



EDUCATORS GUIDE

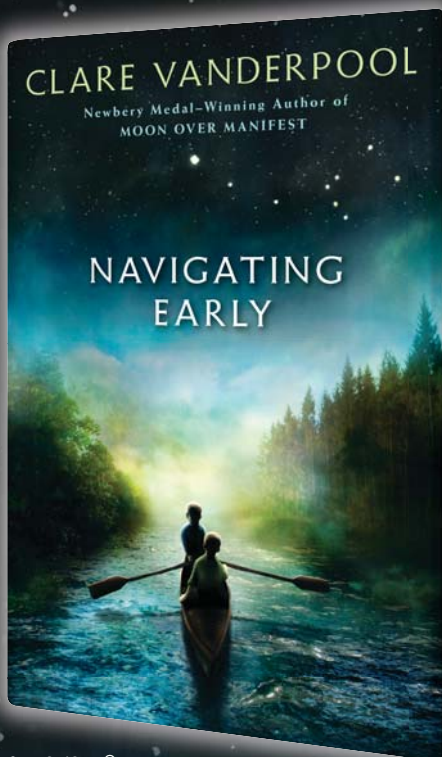
# NAVIGATING EARLY


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# ABOUT THE BOOK



Ages 9–12 • 

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Jack Baker was only nine when his father, a naval officer, went to fight in the European Theater in World War II. Just as the war is winding down, Jack's mother dies and his father returns to collect thirteen-year-old Jack, and deliver him to Morton Hill Academy in Cape Fealty, Maine near the naval base where his father is stationed. Jack is lonely and feels disconnected from his classmates until he meets Early Auden, a strange boy who lives in a janitor's closet. When the two boys are alone at school during fall break, they set out for the Appalachian Trail on a quest to find a great black bear. They encounter a number of strange characters that have lost their way, and eventually discover things about themselves and others.

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Lead a class discussion about the relationship between a protagonist and antagonist of a novel. Have each student write a brief essay about a novel they have read in the past where the antagonist takes a significant role in helping the protagonist resolve an inner conflict. Share the essays in class. Finally, read the Prologue to *Navigating Early*. Who is the protagonist? Who is the antagonist? What one thing do you know about them from reading the Prologue?

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 6.1, 6.2, 6.3; Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 6.3; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 6.1, 6.3; Production and Distribution of Writing W. 6.4.

## QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Explain what Jack means when he says, "You get what you get and you are what you are." (p. 2) Later Jack says, "Somehow Early maintained a sense of direction. He knew who he was and where he was going. I did not." (p. 101) What is Jack's greatest obstacle? What is Jack's direction by the end of the novel?

Jack often refers to being lonely. What is his first twinge of loneliness? Discuss what he could have done upon arrival at Morton Hill to help his situation. How might he interact differently when he arrives back at school after his adventure with Early? Debate whether Early is lonely. What is significant about Early thanking Jack for coming with him?

Discuss how the faculty and students at Morton Hill dismiss Early. Debate whether the school allows him to stay out of loyalty to his dead mother. How are students like Early served in schools today?

Jack ditches Early at the Regatta. Why does he think Early doesn't feel disappointment or pain or being left out? At what point does Jack realize that Early does have these feelings? Morton Hill's motto is "Always Faithful." Discuss how Early understands these words better than Jack? How is Jack dealing with a personal disappointment? Debate whether this excuses his actions. How might Jack live up to the school motto the remainder of his days at Morton Hill?

Early says that the stars are "connected in unexpected ways, just like people." (p. 36). Discuss the unexpected connections between the following characters: Jack, Early, MacScott, Martin, Gunnar, Emmaline, Eustasia Johannsen, Fisher, and Captain Baker. How does each of their stories contribute to the overall quest in the novel?

Jack says, "You can tell a lot about people by what they enshrine." (p. 163) Why does it take Jack so long to learn about Early from what is enshrined in his room? What does Jack learn about Gunnar? Discuss what the trophy case at Morton Hill reveals about Fisher. Describe Jack based on what he enshrines. What might Jack enshrine by the end of his journey?

Gunnar tells the boys that sometimes people think they are looking for something, but are really running away from something instead. At what point does Jack realize that Gunnar is running away? What about Fisher and MacScott? Discuss what Jack is looking for. What is he running away from?

Jack ponders whether "seeking" or "finding" is more important. Why does he believe that his mother would think "seeking" is more important? What might his father believe? Discuss why a person must be willing to "seek" before he can "find." At what point does Jack realize what he is "seeking"?

Explain the parallel story of Pl. Discuss how the story belongs to both Early and Jack. Which boy is more capable of dealing with the conclusion? How do the boys encounter a role reversal at the end of the adventure?

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 6.1, 6.2, 6.3.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

In the Author's Note, Vanderpool says, "By our standards today, Early would be diagnosed with a high-functioning form of autism." As a class, make a list of the behavioral characteristics of a person with a high-functioning form of autism. Which of these characteristics apply to Early? Have students select three of the most pertinent characteristics and write a two-page case study of Early that Jack might write for a psychology textbook

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL 6.1; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 6.2; Production and Distribution W. 6.4, 6.7.

Early has a collection of clippings hanging on a bulletin board in his room. There are specific articles about the Invasion of Normandy and D-day. Why is Early interested in these two important subjects? Use books in the library or sites on the Internet to research these two World War II events. Write a front-page story for a national newspaper titled "D-Day, June 6, 1944." Remember to include who, what, when, where, and how. Download or photocopy old photographs pertinent to the story and include with the article.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading: Informational Text RL 6.1, 6.2; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL 6.7; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: W. 6.4; History/Social Studies: Key Ideas and Details RH 6-8.2, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RH6-8.7.

Jack finds some of his old *Superman*, *Batman* and *Captain America* comics mixed in with the stack of *National Geographic* magazines that he brought to school. In class, discuss the qualities of a superhero. Why does Jack think that Fisher is Early's superhero? Write and illustrate a superhero comic book titled "Fisher" that Jack gives to Early as a gift. Include a dedication page.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL 6.1; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 6.3; Production and Distribution of Writing W. 6.4.

Little was known about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among veterans returning from World War II. Read about the disorder on the following website: [www.helpguide.org/mental/post\\_traumatic\\_stress\\_disorder\\_symptoms\\_treatment.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/post_traumatic_stress_disorder_symptoms_treatment.htm). Debate whether Fisher is suffering from this disorder. What is the best treatment for Post Traumatic Stress? How does Captain Baker convince Fisher to accept help? In small groups, develop a care plan for Fisher based on recommendations from the website. What other characters suffer from Post Traumatic Stress, though not war related?

Correlates to Common Core Standard RL 6.1, 6.2; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL 6.7.

How does Jack figure out that Miss Bellefleur, the Morton Hill librarian, is Gunnar's Emmaline? He hands her Gunnar's letter without explanation. Why does he leave before she reads the letter? Ask for volunteers to portray Jack and Miss Bellefleur. Dramatize a scene where Jack returns to the library and relates Gunnar's personal quest to find peace with his violent past. How does Miss Bellefleur respond to Jack's story?

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details, R.L. 6.1; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration 6.1, 6.2.

Fisher Auden, a 1943 graduate of Morton Hill Academy, was one of the school's most outstanding athletes. The school retired his #67 number and his accomplishments are featured in the school's trophy case. His boat, the *Maine*, is in the Nook. Why is there no plaque memorializing him when he is reported killed in action? Fisher is recovering in a hospital at the end of the novel. Plan a school ceremony for Fisher once he has recovered. Cast Mr. Conrady, the headmaster, as master of ceremonies. Include music chosen by Early. What might Fisher say to the students? How might he thank Early, Jack, and Captain Baker?

Correlates to Common Core Standard Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL 6.3; Presentation of Knowledge and Idea SL 6.4, 6.6.



# LOOKING AT LITERARY ELEMENTS

## THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Making thematic connections: consider the following themes of *Navigating Early*: belonging, friendship, father/son relationship, courage, fear, loneliness, survival and death. In small groups, have students identify scenes that support each theme. Then ask each student to write a brief analytical essay that shows the relationship between several themes. (For example, courage, fear and survival, or belonging, friendship, and loneliness). Make specific reference to scenes or direct quotes in the novel.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details, R.L. 6.2; Writing Text Types and Purposes W 6.1.

## EXPLORING POINT OF VIEW

The novel is told in first person from Jack's point of view. How does this limit the readers' view of Early? Jack refers to Early as "strange." In class, list adjectives that best describe Early as Jack gets to know him better. How does Vanderpool use dialogue to reveal Jack through Early's eyes? Select a partner and identify a scene that best describes the bond that develops between the two boys. Take roles, and read the dialogue aloud in class.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Craft and Structure RL. 6.6; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 6.5.

## FOCUSING ON USE OF LANGUAGE

Jack wishes that he could see what Early sees—"color, landscape, texture, and voice." (p. 125) Explain the following metaphor: "I suppose if color could be sound, I said, these trees would be playing a whole symphony." (p. 127) Select a scene from the novel, like the cave, crossing the river, the night at Gunnar's, or finding Fisher, and write a metaphor that explains how Early sees the scene.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L. 6.5.

## UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER

J  
A  
C  
K  
B  
A  
K  
E  
R

In class, write an acrostic about Jack. Remind students that an acrostic is a poem that spells a word or phrase vertically, based on the first letter of each line.

Have students make a list of the most important characters in the novel. What does Jack, the narrator, reveal about each character. Instruct students to select one character and write an acrostic about each of them.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L.6.1; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing W. 6.4.

## EXAMINING PLOT

The climax of a novel is a dramatic turning point in the story. Have students write a brief essay that discusses the climax of *Navigating Early*. They should defend their opinion by considering the changes that happen within Jack and Early. Engage the class in peer editing for clarity.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 6.1; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 6.3; Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4, 6.5.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clare Vanderpool loves to read, research, and travel. Writing *Navigating Early* gave her the opportunity to do all three. On a research trip to Maine, she explored lighthouses, walked on sandy beaches, visited a boarding school, and even took her own trek on the Appalachian Trail. Vanderpool started reading at the age of five and writing at age six, when her first poem was published in the school newspaper. Her first novel, *Moon Over Manifest*, was awarded the 2011 John Newbery Medal for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children. She lives in Wichita, Kansas, with her husband and four children.

## ALSO BY CLARE VANDERPOOL

### Winner of the Newbery Medal



### Moon Over Manifest

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