

Teacher Guide

Grades 7–8

My Brother Sam Is Dead

James Lincoln Collier
Christopher Collier

NOVEL UNITS[®]

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MY BROTHER SAM IS DEAD

by
James Lincoln Collier
and
Christopher Collier

Teacher Guide

Written by
Anne Troy

Note

The Scholastic paperback edition of the book was used to prepare this guide. The page references may differ in the hardcover or other paperback editions.

Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with your class.

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Novel Units, Inc.
P.O. Box 97
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Web site: novelunits.com

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, classifying
and categorizing, evaluating,
analyzing details, making
judgments, making
generalizations

Writing

Letter, narrative,
argumentative, chapter titles

Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion,
drama, role play

Vocabulary

Antonyms/synonyms,
context

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,
comparison/contrast, cause/
effect, inference, comparing
information from more than
one source

Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot,
conflict, foreshadowing

Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how the conflict will be resolved, which details given by the author will be important to the plot, which details will help to fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses. As students work on predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give us to help us in making our predictions? Why are some predictions more likely than others?

A predicting chart is for students to record their predictions. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, you can review and correct previous predictions. This procedure serves to focus on predictions and to review the stories.

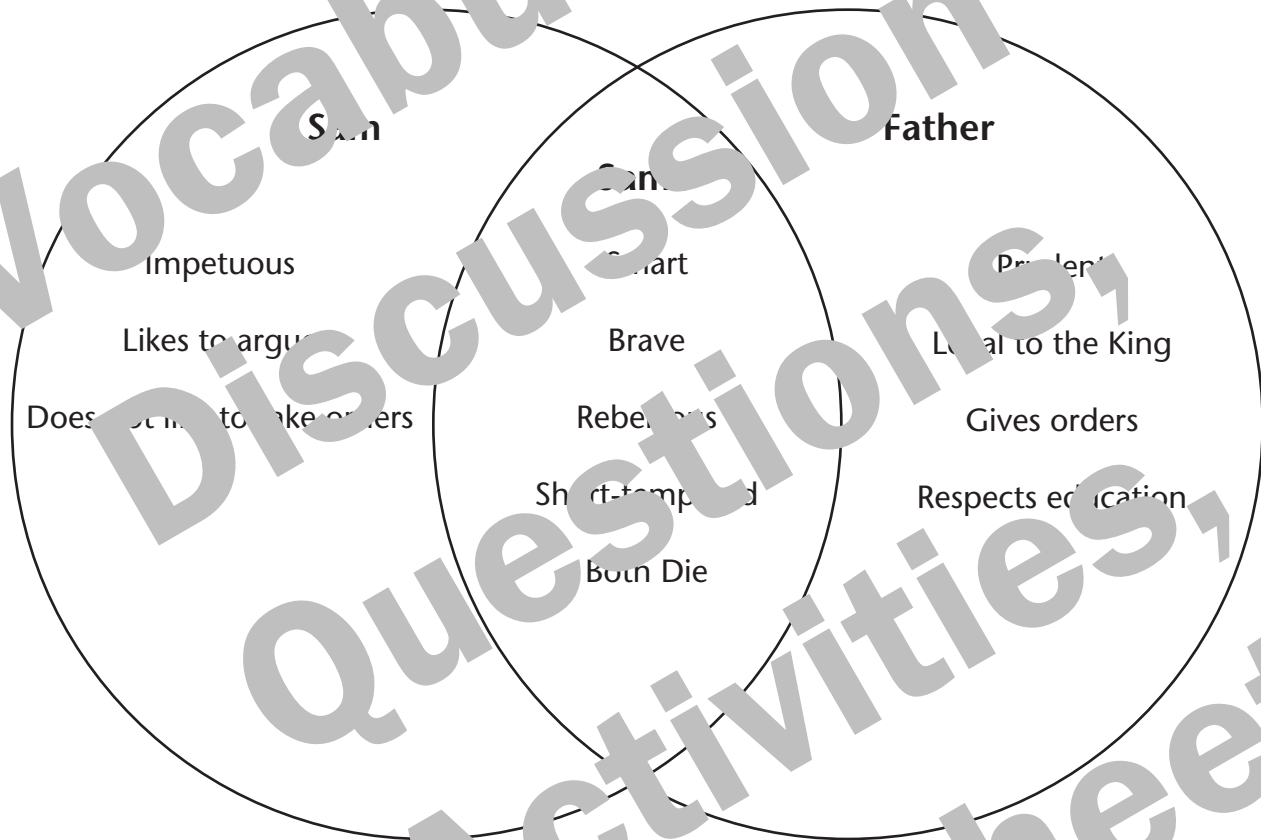
Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own knowledge.

Use new information that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions:

5. How was Sam like his father? How was he different? (pages 5-12, 20-22) Begin an attribute web for the father and son and note similarities and differences on a Venn diagram. (See Venn diagram below and pages 12-14 of this guide.)



- How did you feel when you read the section where Tim was being shot at?
- Why would anyone go to the executions? (Page 207, *Somebody had to claim the body.*) If Sam was your brother, would you have wanted to watch him die? How would witnessing such an event affect a 14-year-old boy?

Epilogue—Pages 209-216

Vocabulary:

commemorate 209 domination 211

Discussion Questions and Activities:

- What does "epilogue" mean? (a short poem, speech or section at the end of any literary work)
- What is your reaction to the statement "But somehow, even fifty years later, I keep thinking that there might have been another way, besides war, to achieve the same end"? Could the United States have become a nation without the Vietnam War?
- My Brother Sam's Dead* was written in 1974. Why is that date important? (This book was written at the end of the Vietnam War which caused a great deal of controversy. Many people believed there should have been another way to solve the problems.)

Supplementary Activities:

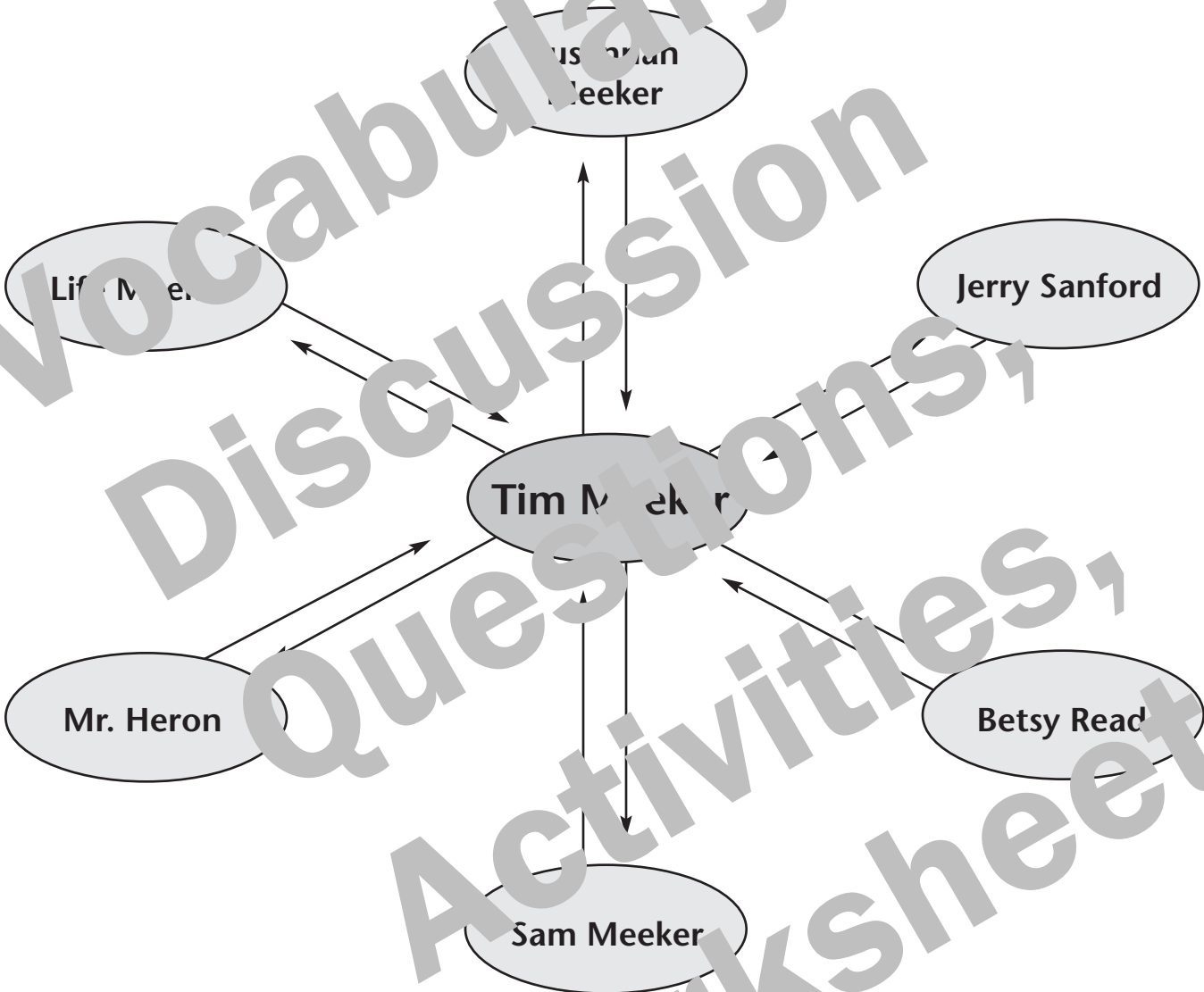
- Writing:** Suppose Sam wrote a letter to his family before he was executed. Have the students write the letter.
- Writing:** Have the students write a different, happier ending for the novel.

Post-reading Questions

- This novel does not have chapter titles. Write titles that will help the reader make good predictions and encourage him to read the chapters.
- Summarize the story by making a collage of key characters, pictures or symbols, and important words.
- Divide the class into small groups. Have them discuss and decide what they feel is the authors' purpose in writing this novel. Have them present their opinions to the class, and compare and discuss as a class the various groups' answers.
- What other stories about war does this novel remind you of? How are they alike? How are they different? Are the authors pacifists (against war)? Are they saying that war is ugly, but necessary?

Sociogram

On each arrow write the feeling or feelings that the person at the base of the arrow has toward the person to whom the arrow is pointing. Find examples from the text to justify your answers. Write the page number on the line also for your own reference during discussion.



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