

BOOKNOTES

EDUCATORS GUIDE

classroom connections

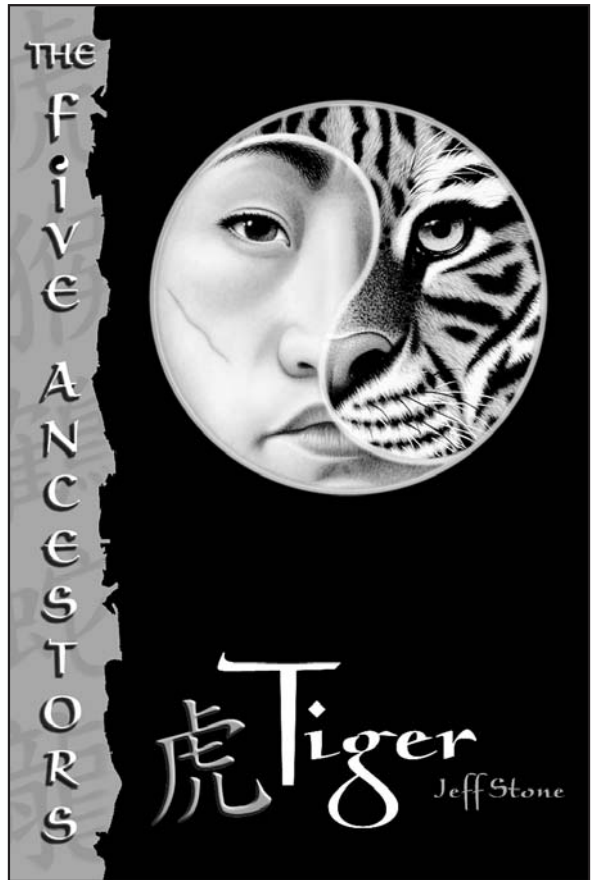
Courage • Family • Loyalty
Trust • Revenge
Cultural Diversity

Grades 6 up

about the book

It's 1650 China when Cangzhen Temple is betrayed by a former monk and destroyed, the grandmaster's life is taken, the secret scrolls are stolen, and one hundred warrior monks are killed. Fu and his four brothers escape and set out on a quest to avenge their fallen brothers and regain the temple's stolen scrolls. But success lies in understanding their pasts, and Fu, Malao, Seh, Hok, and Long are orphans with no knowledge of their true origins. The secrets they uncover will forever change not only their future, but the future of all of China.

When China's Cangzhen Temple is destroyed, only five young warrior monks survive. Each is named after an animal—tiger, monkey, snake, crane, dragon—for each is the youngest-ever master of that animal's fighting style. The five scatter and begin teaching not only their formidable fighting skills, but also their peaceful philosophy of life. It is said that today's martial arts come from the teachings of these five young warrior monks, who are known in legend as . . . THE FIVE ANCESTORS.



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pre-reading activity

Kung fu is an ancient martial art with which most students are familiar. First ask the students to write down what they think they know about this martial art. Then, have them investigate the history of kung fu and its role in today's society. Instruct them to write one or two facts they learn on index cards. As a class, categorize the information and post the index cards on a web bulletin board. Make plans to refer back to the web during the reading of the novel and to discuss consistencies and inconsistencies of the students' thoughts on kung fu with the information obtained and the information in the novel.



thematic connections

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Courage—When the attack on the temple begins, the grandmaster helps the brothers to hide in a water barrel, which prevents them from being killed. Furious, Fu complains and chides his brothers for their lack of bravery and unwillingness to fight. But the brothers are obedient to the grandmaster and do as he asks, trusting that he knows what is best for them. Ask students if they think Fu's brothers are any less courageous than Fu. How does Fu's courage get him into trouble? Is it possible to be both courageous and obedient at the same time? How?

Family—Even though the brothers are adopted and, as far as they know, not related by blood, they are willing to risk their lives for one another. Ask students how they think these bonds were formed. Why does Ying not feel the same bond with his five brothers? What effect does his betrayal have on them? Have students explain why they think it is particularly devastating when someone in their family betrays them.

Loyalty—The five brothers are fiercely loyal to each other and their grandmaster. How is loyalty of this degree achieved? Is it due to specific actions of the grandmaster? Or is it a result of the character of each brother? Ask students if they have ever been in a situation where their loyalty was tested. Who are they loyal to and why?

Trust—Tonglong, a soldier of Ying's, says, "If you do not trust people, you make them untrustworthy." (p. 125) What does he mean by this statement? How does it apply to Ying and his situation? In what situation does Fu not trust, and what does it cost him? How could you apply this statement to your own life?

Revenge—Ying's motivation for murdering Grandmaster is hate. (p. 43) His desire for revenge fuels his hatred and causes the death of many soldiers and one hundred warrior monks. Ask students to look at American history and find examples of destruction that are the result of revenge. What can be done about such violence? How does violence change the attitude of the offender? Who is hurt most by acts of revenge?

connecting to the curriculum

Social Studies—The Chinese calendar differs markedly from the Western calendar. Ask students to investigate and record facts of interest regarding the history of and legend behind the Chinese calendar. Then, in small groups, have students design and illustrate a Chinese calendar to display in the classroom.

Tiger takes place in 1650 AD, the Year of the Tiger. Have students research the “animal year” in which they were born and the history of that year.

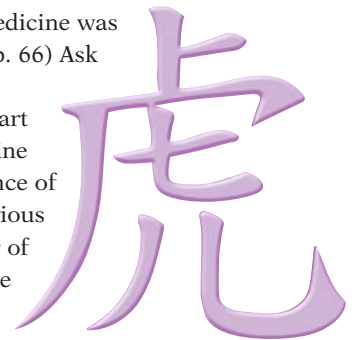
History—*Tiger* is set in the 17th century in Henan Province, China. Ask students to locate Henan Province and research the history of the area. Have students record their findings on “ancient” scrolls to be displayed in the classroom. Use them as a catalyst to discuss how novelists use research to weave fact with fiction in historical novels.

Language Arts—Have students form groups and write a collaborative narrative focusing on 17th-century China, weaving this fiction with facts from the “ancient” scrolls they made above. Students should include a historical setting, well-developed characters appropriate to the time period, a timely problem/conflict, plot complications, and a resolution to the problem or conflict. Have students share their historical narratives with the class.

Fu is on an emotional roller coaster throughout this story. Ask students to examine the situations he encounters throughout the book and then make a list of the emotions he experiences in each. Ask students to write a poem about one or more of these experiences. Or have students select one experience and prepare a cartoon strip that reflects the range of emotions in a humorous manner.

Science—The six young monks adopted and raised by the grandmaster are each named after a different animal. Divide the class into six groups and assign each group one of the monks and the animal they’re named after: Fu/tiger, Malao/monkey, Seh/snake, Hok/crane, Long/dragon, Ying/eagle. Ask students to study the characteristics of each animal to determine the personality of its corresponding warrior monk. Students can write a one paragraph description of each animal and then predict how the warrior monk will act and react based on that description.

Fu says that “herbal medicine was a matter of survival.” (p. 66) Ask students to pair up and investigate the ancient art of herbs used in medicine and the recent resurgence of the use of herbs for various ailments. Ask each pair of students to choose three to five herbs. On individual index cards, have students list both the common and scientific names of the herb, explain its use, and draw a picture. Collect all the cards and bind them together with a ring to make a booklet.



vocabulary/ use of language

Each character is referred to according to the animal he represents. For example, Fu the tiger is referred to as a kitten and a pussycat. Ask students to list each character by his animal name and then list other names by which they could be called. Discuss positive and negative connotations of the various names. Have students write a character description of one of the brothers.

behind the five ancestors . . .

It is legend in China that around the year 1650, Shaolin Temple was attacked by the Emperor's troops with the assistance of a renegade, former monk. Five adult monks escaped, including a nun who was famous for her crane-style Kung Fu skills. The five monks separated and formed three resistance groups, which collectively became known as the Triads. Some call these five monks The Five Ancestors. Obviously, this legend was key in the development of The Five Ancestors series. (Note: The concept of "five" monks escaping is highly suspect because the number five has special meaning in kung fu. It takes five fingers to form a fist.)

It is a fact that, at the time The Five Ancestors series takes place, there was a major shift in power in China. Foreigners from the North (Manchu), swept down into China and took the throne, making one of their own the new Emperor. Similarly, in The Five Ancestors series, a foreign force will attempt to sweep into China with the aid of some surprising double agents. The efforts of the five boys to avenge the attack on their temple and find their birth parents will ultimately have a tremendous impact on the entire nation.

internet resources

Chinese New Year

www.new-year.co.uk/chinese/calendar.htm

An explanation of the Chinese calendar

The 5 Shaolin Animal Styles and Their Sub-Species

www.shaolin.com.au/animal.html

An explanation of animal kung fu

History of the Shaolin Temples

www.shaolin.com/page.asp?content_id=1007

Includes history of the temples and a timeline

Master Xing Du, Kung Fu Warrior Monk, from the Songshan Shaolin Temple, China

<http://beifan.com/059kungfu/page01.html>

Pictures of kung fu positions



about the author

Jeff Stone lives in the Midwest with his wife and two children and practices the martial arts daily. In addition to having been a college instructor, he has worked as a photographer, an editor, a maintenance man, a technical writer, a ballroom dance instructor, a concert promoter, and a marketing director for companies that design schools, libraries, and skateboard parks. *Tiger* is his first novel.

Like the Five Ancestors, Mr. Stone was adopted as an infant. He began searching for his birth mother when he was 18 and found her 15 years later. One day when they were having lunch, she surprised him by pulling a wooden box from her handbag. She told him she had made it and filled it with items for him 34 years earlier, while living in a home for unwed mothers. It contained mementos such as photos of her and Jeff's birth father, and poems she had written for her unborn son.

on the web

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