Summer Holiday Reading 2021

Rooftoppers

For our reading classes together over the summer holidays, we will be exploring each book in three lessons, with the first offering a general overview, the second delving into the stylistic and narrative elements of the writing and the final lesson offering a closer, more thorough examination of the text itself through the use of close textual analysis and with particular attention paid to literary techniques and structural devices. These lessons are designed to help the students develop new frameworks through which to read and understand literature, equipping them with the vocabulary with which to discuss themes, genre and morals.

*Lesson 1:* **Introduction to *Rooftoppers***

In lesson 1 we will be starting our introductory work on *Rooftoppers,* thinking about the central ideas and context of the novel. We will be looking at the historical background of the turn-of-the-20th-century, and think about the role of orphans in literature, looking at the notion of the orphan as a literary archetype. We will consider the notion that the novel is set in a somewhat ‘timeless’ setting, thinking about the anachronisms the author uses and the effect they have. We will also discuss the role of setting in the story, looking at how the author introduces us to the secret world of the rooftops, and considering if any of the students have their own experiences of accessing secret spaces that only they know about. We will watch a brief segment of *Man on Wire* to give the class a sense of the magic sensation that can come from finding spaces high above the rest of the world. The class will also be given time to ask any questions they had about the book and to give their opinions on how the story, characters and themes made them feel.

*Lesson 2:* **Exploring Style and Narrative**

In lesson 2 we will dive further into the novel, thinking about the moral framework in the book, the role of witticisms and discussing how Katherine Rundell develops the characters in her book. We will develop a framework of themes to work with, identifying where and how thematic ideas make the reader relate to and empathise with the characters. We will discuss the moral framework of the story, looking at the values it espouses and asking what the writer is trying to say. Furthermore, we will try to put ourselves in the shoes of the children on the rooftops, looking at the notion of ownership and what makes a home. We will analyse the character of Matteo, thinking about why he chooses to live like he lives and thinking about the role of freedom in the novel. Finally, we will look at the role of gender in the book, thinking about how Sophie goes against the Victorian notion of what it means to be a ‘proper girl’, connecting this to the quirky, bohemian character of the novel overall.

*Lesson 3:* **Close Textual Analysis**

In lesson 3 we will be focusing on developing the students’ analytical skills, looking at closely analysing the text of the novel. The class will be asked to respond creatively to the story, thinking about how violence and the brutality of life in the book are offset against the wisdom and humour of the main characters. We will work on re-telling parts of the story whilst also having to work with the thematic framework Rundell creates in the book. This lesson will focus on how to create a sense of time and place, look at the use of metaphors and similes in writing, and finally think about how to subvert the reader’s expectations and surprise them at every turn.