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Teaching Unit™

Sample

Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Bad

by Jean Ferris

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



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Bad

Objectives

Note to the Teacher: Bad is a coming-of-age novel based on the true stories of girls in a juvenile rehabilitation center whom the author interviewed in 1993. The protagonist is a 16-year old girl who questions her self-worth as she struggles with the legacy of her mother's death and her relationships with her father and friends. There are many references to racism, violence, rape, teen pregnancy, prostitution, and drug and alcohol use in the novel. Teachers should be aware that, while used infrequently, there are a few racial and sexual slurs in Bad that some may find offensive.

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

1. identify examples of the coming-of-age theme in *Bad*.
2. explain the nuances of the title in connection with character and theme.
3. discuss Dallas's growth over the course of the novel.
4. identify and cite examples of the following literary terms:
 - characterization
 - coming of age
 - irony
 - metaphor
 - personification
 - plot
 - protagonist
 - simile
5. consider the implications of choice and free will as the major determining factors of one's behavior.
6. explain how and why Dallas and her father are unable to communicate effectively.
7. evaluate and discuss the following ideas:
 - People are who they choose to be, not what they do
 - Strength and character can be built from hard circumstances.
8. discuss the effectiveness of the rehabilitation process, and the high rate and causes of recidivism.

Bad

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. The author uses the word “bad” often throughout the story. Using the following examples, answer these questions:

- Define the word “bad” and how it is used in this excerpt.
- In each case, does the description fit? Why or why not?

Example 1: “It was actually remarkable that my fellow bad girls had been able to commit any crimes at all, considering how stoned they were most of the time.” (Pg. 76)

Example 2: “Ray was bad news, but that was part of his appeal.” (Pg. 4)

Example 3: “I knew I didn’t think I was a monster or anything, even if I had done some bad things.” (pg. 105)

2. Select one idea that Nolan introduces to the girls for consideration. Choose an example from the novel that shows how his idea affects one of the girls’ behaviors.
3. What does Dallas believe about herself in the beginning of the novel? How are these beliefs shaped by her parents?
4. How does Dallas begin to develop a sense of possibility in her life?
5. Compare Dallas’s friendships with the girls in GRC with her relationships with Pam and Ray.
6. Choose a situation in the story involving one of the girls and discuss the following quote:

“Being bad is easy. At least for awhile. Until you get caught. Until you’re not somebody you like. Good is harder, no doubt about it. But it makes you feel better.” (Pg. 122)
7. How does Mary Alice (Malice) fit into the story? Compare and contrast her behavior with that of the girls who are being rehabilitating. What might Malice represent?
8. Describe how the situation involving Toozdae affects the girls. How do they see her step-brother’s sexual advances as different from the prostitution she was engaging in already?
9. What is valuable about hearing this story through Dallas’s voice? How would it change if it were told from the perspective of Kate? of Shatasia?
10. Discuss what Damaris’s failure to succeed outside of GRC implies.

Bad

All references come from the Farrar Straus Giroux edition of Bad, copyright 1998.

Chapter One

Vocabulary

inaudibly – so as not to be heard
misguided – without direction
moping – feeling sorry for oneself

1. Who is the protagonist compared to in the beginning of the story? How does she feel about it?

2. What kind of relationship does the girl appear to have with her father?

3. Describe the girl's feelings about the activities she calls "skating."

4. Why does the girl agree to have sex with Ray in public even though she does not enjoy it?

5. What kind of response does the girl have after her father says, "If you leave this house tonight, I'll take no responsibility for what happens to you next!"

Chapter Two

Vocabulary

arraignment – a hearing

Aryan – White (a term usually used by white supremacists)

benevolent – kind

faltering – not steady

imperative – of the highest importance

incarceration – imprisonment

leniency – mercy

pestilence – plague

1. What is Dallas feeling during her ride to the police station?

2. Describe Dallas's roommate and her beliefs. How does Dallas react to her?

3. What suspicion does Dallas have about Ray when she cannot reach him?

4. In Chapter Four, the author introduces most of the other main characters in the story. How are they different from each other and from Dallas?

5. Why does Kate give Dallas a book to read?

6. What is the nature of the conflict between Dahlia and Shatasia?

7. Why is Shatasia's smile "triumphant"?
