

Unit Plan for *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen

Group or Individual Projects

- What is the [Endangered Species Act of 1973](#)? Can you determine what impact the act has had on the environment since it was implemented in 1973? Have there been changes in the act since it was passed by Congress and signed by the President of the United States? Consult the Endangered Species Program at <http://endangered.fws.gov/> to determine what species of wildlife are endangered in Wisconsin. What are some endangered species of plants and animals in other parts of the United States, the world?
- What is a burrowing owl? Find out as much information as you can on the burrowing owl from various web sites and library books. Bring in a photo of this species of owl. Click on <http://raysweb.net/specialplaces/pages/owl.html> to start your research.
- There are hundreds of environmental impact statements across the United States. (Click on <http://www.epa.gov/eftpages/envienvIRONMENTALIMPACTSTATEMENT.html> to get an idea of the purpose of the impact statements.) Examine one impact statement that you find on the web and write a one-paragraph summary of it. Think of an environmental issue in your own area that may benefit from an environmental impact study. For example, what would be the environmental impact of an asphalt company being built at Brice Prairie, Wisconsin? Or what would be the environmental impact of a new expressway from La Crosse to Onalaska through the marshes?
- Read *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee. Present to the class a scene from the play. After the presentation share with the class why you chose this scene and what you learned from the play. You may want to consider what “costumes” would be appropriate for this type of production. Or you may consider performing a “readers’ theatre.”
- Who was Henry David Thoreau? Look at a variety of web sites on Thoreau (starting with <http://www.walden.org/thoreau/>). Prepare a panel discussion on Thoreau—include in your panel discussion Thoreau’s life, his literature, his political views, and his environmental views.
- Many times in our nation’s history citizens have engaged in “civil disobedience” when they believed that their rights were being denied or when they believed that the application of the civil laws was unjust. Do some research on America’s history with civil disobedience and report to the class what you find.
- Civil Disobedience has also been a part of international movements. Do additional research on other countries’ participation in non-violence to bring about social or political change. Report to the class what you find.

Discussion Questions

- Choose one passage from the book that you really enjoyed. Be prepared to read the passage and explain to the class why you enjoyed the passage. Consider the following: How did passage help to develop the plot? How did the passage help to develop a character? How did the passage cause you to think about something that you hadn’t considered previously?

- Roy is bullied by Dana, and he is threatened by Beatrice. How does Roy respond to both examples of bullying? How do others respond to bullying—the school administrators, the parents, the students?
- How are parents and other “authority figures” represented in this book? For example, what do you think of the parents, the police officers, the school teachers and administrators, and the business leaders?
- What is more important, a burrowing owl or Mother Paula’s All-American Pancake House? The pancake house will bring jobs to the community and offer a good breakfast at a good price for the townspeople! What value does a burrowing owl have to Coconut Cove?
- Symbols in literature stand for or suggest something larger and more complex than the actual object. For example, the burrowing owl is interesting in its own right, but doesn’t the author use the owl to represent something more than the owl? List **five** possible symbols in this novel. Discuss what you feel the symbols represent.
- Is Hiaasen having fun with the names he chooses for his characters? How do the characters’ names help us to understand their personalities?
- Were you happy with the ending of *Hoot*? Why do you think Hiaasen did not have Mullet Fingers find a happy home for himself?
- When did you say, “Wow!” while you were reading *Hoot*? Record the page number of the scene that you thought was the most powerful. Tell the class why you chose that scene.
- List in chronological sequence the ten most important events in the story.
- Mullet Fingers commits various acts of violence in this book. Are those acts of violence justified? Why? Discuss when an act of violence is justified and when it is not. Also consider what types of violence you feel are appropriate when you feel violence is necessary.
- How do you think Roy would respond to this statement by Thoreau in *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*: “What’s the use of a house if you haven’t got a tolerable planet to put it on? Did you know that trees cry out in pain when they’re cut? I’ve heard them. But what bells in town toll for them? We prosecute men for abusing children; we ought to prosecute them for maltreating nature.”
- Click here for 15 discussion questions from <http://www.viterbo.edu/uploadedFiles/academics/letters/english/HootDiscussionQuestionsScholastic.pdf>

Writing Activities

- List five of the major characters in this book. Write a descriptive paragraph about each character. Choose one character that you thought changed in the book. Write a paragraph describing that change. Include in that paragraph what prompted the character to change and what you think about the change.
- Keep a journal as you read *Hoot*. Include in your journal entries some of the following: (1) your first impressions of the characters or the book in general; (2) similar experiences you have had with school, friends, bullies, or the environment; (3) similarities between this book and another movie, book, or short story you have read recently; (4) list some

questions you would like to ask Roy or the author; (5) note the page number of important passages or striking images and then comment on those parts of the book.

- There are many examples of vandalism in *Hoot*. List several of the acts of vandalism. Record the page numbers where the acts are described. Arrange the acts from “most serious” to “least serious.”
- Write a letter to Roy. Tell Roy what you thought of him and his experiences.
- Write a letter to your local newspaper about an environmental issue that concerns you.
- Write a poem about the book, its characters, or themes.

Class Activities

- Service Projects: Neighborhood clean up; collection of aluminum cans; recycling campaign; collection of clothing for Good Will or Salvation Army, etc.
- Take a walk through your schoolyard. What do you see? Collect all the garbage that you see on the school grounds. Weigh the garbage. Where does most of the garbage come from? What can the school do to improve the appearance?
- Design a bulletin board around *Hoots* – on recycling, endangered species, etc.
- Compose a bumper sticker that you think would be appropriate for the themes and characters in *Hoot*.
- Draw a picture of an important scene in the book. Be prepared to discuss with the class why you chose this scene.
- Visit a nearby zoo or park. Record in a journal what you learn from the visit.
- Visit a nearby landfill. Record in your journal what you learned from the visit.
- Visit the Aldo Leopold Family Farm outside of Baraboo, Wisconsin. Report what you learn from the visit.

Teachers’ Resources:

- Carl Hiaasen’s Home Page: <http://www.carlhiaasen.com>
- Home Page for the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute <http://library.osu.edu/finding-aids/special-collections/LandL.html>
- Home Page for the Aldo Leopold Foundation <http://www.aldoleopold.org/>
- <http://www.epa.gov/>
- Grant T. Smith’s Home Page <http://www.viterbo.edu/facpages.aspx?id=587>