

An acquaintance with darkness



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

An Acquaintance with Darkness by Ann Rinaldi Ann Rinaldi has written a book that weaves history and fiction into a wonderful book, and this is why I have chosen this book. It covers some important parts of history and the reader sees it through the eyes of a thirteen old girl. The book is dark with intrigue and gross medical stuff, so students should love it. While the assignation and arrest of Mary Surratt is the major historical event around which the book is written, it is more about the state of medical science in the US at the end of the war and how it was impacted by the war.

For instance, Rinaldi's author's note starts out focused on the history of medical dissections in the United States, and then goes on to describe its history in Europe. She then describes the history of hospitals, medical schools and medicine in the US. She doesn't turn towards the conspiracy to kill Lincoln till later. Emily's best friend is Annie Surratt, the daughter of Mary Surratt who was hung for her part in the conspiracy to murder Lincoln. Students will see this part of history through a different point of view, not just learning about it through their textbook.

I also think students will relate with Emily, because she wants to see the good in everything. She wants to believe the world is a good place. She judges her Uncle for something she believes is horrible and doesn't understand because of her young, innocent age. Then the reader sees her grow as into a young lady, where she isn't so innocent anymore. Emily realizes the world isn't perfect and she shouldn't have judged her Uncle, because he was snatching dead bodies to help medical science and save more lives during a horrible time of war. At the end of Ann Rinaldi's book, she has questions for teachers to discuss with their students.

This will make it easy to have literature circles with students. This book relates to my content area because it is a historical fiction book. Ann Rinaldi has taken many facts from history and put them in a wonderful fiction book. If I was a teacher of History, I could relate this to our unit on the Civil War around the end of it when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. This book takes a look at the Surratt Family and how they were involved with John Wilkes Booth. This is usually a glimpse of history many students don't know about. I don't remember learning this when I was in school.

I think kids are interested in anything related to death, and this book is full of it. They will learn about Lincoln's assassination, the hanging of Mary Surratt, and how doctors snatched dead bodies to benefit medical science. This book ties a lot of factual information to the Civil War, and it is interesting to read. I think this is a way to supplement the main textbook, to give kids a different perspective of the war. Many of our discussions in class have centered on supplementing the main text. I think by adding interesting books about what they are studying will make them want to learn more about that era.

So by picking this book that tells about a girl in the time of the Civil war, they will see certain aspects of that time period in a different way. They will be able to relate to it more because this girl is around their age. They will be seeing it through her eyes. I think this is so important when teaching, because I want kids to be excited to learn about history. I think to do that you have to find some way to relate it to them. Having kids around that age, I have found that they don't care about it if it doesn't relate to them, or they can't understand it, or it's boring. I know a lot in school will be boring to them.

That is why it's important to find certain things to " jazz" up the lesson. After reading this book, I found myself wanting to learn if doctors in that time really had to snatch bodies to study on. I think this book will be a way to get them interested in studying certain parts of the Civil War. I think they will want to learn more after reading this book. The two main activities that I could use in my classroom that relate to the book, are Literature Circles and List-Group-Label. I will introduce the book with the List-Group-Label activity to see what prior knowledge the students have.

By doing this activity first it gets them thinking about the Civil War Era and discussing it. I hope for some students they will learn things they might not have know before the discussion. Then during the time that we are reading the book, I will have them split into groups every Friday and do literature circles. I will have discussion sheets that they will have to fill out as a group. This will give them a chance to learn from eachother and give them a since ofresponsibility. I think these activities will work well together in creating a fun unit.