

Pre-Reading

Theme: Scene Setting – And WHY?!

Outcomes:

- Understand the author's purpose in writing this book
- Be prepared to make connections between the French Revolution era and current personal, political, and social issues
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of what the French Revolution was about and its outcome

Objectives: (SWBAT)

- Identify similarities and differences between the French Revolution era and 2021
- Summarize the conflicts surrounding the start of the French Revolution
- Imagine the setting in terms of fashion, food, music, and daily life for people of all three Estates

Plan:

- (1) Show video of author explaining why she wrote *Nemesis and the Swan*
- (2) Ask students to share what they already know about the French Revolution (ie. Date, Cause, Major players, Dramatizations, Artwork, etc.) What similarities and differences do you expect to find between this time period and your life today?
- (3) Show video: *The French Revolution in a Nutshell*, re-visit question #2
- (4) Fact Check: *Marie Antoinette/Let Them Eat Cake*
- (5) Small group activity: Split the class into small groups. Using the resources provided, create graphic organizers of the time period. Include information on fashion, music, food, religion, and daily activities for 1. Peasants 2. Nobility 3. Clergy

LESSON 1: Patriotism and Changing Ideals

Theme: How does our definition of patriotism affect our actions?

Learning Outcomes:

- Consider how patriotism affects moral gray areas
- Understand the subjectivity of what patriotism means to varying individuals and groups at different times, and how it is different from nationalism.
- Recognize the citizens and people groups denied freedoms, both before and after revolutions. Learn more about revolutions outside of Europe and North America.
- Evaluate your own definition of patriotism
- Consider modern protests and calls for change. When is an action unpatriotic, revolutionary, criminal, or heroic?

Objectives: (SWBAT)

- Define patriotism in their own words
- Distinguish between patriotism and nationalism
- Determine whether specific “patriotic” or “revolutionary” actions could be justified or criminalized
- Briefly describe a non-western Revolution
- Express your opinion about whether or not athletes taking a knee during the singing of the National Anthem is justified or unpatriotic, and whether this specific action has affected change.

Plan:

- (1) Now that you’ve read chapters 1 and 2, consider the quote from Helene’s cellmate on slide #2. Discuss or journal: Do you believe there are situations in which stealing or killing are not a crime?
- (2) Evaluate the scenarios on slide #3.
- (3) Define patriotism and nationalism and discuss the similarities, differences, positives, and negatives
- (4) Discuss how your parents’ and grandparents’ generations might express or define patriotism differently from your generation.
- (5) Go beyond! Refer to slide #6. Consider the principles and ideals that ignited the Age of Revolutions. Which groups were demanding rights—and winning those rights through force? Which groups were excluded, defeated, or ignored? In small groups, find information from reliable sources on a revolution or rebellion in Latin America, Africa, or Asia.
- (6) Refer to slides #7 and #8. Watch ABC news segment from September 2, 2016 on Colin Kaepernick, then read the article from History.com detailing the history of The Star-Spangled Banner. Write about or discuss student opinions

LESSON 2

Theme: Keeping Secrets and Keeping the Peace

Learning Outcomes:

- Learn more about Lover's Eye jewelry and the secrets the eyes would keep
- Consider Voltaire's definition of optimism and evaluate your own definition
- Learn more about the French soldiers who returned home after fighting in the American Revolution. Consider the portrayal of these soldiers in Nemesis and the Swan and Lin Manuel Miranda's Hamilton, and consider the effects of the American Revolution on the French Revolution.

Objectives: (SWBAT)

- Explain the history of Lover's Eye jewelry and its significance in keeping secrets
- Express their own leanings toward optimism or pessimism
- Creatively re-imagine the experience of a French soldier returning home to a monarchy after fighting for freedom in America.

Plan:

- (1) Have students read the article from Artsy on slide #2
- (2) Discuss Helene and Theo's differing opinions on Voltaire's definition of optimism and the events in their lives that might have led them to form these conclusions. Journal about your own view of optimism and the events in your life that have led you to feel the way you do.
- (3) Listen to the song from Hamilton on slide #4, then click through to the History.com article on slide #5 explaining the influence of the American Revolution on the French Revolution.
- (4) Imagining yourself as a French soldier returning home from fighting in America, write a brief narrative, poem, or song describing your thoughts and feelings.

LESSON 3

Theme: Broken Walls and Broken Families

Learning Outcomes:

- Consider the conflicts and behaviors that cause fractures in families and nations
- Understand the storming of the Bastille and the far-reaching significance of breaking down the prison's walls
- Consider the positives and negatives of breaking things – relationships, walls, etc.

Objectives: (SWBAT)

- Identify patterns or toxic behaviors that lead to estrangement
- Read Alice Walker's poem "I Will Keep Broken Things" and relate this to pieces of the Bastille (see article) and their personal life
- Describe the fall of the Bastille and its world-wide significance
- Describe the way Bastille Day is celebrated in France today
- Compare and contrast the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789 to the storming of the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. Look at the experience of living through both of these events from varying points of view.

Plan:

- (1) Watch the brief video by the author
- (2) Read the article about remaining pieces of the Bastille and Alice Walker's poem "I Will Keep Broken Things" (Slide #2) and discuss
- (3) Use examples from famous families as you consider what causes family estrangement and fracture. (Slide #3)
- (4) Watch the video about the Fall of the Bastille and the far-reaching consequences (Slide #4)
- (5) In small groups or individually, investigate how Bastille Day is celebrated today
- (6) View the news footage of the storming of the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. Using teacher discretion concerning the classroom climate, allow students to either verbally discuss or privately write their thoughts on the similarities and differences between these two events. Alternately, allow students to write a brief narrative in which they imagine themselves present at one of these events. Students may choose a point of view to write from, or the teacher may assign various points of view. (Ex: Write about the fall of the Bastille from the POV of Marie Antoinette, a Parisian baker, or a washerwoman. Write about the storming of the Capitol from the POV of a rioter, a senator, etc.) Students may be assigned to write from a POV they disagree with or dislike, but they must write a first-person narrative that stays in character!

Lesson 4

Theme: Reality vs. Ideals

Learning Outcomes:

- Evaluate your own ideals, principles, and values and how they've developed
- Consider the sacrifices and compromises that must sometimes be made when implementing ideals into practice, whether in personal relationships or establishing a government

Objectives (SWBAT):

- Define: Value, Ideal, and Principle.
- Name several values or principles they hold dear, as well as the people who have been influential in the development of those values. State how one's values lead to the development of one's ideals.
- Distinguish between motive and action in relation to living out one's values
- Discuss the concept of "true love."
- Create a blueprint for a post-Bastille Day France, incorporating your ideals in a realistic way
- In essay form, give specific examples of how idealism and realism work together in personal relationships and society.

Plan:

- (1) Using a dictionary, define Value, Ideal, and Principle and journal to answer the questions on Slide #2
- (2) Slide #3. Consider the following quote from Nemesis and the Swan: "Sometimes, people do bad things for good reasons, or even good things for bad reasons." Discuss: Which of Helene's life experiences so far contributed to this statement? Can you name any modern-day examples? Considering your values, principles, and ideals, which is more important--motive or action?
- (3) Slide #4. Discuss in small groups: Helene tells Marie she did, indeed, find true love with Theo. Do you believe her? Why or why not? Do you think "true love" exists, and what does it look like? Do you believe that there is one person "meant" for every other person?
- (4) In small groups, create a blueprint that implements your ideas realistically, following the instructions on slide #5.

Individual essay assignment: Review the quote on slide #6 from Helene's grandmother, and answer the following questions: How do we balance realism and idealism in personal and/or romantic relationships? How do both idealism and realism contribute to progress and stability in society? Give specific examples, either real or hypothetical.

Lesson 5

Theme: Pop Culture and Paranoia

Learning Outcomes:

- Consider the ways that personal style evolves, and how it correlates with the way we see ourselves and want to be seen
- Consider the ways that art, music, and pop culture change as fads come and go. How are the changes in art, fashion, music, etc. both influencing and being influenced by changing societal values and ideas?
- Recognize the social role of music, and the way music is experienced differently as an individual or as a group
- Recognize the ways animals help humans cope with trauma and stress
- Recognize the social development of paranoia in Revolutionary France, as well as in either post-9/11 America or Pandemic America.

Objectives (SWBAT)

- Describe your own personal style and the way it has evolved as you've grown older, as well as what messages your jewelry, clothing, or room décor sends to others.
- Describe correlations between changes in decade styles and ideas/values
- Identify songs that have come to represent a specific cause or issue in your lifetime, as well as how music becomes an instrument of social change
- Write an essay about the role of social paranoia in either post-9/11 or Pandemic America

Plans

- (1) Journal using the prompts on Slide #2
- (2) In small groups or individually, examine the parallels between the changing clothing/art/music styles and changing social conflicts and values. Each group can be assigned two decades for comparison/contrast. Depending on time constraints, groups can create collages or graphic organizers that visually display these changes. (Slide #3)
- (3) Listen to the clip of the Ca Ira on slide #4, and use the prompts to discuss the social role of music.
- (4) Discuss the role animals can have in helping humans through times of stress or trauma
- (5) Essay Prompt: Slide #6 details two possible essay prompts dealing with widespread social paranoia

Lesson 6

Theme: Fact vs. Fiction

Learning Objectives

- Consider whether the true nature of a person can change, or merely be revealed
- In the context of the Champ du Mars Massacre, examine the role of Lafayette and his portrayal in Hamilton vs. his portrayal in Nemesis and the Swan, and evaluate an author's responsibility to truth and fact when writing fiction.
- Become familiar with the major male figures of the French Revolution

Outcomes (SWBAT)

- Articulate your opinions on the true nature of a person
- Describe the ways that Lafayette's backstory has been simplified for the musical Hamilton, as well as the complexities of his loyalties and actions during the Champ du Mars Massacre
- Using the information provided in Nemesis and the Swan, decide whether or not you would have signed the petition to depose the king, as well as whether or not Lafayette was justified in firing on the crowd.
- In small groups, creatively present information about the birthplace, major contributions, and cause of death of one male figure of the Revolution

Plan:

- (1) Read the quote from Marie Antoinette on slide #2. Discuss or journal your response, giving specific examples.
- (2) Considering the petition Max, Elizabeth, and Helene choose to sign in the Champ du Mars, discuss whether or not you would have signed the petition—before knowing the outcome of that day.
- (3) Fact check! Click through to read the article on slide #4 about how the Marquis de Lafayette's backstory was changed for Hamilton. Using what you've learned about Lafayette and the way events unfolded during the massacre, discuss whether Lafayette did the right thing. What might have happened if Lafayette had not fired on the crowd?
- (4) Using the prompts on slide #6, discuss a fiction writer's responsibility when writing about real people.
- (5) Small group activity: Using the prompts on slide #7, break into small groups and choose one of the following: Jaques Danton, Maximilien de Robespierre, Jacques-Louis David, or Louis XVII (aka The Lost Dauphin). Research to find his birthplace, basic role in the Revolution, and how/why he died. Present your findings to the class as a comic strip, reader's theater, or musical performance.

Lesson 7

Theme: Myths and Fairy Tales

Learning Outcomes:

- Consider the appeal of fairy tales and royal families during the Revolution and today
- Identify the symbolism being used in the story so far
- Examine the use of myths and fairy tales in *Nemesis* and *the Swan*, as well as their continued presence in pop culture
- Consider the importance of ancient stories in holiday traditions and celebrations

Objectives (SWBAT)

- Explain why Helene told the children a fairy tale, and identify the symbols she used
- Identify the significance of the following symbols used throughout *Nemesis* and *the Swan* so far: swans, pearls, the color white
- Explain why and how ancient stories are still being re-interpreted and re-imagined through art, music, and literature today
- Compare and contrast your holiday traditions with Helene's, and recognize the role of ancient stories in those holiday traditions

Plans:

- (1) Ask a student to read aloud the fairy tale Helene tells the children in chapter 15, and discuss or journal about the prompts on slide #2. Name as many symbols as you can that are used in Helene's story.
- (2) Use slide #3 to discuss the use of symbolism throughout *Nemesis* and *the Swan*. Create a graphic organizer with specific examples of how swans, pearls, and the color white have been used literally and figuratively.
- (3) Using slides #4 and #5, listen to the song *Icarus* by Bastille and discuss this and other interpretations of the Icarus myth in art and literature.
- (4) In small groups, use slide #6 to discuss holiday traditions. Compare and contrast your traditions to Helene's and to one another's.

Lesson 8

Theme: Gender Roles and Censorship (may be split into two separate lessons)

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the roles of women in the French Revolution intellectually, culturally, and physically
- Develop an understanding of the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen and Olympe de Gouge
- Understand the difference between freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and censorship, and consider if there are times when censorship is appropriate

Objectives (SWBAT)

- In small groups, creatively present information about one of the prominent female figures of the Revolution
- Describe the basic assertions of the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen
- Assert your opinion about whether or not The Friend of the People should have been allowed to distribute literature calling for a “holocaust to liberty.”
- Write an essay detailing your opinion on modern censorship, freedom of the press, and freedom of speech in relation to the removal of “fake news” and calls to violence on social media after the storming of the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021

Plan:

- (1) Using slide #2, discuss the role of Theroigne de Mericourt as an influential celebrity in Revolutionary Paris. Either discuss or journal about modern celebrities using their popularity to affect change in society.
- (2) In small groups, choose one of the following women to research: Charlotte Corday, Pauline Leon, Olympe de Gouges, Theroigne de Mericourt, Manon Roland, Marie Antoinette, or The Princess de Lamballe. Research her birthplace, role in the revolution, and cause of death. Present your findings to the class as a comic strip, reader’s theater, or musical performance. (Slide #3)
- (3) Watch the video on slide #4 about the Declaration and its author, Olympe de Gouge
- (4) Define the following terms and discuss what they mean in practical terms: Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, censor. (definitions on slide #5)
- (5) Are there times when censorship is appropriate? Consider the question about parental censorship on slide #6 in terms of the dismissal of Helene’s governess, Mademoiselle Girard, as well as the limits modern parents put on their children’s viewing/reading, etc.

- (6) Using slide #7, click on the Britannica article about Jean-Paul Marat and his newspaper, The Friend of the People. Discuss whether presses should be free to publish articles like this.
- (7) Essay Prompt: Using the instructions on slide #8, consult various sources and craft an essay that explains your opinion on censorship vs freedom of speech and revolution, vs treason after the January 6, 2021.

Lesson 9

Theme: Shifting Lines Between Right and Wrong

Learning Outcomes:

- Consider if there are moral gray areas, and whether or not the line between right and wrong ever shifts.
- Evaluate the decisions and actions of the characters, and whether the ending was satisfying/delivered justice.

Objectives (SWBAT):

- Express your opinion on the nature of right and wrong
- Argue for or against the actions of characters who committed wrongs in the name of love, freedom, or progress.
- Answer Helene's question about who has the authority to decide when rules should be changed or broken
- Answer summative review/discussion questions

Plan:

- (1) Journal/Discuss: Do the lines between right and wrong ever shift?
- (2) Review the three quotes on slides #2, #3, and #4. Consider the various characters in Nemesis and the Swan who have committed wrongs in the name of love, freedom, or progress. Were any of them justified? Why or why not? Discuss the following:
 - a. Helene
 - b. Lucille
 - c. Theo
 - d. Vivienne
 - e. Grandpere DuMaurier
 - f. Madeleine and Jean-Luc d'Aubign
- (3) Ask a student to read the quote on slide #5 aloud, and write your answer to Helene.
- (4) Discuss your feelings about the ending, and click through for summative review/discussion questions that include spoilers!

Summative Review Questions

- This book is historical fiction. How is reading about a historical event, in this case the French Revolution, in a novel different from reading about it in a history book? What do you gain and what do you lose when you see events through the eyes of a teenage girl?
- Simonne was initially against the war, but then became an active participant. Why didn't the men believe her when she said she was learning how to fight? Are women in the military treated differently than men today?
- The Declaration of Independence for the United States was written by men and states "all men are created equal." The men promoting the cause of French Revolution also left out any reference to women in their papers. Were you surprised to learn that women were actively seeking an equal place in their society in 1789? How equal have men and women been throughout history and in government and politics today?
- Helene is angry to find that Theo had married. Helene had been missing for one year. Is there only one person you are destined to love and marry, or are there many possible mates for any individual? If there are more than one, how long should one wait to find someone else if you lose your love?
- How do you feel about Theo? Was it right or wrong for him to marry Lucille? Was it right or wrong for him to stay with Lucille when Helene returned? Was it right or wrong for him to abandon Lucille at the end of the novel? Is Theo a good mate for Helene or would Jacques have been a better one?
- Look at Helene's relationship with both sides of her family. Was she correct to run away from from her mother? How can she love but not respect her father? Compare what her two grandmothers say to Helene. How are the grandmothers different and alike?
- Swans "swim" through this book. Helene's costume, the name of the chateau, a painting, the myth with Zeus, and the story Helene tells the children all are related to swans. Examine how each of these references to swans contributes to Helene's story.
- The book is written in the first person. We hear Helene's story. What would you gain and lose if the story had been told by an omniscient narrator? How would it be different if it were told from Theo's point of view?
- The story jumps from Helene's time in prison to flashbacks of the events that led up to her imprisonment. Did you like this? If you were imprisoned, what would you be thinking about?
- Helene does not save Alexander at the end of the novel. Is this understandable? Did Alexander have a fair and impartial trial? If not, then did Helene contribute to his murder?
- Helene lied and changed her name during the story. Can you change who you are when you change your name? Are you allowed to leave your past behind when you change your identity?

- The servants of the rich, clergy, and others were scooped up and imprisoned and killed along with the aristocracy. Was it right to want to kill all the aristocracy and not to simply deport them? Was it right to kill the support staff of these people who were aligned with them? The author does not clarify if Helene's cell mates were killed. Do you think they were? Why or why not?

- In life and in literature, to see is to know. Consider how often people say "I see" when then they understand the solution to a problem. In the novel, Sebastien often says "tu vois," which means "you see" in English, when he wants Helene to understand something. Also, the name Helen means shining light. When you understand, you move from darkness to light. You shed light upon the problem. Add to this mix, the jewelry pieces of the eyes. Put all these eye and light references together and explain how they relate to this story.

- What will happen after the book ends? If you were to write a sequel, what would happen in it to Helene, to Theo, to Max and Elisabeth, and to Max's children?