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Ordinary People
BY JUDITH GUEST



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Inferring Meaning

Objective: Drawing inferences about the meaning of the book's title

Activity

Ordinary People is a novel about a typical American family during the 1970s. Think about the title of the book and then read the back cover, including the media quotes. Although the blurb is short, it provides some clues as to the story's subject matter. What information gives you an idea about the possible meaning of the title and how it relates to the topics of success, pain, healing, and understanding? On the following Inference chart, list the words or phrases you've identified, and explain what meaning can be inferred from them in relation to the novel's title and topics listed. You may find that some words and phrases apply to more than one topic.

INFERENCE CHART

Topic	Words/Phrases	Possible Meaning
Success		
Pain		
Healing		
Understanding		

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 1

Crafting Mobile Messages

Objective: Creating thought-provoking messages with few words

Activity

This chapter introduces Conrad Jarrett and his desire to have a guiding principle for his life, which he equates to messages on bumper stickers. These messages are often humorous, religious, political, philosophical, or supportive of an organization. They naturally reflect a belief held by the owner of the vehicle.

Using information from the text that you find important, write a bumper sticker message that models a guiding principle appropriate for Conrad.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 5

Point of View

Objective: Learning how point of view affects a story

Activity

In this chapter, Conrad has his first visit with Dr. Berger. The visit is told from Conrad's point of view. This is known first-person narration, in which the story is seen and told from the character's perspective. This type of narration gives the reader only one perspective. If the same story is seen from another character's perspective, it may reveal aspects of the story that the reader may not be aware of or hasn't considered. To gain a different character's perspective on an event, retell Conrad's visit from Dr. Berger's point of view. Imagine how the conversation would be interpreted by Dr. Berger based on the information provided in the text and what you know about Conrad so far. Write your observations as an entry in a private notebook that Dr. Berger keeps on his patients. Try to be as analytical as possible, as a doctor would be. We have started the entry for you with a basic outline. Be prepared to discuss your interpretation of Dr. Berger's point of view in a class discussion.

Date: _____

Patient: _____

Time: _____

Referral: _____

History: _____

Notes: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 10**Prioritizing****Objective:** Comparing a character's priorities to your own**Activity**

In this chapter, Conrad decides to quit the swim team. We have already witnessed Conrad's attempt to find meaning in his life. Many times, people often find their life's purpose by prioritizing what they consider important. Create a T-Chart listing things that Conrad would and would not consider priorities. Then, make a chart of your own priorities, and compare your list to Conrad's.

PRIORITIZING CHART

Conrad		Student	
Priority	Non-Priority	Priority	Non-Priority

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 14

Relating Disparate Quotations

Objective: Relating disparate quotations to the text

Activity

Aphorists are writers who are known for their adages. They are often quoted for the ease with which their statements can be applied to everyday life. Mason Cooley, an early twentieth-century American aphorist, wrote the following on forgiveness: "Forgiveness is like faith. You have to keep reviving it." Write a brief, informal essay explaining how this quotation applies to the events leading up to and including Chapter 14.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 18

Test-Taking Strategies

Objective: Discussing and exchanging test-taking strategies

Activity

Conrad experiences a bit of test anxiety during his English exam. He is tense and has trouble concentrating. How well did Conrad prepare for his exam? (Look back to previous chapters for references to his studying habits.) What could he have done to better prepare himself? Many times, test anxiety can be avoided if proper study skills are utilized.

How do you prepare for a test? Write a list of helpful hints that could have reduced Conrad's test anxiety. Consider what could have been done before the day of the exam and what could have been done on exam day.