The Lords of Discipline by Pat Conroy (Published by Bantam Books)

Approved for use in Communication Arts IV and Contemporary Communications

Summary

Will McLean is about to enter his senior year at a military college. He encounters personal challenges that involve friendship, social taboos, racial prejudice, and redefining his personal code of ethics. McLean's struggle to do the right thing within the parameters of a highly structured environment makes for an intensely personal story. The book presents multi-layered themes. The most prominent theme is a college student's rite of passage to manhood.

Connection to the Curriculum

Pat Conroy is a master of weaving artful language with realistic story telling. His use of rhetorical strategies, such as imagery, diction, alliteration, extended metaphor, and syntax is exemplary. His descriptions of setting are great examples to examine for students' own writing. Through the vehicle of plot, the reader experiences the author's layering of a story with the development of character traits and motives, introduction of themes, and influence of setting on characters. Conroy's theme of man's need and struggle to be part of inner circles is woven into the complex plot. The reader experiences richness of language, insight into a variety of cultures, a positive approach to prejudicial issues, and an attempt to answer the question, "What is honor?" Students will have the opportunity to read the writing of an author who has been lauded as one of the best novelists of the 1970s-80s. 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 the world.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)
Reading: 1.2- The students read fluently. 1.3- The students expand vocabulary.
Literature: 2.1- The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)
Reading:
1.2.1- The student adjusts reading rate.
1.3.5- The student identifies, interprets, and analyzes the use of figurative language.
1.4.11- The student uses information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.
1.4.12- The student compares and contrasts varying aspects in one or more appropriate-level texts.
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:
2.1.1- 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 their influence on characters and events in the story or literary text.
2.1.3- The student analyzes and evaluates how the author uses various plot elements to advance the plot and make connections between events.
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.

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

Readers should be aware that this intense novel examines the life of a cadet attending a military institute. Its realistic portrayal involves explicit profanity (including the "f" word and racial slurs) and graphically violent situations (including hazing) that develop the frustration level of the main character, Will. There is also explicit sexual content. Language and situations of this novel are of a very mature nature. However, the novel demonstrates that goodness does prevail and having honor does not mean just blindly following a crowd.

Additional Unit Design Connections
Coming soon