

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Fallen Angels

by Walter Dean Myers

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ISBN 13: 978-1-60389-770-9
Reorder No. 200907

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Objectives

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

1. define and cite examples from the text of the following literary terms:
 - allusion
 - euphemism
 - foreshadowing
 - flashback
 - irony
 - jargon
 - metaphor
2. discuss the significance of the title.
3. identify and manipulate military jargon presented in the novel.
4. discuss the role of pop culture in the soldiers' lives.
5. compare and contrast Richie's perspective of war at the beginning of the novel with his perspective at the end of the novel.
6. define associated vocabulary from each chapter.
7. trace the relationship between Richie and Peewee.
8. discuss the role of racism in the novel.
9. write detailed character sketches of selected characters.
10. evaluate Captain Stewart's motives.
11. define round/dynamic and flat/static character types, and identify them in the novel.
12. discuss the role of religion/morality in war.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. How does the use of first person point of view affect the narration of the novel? Would third person point of view be just as effective? Explain.
2. In what ways does Peewee's characterization in Chapter One contrast with the characterization of Peewee in the final chapters of the novel?
3. Walter Dean Myers uses indirect characterization to establish Richie Perry as the chief protagonist of the novel. What admirable qualities does Richie possess?
4. Military jargon is a pervasive element in the story. Does the author's liberal use of jargon detract from or enhance reader understanding? Explain, providing several examples of jargon from the novel to support your position.
5. Discuss the irony of Richie's involvement in combat.
6. Why does the death of Jenkins have a profound effect on Richie?
7. What defines a hero? Which character do you think is most heroic? Why?
8. Characterize Johnson. Why does he have a chip on his shoulder?
9. Who are the fallen angels? How can Richie and Peewee be classified as fallen angels?
10. Discuss Lobel's relationship with his father.
11. What does Hawaii represent? Why is it important for the men to have this sort of promise?
12. On page 77, the men are interviewed by a television crew. They are asked why they are fighting. How does each character respond? How would each character respond to the same question if it were posed later in the novel?
13. In what ways does Myers portray the war as detached, surreal, and shockingly graphic?
14. Discuss how Richie's attitude toward his mother and brother changes over the course of the novel.

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Study Guide Student Copy

Chapter 1 (pages 3-12)

Vocabulary

Congs – abbreviation for Vietcong, the enemy

quonset hut – a portable building with a semicircular metal roof that curves down to form walls

1. What paperwork mistake sends Richard Perry to Vietnam? What is ironic about the situation?
2. When does Perry arrive in Vietnam?
3. How does Perry feel during his first hours in Vietnam?
4. To what company is Perry assigned? What does its name imply?
5. Describe Peewee Gates. How do his actions define his character?

Chapter 5 (pages 57-69)

Vocabulary

Bird – slang term for a brand of liquor

mojo lady – slang term for a woman who practices voodoo

formaldehyde – a colorless, gaseous compound used for embalming fluid

Molotov cocktail – a homemade bomb in a bottle

battalion – a large body of military troops, usually a headquarters company and at least two infantry or artillery companies

1. Why does Lieutenant Carroll point out that insect repellent can be used as a weapon?
2. Why is Richie concerned about his younger brother, Kenny?
3. When the men return from patrol, there is talk of bringing in a Lurp team. What is a Lurp team, and what does it foreshadow?
4. Why does Richie turn down the chance to be transferred to another unit?
5. Richie states, “The real question was what I was doing, what any of us were doing, in Nam.” (Pg. 69) How does this statement reflect a shift in Richie’s attitude about the war?

Chapter 10 (pages 121-128)

Vocabulary

Diana Ross – a 1960s entertainer

Juliet Prowse – a 1960s actress, dancer, pin-up girl

silhouette – a solid profile or outline

1. What goes through Richie's mind as he waits to ambush the VC?
2. How do the VC get past the ambush point undetected?
3. What happens to Lieutenant Carroll?

Chapter 15 (pages 189-204)

Vocabulary

Spookies – C-47 gunships

boonievillle – a slang term for the wilderness or a sparsely populated area

bivouacked – a field camp for soldiers

punji sticks – sharpened bamboo stuck into the ground to impale or jab

1. Why does Richie have trouble writing a letter to his brother?
2. What is the objective of an interdiction number?
3. Why do the Americans call off the ambush?
4. Why do Sergeant Simpson and Captain Stewart have an altercation?
5. Describe what occurs when Alpha Company charges up the hill.

Chapter 20 (pages 262-271)

1. How do the ARVN troops betray the Americans, and what is the outcome?
2. Why does Monaco open fire in the safety of the hooch?
3. Why does Gearhart give letters for his wife to both Walowick and Richie?
4. Explain what Richie means when he says, "I had thought that this war was right, but it was only right from a distance." (Pg. 269)