

The Eighth Day by Dianne K. Salerni

Teaching Guide

Common Core Learning Targets:

1.3.5.A Determine a theme of a text from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic ; summarize the text.

1.3.5.C Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

1.3.5.D Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

1.3.5.E Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

Vocabulary:

Point of View (third person limited)	Protagonist	Antagonist	Exposition	Rising Action
Climax	Falling Action	Resolution	Conflict	Theme

Lesson Suggestions:

Point of View:

- Students should identify Point of View as third person, limited to one character at a time. (Jax for most chapters, Evangeline for some)
- Use the end of Chapter 13 and the beginning of Chapter 14 to demonstrate how the narration shifts from Evangeline’s perspective to Jax’s. Have students note that in Chapter 13 readers are privy to Evangeline’s memories, she does not know Jax has come up behind her until he speaks, she doesn’t know his name, and her inner thoughts are shared. In Chapter 14, the narration shifts to Jax’s perspective. He does not know the girl’s name, he has to guess what she’s thinking based on her actions, and the reader is privy to his inner thoughts instead of hers.
- Analyze how specific events are perceived differently by Jax vs. Evangeline. For example, ask students to describe Jax’s first Grunsday from his perspective (Ch. 3), and then from Evangeline’s account of it (Ch. 5). This can be repeated for the dinner lawn party and Evangeline’s disappearance at midnight (Ch. 19/20) and her reappearance the following

week (Ch. 25), as well as the capture of Jax and Evangeline by Balin (Ch. 29/30) and the first meeting with Wylit (Ch. 33/34).

- Students can also discuss how Riley and Jax perceive events differently, even though the reader is not privy to Riley's inner thoughts, ie: why they are always out of groceries (Ch. 12), whether Riley is keeping secrets from Jax or breaking the news "a little at a time" (Ch. 11), whether Riley is a good guardian or a lousy one.

Protagonist/Antagonist:

- Students should identify Jax as the protagonist. Evangeline can be seen as a secondary protagonist.
- A series of antagonists can be identified in *The Eighth Day*. The first is Riley, although the relationship between him and Jax changes as the story progresses. There are minor, temporary antagonists, such as Giana and her brother, and the bank robber Terrance. The Donovans emerge as antagonists, but this relationship changes when Tegan is taken captive along with Jax.
- The ultimate antagonist is Wylit. Wylit is the reason the eighth day exists, the reason Evangeline is hidden away, and the reason Jax ended up in Riley's care in the first place, since his vassals are responsible for the death of Jax's father.

Plot Structure:

- Have students construct a plot diagram identifying the following parts of the story:
 - Exposition: Main character Jax Aubrey has been placed in the care of a stranger, an eighteen year-old boy who seems to be a very neglectful guardian.
 - Rising Action: Should include key events such as ...
 - Jax's first Grunsday
 - Jax getting a tattoo which results in a magic talent
 - Meeting Evangeline
 - Learning about Riley's past
 - Getting kidnapped by Terrance
 - The Donovans finding Evangeline
 - Jax swears his loyalty to Evangeline
 - Capture by Balin
 - Meeting Lord Wylit
 - Climax (Note: there is a double climax):
 - The battle on the pyramid to rescue Jax and Evangeline
 - Repairing the Eighth Day Spell
 - Falling Action: Riley and Jax have a frank discussion about the events which occurred, Jax's role in them, and Riley's custody of Jax. New arriving enemies are

diverted with lies so that Riley and Jax can meet Evangeline on the pyramid and whisk her away to safety.

- **Resolution:** Jax chooses to stay with Riley and Evangeline rather than return to his cousin's house.
- Discuss the resolution of Jax's custody situation. At the beginning of the story, Jax wants to be rescued from Riley's custody. At the end, Jax chooses to stay with him. Have students identify the key events that impact his decision. Ex: learning about Riley's past, the growth of mutual trust and respect between them, Jax swearing his loyalty to Evangeline, etc.

Conflict:

- The major **external conflict** is the conflict between the Kin (Wylit) who wish to destroy the seven day world and the Transitioners (Riley) who want to preserve it while keeping the Kin trapped in the eighth day.
- Jax's custody situation with Riley begins as an **external conflict**, with Jax placed in the custody of an unsatisfactory guardian against his will. As the story progresses and the reason for this custody is explained, it shifts to an **internal conflict** for Jax. He will be given a choice, eventually, and he must decide whether to return to his Normal cousins or stay with Riley.
- The discovery of the eighth day world and Jax's inquisitor talent also provides an **external conflict**, because Jax must learn the altered rules of his reality and navigate a treacherous world filled with people who want to use him. (ie: Terrance, the Donovans, Balin) But there is also an **internal conflict** for Jax, because he must decide where to place his loyalty, and only after he takes personal responsibility for his actions does he realize who deserves his loyalty and where he wants to be.

Compare/Contrast:

- Have students compare and contrast Jax and Riley. A Venn Diagram can be used to gather facts, then used as support in an open-ended response.
- Students can also compare and contrast Jax as a character in the beginning of the book versus how he has changed (and how he hasn't) by the end. This can include his personality traits, his new abilities, his change in goals, and the way he perceives others.
- EXTENSION: Have students research characters from Arthurian legend and Welsh mythology that are mentioned in *The Eighth Day*. Students can compare the legendary figures to the way the author has twisted the legends for this book. (Ex: King Arthur, Merlin Emrys, Niviane, Sir Balin, Sir Agravain, Myrddin Wylit, Llyr, Arawen, Excalibur, Morgan LeFay, Sir Owain.)

Theme:

- To lead students into a discussion of theme, ask them to reflect on how Jax changes as a character, what he learns about bravery, loyalty, personal responsibility, and friendship.
 - Jax begins as a kid who cannot stick to trombone lessons or astronomy and ends as a loyal vassal who risks his life for his liege lady. What experiences prompted these changes in him?
 - The book begins with Jax chanting, “Riley sucks.” It ends with Jax relying on Riley as a role model. Who changed? Jax? Riley? Both?
 - Jax tries to classify people as the “good guys” and the “bad guys.” Which characters don’t fall easily into one category? Which good guys behave badly? Which bad guys sometimes behave with honor and courage?