

9th Grade Thematic Topic: Constructing Identities

Guiding Questions:

- How do we form and shape our identities?
- How does what others think about you affect how you think about yourself?
- What can you learn about yourself from studying the lives of others?
- In a culture where we are bombarded with other people trying to define us, how do we make decisions for ourselves?

***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* by Mark Haddon:** Christopher Boone knows every country and capital, and every prime number up to 7,057. Although gifted with a superbly logical brain, Christopher is autistic. His carefully constructed world falls apart when he finds his neighbor's dog impaled on a garden fork, and he is blamed for the killing. Christopher's investigation to find the killer leads him down some unexpected paths.

***The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd:** Set in South Carolina during 1964, *The Secret Life of Bees* tells the story of a fourteen year old white girl, Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. When Lily's fierce-hearted "stand-in mother," Rosaleen, insults three racists in town, they escape to Tiburon, South Carolina—a town that holds the secret to her mother's past. Taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters, Lily finds refuge in their mesmerizing world of bees. Lily starts a journey as much about her understanding of the world, as about the mystery surrounding her mother.

***How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez:** Uprooted from their family home in the Dominican Republic, the four Garcia sisters - Carla, Sandra, Yolanda, and Sofia - arrive in New York City in 1960 to find a life far different from the genteel existence of maids, manicures, and extended family they left behind. What they have lost - and what they find - is revealed in the fifteen interconnected stories that make up this exquisite novel from one of the premier novelists of our time.

***The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie:** Bestselling author Sherman Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which is based on the author's own experiences, coupled with poignant drawings by Ellen Forney that reflect the character's art, chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to live.

Product to bring to class on day 1: Note-taking options

1. Dialectical Journal (Two-Column Notes): Using a two-column format, engage in a written dialogue with the text as you read. In the left-hand column, write the important text. In the right-hand column, respond to the text. This is where you can include reflections, analyses and explanations of how the text connects to the thematic questions.

2. In-Text Annotations: For in-text annotations, you will need to have a physical copy of the book. Record your notes directly in the book (if you purchased the book) or on post-it notes, reflecting how the text connects to the guiding questions. You will need to bring the book and your notes the first day of classes. Each post-it shall include the date and page number.

3. Outline: Create a structured outline focused on the theme and supported with textual evidence. It may be helpful to organize it based on the plot or by guiding questions.

4. Mind Mapping: Create a visual representation of text, important characters or plot episodes that connect to the guiding questions. Use lines, arrows, bubbles and/or sketches to link notes to the theme.

Rubric to score the product

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 20 Description Notes are thorough and reflective, and appear to cover the full length of the text. | 10 Notes are somewhat thorough and reflective, and appear to cover some of the text. | 0 Student did not complete or submit notes. |
|---|---|--|