

***The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*** by Erik Larson (Published by Crown Publishers)

Approved for use in Contemporary Communications

**Summary**

This non-fiction text tells the story of the World's Fair in Chicago, 1893. Readers learn of Chicago's battle to "win" the fair, the competition between architects and other design teams, and the triumphs and tragedies of the fair itself (including the first Ferris Wheel). Parallel to the fair's story is the tragic account of a serial murderer who uses the nation's economy, along with the circumstances created by the fair to manipulate his victims.

**Connection to the Curriculum**

*The Devil in the White City* tells a true story through a style and craft similar to a work of fiction. Students can examine the author's style as he carefully weaves two parallel story lines into one work. Students in Contemporary Communications may discuss the qualities of a leader (one of the themes of the course) as they examine how the various players compete for the coveted leadership positions for the fair. They can examine the personality traits of these real-life figures and discover the cause/effect relationships with their actual results. Critical thinking is promoted throughout the text, particularly through the topics of economics, planning and development, law enforcement (solving a mystery) and the dichotomy of the good and evil in the book.

**Standards**

**Course Objectives (Benchmarks)**

**Reading:** 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- The students write effectively for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts.

**Research:** 4.1- The students use effective research practices.

**Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)**

**Reading:**

1.4.7- The student identifies characteristics of narrative, expository, technical, and persuasive 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 author's style (word choice, sentence structure) and use of literary devices (foreshadowing, flashback, irony, symbolism, tone, mood, satire, imagery, point of view, allusion, overstatement, paradox) 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 their influence on characters and events in the story or literary text.

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

**Writing:**

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

**Research:**

4.1.1- The student generates relevant, investigating, and researchable questions in order to narrow or focus a topic or develop a thesis

4.1.4- The student analyzes the complexities and discrepancies in information and systematically organizes relevant information to support central ideas, concepts, and themes.

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

*This text outlines the events surrounding several murders committed by Henry H. Holmes. The author, however, uses a style comparable to that of a newspaper article.*

**Additional Unit Design Connections**

Coming soon