

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Rumble Fish

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Rumble Fish

Objectives

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

1. discuss the significance of the title *Rumble Fish*.
2. determine the setting of the novel.
3. compare and contrast Rusty-James' thoughts on courage with those of Motorcycle Boy's.
4. discuss the significance of the river and its importance in the novel.
5. identify the recurring themes in the story.
6. cite examples that support the idea that Rusty-James is just like Motorcycle Boy; cite examples that show how they are completely different.
7. discuss the author's use of irony in the novel. Cite examples and explain how irony contributes to the story.
8. develop parallels between the issues faced by the characters in *Rumble Fish* and the issues faced by today's young people.
9. identify examples of descriptive imagery and relate their importance to the story
10. discuss the ways parents are portrayed in the novel. Contrast the effects each has had on their children.
11. point out the climax of the story. Discuss the importance of the climax on Rusty-James' life.
12. explain how *Rumble Fish* is a coming-of-age story.
13. develop an opinion on whether Rusty James is merely a product of his environment or is responsible for his own actions
14. compare and contrast Steve's and Rusty-James' views on courage, leadership, moral responsibility, and authority.
15. discuss what the Motorcycle Boy's trip to California represents.
16. discuss how the story might be different if the point of view were different.

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Essay and Discussion Questions

1. Explain how the use of foreshadowing in *Rumble Fish* builds interest for the reader.
2. Write a half page description of the major characters in *Rumble Fish*.
3. Use examples to discuss the mood of the novel and the impact it makes on the reader.
4. Prove that the following themes are in the novel:
 - A. The destructive effects of stereotyping people and/or groups.
 - B. The importance of family and friends in one's life.
 - C. The conflict that arises when loyalty to a friend clashes with a sense of moral duty.
 - D. The consequences of irrational decisions and behavior.
 - E. The difficulty of following one's conscience.
5. Create a two-page sequel to *Rumble Fish* discussing what you expect will happen to Rusty-James over the next five years.
6. Choose one character from *Rumble Fish* and discuss how he or she fits a particular stereotype.
7. Define first person and third person point of view and explain the advantages and disadvantages of each. Identify the point of view and the narrator in *Rumble Fish*.
8. Define and cite examples in the text for the following literary terms:
 - A. allusion
 - B. flashback
 - C. sarcasm
 - D. simile
 - E. tone
9. Identify the following plot incidents:
 - A. exposition
 - B. rising action
 - C. climax
 - D. falling action
 - E. resolution
10. Determine the setting of *Rumble Fish* and cite examples from the text to support your answer.

Rumble Fish

Study Guide Student Copy

Chapter One

Vocabulary

reformatory—a school for juveniles with disciplinary problems

solitary—a form of punishment where the subject is isolated

1. How do Rusty-James and Steve react when they meet? How long has it been since they last met?
2. Compare the professions and lifestyles of Steve and Rusty-James.
3. Rusty-James and Steve discuss what they have done since they last met. During their conversation, what information is revealed that portrays Rusty-James as a troublemaker?
4. Why is Rusty-James not happy to see Steve?
5. How does the author lead the reader to believe that a flashback is coming up in the novel?
6. What is the novel's point of view?
7. Who is the narrator?

Chapter Three

Vocabulary

maniac—crazed person

black cherry pop—Black cherry soda

1. Why does Rusty-James visit Patty mostly at night?
2. When Rusty-James enters Patty's house, she is angry with him. What does Patty do when she is mad about something?
3. Why does Patty get upset with Rusty-James when he is leaving her house?
4. While they are arguing, Rusty-James and Patty begin throwing accusations at each other. In order to defend himself, what does Rusty-James accuse Patty of doing? What does this information reveal about Patty's character?
5. Rusty-James meets his friends at Benny's and they all leave together. On their way to the fight, Rusty-James and his friends break up into small groups. Why do they do this?
6. Compare how Smokey and Rusty-James react before a fight.
7. Arriving at the field, B.J. looks around and sarcastically says, "I thought Steve was gonna be here." (Pg. 22) Explain the sarcasm in B.J.'s remark.

Chapter Five

Vocabulary

hick—an uneducated, unworldly person

sassy—smart-mouthed

1. Who is Cassandra?
2. Rusty-James does not try to hide his feelings about Cassandra. What does Rusty-James think of Cassandra?
3. What does Cassandra reveal to Rusty-James that he finds disgusting?
4. What is Cassandra's reason for using drugs?
5. Motorcycle Boy has voiced his opinion about drugs to Rusty-James in the past. What is Motorcycle Boy's viewpoint about drug use? How does his viewpoint influence Rusty-James?
6. What are Motorcycle Boy's physical problems?
7. Describe Rusty-James' father. What does Rusty-James never tell people about his father, and why?

Chapter Seven

Vocabulary

doggedly—repetitively and continually

1. Steve meets Rusty-James and Motorcycle Boy to go downtown, and Rusty-James notices that Steve is acting peculiar. What does Rusty-James notice about Steve's recent behavior?
2. Why does Motorcycle Boy not like to drink?
3. What is Motorcycle Boy's level of colorblindness?
4. How do Rusty-James and Steve get into a movie for people eighteen and older?
5. Rusty-James and Steve discuss the risk of a police raid in the theater. Steve takes into account being arrested and asks, "Rusty-James, if you're arrested or something, can you refuse bail? I mean, can't you stay in jail if you'd rather do that than go home?" (Pg. 79) Why do you suppose Steve prefers to stay in jail rather than go home?
6. What does Motorcycle Boy do when he goes to a movie?

Chapter Nine

Vocabulary

pester—bother

1. What two qualities makes the clinic appealing for Rusty-James?
2. What does the doctor tell Rusty-James? How does he react?
3. When he leaves the clinic, Rusty-James stops at Steve's house and is surprised when Steve opens the door. Why is Rusty-James surprised? How does Steve explain what has happened?
4. Rusty-James goes to Steve's house in order to ask him a question. What does Rusty-James ask Steve to do and why?
5. What is Steve's response to Rusty-James' request? What is the reason for his answer?
6. What does Steve say to make Rusty-James shove him against a wall?
7. Steve tries to explain to Rusty-James why he will not hang out with him anymore, but Rusty-James struggles with his explanation: "I didn't understand what he was talking about. Why did all the people I liked talk about such weird things?" (Pg. 113) Why does Rusty-James not understand Steve?

Chapter Eleven

Vocabulary

atheist—a person who does not believe in God

acute—intense

1. Rusty-James returns to the apartment with Motorcycle Boy and, while sitting around, begins thinking about the rumbles of the past. What does he relay about the night of the last rumble?
2. What does Rusty-James ask his father about his mother? Why does he ask him this question?
3. According to Rusty-James' father, why did his marriage fail?
4. Rusty-James' father explains why Motorcycle Boy may be perceived as crazy:

“Every now and then a person comes along who has a different view of the world than does the usual person. Notice I said *usual*, not *normal*. That does not make him crazy. An acute perception does not make you crazy. However, sometimes it drives you crazy.” (Pg. 127)

Discuss how Motorcycle Boy fits this description.

5. Rusty-James discusses the probability of growing to look like Motorcycle Boy when he says to his father, “I think that I’m gonna look just like him when I get older. Whadd’ya think?” His father replies, “You better pray to God not.” (Pg. 128) Explain the father’s response.
6. Why does Motorcycle Boy break into the pet shop?