

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Forged by Fire

by Sharon M. Draper

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Objectives

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

1. discuss the novel's title and its meaning as it relates to the main characters.
2. define the vocabulary words listed in the study guide.
3. identify foreshadowing and cite examples of it in the story.
4. explain how the narration affects the telling of the story.
5. discuss the impact that drug and alcohol abuse has on the main characters.
6. write about the role each family member plays in an abusive household.
7. identify the ways in which the author uses smell, touch, and sound to create tension.
8. discuss Draper's use of informal English and slang and how it contributes to the novel's verisimilitude.
9. discuss how fire symbolizes both destruction and creation in the story.
10. examine the issue of sexual abuse within a family system and what it might take to overcome it.
11. understand how friendship and trust are vital to Gerald's development as a teenager.
12. consider the roles authority figures play in the novel.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. How does Jordan's death free Angel and Gerald, both literally and figuratively?
2. The story begins and ends with a house fire that is the result of adults acting irresponsibly or inappropriately. Consider how Gerald reacts in each situation and how each event contributes to his growth.
3. Discuss Jordan's possible motivations for giving Angel a kitten for Christmas.
4. Compare Gerald's relationship with his mother to his relationship with Aunt Queen.
5. Do you think Monique has a right to re-establish her relationship with Gerald once she is released from prison?
6. Gerald, Monique, Angel, and Jordan all have strong feelings when Jordan is arrested. Discuss each character's feelings and how the character's response illustrates his or her personality and perspective.
7. Select two examples of foreshadowing in the book, and describe how they help to advance the plot.
8. Both Jordan and Monique are described through the sound of their shoes in different scenarios. How does this detail add to the tension in the story?
9. Discuss how Jordan's and Monique's shoes reflect their personalities and what their shoes symbolize.
10. What effect does Rob's death have on Gerald?
11. How does the use of alcohol and drugs contribute to the motifs of pain and loss in this story?
12. Discuss the symbolism of fire as a motif in the story.
13. How are Gerald's friendships vital to his development?

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Notes

Forged by Fire, the second book in the Hazelwood High trilogy by Sharon M. Draper, is a novel that deals with difficult family relationships. Draper's story focuses on an African American family locked in a cycle of drug and alcohol dependency and the accompanying emotional, physical, and sexual abuse that results. The novel contains some graphic descriptions of physical and verbal abuse, and references to sexual abuse, and may be better suited to more mature classes.

Draper received the prestigious Coretta Scott King Award in 1998 for *Forged by Fire*. The award honors African American authors who write books for children and young adults.

All references come from the First paperback edition of *Forged by Fire*, copyright 1998, Simon Pulse, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Division.

4. Why does Gerald's mother dress up before going out?

5. What are some of the ways the narrator refers to fire in this chapter? What do the references help the reader understand about Gerald?

6. Would you describe Monique's behavior as abusive?

Six

Vocabulary

grudgingly – unwillingly
obliged – went along with

1. What does Aunt Queen learn about Angel when she sits in her lap?

2. How does Gerald act toward Angel when they go outside to play?

3. Even though it's very hot, Angel refuses to take off her black tights. She appears to be terrified and claims that her mother would “get” her if she took them off. What can be inferred by Angel's reaction?

4. What happens to Aunt Queen at the end of this chapter, and what might occur as a result?

Seventeen

Vocabulary

garlands – wreaths

1. Jordan wears black jeans, a black T-shirt, and his heavy black cowboy boots to Gerald's game. How does Kiara describe him?

2. How does Jordan's presence affect Gerald and Angel?

3. When the Washingtons drop Kiara off at Angel's recital, they decide to stay. Their behavior contrasts with Monique's. Explain the difference between the two.
