



VOICE AT WHISPER BEND Teacher Guide

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Discuss the World War II with students, including world maps. Display and read: *Stepping on the Cracks*, Mary Downing Hahn; *Lily's Crossing*, Patricia Giff; *Number the Stars*, Lois Lowry; *The Devil's Arithmetic*, Jane Yolan.

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Conflict — *Voices at Whisper Bend* includes many different conflicts. Can you list all the conflicts in the book? Which are ordinary and everyday? Which are extraordinary?

Difficulties — Sometimes when faced with difficult situations, people try to blame others. Are there times when that happens in this book? At other times, people rise to meet and try to overcome the difficulties? Do Charlotte and the people in her town do this too? When and how? What else might people do in times of war? What would you do?

Stereotypes — Names are important to all of us, they come to represent who we are. In Charlotte's town, a person's last name leads her into trouble. Others form stereotypes, and judge Betsy by her last name. What do you think about this? Does it still go on today? How does it feel to be judged by things we can't help? What's it like to make those judgements about others? What are the reasons for stereotyping then and now? What can we do about it?

Sacrifice — As with conflicts, there are ordinary sacrifices, and extraordinary ones. In this book, which people are called upon to make ordinary sacrifices, and what are they? Which people have to make extraordinary ones and how are their lives changed? What sacrifices have been made by people you know?

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Language Arts — Charlotte and her family exchange letters with her brother Jim who is overseas, but Jim's letters back are sometimes censored. Pretend you're away from home for a long time and write some letters of your own. Then go back and find the places where you've given away clues about where you are or what's happening around you and censor them to make your own confetti letters.

History — Why do people go to war? Even in a particular war, the reasons for participating might be different on different sides. Using WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraq as examples, make a list of the reasons that countries found themselves at war. Which reasons make sense to you? Which do not?

Social Studies — Encourage students to interview older people in their families or neighborhoods and find people they know who were alive during World War II. Where did these people live? What was their experience of the war? Memories?

Science — Technology played a big part in the outcome of World War II. What inventions, technology, and scientific activities did each side use and which made significant differences?

Geography/Math — Look at maps of the world and find the countries on the Allies side and the Axis powers during World War II. Mark the territories invaded and controlled by the Axis powers. Look at the routes soldiers and sailors might have traveled to the battle zones and calculate the distances they traveled.

Food — Many foods were rationed during World War II. See if you can find old recipes for meatless meals, sugarless cakes and so on. Try making some of these and see how they taste. Feeding an army is a hard job and the troops must have food ready to eat, even if they can't cook it. What did battlefield soldiers eat during WWII? If you know anyone with connections in the armed services, get a sample of current-day army rations.

Music/Drama/Art — How was the war supported or represented in popular culture? Can you find war songs from the 1940s? Wartime movies? How were the visual arts used to support the war effort? What about some of the famous posters, that were used for propaganda?