

FOR USE
WITH COMMON
CORE STATE
STANDARDS

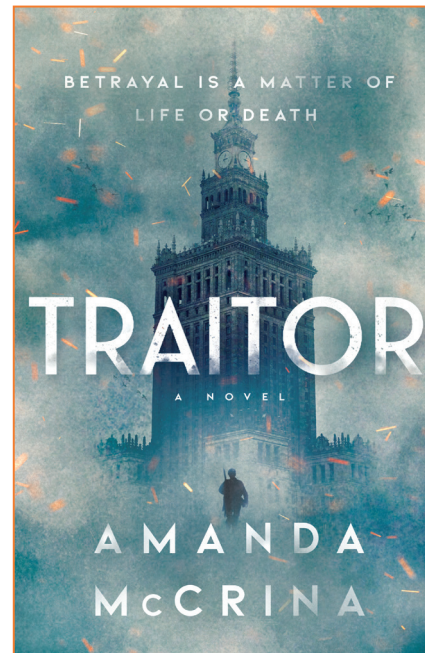
A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR TRAITOR

ABOUT THE BOOK

Poland, 1944. After the Soviets liberate Lwów from Germany, the city remains a battleground between resistance fighters and insurgent armies, its loyalties torn between Poland and Ukraine.

Seventeen-year-old Tolya Korolenko is half Ukrainian and half Polish, and he joined the Soviet Red Army to keep himself alive and fed. When he not quite accidentally shoots his unit's political officer in the street, he's rescued by a squad of Ukrainian freedom fighters. They might have saved him, but Tolya doesn't trust them. He especially doesn't trust Solovey, the squad's war-scarred young leader, who has plenty of secrets of his own.

Then a betrayal sends them both on the run. And in a city where loyalty comes second to self-preservation, a traitor can be an enemy or a savior—or sometimes both.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AMANDA McCRINA was homeschooled through high school and graduated from the University of West Georgia with a BA in history and political science and an abiding interest in ancient Rome and the World Wars. For three years, she taught high-school English and government at an international school in Madrid, Spain, and is now a bookseller in Franklin, Tennessee. Her paternal grandmother was Polish, and she's been interested in the Polish experience during World War II and the Soviet era since high school.

This guide is intended to support your classroom instruction. The standards listed throughout are aligned with the Common Core State Standards for grade eight, but the activities and questions can be applied to multiple grade levels. Please adapt the activities and questions to meet the needs of your students. You know your students better than anyone else!

BEFORE READING

1. Using the Historical Note, create a chronological timeline of events to build background knowledge for the novel. Be sure to include the date, name of event, and historical significance.
CCSS.RH.6-8.3 Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies.
2. Using the map on page xi as a starting point, research the area from 1900 to 1945. Locate other maps that show the history of border changes and its impact on the area of Lviv/Lwów. How do maps show the impact of border changes in an effective way?
CCSS.RH.6-8.5 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

DURING READING

1. “At dusk, Tolya shot his political officer.” Why did the author choose this as the first sentence of the novel? How does it impact the reader to start with action?
CCSS.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
2. In chapter 2, Koval argues that Tolya’s best chance of survival is to run. Do you agree with her assessment? Why or why not?
CCSS.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
3. In chapter 3, Tolya’s true identity is discovered. Why was he so concerned when Solovey found his rosary?
CCSS.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
4. In chapter 4, Solovey presents Tolya with multiple options for his next steps. Which option would be Tolya’s best choice and why?
CCSS.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
5. “*Bolshevik whore! You did this!* My stomach tightened. It was an old idea—that this was all just some Jewish conspiracy, that the Reds were nothing more than Jewish thugs—and it was a stupid one. Jews died with NKVD bullets in their heads just like the rest of us. But it was the kind of idea somebody like Strilka wouldn’t mind using if he thought he could get something out of it, and it was the kind of idea angry, hurting people latched on to, when they couldn’t touch the real culprits but still wanted to feel they could do something” (pages 110–11). Why is Aleksey’s reflection important for the reader to understand?
CCSS.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
6. As Renata Kijek explained about Mykola, “He’s malnourished to the point of starvation. He has all the signs of rickets. We’ll do the testing to be sure, but I can tell you right now that both of you could use vitamin supplements” (page 127). What do you learn about the lifestyles of Aleksey and Mykola as well as the long-term impacts on their health from Renata Kijek’s assessment?
CCSS.RL.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
7. “I closed my eyes again. Whatever it was, I could safely assume it would still be a problem when I woke up. It could wait” (page 151). How does this chapter-ending cliff-hanger impact the reader?
CCSS.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

DURING READING (CONTINUED)

8. On page 177, Solovey and Tolya discover their planned escape isn't going to work. Predict what their next steps will be.
CCSS.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
9. "The Reds killed them," Tolya said. He swallowed against the knot in his throat. His heart was beating loudly in the silence—*thump, thump, thump* against his ribs. He wasn't going to make excuses. What was he going to say—I was hungry in Voronezh? 'I collaborated,' he said. 'I fought for their murderers. I'm the one who betrayed them'" (page 182). Do you agree with Tolya's analysis of his collaboration and subsequent betrayal? Why or why not?
CCSS.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
10. Tolya and Solovey realized they were surrounded and Solovey made the choice to sacrifice himself to save Tolya. Why did Solovey make this choice, and what impact does this have on the reader?
CCSS.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
11. With nowhere else to turn, Mykola seeks out Mrs. Kijek for help. Do you trust Mr. and Mrs. Kijek, or did Mykola make the wrong decision?
CCSS.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
12. "Hate is like hogweed, Father Dmytro would say, *easily seeded, easily spread—but have you ever tried to root out hogweed? And you've got to root it out, because it chokes everything else*" (page 281). Do you agree with Father Dmytro's description of hatred? Should Tolya take his advice? Why or why not?
CCSS.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
13. "I wonder," she said. "How much of that was his fault, and how much of it was ours. Who are you supposed to blame? Who are you supposed to punish? He was the one trying to atone . . . I don't blame you. If I had to blame anybody, I suppose I'd blame myself. My sins are the only ones I'm sure about'" (page 306). Why did Lena respond to Tolya's question this way? Do you agree with her analysis of the situation? Why or why not?
CCSS.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

AFTER READING

1. Research the Brygidki prison massacre and the pogrom that followed using credible sources like yadvashem.org and ushmm.org being sure to utilize both primary and secondary sources. Did the author accurately describe these events in the novel based on your research? Use evidence from the novel and your research to defend your claim.
CCSS.RH.6-8.9 Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.
2. Throughout the novel many secret police and special forces organizations are introduced, including the NKVD, Nachtigallen, SS, and the UPA. Using a free infographic designer like Canva, design an infographic that explains the similarities and differences between two of the four groups listed.
CCSS.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
3. Throughout the novel the themes of betrayal and sacrifice repeat. How do these themes, or others that you discover, connect to any myths, traditional stories, or religious works that you've read before? Analyze these connections using evidence from the novel and another work.
CCSS.RL.8.9 Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.

AFTER READING (CONTINUED)

4. McCrina named this novel *Traitor*. Which character do you think the novel is named for and why? Defend your claim with evidence from the text. If you could change the title of this novel, what would it be?

CCSS.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

5. As the novel progresses the reader discovers how the two plotlines intersect. What is the power of having these intersecting plotlines and characters that appear in both plots?

CCSS.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

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