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Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Fallen Angels

by Walter Dean Myers

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Fallen Angels

Note to the Teacher

Fallen Angels is the chronicle of young Richie Perry's coming of age as he experiences the horrors of war. Set in Vietnam, *Fallen Angels* presents a graphic portrait of fear and futility through the eyes of a soldier who enters the war as an innocent. The novel tests the moral compass in its poignant vignettes. Richie, the protagonist, struggles with achieving a sense of purpose in his role as a soldier while maintaining a dogged determination to defend his fellow soldiers, and, ultimately, his country.

Fallen Angels also explores the dynamics of friendship and family relationships. Richie faces a number of conflicts outside of military action. Myers portrays the other members of Richie's squad as foils who reveal a variety of perspectives on topics ranging from racism to sexuality. Myers's use of military jargon mixed with allusions to pop culture of the era help create a believable account of army life. The characters' language is peppered with slang, epithets, and obscenities. Myers depicts his characters in a hyper-emotional setting complete with high suspense and realistic action. It is this realism that makes *Fallen Angels* an eye-opening account of the Vietnam conflict.

Note: All page references come from the Scholastic, Inc. edition of *Fallen Angels*, published 1988.

Fallen Angels

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.

Fallen Angels

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. The men are interviewed by a television crew, and 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.

Chapter 4

VOCABULARY

ARVN – the South Vietnamese army (allies of the American forces)
gook – a derogatory term for Vietnamese people

- 1. What task must Richie perform as the chapter opens? What does the supply tech teach Richie about enemy maneuvers?

- 2. Why is Richie numb on the inside?

- 3. Lieutenant Carroll prays, “Let us fear death, but let it not live within us.” How does this prayer parallel Mrs. Liebow’s definition of a hero?

- 4. Why does Lieutenant Carroll refer to soldiers as angel warriors?

- 5. Lieutenant Carroll states, “I don’t have doubts about God, . . . I’m just not that sure who I am anymore.” What experience changed his perspective about himself?

3. In what way is Richie's situation in Vietnam like a prison?

4. Richie's mind dwells upon the dead Vietnamese soldier: "I wondered if he had a family? Had he been out on patrol? When did he know he was going to die?" (Pg. 84) Discuss why Richie is having difficulty dealing with the dead man.

5. Who are the Rovers? What is the purpose of Richie's flashback about the Rovers?

6. Why do Johnson and Walowick fight? How does Captain Stewart resolve the situation? Is their fight a result of racism, tension from the war, or both?

7. Who is Earlene? Why does Peewee want to break her heart?

8. Why does Richie feel compelled to pray?
