

THE TRUTH ABOUT SPARROWS

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2007 Grades 6-8

Submitted by Kendra Collins, Graduate Student, Louisiana State University
(Professor: Dr. Margie Thomas)

The Truth About Sparrows by Marian Hale. Henry Holt and Company, 2004. 260 p.

Summary

In 1933, during the depths of the Depression a terrible drought devastated most of middle America. Sadie Wynn's family lost their house, and Mr. Wynne decided to look for work as a fisherman in Texas. Twelve-year old Sadie was distraught about having to move. Sadie didn't want a new life or to make new friends. She promises her best friend that she would write all the time. On their journey to Aransas Pass, Texas, Sadie realized that life for her would never be the same: "I'd lost more than just a home and a best friend...I'd lost a piece of me that I might never find again." Though Sadie was very responsible about helping her mother with the day-to-day chores and caring for her younger brothers and sisters, she was resentful and bitter about their move to Texas. They lived in a shantytown with other migrant workers. At school, students teased Sadie because her family was poor. Gradually, Sadie began to accept her circumstances and tried to do something to make life better. She got a job at a shrimp plant in the morning before school, handled herself at school with patience, and became a friend to a down-and-out man she called Mr. Sparrow.

Awards

Bank Street Best Children's Books of the Year
Children's Books: 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing, New York Public Library
IRA Notable Books for a Global Society, 2005
VOYA Top Shelf Fiction for Middle School Readers, 2004

Author's Biography

Marian Hale lives with her husband on Copano Bay in Rockport, Texas, just twenty miles from the Aransas Pass Seawall where the story in the book takes place. She was inspired to write the book from stories told by her parents while growing up in the Aransas Pass Seawall during the Great Depression. This is her first novel.

Related Titles

Dislocation

How I Live Now by Meg Rosoff.
Kira-Kira by Cynthia Kadohata.
Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy by Gary D. Schmidt.

Depression Era/Drought of 1930s

The Amazing Thinking Machine by Dennis Hasely.
Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis.
Dust by Arthur G. Slade.
Hitch by Jeanette Ingold.
The Journal of C.J. Jackson: A Dust Bowl Migrant by William Durbin.
Lizzie's Storm by Saily Fitz-Gibbon.

A Long Way from Chicago: A Novel in Stories by Richard Peck.
Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse.
Saving Grace by Priscilla Cummings.
Survival in the Storm: The Dust Bowl Diary of Grace Edwards by Katelan Janke.
A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck.

Classroom Connections

See **Henry Holt and Company: The Truth About Sparrows Teacher's Guide**

www.henryholtchildrensbooks.com/teacherguides/truthaboutsparrows.htm

This website provides a short author's biography and a lesson plan. Items include a pre-reading activity, questions for discussion, and a writing activity.

Connections by Dorothy Grimsley, Instructor, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Geography

- Have students use maps and determine the route that the family might have taken from Missouri to Texas.
- Locate Aransas Pass on a map and do research on the area.

History

- Many families had to move because of the Depression and drought of the 1930s. Have the students research this era and make reports.
- Have students compose a PowerPoint presentation to show how the Depression affected our country.
- The Wynn family moved to Aransas Pass, Texas so Sadie's father could get a job shrimp fishing. Have the students research Texas history, Aransas Pass and shrimp fishing.

Language Arts

- Have students locate and read other fiction titles that are set during the Depression.
- See Related Titles.

Connections by Elizabeth Dumas, Good Hope Middle School, West Monroe

Grade 6

ELA Unit 3: Historical Fiction This title can be utilized in the following activities by student historical research groups interested in the Great Depression Era.

Activity 3: Resources for Exploration: Fiction and Nonfiction Bibliographies

Activity 4: Determine Influence of Setting on Characters. Chapter 4 from this book is a good excerpt for the teacher to use to "review and model the use of first person pronouns in telling a story from a particular character's point of view."

Grade 8

ELA Unit 5: Novel

Activity 1: Sustained Silent Reading. This book can be included on a recommended independent reading list for students. It can then be used for the other follow-up activities in this unit.

Social Studies Unit 8: Transitions to the Twentieth Century

Activity 9: The Rise of Huey Long. Excerpts from this book can be read to illustrate life during the Great Depression and the national climate during Huey

Long's ascension to the national political stage.

Web Links

Book and Author

Henry Holt and Company: The Truth About Sparrows Teacher's Guide

www.henryholtchildrensbooks.com/teacherguides/truthaboutsparrows.htm

This website provides a short author's biography and a lesson plan. Items include a pre-reading activity, questions for discussion, and a writing activity.

Henry Holt and Company: Marian Hale

<http://www.henryholtchildrensbooks.com/authordetails.asp?ID=Hale>

Biography of author Marian Hale.

Holtzbrink Publishers: The Truth About Sparrows

<http://www.holtzbrinckpublishers.com/HENRYHOLTBYR/Book/BookDisplayLarge.asp?BookKey=1532176>

This website gives a description of the book, brief reviews, awards list, and a link to read an excerpt.

Powell's Books

www.powells.com/biblio?isbn=0805075844

This website provides an extensive summary and synopsis of the book.

Through the Looking Glass Children's Book Review

http://www.lookingglassreview.com/The_Truth_About_Sparrows.html

Review of the book.

History

Aransas Pass, Texas

<http://www.aransaspas.org/history.htm>

Site includes history and interesting old photographs.

History of Port Aransas, Texas

<http://www.port-aransas.k12.tx.us/PORTA/Port-Aransas-history.html>

This site includes a detailed account of "Ragtown" where migrant workers lived in Port Aransas during the Depression.

ThinkQuest

<http://www.thinkquest.org/library/search.html>

Search United States History, 20th Century

<http://library.thinkquest.org/03oct/01794/> Information about the Great Depression.

<http://library.thinkquest.org/TQ0312210/> Information about the Depression and a lesson plan for Hesse's *Out of the Dust* that would be useful for *The Truth About Sparrows*.