

Dear Colleague,

Fall, 1999

I met Roland Smith quite by chance at the Michigan Reading Association Conference. I presented on Saturday and had planned to return home that evening, but a snowstorm kept me in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Early Sunday morning, I dressed and hurried to my first session. It was full! I checked across the hallway, and the room was almost empty, but the speaker was showing slides of wolves. I am a huge animal lover, so I sat down and listened. Within the next few hours, I bought all of Roland's books; and, within the next few weeks, I read them all and became a huge fan.

I brought the novels to school and tried *Thunder Cave* with my seventh grade class. They enjoyed the book so much the students began to strongly encourage me to bring Mr. Smith to our school. Last March, he came to Shepherd, Michigan, and mesmerized the entire school. He was not only knowledgeable and interesting, but he was gracious to the group of 11-to-15 year-olds. This unit is a result of that day.

The unit combines all the areas of Language Arts--literature, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing --as well as technology. There are individual activities and student assignments that can be implemented in small groups or with a partner.

I included a research element in the unit, because I found that my students wanted to become field biologists in their own way. The students benefited from this research and enjoyed sharing their particular topics with the class in a book format. Each animal studied became a chapter. We then circulated the book to area merchants, doctors' offices, pharmacies, and other businesses. Students found a real purpose in creating their chapters and took pride in the results.

Included in this unit are a student packet, instructor notes, and an appendix that has everything you will need to explore and share *Jaguar* with your students.

Activities are applicable and enjoyable for students in fifth through eighth grade.

The unit can take from four to eight weeks, depending on how long your class periods are, how much homework you require, and how many activities you decide to complete. It is my suggestion that you persuade the science or social studies teacher to explore the research section with students while you're sharing the novel. We must begin working together and blending curriculum.

I'll close by saying that if you get a chance to invite an author to your school, you will never do better than Roland Smith. Give him a call or e-mail him with your request.

Working With You, *Julie Sprague*

Instructor Notes

Anticipatory Set/Culminating Activity - Before and After Novel

Service learning is an important method to help students see past themselves and connect to the real world. Contact a local retirement home and begin a Pen Pals Program. Begin by having your students tell about themselves, and then have them ask the seniors a few questions. The first letters should be short so the seniors are not overwhelmed. Questions should be easily answered and appropriate. With the home's activities director, select a day near the end of the unit when students can meet their pals in person, perhaps at a small party. Beginning with letters allows students to form bonds with the seniors before they go into what can be an uncomfortable situation. If the retirement home has e-mail, even better. If writing is difficult for seniors, a few parents, former students, or friends could sit and write out the letters for them. If your students are willing, schedule more visits so students can read Jaguar to the seniors. The older people will love it, and a living link for students will be created.

Vocabulary - Throughout novel

Students will "Share a Word" in order to learn many of the interesting and unfamiliar words in Jaguar. Students do not feel so overwhelmed when they are initially responsible for two words instead of fifty. Also students get practice with the novel's vocabulary as it is used in the context of the sentence. In addition students will play Jaguar Jeopardy in the place of the traditional vocabulary quiz. Blow up the game cards for a jeopardy board on your chalkboard or white board which are included. A list of words is included.

Shared Reading - Throughout novel

Jaguar can be read by you, by students individually, or by students in pairs. It is always my suggestion that the teacher begins the book. This book is separated into six sections: Before, The Home, Manaus, The River, The

Preserve, and After. The teacher reads Before, Manaus, a Preserve and After sections. Students could read The Home in pairs and The River individually or in different pairs. Variety is the spice of life.

Sequencing - After Chapter One

Students practice sequencing skills by recording Jake's daily schedule at "The Home". Students will then compare Jake's schedule to their own.

Author's Craft - Before, The Home, and Manaus sections

It is important that students recognize great writing so they have a model for their own writing. Roland Smith's extensive research and experience are evident in many ways, but especially in his use of foreshadowing and rich description. Students will be keeping their eyes peeled for any signs of foreshadowing regarding the relationship between Jake and his father and for the rich descriptive details about how the jaguar preserve program is funded. A list of page and paragraph numbers are included.

Novel Analysis/Socratic Discussions - After Manaus and River Sections

Students will use the Socratic Discussion method to analyze the novel. Take a day to practice this method, using the fable and questions included. An explanation of Socratic Discussion is also included. Students should complete the discussion questions on paper, individually. I do not include a key for this, as it is important for you to experience this assignment yourself. Students will complete two Socratic discussions, the first after the Manaus section and the second after The River section.

Writing Link/Point of View - End of Novel

Now that students have completed the story ask them to find a place in the story where they could insert themselves. Could there be a Chapter 5a or perhaps a 16a? It is important to talk about Roland Smith's style of writing, as they are going to mimic it. For example, it will be very important that each student maintains the first person narrative, from Jake's point of view so that

this new writing can fit into the original storyline. Also, students will need to maintain the rich description Roland Smith uses. Students should include a minimum of 12 vocabulary words in their sub-chapter. I like to choose six and let them choose six. Talk these over with students and discuss a few more techniques that students will need to keep in mind as they develop their sub-chapters. As this writing is a sub-chapter, it should be no longer than eight to fifteen paragraphs. Complete this assignment yourself so that students get an idea of how an additional sub-chapter might sound.

Elements of Literature -

Setting - Before novel begins.

Students should use the Internet to research the Amazon Basin area. After a day or two, students should create their own maps to follow as the story is being read or as they are reading the novel. They should make adjustments to their maps as the story progresses.

Characterization - After Manaus and The River Sections

Right from the start, Dr. Lansa doesn't trust Silver. Students will collect information, starting at page 72 and continuing through page 165. A list of observations is included.

Mood - After completion of novel

In small groups of four, students will share which parts of the novel they felt were heartbreaking, surprising, humorous, frustrating, and infuriating. They will have to write out their answers first and then share and compare with the group. A final list of sections that evoke moods should be sent to Roland Smith via e-mail or in a letter format.

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Wilsonville, OR 97070**Conflict and Resolution - Throughout novel**

Pairs of students will search for signs of the major conflict - - Jake's relationship with his father throughout the novel -- and record. They will also record three other conflicts they feel are part of the novel. In essay paragraphs, students will then explain how each of these conflicts, major and minor, is resolved

Theme/Life Lessons - Throughout novel

There are many different themes in this novel, including survival, coming of age, friendship, family, trust, rain forests, indigenous people, greed, and more. Coming of age is my favorite. Jake learns many lessons about joy and trust, and he learns about topics such as, ultralights, jaguars, the indigenous people of the Amazon, the Amazon canopy and endangered habitats. Roland Smith is a master at teaching students, through Jake, about many topics. Students will try to figure out what Jake is learning, while they learn a little, themselves. A short list of life-lessons is included.

Research Enrichment - Concurrently with novel or at the end of novel

Students use a rigorous research method to learn about an animal of their choice. Find a video of the rain forest, sections of Medicine Man work well. and ask students to keep a list of all the creatures they can name. Students will choose an animal from the rain forest to study. Students work to collect information to write their own section/chapter and create a book by binding the chapters together. The book should be shared with the retirement home folk and throughout the community in stores and businesses. I'm sure Roland would love to see one, too.

Vocabulary

Page	Word	Synonym or Short Definition	Part of Speech
3	spoor	track or trail	noun
10	ritual	established ceremony form	noun
10	surrogate	substitute	noun
10	marooned	stranded	verb
13	escalated	grew in intensity	verb
17	fabled	fake story with moral	noun

19	passport	official document for country travel	noun
19	obstacles	something that stands in the way	noun
24	ecstatic	crazy happy	verb
27	amulet	object worn as charm against evil	noun
28	intricately	complicated, difficult to follow	adverb
32	lucid	clear in mind/thought	adjective
35	crudely	rough/raw - lacking in skill	adverb
35	throng crowd		noun
37	corroded	worn away by chemicals	verb
38	tetanus	an infectious disease	noun
39	gauntlet	semi-deadly to deadly obstacle course	noun
42	telemetry	transmitting data-far away to homebase	noun
48	knots	one mile on a body of water	noun
51	altitude	height above sea level	noun
53	somber	quietly sad	verb
53	surly	nasty	verb
56	encroach	trespass	verb
58	viable	capable of living	adjective
59	guillotine	a device for beheading	noun
63	ascent	act of moving upwards	noun
64	deforestation	to clear forests	noun
73	jabbering	constant talk with no purpose	verb
76	warily	cautiously/carefully	adverb
86	competent	skilled or able	adjective
86	provisions	food or other needs for a trip	noun
89	lugged	carried with effort	verb
90	moorage	a place where a ship is secure	noun
93	bolster	encourage or support	verb
96	responsive	reacting/replying	adjective
101	glimpse	quick look/glance	noun
116	indigenous	native	noun
117	nocturnal	night	adjective

Vocabulary cont.

Page	Word	Synonym or Short Definition	Part of Speech
127	tethered	tied up	verb
127	hovels	open shed or shelter	noun
136	tuft	short cluster of material strands	noun
138	splayed	spread apart	verb
138	prone	lying face or front downward	adjective
144	reluctantly	unwillingly	adverb
150	enthralled	totally interested/captivated	verb
151	constrict	squeeze	verb
153	disputing	arguing	verb
162	roundabout	out of the way - indirect	adjective
171	serenade	music for a loved one	verb
188	luxurious	expensive pleasure	
	adjective		
240	contentment	peaceful happiness	noun

Jaguar jeopardy

Directions: One contestant from each of the five groups chooses a number to determine who goes first. Each contestant then comes to the front and sits behind their respective ringer to begin competition. Answers are placed behind sticky notes on the chalkboard or whiteboard. The answers are definitions from the vocabulary words we covered throughout the reading of the novel. There are different POINT values starting with 10 and moving to 50, the most difficult vocabulary definitions have been given the highest POINT value.

Player # 1 chooses a color and POINT value. The MC, (teacher or another student) will pull the sticky note off and read the definition of the vocabulary word. Each player will have 30 seconds to come up with the correct word. If an incorrect answer is given, player # 2 or 3 may ring in if they think they know the correct answer. If player # 1 is correct, he may make the next selection from the board. If however, he is incorrect and player # 2 or 3 answers correctly, one of them will make the next selection. The game continues until time runs out or the board is empty. 10 extra points will be given if a player can correctly spell the vocabulary word. The MC is responsible for marking down correct POINT values, CHECKING SPELLING, and keeping a running total for all players.

Final Jeopardy: Players are allowed to wager any POINT amount each has accumulated during the game.

This process repeats as other students sit in the contestant seat. OR Students can take turns in the contestant seat until the board is depleted or until all have had a chance to compete.

Materials needed: 1 white or chalkboard, vocabulary answer cards, 1 question sheet, 5 ringer dingers, 1 scoring pad, 1 timer.

Author's Craft

Foreshadowing Father-Son Relationship

Page# Paragraph#

3	1, 2
4	6-9
5	8, 9
18	4
19	3
26	1
28	6
30	5, 6
36	3
42	11
43	1
44	1
51	2,8
53	2-4
57	1
58	12 -
60	3
61	10 -
62	3

Rich Description Jaguar Preserve Funding

Page# Paragraph#

35	5
37	8
38	1
40	3-7
41	5-9
47	3
50	2
54	1-7
58	5-11
65	2

65	13 -
67	2
68	5

Novel Analysis/Socratic Discussion

The Socratic Discussion is mirrored after the way Socrates conducted learning activities in Ancient Greece. All students were expected to share their thoughts and opinions regarding the written and spoken word. Students were further required to read, analyze and evaluate assigned materials before the date of class discussion. Socrates remained silent to allow true discussion to flow from his students. Today, when using the Socratic Discussion, students are also required to come prepared to discuss assigned materials and share ideas and opinions. This method of instruction can be used effectively for any genre, fiction or nonfiction. You will be amazed at how everyone really does respond when given the chance. You will also be amazed at who shares what.

Teacher Preparation

Before the day of class discussion, the teacher prepares three types of questions:

- 1.) Opening Question (1) - is general and directs student into the text
 - introduces and explores topics, themes, main ideas
- 2.) Core Questions (2-5) - content specific
 - examine central points
 - interpret “a passage”, explore “a passage”
 - are often how or why questions

- 3.) Closing Question (1-2) - establishes relevance
- connects with real world
 - applies to self

Important:

Use open-ended, meaty questions. This is the key to successful discussion.

Student Preparation

Students are asked to record their answers to the questions a day or a few days before the actual discussion. Everyone must be prepared or they do not participate. Students should be instructed to give complete sentences and always explain why they believe what they answered. There is always a why!

Class Setup and Procedures

Students are arranged in two concentric circles.

The *inner circle* contains the speakers who will be involved in the discussion; each student must contribute.

The *outer circle* contains the listeners. Students of the outer circle are not to speak, only to listen to the discussion.

Important:

Two empty seats are reserved in the *inner circle*. Students in the *outer circle* have the option of joining the *inner circle* when:

- 1) the discussion appears to be off topic.
 - 2) the discussion becomes nonproductive with arguments and “put downs.”
 - 3) inner circle members have not discussed an area deemed important.
- (Once a student takes an empty seat, he or she must stay for the remainder of the discussion. When both empty seats are taken, the inner circle is complete.)

Responsibilities of the inner circle members

Students are to clear desks and display only prepared answers to the discussion questions. (No pencil or pen is allowed.)

Students, not the teacher, determine the first speaker.

A student enters the discussion only when the previous speaker has indicated he or she has finished.

Circle members decide how the discussion proceeds.

Examples:

Students may

- choose to speak in sequence around the circle.
- decide to appoint a discussion leader.
- let each speaker choose the next participant.
- other.

Students fall into their own rhythm, do not suggest a method.
Follow-up questions may be asked by inner circle members.

Examples:

What do you mean by...?

Where in the text do you find support for that?

Would someone take issue with....

What is your point?

Are you saying that...?

Type these out on cards and let inner circle members refer to these during the discussion.

When a student (Facilitator A) opts to take an empty seat, he or she becomes the next speaker.

The final responsibility of the inner circle members:

1) come to a consensus on each question

OR

2) simply make sure each member has had an opportunity to discuss answers to the assigned questions.

Responsibilities of the *outer circle* members

To ensure the practice of good listening skills, students are required to submit their written answers of the discussion questions to the teacher *before* the inner circle begins the discussion.

(Otherwise, students tend to compare their work with the ongoing discussion.)

If the inner circle decides to reach a consensus, students of the outer circle are required to summarize and record the consensus OR

If the inner circle members decide to simply share ideas and opinions while discussing their answers to the questions previously submitted by their teacher, students of the outer circle are to script as much of the discussion content as possible as the discussion evolves. At the end of discussion, students are to highlight or circle any words or phrases they believe most important.

The final activity required of outer circle members is to share their summaries or key words and phrases with the students of the inner circle.

(Students of the inner circle cannot comment; they become the listeners!)

Important:

Students should to switch positions halfway through the discussion. Assign ? 1,3,5,7,9 etc. to one group and then 2,4,6,8,etc. to the next. This way both groups benefit from the flow of opening questions to core questions to closing questions. Sometimes I will assign the same question to both groups if I know they will both want to discuss it.

Responsibilities of the teacher

- Prepare the discussion questions for the assigned topic.
- Keep silent unless disorder occurs or students fail to detect off topic event.
(During the SD by students, the role of the teacher is similar to a “Sergeant at Arms,” in a courtroom--no verbal or nonverbal feedback, no directions once the discussion begins.)
- Record *Inner and Outer Circle* behavior on prepared rubrics.

Final Responsibilities of All Participants and Teacher

- A short 5-7 minute debriefing session should be left for the end of the discussion.
Everyone is now allowed to “have their say” and no one is to rebut or question others’ ideas. All members, even the teacher, are allowed to simply state one more idea.

Assessment and Evaluation

- 1) Students’ written responses to the three types of questions.
- 2) Inner Circle members use of effective discussion skills.
(Criteria to be determined by teacher and students before the SD and made into a rubric.)
- 3) Outer Circle members use of active listening skills.
(Criteria to be determined by teacher and students before the SD and made into a rubric.)
- 4) Teacher collects summaries of Outer Circle members summaries or scripts at the end of the SD.

Important:

From this one class activity, the Socratic Discussion, students will have three items for teacher evaluation. I like to assign 15 points to each section, written responses, inner circle requirements, and outer circle.

Socratic Discussion Practice - Fable and Questions

The Weasel, The Stone and The Snake

Once upon a time long ago there was a weasel and a snake who were enemies but did have a few things in common. First they were both known to be sneaky and have mean spirits and cold hearts. The other thing they had in common was that they both loved to eat field mice.

One certain weasel and one particular snake had an ongoing contest of who could get a luscious field mouse first each day. They would search through the tall and thick field grasses for big, fat field mice to sink their teeth into. The brown field mice presented an adequate meal but the gray field mice were extra delicious and twice as large.

After many months, the snake had beaten the weasel at this game so often that the weasel decided he would have to find a way to trick this particular snake. One day as the weasel set out across the warm grasslands he spied something in the clover. It looked like a fat, gray, field mouse but it was merely a smooth stone. Suddenly, the weasel got an idea.

“I’ll get that snake! This ruse is just what I need!!!” the weasel snickered.

Immediately that certain weasel carried the stone through the clover, into the tall, thick grasslands and laid it near the snake’s nest being ever so careful not to be seen. When morning came, the snake awoke and smelled the fresh air and looked across the warm grasslands. He saw the false mouse and hissed, “Good fortune has been given to me for here lies my meal for the day.”

The weasel crept slowly closer so not to miss any of the trick. Just as the weasel had plotted, the snake snapped at the stone and its two great fangs shattered into a hundred tiny pieces. The weasel cheered heartily as the snake slithered away in pain. The weasel was very satisfied and had no trouble catching fat, field mice for a few days. But, just across the tall grasses was another snake who watched the whole, terrible scheme. He vowed to get even! The very next day, slowly and ever so quietly, the revengeful snake squirmed and slithered and pushed that same, smooth stone to the weasel’s lair. He then disguised the stone with a few dried leaves that had fallen in the night. That morning the weasel awoke and began to prowl for his breakfast.

“Good fortune has been given to me for here lies my meal for the day.” boasted the weasel.

Just as that particular snake had done the weasel leapt at the false mouse and sunk his great jaws into the smooth stone and his incisors broke into a hundred pieces. The weasel let out a howl that rang out over all the grasslands and skulked away in disgrace. And the other snake formed a silent smile and slithered happily away.

1. What characteristics do the snake and weasel have in common?
2. How are the snake and weasel different?
3. Why does the weasel decide to trick the snake?
4. What is the moral of this fable and why do you think so?

5. Do you think the weasel and snake will survive? Explain.
6. What other animals might live where the snake and weasel live?
7. What does this fable try to teach about competition? Explain.
8. Do you think competition is a good thing in school? in a family? in life? Explain.
9. Do you think practical jokes are funny? Explain.

Elements of Literature

Characterization - Who is Silver?

<u>Page#</u>	<u>Paragraph#</u>
72	9
73	15
74	8
78	12
79-82	
84	8
92	11, 12
100	4
103	4
109-111	
117	3
118	2
124,125	
143-146	
148	3-6
149	1
154, 155	
162	6
165	3

Theme

<u>Life Lesson</u>	<u>Page(s)</u>
Elderly	9-32
Relationships	9-32, 69-75, 100, 149, 161
Rubber industry	39

Ultralight	47-50
Life and death	69-75
Joy	97
Gold mines	123
Racism	123, 124
Black jaguars	146, 147
Amazonian animals	151, 152
Amazon canopy	183
Indigenous people	128-131, 197
Coming of age	Throughout novel
Trust	Throughout novel
Endangered habitats	Throughout novel

Sample Parent Letter

Greetings

We will began our new literature and research unit this upcoming week. We will be using the novel Jaguar. This is a wonderful story written by Roland Smith. Jake, the major character, flies down to the Amazon Basin to assist his father in setting up a Jaguar preserve. Students will be analyzing the text for the elements of literature as well as looking at the author's craft in writing the book. In a few weeks, ask your child about the Socratic Discussion. Vocabulary will be an important part of our study. We will be playing Jaguar Jeopardy and invite you to join us on _____. We would also like you to join us as we begin a pen pal relationship with our local retirement home. If you could share some of your time, please, contact me as soon as possible. I am very excited about this unit and the wonderful opportunities it has.

Each student will also be selecting a mammal, bird, reptile, etc from the Amazon Basin located in Brazil, to examine and research. This research also enhances our attempts to connect student's reading and writing. As students explore an animal they are interested in, they can begin to see how information is organized and written and how they might construct their own paper.

It is very important that you communicate with your child on a weekly basis in order to help them stay caught up. This literature and research unit is one of the

most important units in our English Language Arts curriculum. I would greatly appreciate your help throughout the next eight weeks. Most of the resource materials the students will need are in our classroom or in the school library. However, it may be necessary for you to take your child to one of the local libraries and help them find a book, magazine article, or even a video. Students must have a package of index cards (100 count) by _____.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you in advance for your help.

Working With You,

Please sign and return this slip granting _____ permission to travel on _____ to the retirement home, ASAP.

Guardian Signature: _____

THUNDER CAVE RUBRIC

Name:	Hour:
UNIT ACTIVITIES AND REQUIREMENTS	POINTS/COMMENTS
READING	
Sequencing Schedule	X3
Vocabulary: individual word presentation, share sheet, jaguar jeopardy points	
LITERATURE	
Class Novel: JAGUAR	
Author's Craft: foreshadowing - show not tell	X2
Elements of Literature	
Setting: Amazon Basin map	
Characterization: Who is Silver?	
Mood: 5 paragraph essay	

Conflict/Resolution (3)
 Theme/ Life Lessons (5)

WRITING

Retirement home letter(s)

Sub-Chapter: prewriting

Socratic Discussion essays X2

Polished Writing: vocab. and point of view used X2

accurately, rich descriptive details, mechanics

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Socratic Discussion: inner circle/outer circle

Active Listening - posture, eye contact, thoughtful ?'s

RESEARCH

Information Cards: information and format accurate X3

Outline: accurate format

Drafts X2

Polished Chapter: format, content, mechanics X2

Key: A -15,14; B -13,12; C - 11,10, INC.

Total Points:

Comments:

Unit Grade:_____