



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

THE CHOCOLATE WAR

BY ROBERT CORMIER



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Written by Lori White

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Poster

Objective: Relating to a thematic concept

Activity

In Jerry Renault's locker hangs a poster with the question, "Do I dare disturb the universe?" What does this mean to you? Based on your personal interpretation of the question, make up your own design for the poster that hangs in Jerry's locker. Your final poster should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Posters should be "locker-sized." They should be no more than twelve inches wide, and longer than they are wide—anywhere from thirteen to eighteen inches in length.
- Posters should be done on heavyweight paper—*not notebook paper!* Any color paper is fine.
- Each poster should have the question "Do I dare disturb the universe?" written in large, easy-to-read lettering.
- The design of the poster may be done by hand or computer, in any medium, and should reflect the meaning of the question posed. Attach to the back of the poster a brief paragraph explaining how the design ties in to the question.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters One – Thirty-Nine**Chapter Titles**

Objective: Identifying the main idea of each chapter by assigning titles to each

Activity

As you read, note that each chapter is numbered rather than titled. Create a title for each chapter based on the significant event in that chapter. We have done one for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters One – Six

Characters

Objective: Recognizing how character traits are revealed

Activity

Most of the significant characters are introduced in the first few chapters of *The Chocolate War*. It is an important function of a novel's exposition to give the reader a concept of the people in the novel. In the first few chapters, the reader gains valuable insight about the characters' ages, appearances, personalities, and things that are important to them in life.

Use the following charts to list information about each character. Each group should complete all character charts. In completing the charts, give page references, supply your ideas, and include quotations that support your answers.

After completing all charts, each group should

- select one character.
- use the chart to write an introduction for this person that could be used in a biographical entry in a book about fictional characters.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters One – Eight

Character Profiles

Objectives: Relating details about characters
 Understanding the relationship between the protagonist and other characters

Activity

In most novels, the main characters are introduced to the reader in the first few chapters. *The Chocolate War* is no exception, providing the reader with a physical description, a small insight into the personality and unique character traits, and some understanding of the relationship of the characters to the protagonist. Most of this is done indirectly rather than through direct characterization:

Tom was tall, redheaded, with pale, lightly freckled skin. He had a temper to go with the hair.

In indirect characterization, a character's traits are revealed through that character's words, actions, thoughts, through what others say about him, and through the way other characters respond to him. Study the example, below.

Tom stamped his foot in frustration as his friend Bill looked on enviously. "You shouldn't be upset that someone called you a giraffe," Bill said soothingly. "He's just jealous of your height. It gives you an advantage in basketball. And your hair does not resemble a fire truck. It's fine like it is."

We acquire the same information in both passages about Tom: height, hair, and temper. The second passage conveys the information more subtly than the first.

Working in small groups, use examples of direct and indirect characterization to create a character profile for each of the following characters:

- Jerry
- Archie
- Brother Leon
- Goober
- Obie

In the space beside each example, explain what this reveals about each character and tell whether the example is direct or indirect. We have supplied two examples for Jerry's profile.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters Eight and Eleven

News Article

Objective: Writing about key events

Activity

In Chapter Eight, the Goober completes his Assignment with the help of several masked assistants: the demolition of Room Nineteen. In Chapter Eleven, the school discovers the prank.

Pretend you are a student on the staff of Trinity's newspaper and you have been given the task of writing an article about either of these two events. Keep in mind the following aspects of news articles:

- A news article provides key information about a recent event. It should answer "Who?" "What?" "When?" "Where?" "Why?" and "How?"
- Most news articles are told in the inverted pyramid form. An inverted pyramid story begins with the most important information in the first paragraph and ends with the least important information in the last paragraph(s).
- The first paragraph should begin with a strong "lead," a compelling sentence that grabs the reader's attention and gives them a reason to keep reading.
- Paragraphs in a news article should be short and full of information. Imagine them in print. A person reading a newspaper does not want to read huge blocks of dense text; rather, he or she would need to have the text broken up into smaller segments to provide some visual relief.

With these tips in mind, investigate and write the news story. Keep in mind that, as a reader, you possess much more information than a student reporter at Trinity would. Make sure you are not reporting more than such a student would know.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter Twenty-Five

Dramatization

Objective: Rewriting a scene from a novel as a play

Activity

There is much close activity and dialogue between a few characters in Chapter Twenty-Five. Reread it, imagining the characters on a stage; then rewrite it as a scene in a play. Below is an example that you may use to start your scene. Be sure to include stage directions, which tell the actors what movements to make.

Off to stage right, Jerry looks down at a piece of paper, a summons to a Vigil meeting. Then, shaking his head, he walks across the stage to the Vigil meeting room. Vigil members are seated or standing menacingly behind Archie, who sits at a desk.

Archie: *(softly)* Renault.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters Eleven – Thirty-Nine**Motif and Symbol**

Objective: Understanding and interpreting motif and symbol

Activity

Cormier uses a great deal of motifs and symbols to help the reader identify the various themes of *The Chocolate War*. The recurrence of these elements gives them significance.

Listed below are several symbols and motifs that appear in the novel. With a partner, jot down some of the page references for each one. Then discuss the significance of each motif and identify what each symbol stands for. Be prepared to present your findings to the class.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wrap-Up

Interview I

Objective: Understanding influences on and inspirations for a literary work

Activity

According to the *Children's Book Review Service*, "Robert Cormier has written a brilliant novel." Despite its rave reviews, however, the novel and its author have faced great opposition in the years following its first publication, including being banned from many school districts.

Imagine that you are a reporter and that you have been given the assignment to interview Robert Cormier. Your task is to discover what motivated Cormier to write this novel, how he felt about its criticism and banning, and if he would do anything differently about *The Chocolate War* if he had written it today. With a partner, prepare a list of ten to fifteen interview questions. A few have been provided for you, below, as possible examples. As with any interview, avoid questions that require a simple "yes" or "no" answer. Ask questions, instead, that will get your subject talking.

Sample Questions:

1. Was there any specific incident that motivated you to write *The Chocolate War*? If so, can you explain?
2. *The Chocolate War* has been widely criticized for its use of vulgar language and discussion of such taboo topics as masturbation. How do you defend including these things in the novel?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wrap-Up

Dramatic Reading

Objective: Selecting, planing, and performing dramatic readings of a literary selection

Activity

A dramatic reading is exactly what it sounds like—a reading, in a dramatic fashion, of a piece of a literary work. When you perform a dramatic reading of a novel, you are essentially acting out a passage, just like an actor on stage. You are allowed to use a copy of the “script,” however, and costumes and props are non-essential ingredients.

Choose one scene from the following list to present to the class. For each scene, assign parts for each character as well as the narrator. The narrator will also serve as director. In passages marked with a (*), a student may play more than one part.

- Chapter Four: Leon propositions Archie. (3)
- Chapter Thirteen: Jerry refuses to sell. (5*)
- Chapter Twenty-One: Obie and Archie meet in the gym. (3)
- Chapter Twenty-Seven: Things start unraveling for Archie. (5*)
- Chapter Thirty: Classroom confrontation. (5*)
- Chapter Thirty-Nine: Archie and Obie—final conversation. (3)

Once your scene is chosen, photocopy the pages that contain your passage and highlight just the dialogue for your character. Underline cues that tell you what your character should be doing at different parts—gestures, facial expressions, or movement from one location to another. These will serve as your stage directions.

Read through your scene silently a few times to familiarize yourself with what is going on. Look up any unfamiliar words.

In your groups, read your scene aloud. The narrator, when not reading, should direct the group members in verbal and facial expression, as well as any needed gestures and movements. As you read your character's part, think about what your character might be thinking, feeling, and doing at this time. How might your character's voice sound? Is it accented? Soft? Angry?

Discuss staging issues, such as the need for props and/or costumes if desired, lighting, the addition of music, and where and how characters will be arranged. Assign tasks as necessary to group members.