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



Darkness Before Dawn

by Sharon M. Draper

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



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Darkness Before Dawn

Objectives

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

1. identify examples of simile, metaphor, and personification in the novel.
2. identify the use of foreshadowing.
3. summarize passages in the story to demonstrate understanding.
4. discuss character motivation.
5. predict future events in the story.
6. define internal conflict (man vs. himself) and external conflict (man vs. man, man vs. society), and provide examples of them from the text.
7. explain how the protagonist and other major characters change over the course of the story.
8. describe the main characters of the novel.
9. identify the point of view, and distinguish it from other types of narration.
10. explain how the use of a different point of view might affect the story.
11. identify and discuss the climax of the story.
12. understand the symbolism of the butterfly.
13. explain how the author uses silver as a motif.
14. identify and explain similarities among characters.
15. compare and contrast two characters.

Darkness Before Dawn

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Explain how the setting of the novel reflects the emotional states of the characters.
2. Compare and contrast three of the mothers in the story: Keisha's mother, Rhonda's mother, and Edna. What effect does each have on other characters?
3. The novel is told in the first-person point of view. Explain the impact a different point of view—such as third-person omniscient—would have on the story.
4. Why do you think Jonathan is successful at manipulating Keisha?
5. Leon turns out to be a good match for Keisha. What is good about him, and why do you think Keisha has never thought of him romantically before?
6. Relate Keisha's poem, "Let Our Circle Be Unbroken," to the events of the novel. Why is the poem a fitting ending for the novel?
7. Explain whether you think the ending of the novel is appropriate or realistic.
8. Write a character analysis of Edna, Rhonda, Jalani, Angel, or Keisha. Be sure to include their personality traits, their motivation in the story, their strengths and weaknesses, and your own opinion of each character.
9. What do you think is the central conflict in the story? Is the conflict internal (man vs. himself) or external (man vs. man and/or man vs. society)? Support your answer with details from the text.
10. How might the story have been different if Jonathan had succeeded in raping Keisha?
11. Is there a hero in the novel? If so, who do you think it is? Explain, and be sure to include your definition of "hero."
12. Consider Keisha, Rhonda, Tyrone, and Leon. Of these characters, which are static and which are dynamic? What major changes do the dynamic characters experience? Explain your answer using details from the novel.
13. Identify the climax of the story. What effect does the climax have on the conflict(s) and the characters?
14. Silver is a recurring motif in the novel. Explain how silver is important to the story.
15. Discuss the title of the novel. What do "darkness" and "dawn" have to do with the plot, characters, or theme?

Darkness Before Dawn

Prologue and Chapter 1

Vocabulary

clenched – squeezed tightly
complications – additional problems or difficulties
console – to comfort
declarations – important statements
procession – a long line
reluctantly – unwillingly; with hesitation
tinny – having a metallic sound
wails – loud cries

1. The narrator refers to herself as “shivering,” even though the room is hot. What does this description imply about her emotional state?

2. List two examples of figurative language found in the prologue.

3. The first few pages of the novel are untitled and serve as a prologue to the story. What is the purpose of the prologue?

4. What is Keisha’s relationship to Andy Jackson?

4. Rhonda and Keisha meet Jalani. Describe her.

5. Describe Gerald's relationship with his sister Angel.

6. Why are Gerald, Angel, and Joyelle impressed with Jalani?

Chapter 5

Vocabulary

incident – an event or occurrence
loping – running with long strides
obscenities – curse words
potent – strong
stride – the distance between one’s feet as one runs or walks

1. Why does Keisha run track?

2. Describe Leon and his contribution to the team.

3. Keisha remarks to Leon that she likes “the way the wind makes me feel strong and powerful,” to which he replies, “At school I hardly ever feel that way.” What can you infer about Leon based on these two statements?

Chapter 15

Vocabulary

giddy – silly; carefree

- 1. In a previous chapter, Jonathan promised Keisha one dance at the Valentine’s Day dance at school. However, at the dance, he tells her “it’s probably not a good idea.” Why not?

- 2. In what way is Keisha dishonest with her parents?
