

***Peace Like a River* by Leif Enger** (Published by Grove Press)

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

Summary

Eleven-year-old Reuban Land, an asthmatic boy in the Midwest, has reason to believe in miracles. Along with his sister and father, Reuben finds himself on a cross-country search for his outlaw older brother who has been controversially charged with murder. Their journey unfolds like a revelation, and its conclusion shows how family, love, and faith can stand up to the most terrifying of enemies, the most tragic of fates.
—Grove Press

Connection to the Curriculum

During the sophomore year, students continue to study the archetypal hero and quest introduced during the freshman year. This novel provides a smooth transition in the sophomore honors curriculum by reviewing the archetypal hero through a challenging text. The rich allusions provide depth of meaning when studied by the honors sophomore. Also, close reading is required to understand the allusions and use of analogy in the book.

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.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.3.1- The student determines meaning of words or phrases using context clues from sentences or paragraphs.

1.3.4- The student identifies, interprets, and analyzes the use of figurative language (with emphasis on imagery, analogies, theme, motifs, and symbolism).

1.4.4- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking questions during and after reading the text.

1.4.11- The student analyzes and evaluates how an author's style and use of literary devices work together to achieve his or her purpose for writing text.

Literature:

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.

2.1.4- The student analyzes themes, tone, and the author's point of view across a variety of literary works and genres using textual evidence and considering audience and purpose.

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices in a text (with emphasis on flashback, figurative language, imagery, symbolism, allusion, and point of view).

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

Although this novel opens by revealing an older brother has committed a murder, the younger brother (along with the entire family) discovers the tragedies of this violence. Through a spiritual father (the book contains many references to the Bible and religious customs) the boy finds a positive ending. The negative instances are shadowed by the positive end.

AP Connections

The author's use of eloquent diction provides the perfect work to discuss the importance of proper word choice. In addition, students can analyze the tone of passages from the text, which prepares them for portions of the AP exam. A study of tone also aids students in analyzing an author's style. The two writing styles in the text (the author's style and the young girl's writing style) provide the Honors CAII student the opportunity to evaluate the effect of style. Close reading and examination of these elements is beneficial practice for students who plan to advance to AP III. This well-written text allows teachers to pull a variety of passages and discuss them in class with AP-style questions. With such rich imagery and use of language, students will have to read closely to obtain the depth of the meaning in the text.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon:

To be completed during future curriculum development activities