Navigating Early

By: Clare Vanderpool
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Genre: Realistic Fiction
Setting: Cape Fealty, Main

SUMMARY:
After his mother’s death, thirteen-year-old John Baker III, “Jack,” is sent to Morton Hill Academy for Boys in Maine by his enlisted father. There Jack meets Early Auden – the “strangest of boys.” As Jack tries to cope with his mother’s death, Early is convinced his brother, Fisher, who went missing in France during World War II and was declared dead is really alive. Together Jack and Early set off on a quest to find a black bear, to find Pi who is lost on his journey, and locate Early’s brother. Readers will enjoy the adventure as Jack and Early search for answers.

AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:
Clare Vanderpool grew up and lives in Wichita, Kansas. She has always enjoyed reading stories. Her first novel, Moon over Manifest, won the Newbery Medal. For more information on the author, visit www.clarevanderpool.com.

Other books written by the author:
Moon Over Manifest (2010)

SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:
Going Bovine by Libba Bray
All the Earth, Thrown to the Sky by Joe R. Landsdale
Weedflower by Cynthia Kadohata
Bat 6 by Virginia Euwer Wolff
The Green Glass Sea by Ellen Klages
The Art of Keeping Cool by Janet Taylor Lisle
All the Way Home by Patricia Reilly Giff
Mister and Me by Kimberly Willis Holt
Jump Into the Sky by Shelley Pearsall

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
1. In the beginning of the novel, Jack says Early helped him from being swept away (pg 2). What do you think Jack means by this statement?
2. Why do you think Early Auden rarely attends class throughout the novel?
3. How does the story alternating between Jack’s narration and Early telling the story of Polaris (Pi) add to the story format?
4. Why do you believe Early tells the story of Pi?
5. Early says that the story of Pi is not just numbers – the story is in the numbers (pg 66). What do you think he means by this?
6. Pi learns his lessons of the world throughout his journey. How do the characters in the story learn lessons throughout the novel?
7. Early is viewed as an outsider in the novel. Do you think he wants to be an outsider or wants to fit in? Explain your reasoning.
8. Pi becomes lost without his mother (pg 103-109). How are Early and Jack lost in the novel?
9. Early believes that Pi is not dead. Similarly he believes that his brother is not dead (pg 110-121). Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
10. How are Early and Jack like Pi – in the land of lost souls (pg 139-141)?
11. Jack’s mom said “All stories intertwined. It’s just a matter of connecting the dots” (pg 294). How is this statement true in the novel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:


1. “Jack says, “You can tell a lot about people by what they enshrine.” (p. 163) Why does it take Jack so long to learn about Early from what is enshrined in his room? What does Jack learn about Gunnar? Discuss what the trophy case at Morton Hill reveals about Fisher. Describe Jack based on what he enshrines. What might Jack enshrine by the end of his journey?” (From educator resource)

2. What does your community enshrine? What does your school enshrine? What do you enshrine? Give evidence as to your answer

3. Semper Fi – “Jack ditches Early at the Regatta. Why does he think Early doesn't feel disappointment or pain or being left out? At what point does Jack realize that Early does have these feelings? Morton Hill’s motto is “Always Faithful.” Discuss how Early understands these words better than Jack? How is Jack dealing with a personal disappointment? Debate whether this excuses his actions. How might Jack live up to the school motto the remainder of his days at Morton Hill?” (From educator resource)

4. Semper Fi 2 – Discuss other characters such as MacScott, Martin, Gunnar, Emmaline, Eustasia Johannsen, Fisher, and Captain Baker and how Semper Fi applies to them or does not apply.

Language Arts
* “Early has a collection of clippings hanging on a bulletin board in his room. There are specific articles about the Invasion of Normandy and D-day. Why is Early interested in these two important subjects? Use books in the library or sites on the Internet to research these two World War II events. Write a front-page
story for a national newspaper titled “D-Day, June 6, 1944.” Remember to include who, what, when, where, and how. Download or photocopy old photographs pertinent to the story and include with the article.” (Educator Resource)

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading: Informational Text RL. 6.1, 6.2; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL 6.7; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: W. 6.4; History/Social Studies: Key Ideas and Details RH 6-8.2, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RH6-8.7.

* “Jack finds some of his old Superman, Batman and Captain America comics mixed in with the stack of National Geographic magazines that he brought to school. In class, discuss the qualities of a superhero. Why does Jack think that Fisher is Early’s superhero? Write and illustrate a superhero comic book titled “Fisher” that Jack gives to Early as a gift. Include a dedication page.” (Educator Resource)

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL. 6.1; Writing: Test Types and Purposes W. 6.3; Production and Distribution of Writing W. 6.4

* “Fisher Auden, a 1943 graduate of Morton Hill Academy, was one of the school’s most outstanding athletes. The school retired his #67 number and his accomplishments are featured in the school’s trophy case. His boat, the Maine, is in the Nook. Why is there no plaque memorializing him when he is reported killed in action? Fisher is recovering in a hospital at the end of the novel. Plan a school ceremony for Fisher once he has recovered. Cast Mr. Conrady, the headmaster, as master of ceremonies. Include music chosen by Early. What might Fisher say to the students? How might he thank Early, Jack, and Captain Baker?” (Educator Resource)

Correlates to Common Core Standard Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 6.3; Presentation of Knowledge and Idea SL 6.4, 6.6.

**Musicians Named**
Frank Sinatra, Glenn Miller, Louis Armstrong, Mozart, Billie Holiday
p. 70 also mentions radio jingles

**Geographic Locations Named**
Kansas; Bethel, Maine; Portland, Maine; Kennebec River; France; Normandy; Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia

**7.RL.2** Determine a theme or central idea of the text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text. What is a central theme or idea of the text? How does the author develop this theme or idea throughout the novel? Use specific examples to support your argument.

**7.RL.6** Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of
different characters or narrators in a text. How does the author develop and contrast the points of view of Jack and Early throughout the text?

7.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. Write your own journey of Polaris, Pi, as he strives to earn his name.

Challenging Words

Cutter (pg 19)
Gig (pg 19)
Whiffs (pg 20)
Wherries (pg 20)
Rum-tum (pg 20)
Unencumbered (pg 27)
Clog (pg 73) – boating term
Brawn (pg 110)
Cavernous (pg 139)
Conferment (pg 163)
Perilous (pg 193)
Brambles (pg 198)
fortification 3
European theater 4
condolences 6
regatta 6
reacquainted 8
archaeologists 11
grail 15
humanitarians 15
allure 16
skepticism 16
authenticity 16
demystify16
millennia 17
venerable 18
whiffle 20
wherries 20
rum-tums 20
diversionary 20
meandered 25
jostling 25
unencumbered 27
accolades 27
coincidence 30
engrossed 38
crew 39