

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 6 UP



## Milkweed

Jerry Spinelli

Alfred A. Knopf HC: 0-375-81374-8 • GLB: 0-375-91374-2  
Listening Library UAB: 0-8072-1858-8

**The latest from the Newbery Medal Winner—  
a stunning historical novel unlike anything  
he has ever written.**

He's a boy who lives in the streets of Warsaw, who steals food for himself and the other orphans. He's a boy who believes in bread, and mothers, and angels—and he's a boy who wants to be a Nazi some day, with tall shiny jackboots and a gleaming Eagle hat of his own. Until the day that suddenly makes him change his mind. And when the trains come to empty the Jews from the ghetto of the damned, he's a boy who realizes it's safest of all to be nobody.

**Identity**—Discuss what Misha Pilsudski means when he says, "Thanks to Uri, in a cellar beneath a barbershop somewhere in Warsaw, Poland, in autumn of the year 1939, I was born, you might say." (p. 42) How does the made-up story of his life become so important to him? How does Misha's identity change throughout the novel? What gives him a true identity at the end of the novel? Discuss Uncle Shepsel's efforts to give up his identity as a Jew.



## Eragon

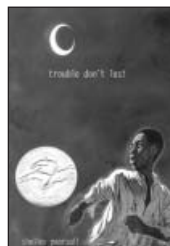
Christopher Paolini

Alfred A. Knopf HC: 0-375-82668-8 • GLB: 0-375-92668-2  
Listening Library UAB: 0-8072-1962-2

**A stunning epic fantasy! Gifted only with an ancient red sword, a blue dragon, and advice from an old storyteller, the young man Eragon becomes entangled in an intricate tapestry of magic, glory, and power.**

When Eragon finds a polished stone in the forest, he thinks it is the lucky discover of a poor farm boy. But when the stone brings a dragon hatchling, Eragon realizes he has stumbled upon a legacy nearly as old as the Empire itself—thrusting him in a new world where the fate of the Empire rests in his hands.

**Good and Evil**—Many fantasy novels deal with the struggle between forces of good and evil. Discuss the ways in which *Eragon* explores this theme. Are there characters that represent pure good and pure evil? Discuss the ways in which an author shows us a character's true nature. How does a character's life experience shape his or her actions?



## Trouble Don't Last

Shelley Pearsall

Yearling Trade PB: 0-440-41811-9 • GLB: 0-375-91490-0

**A Scott O'Dell Award Winner**

Eleven-year-old Samuel was born as Master Hackler's slave, and working the Kentucky farm is the only life he's ever known—until one dark night in 1859, that is. With no warning, cranky old Harrison, a fellow slave, pulls Samuel from his bed and together they run. But as they move from one refuge to the next on the Underground Railroad, Samuel uncovers the secret of his own past—and future.

**Freedom**—Discuss how the River Jordan metaphor relates to freedom. Harrison had run away once before, but was caught, beaten, and returned to Master Hackler. Ask the class to discuss why Harrison is so willing to run away again, especially knowing the consequences of being caught. At what point does Samuel know that Harrison is planning to take him and escape? What is Samuel's idea of freedom? Discuss whether Harrison is looking for freedom for himself, or primarily for Samuel.



## Acceleration

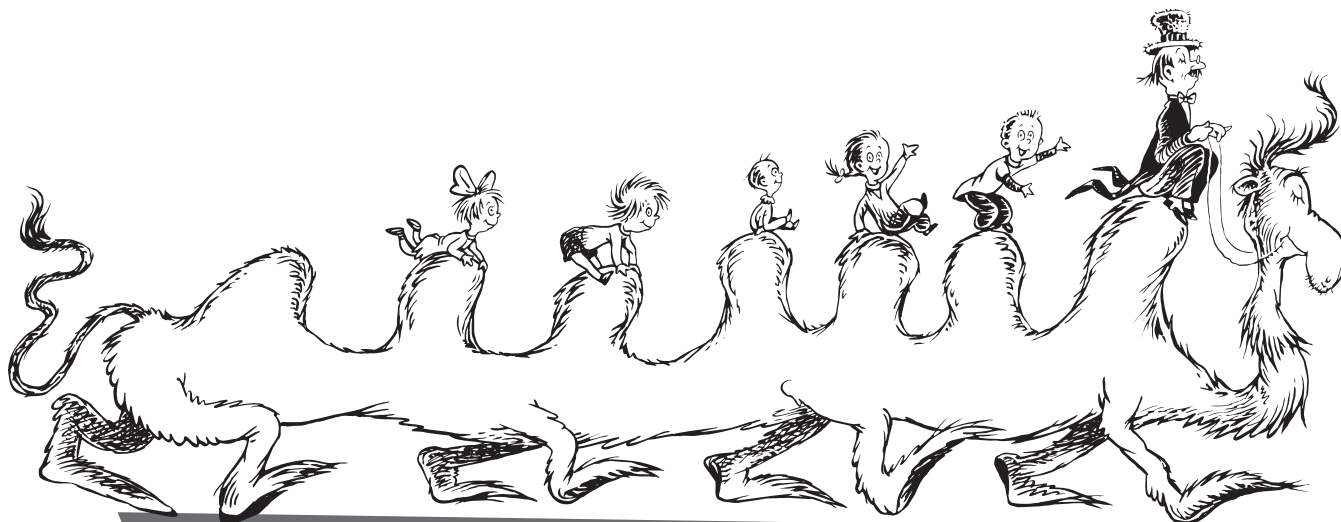
Graham McNamee

Wendy Lamb Books HC: 0-385-73119-1 • GLB: 0-385-90144-5

**An edgy thriller to keep readers riveted.**

It's a hot, hot summer. In the depths of the Toronto Transit Authority's Lost and Found, 17-year-old Duncan is cataloging lost items and sifting through accumulated junk, when he finds a little leather book. It's a diary filled with the dark secrets of a twisted mind, a serial killer stalking his prey in the subway. And Duncan can't make himself stop reading.

**Decisions**—Ask students what they would do if they found a book like that? How far would they go to catch a madman? Point out that Duncan's actions could have been very dangerous. Brainstorm different ways they would have chosen to solve the mystery that doesn't require placing themselves in imminent danger.



2004 NEA's Read Across America Teachers Activity Guide

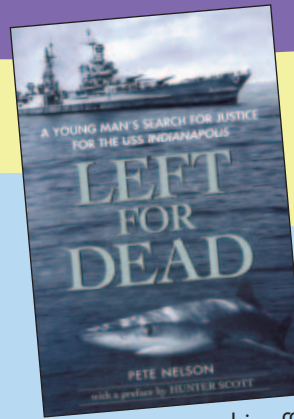
# Classroom Activities for Grades 6–8



## About This Book

Two girls, bound by friendship, defy the ancient traditions of their class and heritage and emerge as young women of indomitable spirit.

**Courage**—At what point do you realize that Xueyan is a courageous young woman? Discuss how her courage is tested throughout the novel. What is the difference between courage and recklessness? Cite scenes in the novel when Xueyan appears to be reckless. How does Xueyan's visit with Ailin help her regain the courage to continue pursuing her dream?

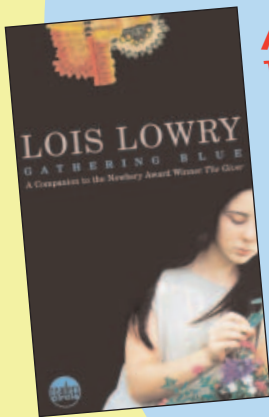


## About This Book

This nonfiction work explores the sinking of the USS Indianapolis, one of the greatest sea disasters in naval history, and a young man's quest to seek the truth and to reverse the court-martial of the ship's captain.

**Perseverance**—There were times when Hunter Scott felt defeated in his efforts to get the government to reverse Captain McVay's court-martial. His dad reminded him, "The true test of a man's character is what it takes to make him quit." (p. 7) Discuss why Hunter Scott felt he couldn't give up. What did he learn about the navy as he persevered to achieve his goal? How did Hunter Scott display the true qualities of a "man" throughout this project?

# Classroom Activities for Young Adult Novels

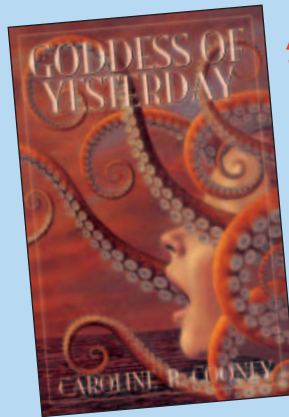


## About This Book

In this companion to *The Giver*, a Newbery Medal-winning favorite among educators, Lois Lowry takes young readers to another futuristic society. Orphaned and physically

handicapped, Kira is unsure of her future until she is named Weaver of the Singer's robe, and becomes a ward of the Council of Guardians.

**Courage**—Discuss how Katrina shows courage when she stands up to the people of the community and demands that her handicapped daughter's life be spared. How is strength related to courage? Discuss how physical pain contributes to Kira's courage.

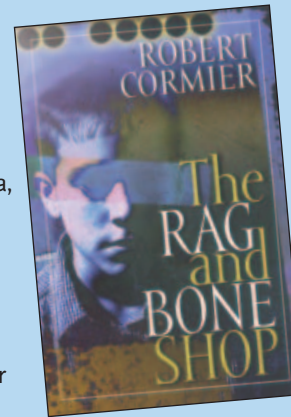


## About This Book

In this captivating tale of ancient Greece, Anaxandra, pretending to be Princess Callisto, is taken in by Menelaus, King of Sparta. She is safe until the war between Sparta

and Troy begins. Can Anaxandra find the courage to reinvent herself once again, appease the gods, and save herself?

**Honesty**—Anaxandra says "I will die as Anaxandra" (p. 132) when she fears Helen's wrath on the journey to Troy. Similarly, when she befriends the princess Andromache, she becomes "dizzy with the desire to tell her the truth." (p. 177) Why, at these particular moments, does Anaxandra's true identity become so important to her? How does this help Anaxandra preserve pieces of truth?



## About This Book

Twelve-year-old Jason is accused of the brutal murder of a young girl. Is he innocent or guilty? Master storyteller Robert Cormier gives readers a terrifying look at what can happen

when the pursuit of justice becomes a personal crusade for victory at any cost.

**Peer Pressure**—What are the heavy external and internal pressures on Trent to get a confession from Jason? In real life, is it possible that this kind of pressure may result in hasty convictions of innocent people?

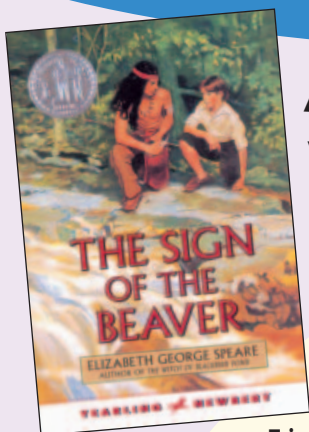
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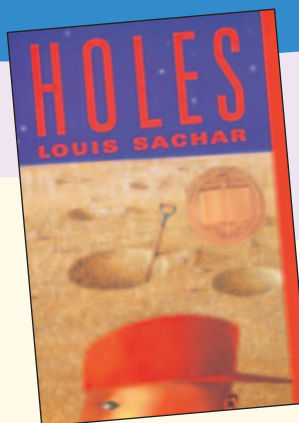
# Classroom Activities for Grades 6–8



## About This Book

While waiting months for his father to return to their cabin in the Maine wilderness, 12-year-old Matt is befriended by Native Americans and is asked to join their tribe when they move north. Should he abandon his hopes of ever seeing his family again? *Newbery Honor Book*

**Friendship**—Matt and Attean do not form an immediate friendship. At what point do the two boys become friends? Ask students to select passages from the book that signify the developing friendship of Matt and Attean. Which boy needs the friendship the most? Have students write a journal entry that Matt might have written on the day that Attean leaves with his tribe to go to the winter hunting ground.

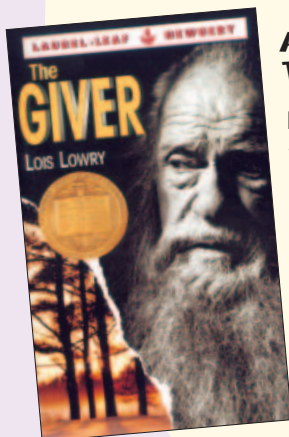


## About This Book

In this funny yet poignant story, a boy embarks on a personal journey that changes his life, as he spends the summer paying for a crime he didn't commit. *Newbery Medal Book*

**Friendship**—Stanley never had a friend before arriving at Camp Green Lake. Ask students to trace the development of Stanley's friendship with Zero. What are each boy's contributions to the friendship? When Stanley finds out that Zero is the person who stole Clyde Livingston's sneakers, he feels glad that Zero put the sneakers on the parked car. Explore why.

# Classroom Activities for Young Adult Novels



## About This Book

In Jonas's perfect world, everything is under control. There is no war or fear or pain. But when Jonas learns the truth, there is no turning back. *Newbery Medal Book*

**Diversity**—*The Giver* pictures a community in which every person and his or her experience is precisely the same. The climate is controlled, and competition has been eliminated in favor of a community in which everyone works only for the common good. What advantages might "sameness" yield for contemporary communities? In what ways do our differences make us distinctly human? Is the loss of diversity worthwhile?



## About This Book

This true story of Adeline Yen Mah's childhood in China tells of her courage and triumph over the abuse she suffers at the hands of her father and stepmother.

**Courage and Honor**—Engage the class in a discussion about the meaning of courage. Instruct the students to write a paragraph describing the scene in which they think Adeline shows the most courage. Allow them time to share their writing and ask them to talk about why they chose that particular scene. Discuss how Adeline's success in school contributes to her courage. How does it take courage to write a book like *Chinese Cinderella*?



## About This Book

A boy's search for his father becomes a desperate journey to unlock a secret past.

**Discussion Questions**—Do you think this novel is a tragedy? What injustices are done to Adam? How does the government view him? Does it value him? In what way(s)? Adam is being manipulated by the doctors and the government. How is Cormier manipulating you as the reader, and why?

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