The Bronze Bow

By Elizabeth George Speare

Note about this lesson: Question numbers and reference numbers in parentheses refer to the complete Socratic List, which is included in the course syllabus of the Center for Literary Education’s flagship seminar, Teaching the Classics: A Socratic Method for Literary Education.

The Socratic List may aid you for this study. If you are not familiar with it, you can simply disregard the numbers and use the study below question by question at your own pace. (More can be learned at http://www.centerforlit.com/.)

Questions about Structure: Setting

Where does this story happen?

When does this story happen?

Questions about Structure: Characters

Who is the story about? (Protagonist)

Who else is the story about?

Is there a character or characters that oppose the protagonist in the story?

In what way is he antagonistic? What goal of the protagonist is he opposed to? (4.b., c.)

Questions about Structure: Conflict and Plot

What does the protagonist want, and why can’t he have it?

What other problems are there in the story?

How is the main problem solved?

How does the story end?
Questions about Structure: Theme

What does the protagonist learn?

What do the other characters learn?

What is the main idea of the story?

Questions about Style: Literary Devices

Does the author use descriptions and comparisons to create pictures in the reader’s mind?

Speare uses Similes to create imagery (16.d.)

She uses Metaphors to create imagery. (16.h., i., j., k., l.)

Does the author use the characters and events in her story to communicate a theme that goes beyond them in some way?

She uses Allusions to weave her tale. (17.f.)

She uses Foreshadowing to heighten tension (17.h., i., j.)

She uses Symbolism to emphasize the story’s themes (17.k., l.)

Questions about Context: The Author’s Life and Times

Who is the author?

When did the author live?

Essay Questions for Writing Assignments:

1. What is the theme of The Bronze Bow? How does E.G. Speare make use of symbolism to spotlight the truths which underlie the story? What does Daniel mean when he ponders whether it is possible that “only love could bend the bow of bronze”?
2. In what manner does this story demonstrate the truth of Hebrews 12:15? Support your answer with quotes from the text. Is this relevant to your life?

3. In accepting the Newbery Award for The Bronze Bow, Elizabeth George Speare said, “I believe that all of us who are concerned with children are committed to the salvaging of Love and Honor and Duty…Those of us who have found Love and Honor and Duty to be a sure foundation must somehow find words which have the ring of truth.” In what ways are the ideals of love, honor, and duty reflected in Speare’s novel? Do they have “the ring of truth?”

4. Compare and contrast the two kingdoms at war in The Bronze Bow. That is, compare the kingdom Daniel awaited with the kingdom Simon recognizes to be invisibly present in the person of Jesus.

5. Research the history of the nation of Israel leading up to the period of the Roman occupation of Jerusalem, and immediately following it. How is the tension experienced by zealots like Daniel finally resolved?

6. Research the biblical allusions Speare makes in the story. Compare and contrast them to their New Testament references.

7. Compare and contrast the character Jesus Speare creates in her story with the New Testament person of Jesus. Was Speare true to the historic person of Jesus in her story?

8. One of the struggles the main character endures involves understanding the role of responsibility in his life. Demonstrate this with textual references. What does Daniel learn?

9. Describe the role of grace in Daniel’s deliverance

**Story Charts**

The following pages contain story charts of the type presented in the live seminar *Teaching the Classics*. As is made clear in that seminar, a separate story chart may be constructed for each of the conflicts present in a work of fiction. In particular, the reader’s decision as to the climax and central themes of the plot structure will depend upon his understanding of the story’s central conflict. As a result, though the details of setting, characters, exposition, and conclusion may be identical from analysis to analysis, significant variation may be found in those components which appear down the center of the story chart: Conflict, Climax, and Theme. This of course results from the fact that literary interpretation is the work of active minds, and differences of opinion are to be expected – even encouraged!

For the teacher’s information, one story chart has been filled in on the next page. In addition, a blank chart is included to allow the teacher to examine different conflicts in the same format.