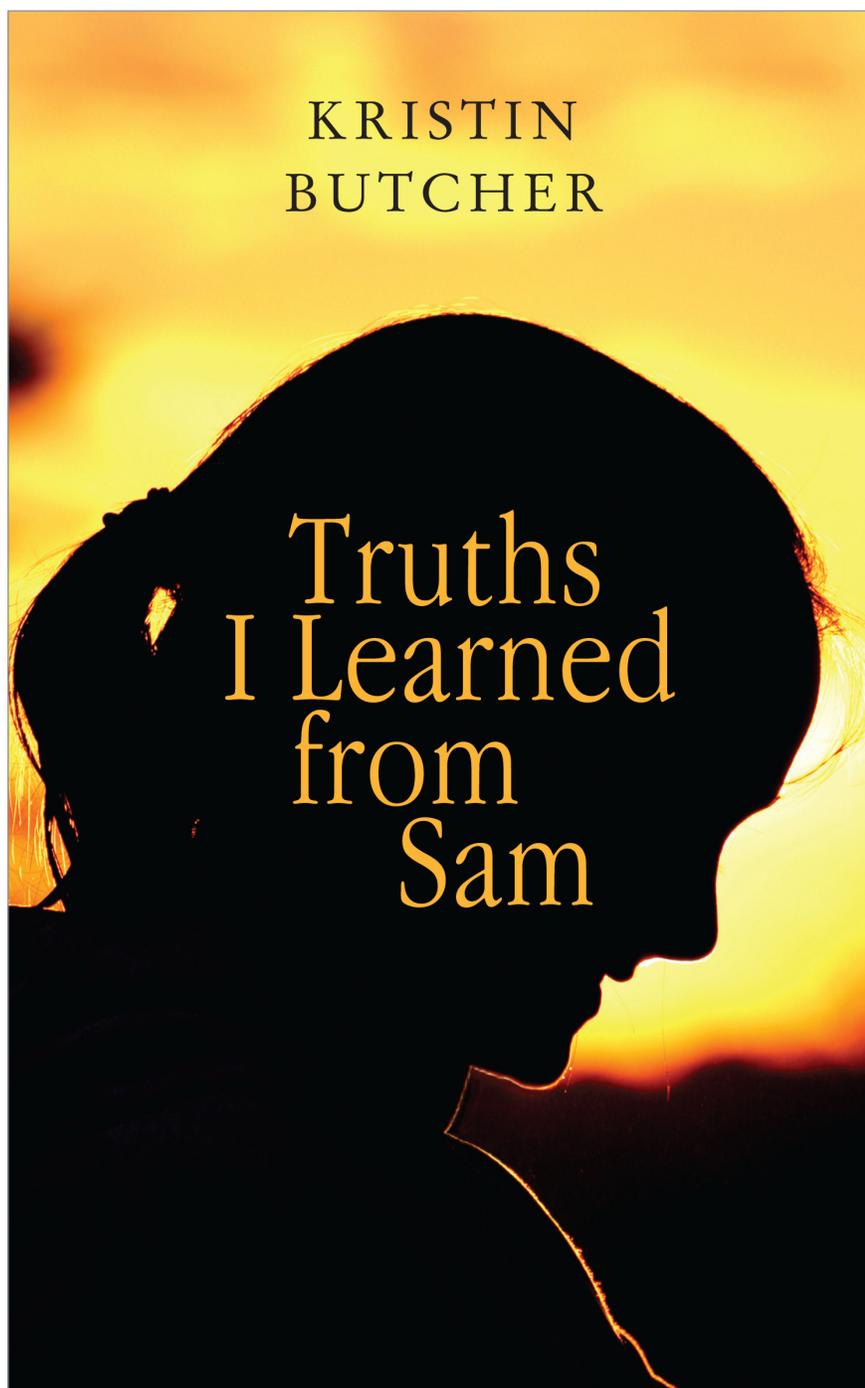


TEACHER'S GUIDE



KRISTIN
BUTCHER

Truths
I Learned
from
Sam



DUNDURN
www.dundurn.com

Teacher Resource Guide developed by
Karen Slattery
ISBN 9781459719163

Books are available from your favourite bookseller, wholesaler and UTP Distribution (t: 1 800 565-9523)
Sign up for new TRG updates www.dundurn.com/newsletter



DUNDURN
www.dundurn.com



teacher resources
www.dundurn.com/teachers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Synopsis of Novel for the teacher	4
Introduction	4
Before Reading:	
Introducing the Novel	5
Pre-reading Activities	5
Who I Am (in-class assignment)	6
Who I Am (6 pieces of writing assignment and rubric)	7
During Reading Activities:	
First Reading and Modelled Think-Aloud	8
Strategies for Think-Aloud poster	9
What is Your Thinking Voice Telling You? poster	10
Teacher Cue Card for beginning of class writing tasks	11
Literature Journal Requirements and Grading Rubric	12
Chapter Summaries, Comprehension Questions and Discussion Cards	13
Defining Dani/Defining Sam/ Defining Me (in-class assignment and group discussion rubric)	22
After-Reading:	
Author's Notebook of Research	24
Book Club Presentation and Discussion	25
Final Assessment Test/Exam	28
Appendix: Literary Device Worksheets	29

Synopsis of Novel

Dani is a 17 year old high school student who lives with her mother. Her mother is getting re-married for the fourth time in a few weeks. While her mother and new step-father honeymoon for eight weeks in Europe, Dani goes to stay with her uncle in the country.

With all of the arguments of a high school student who imagines little entertainment in a small, rural setting, Dani sets off to meet her uncle with few expectations of fun. This, coupled with the fact that Dani just learned she had an uncle – he was the black sheep of the family – cement Dani’s low expectations.

Over the next several weeks, she discovers that her uncle leads a full life in the remote area and that the community is full of interesting characters. In fact, a romance develops between her and her riding instructor (a 20 year old university student). She develops strong ties to her uncle, with whom she shares the daily chores and long book talks.

Yet all is not as it seems with Dani’s uncle. He is hiding two secrets: first, his true relationship to Dani and second, his terminal illness.

Dani’s journey to the interior of British Columbia mirrors the growth she will have over the summer. At first a tough, all-knowing teenager, she develops friendships and ties that will help her to emerge as an adult. Yet, she will also have to deal with the oncoming loss of her new-found family member.

Introduction

Truths I Learned From Sam will take readers into the world of 17-year-old Dani, who is a confident high school student on the verge of adulthood. This guide is designed to help teachers to maximize connections to Ontario’s language curriculum for grades 9 and up. Additionally, this book has connections for Ontario’s Family Studies curriculum for grades 9 and up as well.

Do consider this book as an independent novel study for individual students as well as a whole-class study, as it is a high-interest book.

This novel study guide focuses on:

- **Use of a literature journal**
- **Making connections (text to text, text to self, text to world, text to background knowledge)**
- **Literary devices**
- **Working together in groups**
- **Oral communication**

This novel study was designed in such a way that teachers can pick and choose which activities they would like to use. Activities have been designed to be flexible enough for class study, literature circles, or independent study.

The assignments and rubrics have been designed with the 9 -12 grade levels in mind. However, many of the themes in *Truths I Learned From Sam* are equally relevant to younger students, albeit, for younger students it is more suitable as a read-aloud. Assignments can easily be extended to challenge more advanced learners.

Before Reading

Introducing the Novel: Themes

To get more out of this novel, it is important for your students to have some common background knowledge so that all participants are able to contribute to discussions and group activities that involve building connections and making conclusions.

There are many themes that students can glean from this novel. Most seem to connect directly to the way growing up is a journey. Within the theme of journey is also the defining of dependence, interdependence and independence.

Additionally, the author uses a number of literary devices in this novel. Please see the appendix for handouts on literary devices.

Pre-reading Activities

1. Who am I? (in-class activity)

Using the poem as a pre-reading activity will get students thinking about what a sense of belonging and self is all about.

2. Where to Go with "Who I am" (Handout below)

“WHO I AM”- ONGOING ASSIGNMENT

You will write 6 pieces of writing that grow out of the Who I am poem assigned in class. These will be narratives of your life.

While you can revise (edit, extend, rearrange) your “Who I am” list into a poem, you can also see it as a corridor of doors opening onto further knowledge and other kinds of writing. The key is to let you explore these rooms. Don’t rush to decide what kind of writing you’re going to do or to revise or finish a piece. Let your goal be the writing itself. This will help you finding symbolism in literature, both in your own writing and in your response as a reader.

Look for these elements in your “Who I Am” poem and see where else they might take you:

- a place could expand into a piece of descriptive writing or a scene from memory
- your parents’ work could expand into a memory of going with them, helping, being in the way. It could be a remembered dialogue between your parents about work. It could be a poem made from a litany of tools they used
- an important event could expand into free-writing all the memories of that experience, then writing it as a scene, with description and dialogue. It’s also possible to let the description become setting and directions and let the dialogue turn into a play
- food could expand into a scene at the table, a character sketch of the person who prepared the food, a litany of different experiences with it, a process essay of how to it
- music could take you to a scene where the music is playing; could provide you the chance to interleave the words of the song and words you might have said (or a narrative of what you were thinking and feeling at the time the song was first important to you (“Where I’m Singing From”))
- something someone said to you could expand into a scene or a poem which captures that moment; could be what you wanted to say back but never did
- a significant object could expand into a sensory exploration of the object-what it felt, sounded, smelled, looked, and tasted like; then where it came from, what happened to it, a memory of your connection with it. Is there a secret or a longing connected with this object? A message? If you could go back to yourself when this object was important to you, what would you ask, tell, or give yourself?

Remember, you are the expert on you. No one else sees the world as you do; no one else has your material to draw on. You don’t have to know where to begin. Just start. Let it flow. Trust the work to find its way on its own.

This writing project must include 6 pieces of writing.

WHO I AM 6 PIECES OF WRITING SCORING RUBRIC

Student Name _____

Date: _____

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Knowledge	The writing does not have a beginning, middle, or end. It may lack any personal comment or reflection	The narration may lack a clear beginning or end. It contains a personal comment or thought, but this may require further elaboration.	The narrative has a beginning, middle, and end. It begins with the first, last, or most important event. It ends with a personal comment or reflection.	The narrative has a clear beginning, middle, and end. It begins with the first, last, or most important event. It ends with the writer's feelings or thoughts about the experience.
Thinking	The order of events may be confusing or the narrative may lack essential details.	The narrative is told in chronological order. Transitions are seldom used and may be repetitive.	The narrative has a clear point. It is told in chronological order; transitions make the order clear, although they may be repetitive.	The narrative is interesting and has a clear point. It is told in chronological order; transitions make the order clear.
Application	The amount and types of detail do not demonstrate an awareness of the intended audience. The point of view keeps shifting	The amount and types of detail do not demonstrate an awareness of the intended audience. The point of view may shift.	The narrative contains some specific details about people, places, and events; some may not be identified clearly enough for the intended audience. The writer usually uses the first-person point of view.	The narrative contains numerous and specific details about people, places, and events; the details are appropriate for the intended audience. The writer consistently uses the first-person point of view.
Communication	Numerous errors in mechanics, usage, grammar, or spelling interfere with meaning. Dialogue may lack essential punctuation. Word choice or spelling may interfere with comprehension.	There are several errors in mechanics, usage, grammar, or spelling. The writer may use second and third person pronouns. Dialogue is punctuated inconsistently. Word choice or spelling may hinder easy comprehension.	There are some errors in mechanics, usage, grammar, or spelling. The writer usually uses first-person pronouns, but the case may be wrong. The punctuation in the dialogue may have minor errors.	There are few or no errors in mechanics, usage, grammar, or spelling. The writer correctly uses first-person pronouns, including I and me. Dialogue is punctuated correctly

Comments

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

First reading: Skill Building with Think Alouds

At the high school level, the first reading of the novel is independent. It is important to model good reading prior to setting the students free to read at their own pace and write in their Literature Journals. Therefore, it is wise to lead the students through a Think-Aloud on the first few pages of the book.

Modelling the Think-Aloud Day 1

Introduce the connection between reading and thinking by saying, “Think about a time when you experienced a ‘reader space-out’, a time when you read something but didn’t remember a thing about it afterwards. Why do you think this happened?”

Likely responses will include: “I didn’t understand it.” “I was thinking about something else.”

“I never remember what I read.”

Use the responses to segue into a think-aloud. Reading and thinking go hand in hand. If the reader works to actually think about what he is reading, he’ll remember a lot more. Then demonstrate a think-aloud.

Starting at the beginning of the novel, with all students either reading along in their own text or having copied the text onto a document camera or overhead projector, begin reading Chapter One aloud. As you think aloud, be sure it is engaging and brief.

Chapter One (*Truths I Learned From Sam* by K Butcher)

I stand behind the silk drapes and peer down at my mother’s black Beamer in the parking lot. As I watch, a bird craps right in the middle of the roof. Being pooped on is supposed to be good luck, but I’m pretty sure my mother will want that bit of luck hosed away the second she discovers it.

Ask: This is the opening paragraph of the novel. What can we determine about the narrator from this single paragraph?

Accept all answers, writing every answer on the board. Expect student responses to be “they live in the city”; “they are well-off”; “the narrator is sarcastic”

Circle each response.

Read Chapter One aloud to the class and have them re-evaluate their predictions.

Use the following two posters to discuss strategies with the class. Ask the students to identify some of the strategies that are listed that they already use. Demonstrate any strategies that students are unfamiliar with. Use the Readers Response Writers Tasks to help guide students in developing strategies.

THINK-ALoud STRATEGIES

- 1. Access background knowledge.**
- 2. Predict what will be learned or what will happen.**
- 3. Figure out unknown words.**
- 4. Self-monitor and self-correct.**
- 5. Make mental pictures.**
- 6. Connect what you read with what you know.**
- 7. Determine the most important ideas and events and the relationship between them.**
- 8. Extract information from text, charts, graphs, maps and illustrations.**
- 9. Identify and interpret literary elements in different genres.**
- 10. Summarize what has been read.**
- 11. Make inferences and draw conclusions.**
- 12. Reflect and respond.**

All of these strategies help you to make sense of what you are reading. You probably already do many of these, see if you can find a new strategy to try this week.

WHAT IS YOUR *THINKING VOICE* TELLING YOU?

“This reminds me...” (tapping prior knowledge; connection)

“What appeals to me about the story is...” (making a judgement; rendering an opinion)

“How is it possible that...” (asking questions; evaluating)

“I’ll bet that...” (making a prediction)

“I think something is going to happen because...” (making a prediction)

“I can picture ...” (visualizing)

“I’m wondering...” (why? when? how? what? who?) (question)

“I’m making a picture in my mind of...” (visualize)

“Maybe...” (tell what you think might happen next) (predict)

“Maybe...” (tell something you are thinking that is NOT written) (infer)

“So far...” (summary)

“This is important...” (main idea)

“Now I’m thinking about...” (a new thought) (transform)

The Literature Journal

Often times, when reading, you will have questions or comments about the reading. A literature journal is where you will record these questions and comments. It must be completed after each reading session.

- **A journal is not a diary.** A diary is a book in which you record your feelings and thoughts about your personal life. It is entirely personal and private. Many people find keeping diaries a worthwhile activity, but that decision is yours.
- A journal is also not a notebook. A notebook is a summary of the ideas discussed in class. It is not personal, nor is it private. In fact, it usually consists of the thoughts of other people, and is intended to serve as a review for tests and exams.

A Literature Journal lies between these two: it is like a notebook in that it deals with literature – novels, poems, stories and themes in them – but it is also like a diary because it contains your personal response to these texts.

After reading the novel, *Truths I Learned From Sam*, you should spend 5 minutes or so writing down what you think about it. What response did you have to the reading? Did you like it? Did you not understand something? Was something too predictable? Write it down.

The key to a good journal-entry is that it should be an honest attempt to write what you personally think about the text you are discussing. Do not write down what you think the teacher wants to hear. Say what you think as clearly as you can and develop your ideas or feelings as fully as you can.

Your Literature Journal will be collected several times during our novel study. I will read all of the entries, make specific comments on some I find most interesting, and write a summary comment at the end of the most recent set of entries. **There is no such thing as right or wrong responses;** there are only honest or faked, developed or undeveloped responses.

I look forward to reading your responses.

Evaluating the Literature Journal

From time to time, I will be grading your Literature Journal, the grade will be based on these factors:

- completeness (some responses to all assigned prompts and questions; writing after each reading; writing that reflects a thorough understanding of the text)
- the extent to which responses are developed. (dashed off? Little engagement with text? Or are ideas shaped with reference to the text? etc.)
- evidence that you are really exploring your own responses, going beyond the simple, unthinking reaction to story and themes
- insight into character and themes, making connections between story and experience, etc. (text-to-self; text-to-text; text-to-world connections)
- A good understanding and demonstration of comprehension and response and analysis of the text.

Teacher Cue Card for Assigning Beginning of Class Reader's Response Writing Tasks

<p>Tapping Prior Knowledge: I already know that... This reminds me of... This relates to...</p>	<p>Predicting: I'll bet that... I think... If ____, then ...</p>	<p>Visualizing: I can picture... In my mind I see... If this were a movie...</p>	<p>Reflecting and Relating: So, the big idea is... A conclusion that I'm drawing is... This is relevant to my life because... This author is trying to make me (see, feel, know, do) ... It makes a difference that this text was written because...c</p>
<p>Forming Interpretations: What this means to me is... I think this represents... The idea I'm getting is... One question that this text answers is... One question that this text addresses is...</p>	<p>Monitoring: I lost track of everything except... I need to reread the part where... I know I'm on the right track because... A term or idea that was unclear to me was...</p>	<p>Analyzing the Author's Craft: A line that resonated for me is... This word/phrase stands out for me because... I like how the author uses ____ to show...</p>	<p>Relating to the book: The character I most identify with is... The idea I find most provocative is... I reject this author's view because...</p>
<p>Asking Questions: I wonder why... What if... How come... How is it possible that...</p>	<p>Revising Meaning: At first I thought ____, but now I... My latest thought about this is... I'm getting a different picture here because...</p>	<p>Making Connections: This reminds me of... I experienced this once when... I can relate to this to other readings because... The argument here is similar to ____ because... Another example of ____ is...</p>	<p>Evaluating: I like/don't like ____ because... This could be more effective if... The most important message here is... One big difference between this and ____ is...</p>

Chapter Summaries, Comprehension Questions and Discussion Cards

At the high school level, the first reading of novels is completed at home. It is the second reading, usually a closer reading, which is examined in class. As a result, the chapter summaries are individual but the comprehension questions are assigned after every fourth chapter. There are two sets of group discussion cards, one after chapter 12 and the final after chapter 19. These cards are to be separated and given to small groups to discuss. The groups should then re-convene with the whole class to lead a group discussion.

Chapter 1

The story opens with Dani's mother pulling out of the driveway on her way to a business meeting. Dani spies her car leaving through the upstairs window. Dani then relates some of her life to the reader: her mother is about to be married for the fifth time and has remained on friendly terms with each former spouse. Dani believes her mother marries up each time, finding greater wealth and security with each successive spouse. They will be moving in with the new spouse after the marriage although her mother will keep the condo. Dani is looking through her mother's jewellery box as she shares her life story, eyeing one expensive jewel after another until she comes upon a cheap, toy pendent on a silver chain that she knows her mother prizes. She is sure to put everything back as she found it before running off to answer the door.

Chapter 2

Dani answers the door twice. Once for a registered letter addressed to her mother and once for a bouquet of flowers delivered for herself. The flowers are from her mother's fiancé, Reed Atwater. Reed calls moments later to check that the letter arrived. Dani begins to speculate on where they are going for their honeymoon. When her mother returns home, a discussion begins on where Dani will spend the summer. Her mother says Dani will go to her uncle's house for the summer. She explains that the uncle has long been estranged from the family due to a disagreement years ago with their parents and while Dani's mother has stayed in touch, she has been quiet about the relationship due to her parents' feeling. Now that the grandparents have passed away, it is time for Dani to get to know her uncle.

Chapter 3

Dani is on the bus to Webb's River, a remote area in the inner British Columbia landscape. She is annoyed at the people on the bus but assumes it is just nerves. Soon enough the bus driver calls out "Webb's River" and Dani has arrived.

Chapter 4

Dani gets off the bus and no one is there to greet her. The bus driver assures her that a bus back to the city arrives every morning at 9:30am, should no one show up at all. Dani wanders into the motel looking for her uncle. Just as she begins to speak with the clerk, her uncle arrives and whisks her away. Dani and her uncle drive away from the lone building and into a deeper, more rural area, until they arrive at her uncle's trailer.

Comprehension Questions:

In chapter one, there is a sense of change happening in Dani's life. Explain.

1. What is the relationship between Dani's mother and her brother and why has it been distant?
2. Dani makes a journey from city to country, from being at home to being a guest, from being in control and bored to being nervous. Track each of these "journeys" with references from the text to both.
3. Compare and contrast the characters of Dani's mother and her uncle up to this point in the novel. Use a Venn diagram to make the comparison.
4. Dani's uncle's estrangement with his parents has resulted in an estrangement to Dani. Explain.

Chapter 5.

Dani is alarmed at the humble environment that Sam lives in but keeps her feelings to herself. She sees the inside of the trailer is neat and clean and filled with books. Sam immediately makes dinner and the two decide to take turns cooking the meals. Sam tells her of his life on the rodeo circuit and Dani is suitably impressed.

Chapter 6

After dinner, Dani and her uncle sit outside while her uncle smokes a cigarette. Dani warns him of the health hazards and advises him to quit. He explains that he quits several times a day. Then he introduces Dani to his horse, Jasmine. Dani confides that she has never been horseback riding.

Chapter 7

Sam drives Dani to her first horseback riding lesson the next morning. She meets Micah, her instructor. The lesson lasts three hours and Dani learns that, despite her handsome instructor, horseback riding can be a difficult thing to learn.

Chapter 8

Dani pumps Sam for information about her riding instructor on the way home. He is a nineteen year-old University of Calgary student, home on summer vacation. Sam and Dani make lunch together and eat it outside in the sunshine. Dani describes the setting as Sam's own "Garden of Eden". Sam teases Dani that her change of attitude has to do with Micah, her riding instructor.

Comprehension questions:

1. What are Dani's initial reactions to the trailer Sam lives in. Why does she keep her opinion to herself?
2. By chapter 8, Dani is much more familiar with the trailer and seems to have a different view of the surroundings. What are some of the things that have contributed to her change of heart?
3. Jasmine and Sam used to ride rodeo together. When Sam retired so did Jasmine. How does Sam feel about Jasmine? What does this tell you about his character?
4. Sam hires Micah to teach Dani to ride a horse. Why does he do this rather than teach her himself?

Chapter 9

Dani and Sam have developed a routine. Dani spends morning with Micah, learning to ride while Sam runs errands. Afternoons are spent cooking lunch together and spending time together. The evenings are spent watching baseball and an easy camaraderie has built between the two.

Chapter 10

Sam is teaching Dani how to drive the truck, whom he affectionately names Lizzie. Dani expects that he should be yelling at her but Sam remains calm and encouraging despite Dani's driving errors. By the following morning, Dani has improved and she drives the truck to the riding lessons, while Sam sits in the passenger seat. After Sam drives off, Dani and Micah take the horse for a trial ride. Once on the trial, they stop and Micah kisses Dani.

Chapter 11

Dani returns to the trailer to find Sam sitting on the step. She notices something is wrong but Sam quickly brushes her off and the promise of a community potluck has the two cooking all afternoon in anticipation. When they are ready to leave, Dani compliments Sam on his shirt and admires his big turquoise stone on his lapel. She mentions that her mother has a similar toy stone except hers is a pendant and this makes Sam smile. The two enjoy the potluck, as much for the people as the delicious food. Dani dances with Micah and she admires Sam dancing too. Later, Micah and Dani go outside to talk and Dani learns that Micah was hired for two weeks to teach Dani to ride and the riding lessons are now complete. He promises that they can ride together in the evenings. He also gets Dani to promise that she will come to the rodeo. The pair see Sam out in the dark, smoking, and Dani realizes that he probably saw her and Micah kissing.

Chapter 12

Dani has trouble falling asleep after the excitement of the potluck. She spies Sam out the window, smoking and hears his extended coughing fit. The next morning she sleeps late. She finds a note from Sam saying that he went into Kamloops. Dani busies herself by cleaning the outside of the trailer, as well as straightening up inside. She finds a box of old photos. Some are of Sam and her mother but most of Dani, and Dani realizes that Sam has tried to stay involved in her life all these years.

Comprehension Questions

- 1) In chapter nine, Dani explains that both she and Sam vote for the Blue Jays, if they are playing, because "it is the Canadian thing to do". Explain.
- 2) Sam and Dani talk about religion in chapter nine. Does Sam follow a specific religion? What does Sam say to Dani about his regrets on the subject?
- 3) In chapter 11, Sam wears his turquoise pin on his lapel. He tells Dani that he hasn't worn it in years. Why does he decide to wear it now?
- 4) Why does Sam go to Kamloops? Why does he evade giving Dani a reason for his trip to Kamloops?

Group Discussion Cards

Below, find five cards for group discussion. Each group will discuss, with reference to the novel, themes developed in the questions. Each group is responsible for sharing their discussion with the class.

Group Discussion Question #1

In chapter 12, Dani happens upon a box of old photos. Many are of herself at various times throughout her life. Dani surmises “how hard that must have been, for both mom and Sam, not being able to see each other.” This is the first time that Dani focuses on someone other than herself in the novel. It is her first foray into empathy. Compare and contrast Dani in chapter 1 and 2 with Dani in chapter 12. Do you like the person Dani is becoming. How do you think this new-found empathy will influence Dani elsewhere in the novel and in her life?

Group Discussion Question #2

How has Dani’s opinion of a rural community changed throughout the novel? Compare and contrast Dani’s initial feelings of going to stay with her uncle with her actual feelings. What assumptions were made? What stereotypes have been overcome? Sam tells Dani that she looks like her mother but that there are distinct differences between the two. Is this a compliment? How are Dani and her mother alike and different?

Group Discussion Question #3

While her mother is on honeymoon, Dani takes a journey herself. She literally travels to the interior of British Columbia to stay with her long lost uncle. Journeys are a theme in this novel. What other type of journey has Dani been on? How has her literal trip from Vancouver to Webb River mirrored her figurative journey in the novel?

Group Discussion Question #4

When the novel opens, Dani presents as an independent teenager who can handle everything. Was this accurate or was it put on? As the novel progresses, Dani becomes more and more entwined in the working of the small town she finds herself in. How does Dani’s recognition of her interdependence with others make her a better person? Is she happier for the relationships she has developed with Sam and Micah?

Group Discussion Question #5

Dialogue is a literary device that is used so that readers can witness for themselves what is said. Dani’s mother has a bit role in the book but figures into Dani’s and Sam’s dialogue. What have you learned about Dani’s mother through what has been said in the novel. Is this different than the image Dani presented of her mother in the first chapter.

Chapter 13

Dani's mother calls and Dani excitedly tells her about all the fun she having with Sam. Dani is excited and rushing to tell her mother about her days and misses the importance of her mother's questions – is Sam too skinny, it is too late to ask him to stop smoking.

Chapter 14

Dani realizes that she is to return to Vancouver in two weeks and she doesn't want her summer to end. Indeed, she doesn't want her new relationships to end – with Sam or with Micah. She spends the day watching Micah practise for the saddle bronc riding event at the rodeo. He wants her to return to watch tomorrow as well but she tells him she is off to Kamloops with Sam. She returns home ten minutes late and Sam is uncharacteristically upset. He takes the truck and drives off.

Chapter 15

Dani spends a long evening, hoping Sam will return. He doesn't return until after midnight and his bad mood has diminished as he is very quiet when he enters the house. In the morning, things are polite before the two set out for Kamloops. Each apologizes in the car and the air is cleared. Sam tells Dani they are going shopping for the rodeo. Sam buys Dani an outfit and Dani secretly buys a shirt for Sam.

Chapter 16

The rodeo is more than Dani could have imagined. She describes the crowds, the foods, and the "feel" of the rodeo. Sam and Dani watch the saddle bronc riding event where Micah will be competing. He places a respectable score. They continue to watch after Micah competes, when a woman stops in front of them. She greets Sam and greets her in return. When she continues on, Dani grills Sam to her identity suggesting she might be a good date. Sam informs Dani that the woman is her doctor. Dani asks if he is sick. Sam evades the question by asking "because I have a doctor? Don't you have a doctor?"

Comprehension Questions

1. Chapter 12 is a telephone call between mother and daughter. Dani is excited to tell her mother about her summer. While her mother is pleased to hear it, she also spends some time asking questions that Dani is oblivious to. The author uses dialogue to describe for the reader information (Sam's physical well-being) that Dani can not do because she does not see a problem. Explain. Is the author successful in her task?
2. When Dani ponders possible alternatives to saying goodbye to her new friends and family, she is actually making a statement on how important these relationships are to her. What are the alternatives she considers? Are either realistic?
3. Chapter 15 opens with a page of Dani pacing around the house, upset for having upset Sam. Why does the author spend a page and a half having Dani show you how little she had accomplished while Sam was away? Why not simply state that she was upset and move on.
4. Dani secretly buys a shirt for Sam. Why does she do this? How will Sam react?

Chapter 17

Dani and Sam spend the day at the rodeo. It is crowds, shows and hot food for the second straight day. In the afternoon, Micha joins them. By early evening, Sam says he is tired and is going home. Micah says he will drive Dani home. Dani wonders at Sam's lack of energy but quickly changes subject when Micah suggests he just wanted to give them some time alone. Yet Sam sleeps late the next morning and decides to go to the walk-in clinic. Dani begs off a third day at the rodeo and Sam gives in to her wishes.

Chapter 18

Sam takes Jasmine for a ride and Dani cleans the trailer. She notices Sam's prescription bottle is for morphine and recognizes it is a powerful drug reserved for dire health problems. Dani begins to put together a lot of the strange things she ignored in the summer – Sam's hacking cough, his long stays away from home, his lack of energy on some days. She decides to google the doctor's name to find out what speciality the doctor has, and learns Sam is seeing an oncologist.

Chapter 19

Dani is reeling from the shock that Sam has cancer. Sam returns home and Dani keeps up appearances. Sam is busy with the horse, who has to be re-shoed immediately. This gives Dani more time to come to grips with it.

Chapter 20

Dani decides to call her mother, who already knows Sam is ill. The two discuss the situation and Dani learns that Sam does have terminal lung cancer. Her mother helps Dani to come to terms with it. Her mother tells her that Sam didn't want her to find out he was sick; he thought he could hide it while she was there.

Comprehension Questions

1. In chapter 17, Dani narrates "we spent the morning wandering the grounds and jawing -Sam's word not mine". What does she mean by "jawing"? How does Dani's adoption of Sam's words demonstrate their relationship?
2. In chapter 18, Dani finds clues that Sam is really ill. Do you think she was prying into Sam's business unfairly? What were her motivations in searching the internet.
3. Dani learns from her mother that Sam is very ill. Dani's mother helps to calm her down. What does this tell you about Dani's relationship with her mother? What does their conversation reveal about Dani's mother's decision to send Dani to stay with Sam for the summer?
4. Do you think her mother was wise in sending Dani to stay with a terminally ill relative? What would have been her mother's considerations when making the decision to send Dani to stay with Sam?

Group Discussion Cards

Below, find five cards for group discussion. Each group will discuss, with reference to the novel, themes developed in the questions. Each group is responsible for sharing their discussion with the class.

Group Discussion Question #1

A journey is a theme in this novel. Outline the literal and figurative journeys of Sam, Dani and her mother in this novel.

Group Discussion Question #2

The definition for “dependence” is “the state of relying on or needing someone or something for aid, support, or the like. reliance; confidence; trust: Her complete reliability earned her our dependence.” *(From Dictionary.com ; Oct 1, 2012)*

Discuss Dani likely understanding of this term at the beginning of the novel. How has Dani come to understand the word differently as her journey progressed? Is “dependence” a positive or negative trait? Discuss.

Group Discussion Question #3

The Definition for “independence” is “freedom from the control, influence, support, aid, or the like, of others.” *(From Dictionary.com ; Oct 1, 2012)* Review Sam’s life and his independent nature. Compare Sam’s independence to Dani’s independence. When is independence a positive trait? When can it have negative consequences?

Group Discussion Question #4

The definition for “interdependence” is “the condition of being mutually dependent on each other”. *(From Dictionary.com ; Oct 1, 2012)* How is the family unit generally an interdependent unit? How is Dani’s family interdependent? Does Dani benefit from her relationship with Sam?

Group Discussion Question #5

Dani’s mother agreed to keep Sam’s health a secret from Dani yet she immediately called Sam and told him that Dani had discovered his secret. Why did she keep Sam’s secret? Why did she not keep Dani’s secret? What impact would keeping Dani’s secret have on Dani?

Chapter 21

Sam calls to tell Dani he will be delayed and Dani keeps up the subterfuge. Micah calls and she tells him she has had an argument with her mother rather than betraying Sam's secret. Micah presses for details and becomes angry when Dani refuses to supply them. Then he hangs up in anger.

Chapter 22

Sam arrives home with take out food and they sit down to eat, in front of the TV. Sam tells Dani that her mother called him and told him that Dani knew. He says her mother was concerned for Dani. Sam explains "I made her promise not to tell you about the cancer, because that would have coloured what you thought about me before we even met." And Dani recognizes the truth in that statement. Sam tells he has been happy his whole life and has no regrets.

Chapter 23

Sam and Dani discuss why he never married. Sam tells her there was someone, once, but that it didn't work out. Dani asks for details. Sam tells her that they met when he was new to the rodeo circuit and she was a university student. But they knew it wouldn't work out. So she called off the wedding but didn't return the ring. Sam explains that he didn't have much money then and so the ring was a bauble got from a gumball machine. Dani immediately realizes that Sam and her mother were once engaged and he is her father not her uncle. She feels relief that the story finally makes sense. He also tells her of his childhood in foster care and his desire for her to be raised in a family. Then he gets himself a beer and Dani one too. He tells her doesn't have time to wait until she is old enough to have one.

Group Discussion Cards

Below, find five cards for group discussion. Each group will discuss, with reference to the novel, themes developed in the questions. Each group is responsible for sharing their discussion with the class.

Group Discussion Question #1

Dani politely tries to decline Micah's questions but he ignores her. Reread page 162 (the end of chapter 21). Is there another way that Dani could have evaded Micah without divulging Sam's secret? Was Micah unreasonable in his attempts to find out the issue? What were Micah's motivations in pressing Dani to confide in him?

Group Discussion Question #2

Sam tells Dani that he asked her mother not to tell Dani about his cancer. "I made her promise not to tell you about the cancer because that would have coloured what you thought about me before we even met. Dani agrees. Do you? Dani also realizes that she would have missed out on a lot had that happened. How has not knowing about Sam's illness benefited Dani? How has it benefited Sam?

Group Discussion Question #3

Sam makes a reference to "that Tim McGraw song". Read the lyrics of the song (Live Like You Were Dying by Tim McGraw) and evaluate this song in relation to Sam's situation. What are the similarities and what are the differences? Are the actions of the protagonist in the song realistic? Are Sam's actions and thoughts on dying realistic? Explain.

Group Discussion Question #4

Sam had a childhood that was marred by well-meaning social workers. He was removed from the only parents he knew and placed in foster care. How does Sam's childhood impact the decision he made about being Dani's father? Do you think he made the right decision?

Group Discussion Question #5

When Dani finally realizes that Sam is ill, all of the little clues begin to make sense. What are some of the clues throughout the book that were clues to Sam's illness. Is it believable that Sam may not have been aware of them? List at least three clues with references and list why or how Dani was unaware of them.

****Please see Literary Devices Worksheets in the appendix for additional comprehension questions.

Defining Dani/ Defining Sam/Defining Me

In-Class Activity

Students learn, in this activity, that there are many aspects to themselves that define them as a person. They will also have the opportunity to reflect on what it would be like to lose part of that identity as Dani does, and as Sam does, in *Truths I Learned From Sam*

Part One

Steps:

1. Create a concept map of Dani and ask the students to supply descriptions that define Dani . (City-born, Level-headed, Horse-back Riding, Driver, Daughter, etc
2. Create a concept map of Sam and ask students to supply descriptions that define him. (foster child, rodeo cowboy, book reader, baseball fan, etc)

Ask the students to reflect on how Dani's relationship with Sam and Sam's impending death will change each of them. (For Sam, students should focus on how his illness will change him)

Discuss how Sam told Dani that he believed if she had known about his illness before hand, she would have viewed him differently. How did becoming ill change Sam's identity?

Part Two

1. In the centre circle on the concept map, students write their name and what they primarily identify themselves as.
2. In the four remaining circles, students use nouns to further identify who they are.
3. On the connecting lines of the concept map, students write connecting words that accurately describe the connection between their central identity and the other nouns they have written in the other circles.
4. Once all students have completed the task, they should have a fairly good idea of who they see themselves as and why they see themselves this way. Now, ask each student to tear off the top right hand corner circle, crumple it up and throw it away.
5. All students have just removed part of who they feel represents the person they are. In a journal entry style or letter, have students reflect on what it would be like if they really had to leave that part of themselves behind forever. How would they manage, could they manage, or would they feel empty inside? Be sure to encourage students to make connections to characters from books or movies or people in their lives who have had to given up a part of themselves for better or for worse.
6. Arrange students in group to discuss the impact of losing part of themselves. Students will each discuss one group member's identity and the impact of the loss of identity. Students will then complete a group self-assessment rubric.

Student Self-Assessment of Group Discussion

Student Name _____

Date: _____

Group Members Names	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
	In-class assignment not completed Does not contribute to discussion despite repeated prompting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completed in-class assignment • Comes to group reluctant to discuss and share thoughts Needs several prompts to contribute to discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student read assigned text • Comes to group ready to discuss and share thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student was clearly mindful of discussion • Comes to group ready to begin discussion and share thoughts
	In-class assignment not completed Does not contribute to discussion despite repeated prompting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completed in-class assignment • Comes to group reluctant to discuss and share thoughts Needs several prompts to contribute to discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student read assigned text • Comes to group ready to discuss and share thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student was clearly mindful of discussion • Comes to group ready to begin discussion and share thoughts
	In-class assignment not completed Does not contribute to discussion despite repeated prompting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completed in-class assignment • Comes to group reluctant to discuss and share thoughts Needs several prompts to contribute to discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student read assigned text • Comes to group ready to discuss and share thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student was clearly mindful of discussion • Comes to group ready to begin discussion and share thoughts
	In-class assignment not completed Does not contribute to discussion despite repeated prompting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completed in-class assignment • Comes to group reluctant to discuss and share thoughts Needs several prompts to contribute to discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student read assigned text • Comes to group ready to discuss and share thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student was clearly mindful of discussion • Comes to group ready to begin discussion and share thoughts

Comments

The Author's Notebook (Researching for the Novel)

A fiction novel is make-believe so the need to do research seems odd; but, upon greater investigation, when writing a book that is realistic fiction that is not so. The author wants the audience to believe her fiction, as if it is true. This is where research comes into the picture.

You are hired to be a background editor for the author. Choose three of the topics below to provide information on so that the author may use this information when writing her book.

The Rodeo Circuit | Horse Back Riding | Rural British Columbia | Stages of Illness/Cancer

Each topic can be sub-divided into many areas. Re-read relevant parts of the novel for ideas on what background information the author would need. Include fact sheets, labelled diagrams, mind maps and pictures if these will help the author understand the subject area. Your job is to provide the author with a book that she can use to become an expert on the topic; you are writing an expert's guide on your topic. She will use this when creating her story.

Requirements:

Your information needs to be compiled into a book format – a scrapbook or notebook will work.

You are limited to 5 pages per topic. This includes all writing, diagrams, maps and pictures.

You must include at least one diagram, map or picture per topic.

You must provide references of where you found your data.

Knowledge	Information is gathered but vaguely relates to the book. The information is too short, providing the user to too narrow a scope of the topic.	Information relates somewhat to the book. It is useable. There are a few sub-topics attempted. At times, the information is too short, providing the user to too narrow a scope of the topic.	Information relates to book. It is concise and useable. There are at least three sub-topics for each topic. Creative supporting details and/or examples are used which add interest to reader.	Information clearly relates to book. It is concise and useable. There are at least three sub-topics for each topic. Creative supporting details and/or examples are used which add interest to reader.
Thinking	Information is not complete or is missing entirely for the author's purpose.	Information is provided for use but a thorough understanding can not be gleaned from the information provided	Numerous items are provided for author's use. It is presented in an easy-to-read format and the author can become knowledgeable.	Mind maps, diagrams and extensions are provided for the author to use. It is presented clearly and the author can become knowledgeable from its use..
Application	Diagrams and illustrations where present are neither neat nor entirely accurate they don't add much to the content	Diagrams and illustrations are accurate and are related the topic.	Diagrams and illustrations are accurate and clearly provide information important to understanding the topic.	Diagrams and illustrations are neat, accurate and clearly provide additional insight to the content and an overview of the topic.
Communication	The document can be confusing at times. Attempt to document source used is not completely accurate Only 1 source was used	Communication is mostly straight forward. All sources are accurately documented Only 1 or 2 sources were used	Clearly communicated; useable All sources are accurately documented and in the desired format. 2 or 3 sources were used	Clearly communicated; very useable. All sources are accurately documented and in the desired format. 3 or more sources were used

Book Club Presentation and Discussion Assessment:

Teacher Overview

Truths I Learned From Sam by K. Butcher

This plan includes recommendations of compacted introductions or review of previously learned material and moves students quickly into Bloom's higher order of thinking of analysis, synthesis and evaluation while stressing consideration for others' points of view.

Objectives:

1. Students apply literary terms to reading selections and analyze the author's success in using them
2. Students then judge the selection based on details from the selection
3. Students present their assessments in class during a discussion and consider others' points of view
4. Students will begin building their self-confidence in analysis and evaluation of literary works
5. Students will conduct discussions observing rules of courtesy

Materials needed include index cards and categories written on the board as a reference.

After students have read the novel, they then rate it on a scale of 1 to 10, using the following categories:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. plot | 6. point of view |
| 2. characterization | 7. other elements, for example, irony as appropriate |
| 3. theme | 8. literary merit |
| 4. style | 9. Would you recommend this novel or not? Why? |
| 5. readability | |

Review with students what each category entails in judging. (see worksheets in appendix) In particular, students may need clarification in differentiating between author's style and readability. Explaining the difference briefly will enable students to distinguish in their own writing between the author and the speaker's styles. In addition, these two categories are important in order to understand context of the piece, word usage at the time of the story and how style affects readability.

Students individually rate the novel in class, then discuss and defend their ratings in a Siskel/Ebert discussion where students' become really involved.

At the end of the 15-minute discussion, the teacher will ask for any revisions of their ratings and reasons, and students will share their findings. This discussion approach also lays the foundation for analysis and evaluation of point of view in Advanced English classes and also in the students' own creative writing.

Book Club Presentation and Discussion Assessment: Student Handout

It is your turn to voice an opinion. Did you enjoy the novel or not? Come to class, prepared with the novel, cue cards and whatever else you need to persuade your peers on your opinion of the novel.

Format:

Introduction: Briefly review the novel summarizing main themes. This should be about ten sentences. (2 -3 minutes)

State a Rating: Use the scale below to explain the rating you have assigned this novel. (6 and above is a thumbs up; 5 and below is a thumbs down). You may wish to make a chart for this segment of your presentation. (5 minutes)

Rate it on a scale of 1 to 10, using the following categories:

1. plot
2. characterization
3. theme
4. style
5. readability
6. point of view
7. other elements, for example, irony as appropriate
8. literary merit
9. Would you recommend this novel or not? Why

Audience Comments and Questions: Be prepared to justify and explain your rating to the audience. (This should take approximately 10 minutes). Tip: It is always wise to try to summarize the audience question in order to be sure that everyone has heard it.

Finalize your thinking:

Do you still maintain your rating or will you change it based on the discussion that has occurred. You will lose no points for integrating new thoughts into your point of view. This is not a fight to the finish; rather it is an exchange of ideas in which your own understanding can change or develop based on insight from others. (5 minutes)

Your discussion should be 20 minutes but is absolutely limited to 25 minutes.

Book Club Presentation and Discussion Assessment Rubric

Knowledge	<p>A pattern of reasoning supporting the persuasive effort is not evident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The position is not evident, or is unreasonable or unsubstantiated. • Most points are not logically supported (0-22 points) 	<p>A pattern of reasoning supporting the persuasive effort is somewhat evident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The position may not be clear, or is somewhat unreasonable or unsubstantiated. • Some points are logically supported. (23-24 points) 	<p>A pattern of deductive or inductive reasoning supporting the persuasive effort is evident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The position is clear and substantiated. • Most points are logically supported. (25-27 points) 	<p>A clear pattern of deductive and inductive reasoning enhancing the persuasive effort is evident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The position is clear and well substantiated. All points are logically supported. (28-30 points)
Thinking	<p>Details or arguments are non-existent or not in a logical order, making the presentation very confusing. (0-12 points)</p>	<p>Some parts of details or arguments are not in an expected or logical order that is confusing distracting for the reader. (12-14 points)</p>	<p>Arguments and support are presented in a fairly logical order that is reasonably easy to follow. (15-17 points)</p>	<p>Arguments and support are presented in a logical order that is easy to follow and convincing to hear. (18-20 points)</p>
Application	<p>Evidence and examples are NOT relevant and/or are not explained. (0-11 points)</p>	<p>Uses some specific and relevant examples. Explanations and examples vaguely back up the author's position (12-14points)</p>	<p>Uses specific and relevant examples. Explanations and examples back up the author's position (15-17points)</p>	<p>Uses specific, clear, and relevant examples. Explanations and examples clearly back up and promote the author's position (18-20 points)</p>
Communication	<p>The presentation is not effective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas are poorly developed and disorganized. • Errors in sentence structure, grammar, mechanics, word choice, or usage seriously interfere with the clarity and effectiveness of the presentation. (0-18 points) 	<p>The presentation is somewhat effective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas are partially developed but somewhat disorganized. • Errors in sentence structure, grammar, mechanics, word choice, or usage may sometimes interfere with the clarity and effectiveness of the presentation. (18-22points) 	<p>The presentation is effective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas are adequately developed and generally well organized. • Errors in sentence structure, grammar, mechanics, word choice, or usage seldom interfere with the clarity and effectiveness of the presentation. (22-25points) 	<p>The presentation is highly effective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presentation is highly appropriate for the purpose and topic. • Ideas are thoroughly developed and well organized. • Sentence structure, grammar, mechanics, word choice, and usage enhance the clarity and effectiveness of the presentation. (25-30 points)
Teacher Comments				

TRUTHS I LEARNED FROM SAM: FINAL ASSESSMENT

Short Answer. Choose any two questions to answer. Use full sentences and refer to the novel as needed to explain your answer. Be sure to re-read your answer to ensure that you have answered the question fully.

1. Evaluate Dani's relationship with her mother throughout the novel.
2. How does Dani's learning to ride a horse parallel the main theme of the novel?
3. Dani expects the summer in a rural town to be dull. How does her opinion change with her experience over the summer?
4. Why did the author choose to keep Sam's illness from Dani?
5. What is the author's point of view on illness? Recall Sam's role in the novel and how it impacted Dani's perception of him.

Answer any two of the following questions in essay format. Use reference to the novel as well as class discussion to make your point.

1. Dani goes on a journey in this novel. Explain in a five paragraph essay with reference to both her literal and figurative journeys.
2. In class, we have discussed dependence, independence and interdependence as components of growing up within a family setting. Choose one of these themes to explore in *Truths I Learned From Sam*. How does the author develop this theme over the course of the text? Use examples from the text to support your analysis.
3. How does spending the summer with Sam affect Dani? How does Kristen Butcher use Sam's character to affect change in Dani and to develop her theme?
4. The author uses Sam's illness as a means to unravel the deception of Dani's parentage. How does this impact Dani's attitude towards the deception and towards Sam's illness?
5. Sam refuses to be defined by his illness. He did not want Dani to know he was ill before meeting her because he felt that she would not see beyond his illness. Explain.

Appendix: Literacy Devices Worksheets

Literary Elements in *Truths I Learned From Sam*: Definitions and Comprehension Questions

In fiction, there are five main elements.

1. Setting is the time and place in which the events of a literary work occur.
2. Plot is the sequence of events in a story.
3. Characters are the people, animals, or beings in a work.
4. The theme is the main idea or message a literary work conveys.
5. Point of view is the relationship of the narrator or storyteller to the story. (This story was told in first person.)

1) *Truths I Learned From Sam* takes place primarily in one location. Describe the setting of the novel. Is setting important to the story?

2) Name and describe three characters in the story.

3) What do you think the theme of the story is? Why do you think that?

4) Was Dani a good choice as narrator? Think about the theme of the novel and how having Dani narrate impacts that.

Figurative Language

Writers often use figurative language to convey an image or feeling to the reader. Have students pick ten of the examples listed below and describe in writing the images and feelings that the words conjure up in their imaginations.

Metaphors give human characteristics to non-human things.

Similies compare two unlike things with like or as.

- "You look like a daisy girl" (p. 16)
- "Mom's face goes all apologetic" (p. 18)
- "The stiffness that has me standing all ramrod straight finds its way into my voice."" (p. 18)
- "Mom may not be a cookie-cutter parent, but we both know who gets the last word." (p. 20)
- "For a few seconds my chest heaves, and my nostrils flare in and out like a fire-breathing dragon." (p. 20)
- "She is a human mountain" (p. 26)
- "Not only do you look like your mother, you have the same sharp tongue" (p. 35)
- "Wedding brain has been destroying her ability to think" (p. 39)
- "My face is burning so I know it has to be red." (p. 55)
- "To say that I catch Micah by surprise is an understatement, and right before my eyes, he goes from cool to crushed." (p. 61)
- "No rest-of-the-world sounds at all." (p. 62)
- "Speak of the devil" (p. 65)
- "...Sam is nuts about baseball" (p. 67)
- "Trapped in the gaze of those unbelievably blue eyes..." (p. 81)
- "It is almost as if there is a force field keeping me from going any further." (p. 138)
- "I guess it has grown on me." (p.139)
- "Finally reality cuts through the fog in my brain" (p. 140)
- "I block out he swirling kitchen..." (p. 145)
- "The dirty clouds do nothing to improve my mood" (p. 149)
- "...I am dragged down to a sea of despair" (p. 158)

Foreshadowing : A technique for providing clues about the events that may happen later in the story. Foreshadowing may clearly foretell an event or merely hint at it. Foreshadowing can create a feeling of suspense, help draw the reader into the story, or add layers of meaning that are only fully revealed at the conclusion of the tale.

Foreshadowing is a technique used often in the story. Identify two sections of the novel that foreshadows the outcome of this story. Explain why it led you to assume this outcome.

Imagine a story in which something terrible is going to happen. How could an author foreshadow this disastrous event? List at least two ways.

Dialogue is the exact words spoken between characters. It reveals characters' personalities and brings them to life by showing the reader what they are thinking and feeling. Dialogue can also give the reader information about what is happening in the plot.

In chapter 12, Sam voices regret about his lack of religious belief. What emotions are probably going through his head in this scene? What details in this scene suggest his emotional state? Explain.

What do the words, gestures, and actions of Sam reveal about his character or his feelings toward Dani? Explain, referring to specific places in the text in your answer.

Author's Style: The choices that a writer makes about words and sentences in a work determine its style. A writer may choose to use long or short sentences, formal or informal words, common or poetic descriptions, or any combination of these elements. All these contribute to the style of the work and help reveal the writer's purpose and attitude.

Reread chapter one. Is there anything distinctive about the sentence structure or the use of language in this chapter that reveal something about the character of the narrator/protagonist?
