

A Curriculum Guide to

Ghost Hawk

By Susan Cooper

About the Book

Little Hawk is eleven years old when he is sent into the wilderness alone in what his tribe calls his “proving time.” His only tools are a bow and arrow and a tomahawk that his father crafted on the day of Little Hawk’s birth. During the three moons that he is away, he survives an encounter with a lone wolf and treacherous weather conditions. Upon his return he finds that his entire village has been wiped out by the “white man’s plague.” Not too far away in the Plymouth Colony, ten-year-old John Wakely later begins his own journey to manhood. Though his people are prejudiced against the native peoples, John realizes that he cannot live with such hatred and must follow his heart to a new territory. The two boys become men in very different ways, but their lives are intertwined forever.

Prereading Activity

The activity below correlates to the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.6-7.9) (W.6-7.1, 4)

Read aloud the passages from Roger Williams and Woody Guthrie at the beginning of the novel. Ask students to write a one-page paper that draws the relationship between the two passages. Have them share their writing in class.

Discussion Questions

The discussion questions below correlate to the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.6-7.1, 2, 3) (SL.6.1, 3, 4) (SL.7.1a, 1c, 3, 4) (L.6-7.1)

1. Explain why Little Hawk is considered an omniscient narrator. How does the element of surprise at the end of Part 1 explain the title of the novel?
2. Contrast the role of women and men in the Native American culture. Compare these gender roles to those of the Pilgrim culture in the Plymouth Colony.
3. The “proving time” is a survival time in the wilderness when eleven-year-old boys prove that they are men. How do Little Hawk’s parents prepare him for his “proving time”? Discuss Little Hawk’s journey. At what point does he realize that he will survive? Explain the moment he realizes why this “proving time” is so important to his people. How does he know when it is time to return to his village? Discuss how his manhood is further tested when he returns.

4. Foreshadowing is a literary device that hints of events that come later in the story. Suncatcher, Little Hawk's grandmother, says, "You will see me first when you return, Little Hawk." How does this statement foreshadow what Little Hawk finds in his village when he returns from his "proving time"?
5. Morning Star allows Suncatcher and Quickbird to believe that the other is dead. Justify his lie. Why does Suncatcher call it a "half a lie"? Discuss what John Wakely means when he says, "There are some who turn lies into memories." What other lies are told in the novel?
6. Little Hawk says, "I never expected my Manitou to come as a comfort for shame." Why does he feel shame? How do his emotions reflect the beliefs of his culture? Explain why he is comforted by his Manitou.
7. Little Hawk makes several references to loneliness. How does his Manitou relieve his feelings of loneliness? Why is it necessary for Little Hawk to take his road to manhood alone? What other characters in the novel suffer from loneliness?
8. Fear is another emotion that Little Hawk experiences. Discuss the purpose of the sweat lodge. How does Little Hawk overcome his fears? How does John Wakely deal with fear?
9. Contrast the way the Native Americans view the land and nature to the way the white man views it. Cite evidence from the novel to support the claim.
10. Trust and mistrust are themes in the novel. How do Little Hawk and John Wakely trust one another? What is the basis of Leaping Turtle's mistrust of all white men? How does Yellow Feather represent trust?
11. Explain the views of the Puritans. John recognizes Master Kelly as the man who killed Little Hawk. How does this recognition cause John to question the religious views of the Puritans? Why are the Puritans uncomfortable with Roger Williams? Discuss the attitude of the elders of the meetinghouse toward John. How does this explain why John admires and follows Roger Williams?
12. Compare and contrast John's relationship with his stepfather to Thomas Medlycott's relationship with his father.
13. John experiences several life-changing moments in the novel. What are the most significant changes? How do these events make him a man? Contrast his journey to manhood to that of Little Hawk.

14. What does Little Hawk's tomahawk symbolize? How is it significant to the plot of the novel? Discuss how burying the tomahawk helps John come to terms with Little Hawk's death. How does Rachel free Little Hawk?

15. Discuss the tensions that develop between Little Hawk and John's people. Little Hawk says that "greed, resentment, arrogance, and pride" are the root of the problem. Ask students to cite evidence from the text that supports Little Hawk's observation.

Activities

The activities below correlate to the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.6-7.1, 4, 5) (RI.6-7.1, 2a, 3) (W.6-7.2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9) (L.6-7.1, 2) (RH.6-8.2, 5) (SL.6-7.4, 5, 6)

1. The novel is divided into four parts: Freezing Moon, Planting Moon, Burning Moon, and Ripening Moon. Find a quote from each section that best explains the title of each section.

2. Explain the following simile: "I could feel his mind reaching for reason and sliding back again, like a man climbing a muddy slope." Instruct students to write a simile that describes Little Hawk's thoughts when he returns to his devastated village.

3. Like similes and metaphors, personification is a literary device that creates certain images in the reader's mind. What is the difference between personification and simile? Ask students to discuss the following example of personification: "It was the voice of the sea, whose anger would last much longer than the storm that had stirred it into life." Have students identify other examples of personification in the novel. Write a sentence that uses personification to describe the moment Rachel buries the tomahawk.

4. The "White Man's Plague" killed everyone in Little Hawk's village except Suncatcher. Have students make a list of the symptoms of the plague from those given in the book. Use books in the library or sites on the Internet to identify the specific disease. Ask them to write a brief paper that includes information on when a cure for the disease was discovered, and on the scientists responsible for the discovery.

5. Read about the basic beliefs of the Pokanoket tribe of the Wampanoag Nation on the following website: <http://pokanoket.us>. Then have students write a brief paper that explains how Yellow Feather upholds these beliefs. Encourage peer editing for clarity and grammar.

6. Have students use books in the library or sites on the Internet to read about one of the following characters: Roger Williams, Squanto, Miles Standish, Governor William Bradford, or Edward Winslow. Then have them write an acrostic poem that reveals each

man's contribution to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Allow students an opportunity to share their poems in class.

http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/colonial/jb_colonial_williams_1.html

(Roger Williams)

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Squanto.aspx> (Squanto)

<http://www.landofthebrave.info/myles-standish.htm> (Miles Standish)

<http://www.landofthebrave.info/william-bradford.htm> (William Bradford)

http://www.mayflowerfamilies.com/enquirer/edward_winslow.htm

(Edward Winslow)

7. Sponsor a student panel that addresses the following question: "How could all these people have a religion that values compassion and respect so highly and yet so often treat one other with neither of those things?" Instruct students to use specific examples from the novel to make their point.

8. A Boston court banished Roger Williams and ordered him to return to England. Instead he escaped to the Rhode Island territory. Have students stage a drama of the courtroom trial of Williams. Include a judge, jury, and people to speak against and for Williams. Make a poster that announces the trial to the colony.

9. Research the state of the Pokanoket tribe of the Wampanoag Nation today. Little Hawk says, "I can see past, present, but not future." Ask students to assume that Little Hawk can see the future and ask them to write an essay regarding the state of the Wampanoag Nation from Little Hawk's point of view.

Guide written in 2013 by Pat Scales, a retired middle and high school librarian who is currently a children's and young adult literature consultant and specializes in curriculum and free speech issues.

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