



Brothers of the Fire Star

Core Curriculum Standards-Based Study Guide

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Overview

Version 2.0 – January 1, 2016

Brothers of the Fire Star: Literature Guide

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About this Literature Guide

I was very gratified by the reception my novel, *Brothers of the Fire Star*, received from editors, my publisher, and from reviewers. Most important to me, however, was the enthusiastic response of teachers and young-adult readers. It was suggested by an educator, in fact, that I develop a study guide so the book could be more easily used in the classroom, and so I set about to do just that. Having spent thirty-two years working closely with classroom teachers in the public schools as a speech-language pathologist, I was no stranger to the demands of core curriculum standards. I am thankful, too, to have had Jennifer Scarborough as a consultant on this project. With her M.Ed. in Curriculum and fifteen years of teaching experience, her input was invaluable.

This guide differs from other commercially available literature guides in two important ways. First, it was developed by the actual author of the book rather than by a separate company. Second, it is free. You simply need to visit my website, www.douglasarvidson.com, and go the page labeled, “Teachers” Study Guide for *Brothers of the Fire Star*.” You can print out the whole guide or just those pages you need.

I hope this guide will be easy to use. There are forty-four chapters and an Epilogue with each chapter being three to five pages long. A student should be able to read a chapter a day and I have organized the activities so that they will last nine weeks—five chapters each week. As you can see in the Table of Contents, each chapter has a section devoted to vocabulary, comprehension, and the core standards. Additionally, at the end, there are chapter comprehension and vocabulary quizzes and a final test. Where possible, I encourage teachers to have students work together cooperatively in small groups rather than individually.

One of the wonderful benefits of having been an educator and being an author who developed the study guide for his own book, is that I can communicate with teachers directly. I will always consider this guide to be a work in progress; we will continue to seek to improve and expand its contents and notify users of these changes via my website or my newsletters. If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions, please feel free to connect with me via email: darvid46@yahoo.com. It is good to know that if you, as educators, feel that there are changes or improvements that can be made to the guide, I can make those changes immediately via the website.

A Word About Lexile Measure

Brothers of the Fire Star received a Lexile Measure of 900L. The Lexile Measure of the book is based on an analysis of word frequency and sentence length but not the book’s content; that is, not the ideas or themes expressed by those words and sentences. The reading levels of students vary widely despite their grade placement. A Lexile Measure of 900 means that this book may be appropriate for students as low as the 5th or 6th grade. However, it may also be appropriate for students in the 10th or 11th grades. The content/interest range will certainly include middle school, high school, and adult readers.

Name _____ Period _____

Core Standard: Author Biography

Douglas Arvidson

Douglas Arvidson was born on November 25, 1946 in Passaic, New Jersey. Until the age of ten he lived in a rural setting and helped around the neighbor's farm. In 1957 he moved with his family to a small farm in the Berkshire hills of Massachusetts. Here the family had chickens, pigs, cows, horses, and big vegetable garden. Arvidson spent a great deal of his spare time exploring the surrounding forest with his dog and as soon as he was old enough, he joined the local Boy Scout troop. His experiences on the farm and in Scouting resulted in a powerful attachment to the out of doors and a strong urge to seek adventure.

Arvidson also loved reading, especially adventure books by Jack London. When he was in sixth grade, his first short story was published in the school newspaper and his teacher's positive comments about his writing left a lasting impression.

After graduating from high school, he attended college in Boston, studying radio and television broadcasting, but left to join the Army during the Viet Nam War. After serving in the Signal Corps in the Republic of China for three years, he returned to school and finished both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Communication Disorders. He then began his career as a public school speech-language pathologist.

For the next thirty-two years, Arvidson and his wife lived and taught in Virginia, the Florida Keys (where he learned to sail), and around the world including two years in Iceland, twelve years in Germany, and eleven years on Guam in the western Pacific. During this time, he traveled widely in Europe, Russia, and Asia and concentrated on learning the craft of writing. In 1994 his first commercially-published short story appeared in a literary magazine in Minnesota and in 1997 he won the WICE/*Paris Transcontinental* International Short Story competition in Paris. His short fiction has also been published in other literary magazines in the United States and in Europe. Most recently his work has appeared in *The Prague Revue*, a cutting-edge, online, literary journal based in the Czech Republic where he is now a regular contributor.

In 2006 his novel, *The Face in Amber*, was released and was followed by two more books in the *Eye of the Stallion* fantasy-adventure series. *Brothers of the Fire Star* was published in October 2012 to enthusiastic reviews.

Arvidson currently divides his time between a small town on the Eastern Shore of Virginia and the island of Guam. He continues to sail, travel, and write.

Name _____ Period _____

Core Standard: Expository Writing—Author Biography

Directions: Read the biography of Douglas Arvidson and answer the questions by choosing the best answer.

1. _____ Why do you think it is important to know about the life of an author?
 - a. to understand the influences that shaped his or her writing
 - b. to find out where he learned to sail
 - c. to find out what countries he has lived in
 - d. to find out when he started writing

2. _____ What experiences do you think encouraged Douglas Arvidson to want to be a writer?
 - a. learning to sail while living in Florida
 - b. his love of reading and his teacher's praise for his first story
 - c. exploring the forest with his dog
 - d. traveling around the world

3. _____ Why were his experiences as a Boy Scout important to his writing?
 - a. Because he learned how to tie knots.
 - b. Because he did a lot of hiking.
 - c. He enjoyed the adventures that Scouting offered.
 - d. He made a lot of friends.

4. _____ Why do you think writing short stories was important in Douglas Arvidson's development as a writer?
 - a. By writing short stories he became a better writer.
 - b. Writing short stories did not pay very well.
 - c. He enjoyed getting published.
 - d. He liked traveling to Paris.

Name _____ Period _____

Critical Thinking: Introduction

Directions: *Read the following essay and then form groups to discuss your answers to the questions that follow. Use a map of the Pacific Ocean to locate the islands and countries that are referred to. Write your answers in the space provided.*

The author includes an introduction to *Brothers of the Fire Star* to provide the reader with background information that is important for understanding the book. In the introduction, Douglas Arvidson refers to three topics: World War II, the navigation skills developed by ancient Pacific island seafarers, and the affect that the arrival of the Spanish in the western Pacific over five hundred years ago had on the people and culture of the islands.

World War II: The war in the Pacific, which was part of a wider world war that included Europe and Africa, was fought from December 1941 until September 1945, when the Empire of Japan, seeking to expand its economic and military influence, attacked the United States. The Allied powers, including military forces of the United States, Australia, the Republic of China, the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth of the Philippines, as well as the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Canada, joined forces against Japan. The war, which took the lives of millions of people, ended with Japan's defeat.

Traditional Navigation: Some three to four thousand years ago, people from Southeast Asia, most likely from the northern Philippines or eastern Indonesia, began sailing their proas or canoes eastward into the vast Pacific Ocean. To find their way among the thousands of islands that dot the Pacific, they learned to use what nature provided: the stars, sea life, sea birds, ocean waves, winds, and clouds. This method of navigation required many years of study and, because the people at the time had no written language, the knowledge was memorized and passed down orally from generation to generation. Possessing the knowledge of how to navigate gave a person much power and authority and that knowledge was protected and considered secret; only a relatively few men were chosen to learn it.

The Arrival of the Spanish: In 1295, over seven hundred years ago, an Italian explorer, Marco Polo, brought back to Europe tales of the riches to be found in the Far East. Because travel over the land routes was slow and dangerous, European countries started looking for ways to sail there across the vast oceans. This eventually resulted in ships from Spain finding their way to the western Pacific. In 1521 Spanish ships led by the Portuguese captain, Ferdinand Magellan, arrived in what is now the Mariana Islands. Within the next few hundred years, the Spanish colonized the islands, imposing their culture and religion on the people. The people of the islands resisted but were defeated by the superior Spanish weapons. The Spanish sought to subjugate the people by destroying their culture and this resulted in the loss of the ancient and secret skill of navigation. The secrets of the ancient Pacific navigators did survive in the Caroline Islands south of the Marianas, however, and are still taught and used there today.

Introduction: Comprehension Check

(You may refer back to the essay to help you with the answers.)

1. Why does an author sometimes include an Introduction to his or her book?

2. When was World War II fought? Why did Japan attack the United States?

3. Why did the Spanish start sailing around the world and across the Pacific? What was the effect of the Spanish influence on the peoples of the Mariana Islands?

Name _____ Period _____

Introduction: Vocabulary

Directions: Form groups and split these terms up among the groups. Each group will find the meanings of the terms assigned to them and report to the class.

1. World War II
2. Brotherhood
3. Self-reliant
4. Universe
5. Pacific Ocean
6. Atolls
7. Archipelagos
8. Navigation
9. Wayfinding
10. Global Positioning System (GPS)
11. Ancient
12. Ferdinand Magellan
13. Indigenous
14. Guahan
15. Mariana Islands
16. Pearl Harbor
17. Spirits of the ancestors

Name _____ Period _____

The Proa: A Carolinian Voyaging Canoe—*The author provides a drawing of the type of canoe sailed in the book. As a class or in groups, look carefully at the drawing and, using the Internet or local resources, research the following terms:*

1. Carolinian (as it refers to islands in the Pacific)
2. Proa
3. Stays (as they refer to sailboats)
4. Shrouds (as they refer to sailboats)
5. Outrigger
6. Tam
7. Hull
8. Eye
9. Sail
10. Spars

Name _____ Period _____

Core Standard: Understanding Genre

Historical Fiction

Books are written in a certain “genre.” Genre means a specific style or category of writing such as fantasy, science fiction, young adult, mystery, etc. *Brothers of the Fire Star* falls in the genre called “historical fiction.” Below are the characteristics of the historical fiction genre:

1. Historical setting—Historical fiction has an authentic setting with historically correct details concerning political, social, and religious history.
2. Historically accurate characters—The people in historical fiction books should look, act, and dress like the people of that historical era.
3. Plausibility—Historical fiction should depict the values and prejudices of that historical era.
4. Accuracy—Historical fiction avoids distorting history for the sake of political correctness or cultural sensitivities of the current time.
5. Artistic License—Historical fiction should not change historical fact. But reasonable changes for the sake of character development or plot are acceptable.

Discussion: Brothers of the Fire Star is set during World War II when the Americans and their allies were fighting the nations of Germany and Japan. The world was very different then. In keeping with the historical fiction genre, the author accurately depicts the Japanese invasion of Guam as brutal and the Japanese soldiers as merciless. How have the Japanese people changed? How is the government of Japan different now than in 1941?