

THE NIGHT WANDERER

by Drew Hayden Taylor

Genre: Gothic and realistic fiction

Themes: Cultural heritage
Family
Teens
Fiction vs reality
Relationships

Suitable for: Grades 9 – 11

The Night Wanderer

Sixteen-year-old Tiffany Hunter is Anishinabe and lives on the Otter Lake Reserve. Ever since her mother left, family life has been difficult. A new boyfriend offers a ray of hope, but Tiffany's father does not approve of her seeing a non-Aboriginal boy. Then the mysterious Pierre L'Errant comes to stay with them, a man whose inner conflicts pose a potential threat to everyone on the reserve.

THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITY IDEAS ...

... are only a start. There are many possibilities for helping students construct meaning from text. Comprehension activities:

- help readers to extend their general knowledge from prior experience
- develop reading strategies for comprehension
- bring relevance to the act of reading
- foster discussion and reflection through response to the text

BEFORE STARTING THE BOOK:

Activities to build the context and introduce the topic of the book, and to establish prior knowledge and interest and develop predictions of what the text will be about.

1. Draw students' attention to the subtitle, "A Native Gothic Novel." Ask them to research characteristics of gothic literature, and then invite them to speculate about how this novel might combine gothic characteristics and aspects of contemporary Aboriginal life.

WHILE READING THE BOOK

Activities to check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

CHAPTERS 1–8

1. Invite students to suggest words they'd use to describe their impressions of Pierre L'Errant so far. Have them review descriptions of Pierre to note how the author conveys a sense of this character.
2. Encourage students to make personal connections to the character of Tiffany.
 - Which of the conflicts and difficulties that she faces are similar to those that they and their friends encounter?
 - Does the author paint a convincing portrait of the life of a teenager?

CHAPTERS 9–16

3. Have students review the passage in italics on pages 76–77 of Chapter 10. The text immediately before and after this passage suggests that it is Pierre's memories that are described. Yet the passage itself says these are the memories of "another young man" from "a dozen generations or more" earlier.

Invite students to discuss:

- how this apparent contradiction might be explained.
 - why they think the author might have chosen to present information in this way. Do they find this technique effective?
4. Note with students that the novel has two storylines: one about Tiffany's life as a teenager and one about the mysterious activities of Pierre L'Errant. Ask students to make predictions about how the author might bring these two storylines together in the final section of the novel.
 - What might happen?
 - How might Tiffany become involved with the strange activities of Pierre?

CHAPTERS 17–27

5. Have students review Pierre’s discussion with Tiffany in Chapter 26. In a personal essay, students could reflect on whether they found Pierre’s point of view convincing, and whether this point of view led them to see issues in their own life from a different perspective.
6. Have students recall their feelings about Pierre as they read the first two sections of the novel. Then ask them to share how they felt about this character after hearing his full history. Did this story affect students’ feelings about Pierre? If so, how?
7. Ask students to consider the attitude that Tiffany and Pierre each have to their Aboriginal heritage. Invite students to offer reasons why Pierre seems to feel more strongly attached to his Aboriginal roots than Tiffany does.

AFTER READING THE BOOK

Activities to inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.

1. Invite students to create a poster or radio ad to advertise a movie version of the novel. Encourage them to consider how they could appeal to their intended audience. Students creating a radio ad could include sound effects and/or background music. For a movie poster, students could include names of the actors they’d choose to play Tiffany and Pierre.
2. Ask students to revisit the novel’s prologue and, in a journal entry, reflect on:
 - the relevance of this story to the novel.
 - what personal meaning this story has for them.
3. Students could compare *The Night Wanderer* with another novel of their choice that portrays the life of a teenager. Ask them to decide which novel offers the more realistic portrait of teenage life, and what elements and/or techniques the author used to make this portrait convincing.
4. In a classroom discussion, invite students to consider the theme of Aboriginal heritage in the novel. To spark discussion, you might use questions such as the following:
 - In what ways do both Pierre and Tiffany experience a sense of alienation related to their Aboriginal heritage?

- How is the character of Granny Ruth related to the theme of Aboriginal heritage?
- Through this novel, does the author make a comment on the importance of appreciating heritage? If so, what might be the author's view?