

Literary Text: *Nothing but the Truth* by Avi

Organizational Patterns: The text is divided into 19 chapters that range from two pages to over 30 pages. The novel is a documentary subdivided into many different genres which include: discussions or conversations, letters, announcements, memos, telegrams, newspaper clippings, speeches, transcripts, and journal entries. Each genre has a header to announce it and set it apart from the others.

Issues related to the study of Literature:

Theme: The story of Philip Malloy is a controversial one of individual rights and taking those too far, perhaps.

1. Personal and Civil Rights: Does one person have the right to disobey the rules because of a desire to do so? What exactly are civil rights and what do they give a person the right to do? How does that affect others' rights?
2. Listening: How can listening to each other solve problems before they start? How important is communication in the major, and even what we consider minor, aspects of our lives?
3. Respect for authority: Do we have the right to undermine authority just because we feel like it? Are there some circumstances when it would be okay to undermine authority because of our values? When should we obey authority figures even when we may not completely agree with them?
4. Pride: How can pride get in the way of what is best for us and others? How does it discourage respect and listening and all of the important things in our society?
5. Lying: Does telling the truth mean telling the whole truth, or is it still the truth even if you stretch it beyond recognition?

Setting: The setting is a normal American town in the United States, a generic town that could be anywhere. This helps to universalize the story and give it a wider range of possibility. A good question the setting allows us to ask is: Could this happen at my school, and what can I do about it?

Point of View / Voice: Because there are so many points of view and voices throughout the novel, it would be a good way to examine how the different voices work in a story and what they bring to it.

Genres: The many genres (newspaper articles, discussions, letters, etc) are mediums to explain in full detail the aspects of Philip Malloy's story. This design is a perfect way to set up a multi genre research paper and to discuss what the different genres add to a work (newspapers seem like fact; letters seem personal and add to the emotional aspect; etc).

Tone: How does the tone differ from Philip to his parents to Miss Narwin? How is the tone a tool to tell the story of Philip Malloy?

The tone of the novel differs greatly among the characters. Miss Narwin is baffled by what is going on, and very defensive and then outraged, finally settling into submission. That is the tone of the novel—it goes from a quiet voice disagreeing with the majority to the majority voice speaking out of turn, and very loudly, back to the quiet voice of Philip Malloy, but this time, he is admitting that he was wrong. The story is told in a very straight-forward manner without any flowery language or anything that would be difficult to understand, lending itself easily to a discussion of the questions of theme the story brings up, or a discussion of the genres that it presents.

Irony: The irony of this story is that Philip Malloy, who causes such a scene about being able to sing the National Anthem in school (while he is supposed to stand in a silent reverence, according to the School's memo) doesn't even know the words. The idea that the entire novel had no purpose, that Miss Narwin lost her job because no one was listening to her or to reason is grotesquely ironic.

Affective Issues related to the work:

--Students may be able to relate to Philip Malloy or to Miss Narwin because no one is really listening to them. No one is sure what is going on, but everything has been blown completely out of proportion and everything has gotten out of hand. Have they ever felt that no one was listening to them when they had something really important to say?

--Students can explain the benefits of listening to authority figures, and then describe times when they should take a stand against authority figures that are in the wrong.

Vocabulary Issues:

There are quite a few vocabulary words in this book, very many depending on the age group of kids that read it. Some of these words include: "vigilant", "bedlam", "stamina" (55), "insolence" (60), "facilitate" (82), "infraction" (83), "disturbance" (88), "fad" (93), etc.

However, most of the vocabulary is easy to understand, either from prior knowledge or from context clues, so that misunderstanding the words to not be able to identify the topics is not an option. This way, the themes of the book are readily available to the students to be able to discuss them in a meaningful way.

The Central Question / Enduring Issue:

A major issue in this novel is that of authority figures. I really believe that it's a good idea to discuss this issue with the students (the importance of having and obeying authority figures, while thinking for yourself at the same time) while they are at the age of questioning authority and trying to develop their own identities. If a student learns who he is while obeying his leaders, he will be able to better find his place in society, and hence be able to function properly in society.

Research Issues / Project Ideas:

This novel is perfect for introducing a Multi Genre Research Paper. The different genres can help give kids ideas for their own genres that they choose, and outline examples of required genres that are fictional, which is what they will be doing (fiction based on fact) in many of their works.

Students can learn how to write and can practice writing the different genres that are found in the novel, using them as a guide for fictional writing that is presented as fact.

Students can write a documentary of their own about a time when they feel that no one was listening to them—if could be factual or fictional. They should try to incorporate real dates and several genres into their documentary.

Informational / Functional Texts:

Find information about proper respect for authority in magazine articles or newspapers or other sources

Look for other issues that education deals with in other sources

Find information about how difficult it is to find another job the older you get—how plausible would it be if Miss Narwin was to start looking for another job at her age?