

The World Of Dormia

TEACHER'S GUIDE

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES THAT EXPLORE THEMES OF DORMIA

(A)

Have your students stage a courtroom scene in which Bilblox is being tried for the crime of using the purple ash of a Dormian Bloom. Have students form teams of prosecution and defense. The prosecution should explore and stress the environmental morals that lie at the core of Dormia's society. If one person is allowed to burn the plant, what is to prevent another person from doing the same? How many exceptions can and should be made? If too many exceptions are made, the Founding Tree will be destroyed. Also, once a person is addicted to the Purple Ash, is it possible to break that addiction? Can Alfonso, or anyone else for that matter, really trust Bilblox? After all, Bilblox broke his promise to stay away from the purple ash not once, but twice. The students who form Bilblox's defense should stress and explore the idea that Dormia is a just society and it cannot condemn a person simply because they made a mistake or were accidentally exposed to an addictive substance. The Dormian treatment of the Gahnos was horrible. Hasn't Dormia, as a society, learned from this horrible event of the past? Besides, shouldn't there be special circumstances for which exceptions can be made?

(B)

Hold a discussion in which students, playing the roles of Dormians, debate whether or not Resuza should be allowed to stay in Dormia once Alfonso has departed. Those who argue she should be allowed to stay could stress the fact that she helped defend Somnos in its hour of need and that she is now the adopted niece of Hill. Those who say that she should stay could argue that she is a traitor, never to be trusted. Both sides should consider whether Resuza would ever truly belong in a society where she is so fundamentally different from everyone else.

(C)

Have students write short stories about what happens to Uncle Hill in his new life in Dormia.

(D)

This book revolves around a magical tree, known as a “Founding Tree,” which has incredible powers to turn barren soil into rich earth. When the tree is burned, however, its ash can be used to bestow immortality to those who rub the ash into their eyes. There is, of course, a fierce battle between good and bad that ensues over this tree. In real life, can we think of examples of how human beings may sometimes commit evils in their greed to extract and monopolize natural resources?

(E)

Dormia takes place over a vast span of territory. Use Alfonso’s journey to point out some of the geography and history of this territory. Three specific examples:

- 1) Fort Krasnik is loosely based on the early Russian occupation of what is now Alaska’s Panhandle. The current town of Sitka still retains a great deal of Russian heritage
- 2) Vice-Admiral Purcheezie’s relative, Nils A.E. Nordenskjold, is a real person. He was the first explorer to sail through the Northeast Passage along the northern coast of Europe and Asia. The search for a Northern Route from the Pacific to the Atlantic remains one of the dreams of shipping companies and navies.
- 3) The Urals are filled with folktales about the precious stones that could be taken from the mountains, especially malachite – a popular green mineral.