***SYLO***

By D.J. MacHale

**Louisiana Young Readers’ Choice Nominee 2015**

**Grades 6-8**

*Submitted by Christy C. Mayfield, Student,*

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**Title**: *Sylo*

**Author**: D.J. MacHale

**Publisher**: Razor Bill

**Pages**: 407

**SUMMARY**

One minute Tucker Pierce is watching the star football player of his team play the game of his life, and the next he is on the starting lineup after the star’s mysterious and untimely death. This is only the first of a series of strange events. Next, a stranger comes to Tucker’s island home and offers him a pill called “the Ruby” that seems to make him into an epic hero, invincible. Afterward, a military force comes in to quarantine the town in order to stop the spread of the virus that killed Tucker’s teammate.

MacHale’s dystopic tale, set in the modern day, is action-packed and filled with mystery and futuristic technology that awes the reader and the main characters alike. The suspense drives the reader forward as the plot thickens with one trouble after another for Tucker and his town. MacHale leaves the reader breathless and anxious to begin the second book of his new trilogy.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

D. J. MacHale is a *New York Times* bestselling author who was raised in Greenwich, Connecticut. He attended NYU for film production before beginning a successful career as a director, producer, and prolific Young Adult fiction novelist. Currently, D.J. lives in California with his wife and daughter.

Biographical information taken from the author’s website at

[www.djmachalebooks.com](http://www.djmachalebooks.com)

Accessed January 27, 2015

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Author website [www.djmachalebooks.com](http://www.djmachalebooks.com)

**OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

*East of the Sun, West of the Moon* (1991)

*Morpheus Road Trilogy* (2010-2012)

*The Pendragon* *Adventure Series* (2002-2009)

*The Monster Princess* (2010)

**RELATED TITLES**

*The Eye of Minds* by James Dashner

*Vortex* by S. J Kincaid

*The 5th Wave* by Rick Yancey

*Scorpion Mountain* by John A. Flanagan

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

**Language Arts:**

* Students will write a narrative essay about a time when they had to triumph over adversity and fear as Tucker had to do in the novel.
* Students will choose another title for the novel. In an expository essay, they will explain their choice, citing evidence from the text for support.

**Social Studies:**

* Students will create a presentation concerning United States governmental structure, including graphic organizers mapping out the responsibilities and jurisdiction of the branches of the military.
* Students will research the Japanese internment camps in the United States during World War II. Then, they will write a compare-and-contrast essay that examines the prison camps in the novel as well as the Japanese Internment camps.

**Art:**

* Students will draw a different cover for the book, citing evidence from the text for their choices.
* Students will make a model plane and a model ship based on the descriptions of the planes and the ships in the novel.

**P.E.:**

* Students will study and practice the rules and jargon of American football.
* Students will research the pros and cons of using ergogenic aids and present their findings in a T-chart.

**Science:**

* Students will research the history of government-funded medical research and pathology and present their findings in a timeline.
* Students will research the history of bioterrorism and develop a plan to prevent bioterrorism.

**Vocabulary:**

Desolate

Respective

Trapesing

Enigma

Astute

Silhouetted

Reluctant

Trussed

Animatedly

Incongruous

Bravura

Efficient

Daunting

Disarray

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. After Marty Wiggins dies, Tucker shares this thought about life, “It makes me wonder what the point of it all is. Why work hard to try to get ahead if the rug can be pulled out without warning? Or you drop dead during a football game? Maybe that’s why I don’t try all that hard in school. I figure whatever comes my way I’ll deal, but I won’t bother sweating about it until then. That way I’ll never have to feel as though I got burned.” Compare Tucker’s attitude about life to that of Quinn’s. How are they different? How are they the same? Be sure to include textual evidence to support your answer.
2. When Sylo first appears on the island, Tucker reflects, “When my family went, I recognized several of the CDC people who had gotten off the troop transport under Granger’s cold glare. It felt a little creepy to have to give blood, mostly because we weren’t given a choice. But if they were trying to isolate a potentially deadly virus and feared that some people were genetically predisposed to contracting it, then I guess it would be stupid not to get tested. It was one test I desperately wanted to ace.” How does MacHale’s word choice contribute to the suspenseful mood? Which words have strong connotative meaning? How might this scene be different without them and why?
3. How is the peddling of and the use of the Ruby throughout the novel reminiscent of peer pressure in your own community or school? Which characters act and/or react the way you may have witnessed from others in similar situations? Why?
4. During the mob scene in the town square, how does mob mentality play a part? Which characters contributed to the emotional atmosphere? Which characters could have made a difference in the way things played out? What could they have done differently, and what difference might it have made? Support your conclusions with textual evidence.
5. When Sylo soldiers break up the mob with hoses, how is this similar to the uses of hoses during the American Civil Rights Movement? Besides the uses of hoses, how are the situations similar? How are they different? In your discussion, be sure to consider the key players, the motivations, the actions, and the reactions of everyone involved.
6. Discuss your reaction to Quinn’s death. Did you expect it? Do you think it was necessary? How might you have written that part differently? What effect(s) do you think his death had on the plot?

**RELATED WEBSITES**

**Literature Discussion Strategies**

<http://www.csun.edu/~krowlands/Content/Academic_Resources/Literature/Instructional%20Strategies/Short-Literature%20Discussion%20Strategies.pdf>

Strategies for incorporating and facilitating literature discussions

**Literature Circles**

<http://www.litcircles.org/Discussion/prep.html>

Strategies and resources for incorporating and facilitating literature circles

**Graffiti Wall: Discussing and Responding to Literature Using Graphics**

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/graffiti-wall-discussing-responding-208.html>

Includes lesson plan and materials for using graphics during literature discussions

**Pinwheel Discussions: Texts in Conversations**

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/high-school-literature-lesson-plan>

Strategy for comparing author’s tone and purpose with other texts, including possible non-fiction text. This could also be used to analyze different characters through role play. Also, includes formula for text-based question writing

**Teens and Peer Pressure**

<http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/friends/peer_pressure.html>

Includes articles and book suggestions which could be used in a connection lesson about the dangers and strategies for dealing with peer pressure