



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Tears of a Tiger

Sharon M. Draper

READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Tears of a Tiger

Sharon M. Draper

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, critical thinking,
compare/contrast, decision
making

Comprehension

Analysis, predictions,
sequencing, application

Writing

Letter writing, poetry,
newspaper reporting

Vocabulary

Target words, synonyms,
context clues

Listening/Speaking

Class discussion, guest
speakers

Literary Elements

Characterization, imagery,
allusion, narrative style

Fine Arts

Art, drama, music

Summary

Tears of a Tiger is the story of Andy Jackson, a teenager who accidentally kills his best friend, Robert Washington, after drinking and driving. Andy struggles with the pain and guilt of bearing the responsibility for the death of Rob. Turning away from his friends and family, Andy ends his own life believing it will end everyone's suffering.

Please note: This novel deals with teenage depression and suicide. Please assess the appropriateness of this novel for the students in your class.

The story is artfully told through English class assignments, including poetry; snippets of dialogue; journal entries and letters; and police and newspaper reports. Consequentially, both past and present tense are used in this Teacher Guide. Also, this guide is organized by page number due to the brief nature of each of the novel's chapters.

About the Author

Sharon M. Draper was the 1997 National Teacher of the Year and was honored at the White House by President Clinton. She won first prize in the 1991 *Ebony* Magazine literary contest for her short story, "One Small Touch." She currently resides in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she is the head of the English Department at Walnut Hills High School.

Introductory Activities

1. **Previewing the Book:** Have the students examine the title and read the synopsis on the back cover. Students can write their predictions about what will happen in the novel.
2. **Narrative Style:** The story is told from the points of view of the group of friends involved. Discuss as a class what might be good or bad about this style of narration.
3. **Character Journal:** List the names of the main characters from the story *Tears of a Tiger* and have each student choose one. As students read the novel, they write regular journal entries from that character's point of view. Journal entries relate to the events of the story. Students should be prepared to share their thoughts with their classmates.
4. **Attribute Web:** Have students create an attribute web (see p. 5 of this guide) for each of the following ideas: friendship, personal responsibility, guidance, faith. Focus on one word at a time. Write each word in the center of a large piece of paper and ask the students to quickly tell what each word brings to mind. Encourage students to elaborate on each other's ideas.
5. **Story Map:** Every story has the same elements—a setting, a problem, and events that lead up to the resolution or conclusion. Have the students complete the story map on p. 6 of this guide to help them summarize the novel.
6. **Grid:** Ask students if they have ever experienced peer pressure. Tell them to describe the situation and their solution to the problem. Was there a lesson learned from the experience? Complete the decision-making grid on p. 7.
7. **Bulletin Board:** On a bulletin board, display pictures or illustrations of tigers. Have students think about the title, *Tears of a Tiger*. Discuss some possible interpretations of the book's title.

Decision-Making Grid

The decision-making grid below is supposed to make it easier to find the best solution to a problem. Fill in the grid below by specifying a certain problem in your own or Andy's life. Then come up with four possible ways to solve the problem. After filling in the grid completely and choosing one solution, share your choice with your classmates and see if they agree with you.

Problem	Criterion #1:	Criterion #2:	Criterion #3:
State the problem:	Will the solution hurt someone?	Will it make me feel better?	
Solution #1:			
Solution #2:			
Solution #3:			
Solution #4:			

Pages 35-49

Vocabulary

assuming (35)	moody (35)	capable (36)	frenzied (37)
severe (38)	psychic (39)	undergraduate (41)	dispense (42)
affected (42)	initial (45)	convert (46)	cotillions (46)
affirmative action (47)	rebellious (48)		

Discussion Questions

1. Why is Andy late to the basketball game? *(He had to ride the bus since he can no longer use his car.)*
2. Who has replaced Rob as center on the basketball team? *(Andy)*
3. Do you feel that Andy should take the place of Rob as both team captain and as center? *(Answers will vary.)*
4. Why do you think Andy played better than ever for his first game back? *(Answers will vary.)*
5. What does Andy believe made the team want to win and not give up? *(seeing Rob's parents cheer for them in the stands)*
6. How does the author let you know that Andy is unhappy with his parents? *(the comments that he makes about his parents to friends and Dr. Carrothers)*
7. How would you describe Andy's coach as a person? Do you think he helps Andy? *(Answers will vary.)*
8. Why does Coach believe it is good for Andy to cry? *(It helps to cleanse the soul.)*
9. Who is Dr. Carrothers? *(Andy's psychologist)*
10. What impresses Andy about Dr. Carrothers? *(Dr. Carrothers makes over ninety dollars an hour.)*
11. Why does Andy feel that Rob wouldn't blame him for the accident? *(Rob was easygoing and nothing would ever bother him.)*
12. Why do you think Andy says he is not a killer? *(Answers will vary.)*
13. Why do you think Andy didn't want to role-play with Dr. Carrothers? *(Answers will vary.)*
14. Why did Dr. Carrothers conduct an initial interview with Andy's parents before talking to Andy? *(to get to know Andy and what his interests are)*
15. How does Andy describe his mom to Dr. Carrothers? *(She has no grip on reality, she is very active in her sorority functions, and the two are nothing alike.)*
16. What is Andy's attitude toward his father? *(He seems resentful and disgusted with his father.)*

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17. How does Andy feel about his brother, Monty? (*Andy says that Monty is the only one in his family who is "really cool."*)
 18. Why is Andy concerned about Monty? (*Monty is interested in blond girls and thinks that being black is not cool.*)
 19. Why does Andy feel both guilty and proud about taking Rob's position in basketball? (*Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Drama: Pair off students and have them role-play, pretending to be either Rob or Andy. What would Andy say if Rob were talking to him about the accident? What would Rob tell Andy to do with his life and to help deal with his death?
2. Writing: Students can pretend to be Dr. Carrothers. What notes would they write down after their initial meeting with Andy? What impressions would Dr. Carrothers have about Andy's relationship with his family?

Pages 50-70

Vocabulary

adventure (51)	righteous (51)	tantrums (51)	engraved (53)
expectations (55)	radiator (55)	auditorium (56)	fortunate (57)
potential (57)	assumes (58)	frustration (59)	enhanced (59)
shimmers (66)	grace (68)	dense (69)	

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Andy is finally in a good mood? (*Answers will vary.*)
2. How is Andy reacting to Keisha not spending enough time with him? (*He begins to resent that she won't make more time for him.*)
3. What is happening to Andy's grades? (*His grades are slipping because he is not completing work.*)
4. Why do you think that Andy lets his grades slip? (*Answers will vary.*)
5. Why is Andy feeling more pressure from his parents about his grades? (*College is getting closer for him.*)
6. How did Gerald get the scar that is on his face? (*His dad beat him up and knocked him against the radiator.*)
7. How did Marcus acquire his nickname "curve buster"? (*He always passes his tests with A's.*)
8. What excuse does Andy give for not making straight A's? (*He doesn't want to be called to the front for recognition with all of the white kids and be laughed at by his friends.*)