

Boy's Life by Robert McCammon (Published by Pocket Books/Simon and Schuster)

Approved for use in Communication Arts II, Honors Communication Arts II

Summary

Boy's Life is the story of a year in the life of Cory Mackenson in 1960s Alabama. Beginning with a brutal crime, the story revolves around Cory's perception of good and evil in his hometown and the important role he plays in his town and family. The novel is filled with colorful characters who contribute to Cory's self-discovery and development.

Connection to the Curriculum

Boy's Life is a mystery novel which takes the student through one year in the life of adolescent Cory. Beginning with a crime committed in his small town, *Boy's Life* is a novel driven by Cory's narration. In fact, the murder investigation becomes secondary to Cory's development and his narration of the 1960s southern town where he lives. The book provides students the opportunity to investigate characters' motivations and development; analyze differing forms of discrimination – age, ethnic, socio-economic, personal/individual; discuss the definition of heroes; analyze the development of plot and effective storytelling; analyze the role of narrator/narration in story – including suspension of disbelief in the reader; and discuss adolescent issues important to the novel – friends, family, development of personal beliefs/opinions. This novel is specifically well-suited for Communication Arts II because it provides a tableau for study of sophisticated literary elements while being approachable by the various levels of reader ability and maturity typical to the Communication Arts II classroom.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.2- The students read fluently. 1.3- The students expand vocabulary. 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

Writing: 3.1- The students use writing as a tool for learning throughout the curriculum.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.4.7- The student identifies characteristics of narrative texts.

1.4.13- The student compares and contrasts varying aspects such as characters' traits and motives, ideas, themes, problem-solution, cause-effect relationships, persuasive techniques, etc.

Literature:

2.1.1- The student identifies and describes different types of characters.

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and its influence on characters and events in the story.

2.1.3- The student analyzes and evaluates plot elements.

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices in a text (including figurative language).

Writing:

3.2.2- The student generates ideas through the writing process.

A Note on the Text: (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

This novel deals with topics of magic, magical realism, racism, bullying, and death. There are references to alcohol, moonshine, prostitution, and white supremacy. Realistic portrayals of bullying include profanity (including limited use of the "F" word) and violence. These are memories about childhood told from the voice of a reflective adult narrator.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon:

To be completed during future curriculum development activities