



What to Expect

Literature groups in middle school look intentionally different than those in lower school. The goal of literature study in middle school is to move students' understanding beyond literature appreciation to literature analysis.

The most significant shift of middle school lit groups is the independence it builds in students. Students read 30-80 pages independently per week, and then complete about 75 minutes of text- and quote-based independent homework questions. They then come to school prepared to share and discuss the reading and their homework in a seminar-style discussion, similar to what they'll encounter in many high school English classes.

Farewell to Manzanar Ch 7-15 Homework

- I can draw evidence from literary text to support analysis and reflection.
- I can form and state an opinion, and support the opinion with reasons and text evidence.
- I can provide facts and details to support the reasons for an opinion.

Directions: Please complete all three questions. Notice that these questions are "thicker" and might require some reflection before responding. The most effective responses will include textual evidence from the novel and include at least two paragraphs of discussion.

1. Papa is put in an impossible position when he is questioned about whether American or Japan is his country. He asks, "When your mother and your father are having a fight, do you want them to kill each other? Or do you just want them to stop fighting?" How would you answer this if you were in his position?

I believe that Papa could not have honestly answered this question. Japan is certainly not his country. We see this clearly, early on in the book. "That night Papa burned the flag he had brought with him from Hiroshima thirty-five years earlier. [...] He burned a lot of papers too, documents, anything that might suggest he still had some connection with Japan." Obviously, he doesn't feel a strong connection with Japan.

However, America does not allow him to become a citizen. We learn this during the same interview where he makes the analogy about the parents fighting. Papa has been in America for longer than the interviewer has been alive, so he clearly wants to be a citizen of the US. This being said, the US split up Papa's family, and falsely convicted him for a crime. Is it possible for someone to remain 100% loyal to a country that has done this?

The metaphor that Papa uses, is a perfect explanation of this. Japan and the United States are the parents. Their fight is WW2. Papa feels that neither of them are his country, but that he has strong roots to both of them and cannot let go of either. This is why he says, "When your mother and your father are having a fight, do you want them to kill each other? Or do you just want them to stop fighting?" in response to a question about loyalty.

What to Expect

Many of the books are chosen not just by virtue of their connection to the expedition, but also for literary merit and as examples of high-quality fiction. Many have won or been nominated for the Newbery Award or the National Book Award. Some of the books Condors or Ospreys may read include:

- Nothing But the Truth, by Avi
- The Crucible, by Arthur Miller
- Hatchet, by Gary Paulsen
- Oliver Twist, by Charles Dickens
- Farewell to Manzanar, by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston

Literacy Skills

Condors and Ospreys develop mastery of literary analysis learning targets:

- I can explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.
- I can describe how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text.
- I can analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.
- I can determine a theme or central idea of a text and can explain how it is conveyed through particular details.
- I can cite evidence to support analysis of what a text says explicitly and of inferences drawn from the text.
- I can describe how the characters respond and change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
- I can determine and explain how an author's point of view or purpose is conveyed in the text.
- I can use proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization and sentence structure in writing.

Essential Skills

Students moving into the Condors and Ospreys should be ready to:

- ***Start scaffolding their own reading and homework time.*** Students and families should be ready to schedule about 2-3 hours of time per week into weekend or evening schedules to complete the reading and homework. Many students also submit homework early and ask for feedback from the teacher, and then revise the homework before turning it in at the end of the week.
- ***See works of literature as texts to be studied, compared, parsed, and analyzed, not just appreciated for their inherent value.*** Most homework assignments will ask students to include “textual evidence” to support their thinking. Students should be ready to go back to their reading when answering questions, citing quotes from the book in their written answers.

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Essential Skills

Students moving into the Condors and Ospreys should be ready to:

- ***Discuss a book beyond the events happening in the text itself.*** Most Condors and Ospreys lit groups books are discussed in the content of the expedition or the life of the author; for example, “Oliver Twist” and “Farewell to Manzanar” are considered in the context of Victorian society and WW2-era California.

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How We Prepare Students

When students exit the 5/6 grade band, they have developed the following skills:

- The ability to read literature as a critical analyst, connecting their experience of the reading to external historical events, the author's own life, and other works of literature they've read both inside and outside of class.
- The ability to pull out quotes and other textual evidence from literature and use those quotes to support their own conclusions and interpretations of the text, as well as the capacity to cite those quotes in their homework assignments.
- The skill of independently reading and analyzing a section of text, then coming to class prepared to discuss and defend their thinking.

Navigation

