

***All the Pretty Horses* by Cormac McCarthy (Published by Vintage International)**

Approved for use in Advanced Placement Communication Arts III and Communication Arts III

Summary

John Grady Cole, a sixteen-year-old without hope for a future in his hometown, travels to Mexico on horseback in 1949 with his friend Lacey Rawlings. They encounter Jimmy Blevins, a comic and loveable figure who embroils them in horse-thieving, prison, and the eventual death of one of the three boys. There is a subplot with John Grady and the beautiful daughter of a wealthy Mexican rancher all of which add to John Grady's rite of passage into adulthood.

Connection to the Curriculum

All the Pretty Horses fosters a high level of critical thinking and analysis of rhetorical strategies. For example, the border between Mexico and the United States is used as a metaphor for the boundaries between the old and the new, the past and the future. The Old West is memorialized as a vanishing time and place. A "doomed enterprise" violently divides the characters' lives into a "before and after" dichotomy. McCarthy's writing reflects an older tradition, one which explores tragic implications of the rugged individual trying to survive the hostile North American frontier. The work is full of examples of McCarthy's command of descriptive language and his unfailing ear for dialogue. Students will have the opportunity to read the writings of an author who has been compared frequently to Faulkner and Melville in regard to his gift of storytelling.

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.

1.4.9- The student uses prior knowledge, content, and text type features to make, revise, and confirm predictions.

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

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

Literature:

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

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices in a text.

Writing:

3.1- The student writes effectively for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts.

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

As John Grady Cole endures hardships during his travels, the reader encounters some profanity and situations which include sexual references and violence. These instances are limited but are part of the development of the characters and, specifically, the conflicts. As John learns about society through hardship, some readers dub this novel a modern Huck Finn. While positive concepts are portrayed alongside the negative, the book allows the critical reader to extend the true life lessons in his or her society as a means of reflecting on, questioning, and understanding his or her world.

AP Connections

All the Pretty Horses provides a link to the canon of fiction that is helpful not only for the student taking the AP examinations but also helpful for the college-bound reader. Close readings of the text provide insight into the rhetorical strategies (tone, syntax, diction) of Cormac McCarthy's narrative.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon