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Teaching Unit™

Sample



The Light in the Forest

by Conrad Richter

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

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Objectives

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

1. state why and in what way this book is a good example of the historical fiction genre.
2. identify and discuss how the book is a “coming of age” story about the protagonist.
3. discuss how and why the author shifts the point of view of the narrator.
4. discuss the major themes of the novel, including:
 - the difference in the Indian’s and white’s relationship with nature
 - True Son’s conflicting identities as both white and Indian
 - immoral acts of both sides during war.
5. identify and discuss the racist attitudes and actions of the whites against the Indians and vice versa.
6. discuss the history of treatment of Native Americans in the United States.
7. compare and contrast modern Native American communities to those depicted in the book.
8. identify and discuss the symbol of white men’s clothing in the novel.
9. understand, define, and give examples of the following literary terms:
 - simile
 - personification.
 - metaphor

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. The preface of the book is a quote from a William Wordsworth poem, and Conrad Richter takes the story's title from it. Study the lines of the poem and give an interpretation of how they relate to True Son's experiences.
2. Conrad Richter writes in the Acknowledgements that, "He can understand and sympathize with either side. His business is to be fair to them both." Do you think Richter is fair to both the whites and the Indians, or does he favor one side? Why or why not?
3. Based on the definition of historical fiction provided for you and the information in the Notes, what elements of the genre does *The Light in the Forest* contain?
4. Compare how the whites and Indians live in relation to nature. Give specific examples of the differences and similarities.
5. True Son frequently speaks of feeling like a prisoner when he is among the whites. Describe the number of ways that True Son feels confined by white culture.
6. What is the significance of the massacre of the Conestogo Indians to True Son? Compare how the Indians treat True Son, a white boy who lives among them, to how the whites treat the Conestogo. Why do you think there is a difference?
7. Has True Son changed by the end of the story? If so, in what ways? If not, how is he the same?
8. What does *The Light in the Forest* teach you about the history of how white settlers have treated Native Americans?
9. Consider the issue of racism in regards to *The Light in the Forest*. Find examples of racial slurs referring to either side, stereotypical attitudes, and violent crimes committed solely because of the victim's ethnicity.
10. Consider what you know about modern Native American communities, or do some research on them. Compare them to the Native American communities depicted in the story.
11. Consider the time True Son and Half Arrow spend living on their own in the forest. Why is this time so enjoyable to them? How does it relate to the happy memory Bejance shares with True Son and his repeated message to the boy?
12. What factors lead to True Son's betrayal of his Indian comrades? Do you think True Son made the right decision by warning the people on the boat? Why or why not?
13. Are you satisfied with the ending to the story? Is so, why? If not, why and how would you have liked to see the story end?

The Light in the Forest

Chapter 1

VOCABULARY

affronted – insulted, especially face-to-face
aversion – a feeling of repugnance toward something
redoubts – small, usually temporary, military defense barriers
sapling – a young tree
squaws – slang for Indian women

1. How does the boy's father prepare him for hardship?

2. How long had the boy been living among the Indians and why was he taken? How did his father make him a true Indian?

Chapter 8

VOCABULARY

bower – an attractive dwelling or retreat
cooperage – the business that repairs wooden casks or tubs
encumbrances – things that hinder or bother
languish – to be or become feeble or weak
millstones – circular stones used for grinding grain

1. How is True Son forced to wear white men's clothes?

2. What is the "Great Spirit's lodge" and why does True Son find it strange?

3. What had Kringas told True Son about the Great Spirit?

4. Why does Bejance say that Gordie and True Son are enslaved?

6. Why does praise from his white father mean little to True Son?

7. What changes True Son's resignation about dying?

8. Find an example of personification in this Chapter.

9. How does True Son signal to the Indian, and why does that call work?

10. Who is the Indian that the white men have killed?

11. Why is True Son uneasy about the "happy stories" Little Crane told to his uncle?

12. What happens when True Son confronts his uncle about Little Crane's death?
