

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Chocolate War

by Robert Cormier

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The Chocolate War

Notes

The teacher should be aware that there are several references to masturbation in this book, as well as a few demeaning references to high school girls, which might be offensive to some students. There is also some obscenity used, but it is not excessive. In addition, if the movie is shown, the teacher should be aware that the ending differs from that of the book. In the movie, Archie must fight because he draws a black marble. Jerry defeats Archie in the boxing match.

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Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. define and give examples of:
 - foreshadowing
 - alliteration
 - symbolism
 - inference
 - simile
 - irony
 - personification
 - allusion
 - metaphor
 - hyperbole
2. develop an understanding of the importance of character development in a novel.
3. develop an understanding of the third-person omniscient narrative style.
4. recognize and appreciate the use of imagery in a work of literature.
5. identify the central theme of a work of fiction, and what literary devices authors use to reinforce that theme throughout the novel.
6. infer meanings that are not explicitly stated by the author.
7. understand the irony expressed by the title.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. What kind of a person is Archie? Brother Leon? How are their personalities alike? How do they differ?
2. How would you describe Jerry?
3. Would it have been better if Jerry had agreed to sell the chocolates after the 10 days were up. Why or why not?
4. Explain what The Vigils were? What is their role at Trinity?
5. Discuss the progression of the various reactions that the other students had to Jerry's refusal to sell the chocolates.
6. When Jerry compares himself to his father, he realizes that he wants "to do something, be somebody" unlike his father's limited life. And then, "for no reason at all, he thought of Gregory Bailey." Why do you think Cormier makes the connection between Jerry and Bailey?
7. Brian Cochran thinks to himself, "Was Leon right, after all? That the school was more important than any one kid? But weren't individuals important, too?" Do you agree with this statement? Defend your answer.
8. Only three of the five central characters are really developed through the novel: Brother Leon, Emile Janza, and Archie. The reader learns about Jerry gradually and Roland Goubert is merely sketched. What characteristics do the other three have in common? Why do you think their characters are most fully developed?
9. Discuss the following:

Jerry suddenly understood the poster—the solitary man on the beach standing upright and alone and unafraid, poised at the moment of making himself heard and known in the world, the universe.
10. After the fight, as Obie and Archie sit in the bleachers, Obie "looked at the goal posts. They reminded him of something. He couldn't remember." What do the goalposts remind Obie of? What might the goalpost symbolize in relation to the story?
11. A recurring theme that appears through the book is the question; "Do I dare disturb the universe?" What do you think is meant by this question? Do you think it was worth the effort for Jerry to try? Is it worth the effort for anyone to try?
12. What exactly was the Chocolate War? Was there really a war, and if so, who fought the war?

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Chapter 1

Vocabulary

lassitude – tiredness or diminished energy

1. As the opening scene of the book unfolds, what is actually occurring?

2. What elements of Jerry's character can the reader infer?

3. What literary device does Cormier employ in his description of the coach? List three examples.

4. What other literary device does the author use to make his descriptions more effective? List the words he uses.

Chapter 10

Vocabulary

edifice – an imposing building

1. What will be the quota of chocolate sales for each Trinity boy?

2. Are The Vigils enthusiastic supporters of Archie's plan to support Brother Leon's chocolate sale?

3. How does Archie plan to meet his sales quota?

Chapter 29

1. What trend does Brian Cochran notice regarding the chocolate sales?

2. What is the likely reason for the increase?

3. How do The Vigils manipulate the sales figures?
