

The Countess and Me

TEACHER'S GUIDE



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The Countess and Me

TEACHER'S GUIDE

The Countess and Me is appropriate for most students in grades seven to nine to use for independent reading; literature circles or discussion groups. It can also be used as a whole class novel study to teach reading strategies in the middle grades. For more senior students, *The Countess and Me* can be used to study literary devices such as characterization, irony, thematic development and writer's craft.

The first part of the Teacher's Guide is divided into seven sections. Each section contains guiding questions for pre- and post-reading discussions. These questions are not intended to assess literal comprehension, but rather to extend thinking and to encourage inference. Each section also contains an activity which requires the students to go back into the text to extend thinking or develop reading strategies. These additional activities may be used after each section or at the end of the entire book.

The second part of this Guide contains general activities which focus on the literary elements of the story: characterization, literary devices, vocabulary, plot analysis and story structure. Such exercises can be used at any point during or after the reading. They can also be used with other texts for novel study or short-text reading.

Whether students are reading *The Countess and Me* independently, in small groups or as a whole class, the teacher should read the first chapter aloud to set the stage, introduce the main character and generate interest in the story.

Section I

The Story in Brief

The Countess and Me is the story of a 13-year-old boy who must decide whether to betray the teenage gang whose acceptance he craves or to disappoint the supportive elderly neighbour who believes in him.

Chapter 1: “The Skull”

Jordan Bellemare has just moved with his mother and sister from Winnipeg, Manitoba to Surrey, B.C. He has no friends and is feeling pretty sorry for himself. One evening, he meets an elderly woman who lives down the street. Jordan helps her bury a mysterious quartz skull in her front yard and he is rewarded with an 1886 silver dollar.

Chapter 2: “Detention”

Jordan is given an after-school detention because his homework isn’t done. We are introduced to his teacher, Mrs. Marsinello, who Jordan calls Mrs. Marsbars, and a girl named Jessica who stays after school to write the great Canadian novel. We also meet Cullen’s gang — Cullen Thurston, his brother Geoff and their friends Nick and Ryan — who harass Jordan as he leaves the school.

Chapter 3: “A Summer Job”

The reader is introduced to Countess von Loewen, the neighbour who buried the skull. The Countess hires Jordan to do yard work for her during the summer.

Chapter 4: “Cullen’s Guys”

While Jordan is in a local coffee shop, Nick comes up and asks him for his science homework. Without really thinking, Jordan hands over his notes. Later, during science class, Cullen hands in Jordan’s homework, while Jordan has nothing to submit. He’s ridiculed by the teacher but, after class, Cullen and his friends congratulate Jordan on not “ratting” on them. They give him a ride home in Geoff’s BMW.

Chapter 5: “Always be Careful”

While Jordan is helping Mrs. V. clean her chandelier, we learn more about Mrs. von Loewen and her husband, the Count. The concept of heroism is introduced: Count von Loewen stood up to the Nazis and was killed. Will Jordan ever have the courage to be a hero? Will he be willing to suffer the consequences?

Chapter 6: “Initiations”

Jordan is gradually accepted by the gang. He tells them about Mrs. von Loewen and her supposed wealth. They talk about the “initiation” required to be part of the gang: Cullen stole a leather jacket; Ryan stole a car; Nick “kidnapped” a statue from an exclusive girl’s school. Jordan’s initiation is still to come.

Chapter 7: “A Pool Party”

After being held after school by Mrs. Marsinello, Jordan finally gets to the pool party in Cullen’s backyard. The party is small — the gang and three girls from the senior high school. Jordan is attracted to Kathryn, Ryan’s older sister. He is finally given his initiation task: to bring the quartz head to the gang.

Chapter 8: “A Gift”

Jordan is harassed by his mother about his new friends, especially Cullen, and about his apparent change of attitude. Jordan far prefers the time he spends at Mrs. von Loewen’s house. On his next visit there, the Countess gives him an antique shaving kit that once belonged to her husband. “You are the son I always wanted but did not have,” she tells him.

Chapter 9: “Presenting the Skull”

Jordan digs up the skull. He feels vaguely guilty but manages to rationalize his action. Afterward, he feels ill, takes a nap to recover, and then has a fight with his mother. Storming out of his house, he presents the skull to the gang and a new kid, Mordock. Jordan has passed initiation.

Chapter 10: “Mrs. V.’s Garden Party”

Mrs. von Loewen has a party to celebrate the completion of the garden gazebo Jordan has constructed. Jordan is the guest of honour, of course. His work is praised by his mother and by the other guests. Mrs. von Loewen reveals her only regret — that her son Heinrich hadn’t come. It was to prevent Heinrich from selling the quartz skull that led her to bury it months before.

Chapter 11: “Another Kind of Party”

Cullen and Geoff host an end-of-exams pool party. The skull is placed in an upstairs window, looking down at the party scene. Jordan spends most of the evening with Kathryn (Ryan’s sister) and receives his first romantic kiss. At midnight, however, a group of outsiders break into the party and begin fighting with the guests. Jordan punches a boy who is pestering Kathryn, then runs off as the police arrive.

Chapter 12: “Sirens in the Night”

Jordan wakes up to flashing police lights. Mrs. von Loewen’s home has been broken into and ransacked while she was trapped in her bedroom. Later, Jordan meets Mrs. von Loewen’s son Heinrich and Detective Bartkowski, who explain that cash, the pearls and the quartz head were stolen. Jordan goes home to rest. He soon realizes that Mordock was behind the break-in.

Chapter 13: “The Pearls”

Jordan goes to Cullen’s house without a clear plan. He decides to sneak inside to see if he can find the stolen pearls. Just as he breaks into the house, Jordan is caught by the gang. They threaten to implicate him in the von Loewen break-in. Cullen does admit, however, that it would be best to return Mrs. von Loewen’s pearls. The skull, they explain, disappeared during the party. Jordan is told to keep his mouth shut and gets thrown out of the house.

Chapter 14: “A Choice”

Jordan goes to the hospital to visit Mrs. von Loewen. Asked by her son, Heinrich, if he has “heard anything,” Jordan decides to tell the truth. He names the gang and admits his own role in what happened. Mrs. von Loewen forgives Jordan, but Heinrich forces him to call the police.

Chapter 15: “Fallout”

In the time that follows, Mordock and Nick are charged with the break-in, Cullen and Geoff are grounded. The gang falls apart. Jordan feels ostracized at school, but seems to have earned the respect of his mother and sister. In a final scene, Jordan admits to Mrs. von Loewen that he dug up the skull to impress the gang, and that it has now disappeared. The Countess only regrets that she didn’t destroy it earlier, and blames the curse for what happened to both of them.

Introducing the Novel

Chapter Synopsis:

Jordan has just moved with his mother and sister from Winnipeg to Surrey. He has no friends and is feeling pretty sorry for himself. One evening, he meets an elderly woman who lives down the street. Jordan helps her bury a quartz skull in her front yard. She rewards him with an 1886 silver dollar.

Guiding Questions

Before Reading

What does it feel like to be the “new kid” — at school, in a club, in a group — where the rest of the kids already know each other?

Making Connections: Invite students to tell about a time when they were a “new kid” or for some reason didn’t fit in with a group at first. How did they deal with the situation?

During Reading

Read the story aloud, stopping at strategic points to invite comments and questions. This is modeling self-questioning and self-monitoring for the students. Ensure that you don’t stop too frequently to interrupt the flow of the story. At the end, talk about how stopping to ask yourself questions and thinking about the answers helped you understand the story.

After Reading

1. What do you think the Countess means when she says “But the curse maybe we will bury” (p. 14)?
2. What would you do if you were Jordan and a strange elderly woman asked you for help burying a quartz head?
3. What do you think is going to happen next in this story?

A challenge! Use the Internet to find out how much an 1886 American silver dollar would be worth today.

The O-W-L Response

O-W-L is a reader response strategy that stands for Observe — Wonder — Link to Life. It teaches students to notice aspects of the text, ask questions and make connections to their personal experiences.

It is a good idea to model this process for students, and complete a few OWL responses together before expecting them to use this response format independently.

What I OBSERVED about this chapter

I WONDER

A LINK to my own experience is

Note to teachers: An OWL Poster may be downloaded at www.readinglady.com.

Introducing the Characters

Chapter Summaries:

Jordan is given an after-school detention because his homework isn't done. We are introduced to his teacher, Mrs. Marsinello or, as Jordan calls her, Mrs. Marsbars, and a girl named Jessica who stays after school to write the great Canadian novel. We also meet Cullen, his brother Geoff and their friends Nick and Ryan, who harass Jordan as he leaves the school. In the next chapter, we find out that the elderly lady who buried the skull is Countess von Loewen. She hires Jordan to do yard work for her over the summer.

Guiding Questions

**Before
Reading**

Think or talk about the following: Look at the Chapter titles: "Detention" and "A Summer Job." Who do you think is going to get detention and why? What job do you think Jordan might get, based on what we know about the story so far?

**After
Reading**

1. Why do you think the author introduced Jessica to the story? What role do you think she might play?
2. What was purpose of the detention? Do you think it served its purpose? Is it a good form of punishment? Why or why not?
3. What are your impressions of Mrs. von Loewen?
4. Do you think Jordan's summer job is going to work out?

Comparing the Two Chapters

In these two chapters, the author sets the stage by introducing some key characters, settings and situations. Compare the two chapters using the following graphic organizer:

	Chapter 2	Chapter 3
What is the setting of the chapter?		
What characters are important in the chapter?		
What is the main event in the chapter?		
How does Jordan feel in the chapter?		

Setting the Stage

Chapter Summaries:

While Jordan is in a local coffee shop, Nick comes up and asks him for his Science homework. Without really thinking, Jordan just hands over his notes. Of course, during science class, Cullen hands in Jordan’s homework, leaving Jordan with nothing to hand in. After class, Cullen and his friends congratulate Jordan on not “ratting” on them, and give him a ride home. In Chapter 5, we learn more about Mrs. von Loewen and her husband, the Count. The concept of heroism is introduced: Count von Loewen stood up to the Nazis and was killed. Will Jordan have the courage to be a hero? Will he be willing to suffer the consequences?

Guiding Questions

Before Reading

Read the two chapter titles. What do you think Jordan will have to do with Cullen and his gang? Chapter Five’s title gives a warning. Why might Jordan need to be careful?

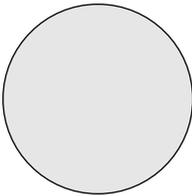
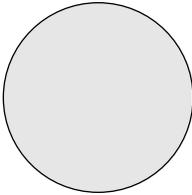
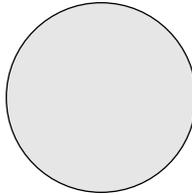
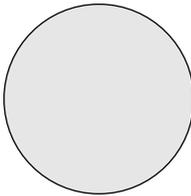
After Reading

1. Jordan doesn’t feel he has much choice but to give his Science homework to Nick. What would you have done in his position? Explain why.
2. In each chapter, the other characters give Jordan a compliment. Why do Cullen and the guys tell him he was “okay?” What does Mrs. von Loewen call him? Which compliment do you think he values more? Why? How do you think he feels about himself at this point?

The idea of heroism is a major theme in the novel. Students who have done previous work in Greek mythology or on modern heroes might profit from a review of the heroic ideal. The Count is obviously a hero; but consider the concept of heroism introduced in Chapter 6 and, ultimately, Jordan’s own heroic choice at the end of the novel.

Writing a Personal Memoir: A Planning Guide

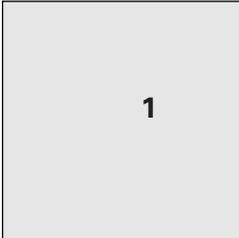
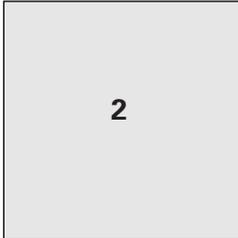
Any story is more meaningful to us as readers when we can personally relate to what the main character is going through. Most of us have experienced doing something we know isn't right — or doing something we thought was right, but found out later was not. Write a paragraph or short story describing a similar experience you may have had or heard about. To wrap up your story, tell what you learned from the experience or what you might do another time in the same circumstances. Use this planning guide to organize your story.

Who?  **Where?**  **When?**  **Why?** 

What happened?



Details

1  **2**  **3** 



What did you learn?

Creating the Situation

Chapter Summaries:

Jordan is gradually accepted by Cullen’s gang. He tells them about Mrs. von Loewen and her supposed wealth. They talk about the “initiation” required to be part of the gang. Cullen stole a leather jacket; Ryan stole a car; Nick “kidnapped” a statue from an exclusive girl’s school. In Chapter Seven, Jordan goes to a pool party in Cullen’s backyard. The party is small — the gang and three girls from the senior high school. Jordan is attracted to Kathryn, Ryan’s older sister. He is finally given his initiation task: to bring the quartz head to the gang.

Guiding Questions

Before Reading

Introduce the word “initiation” and talk with the students about different kinds of initiations, both positive and negative. Invite them to predict what form of initiation Cullen’s gang might have in mind for Jordan. Give support from the story for the predictions.

After Reading

1. Cullen says, “Nobody ever topped Nick and the statue. That was heroic.” Mrs. von Loewen has already called Jordan a hero. How do these comments fit with your idea of a hero? How do these views of heroism differ?
2. We meet Jessica again in this chapter. Why do you think the author brings her into the story again at this point?
3. What would you do if you were Jordan?

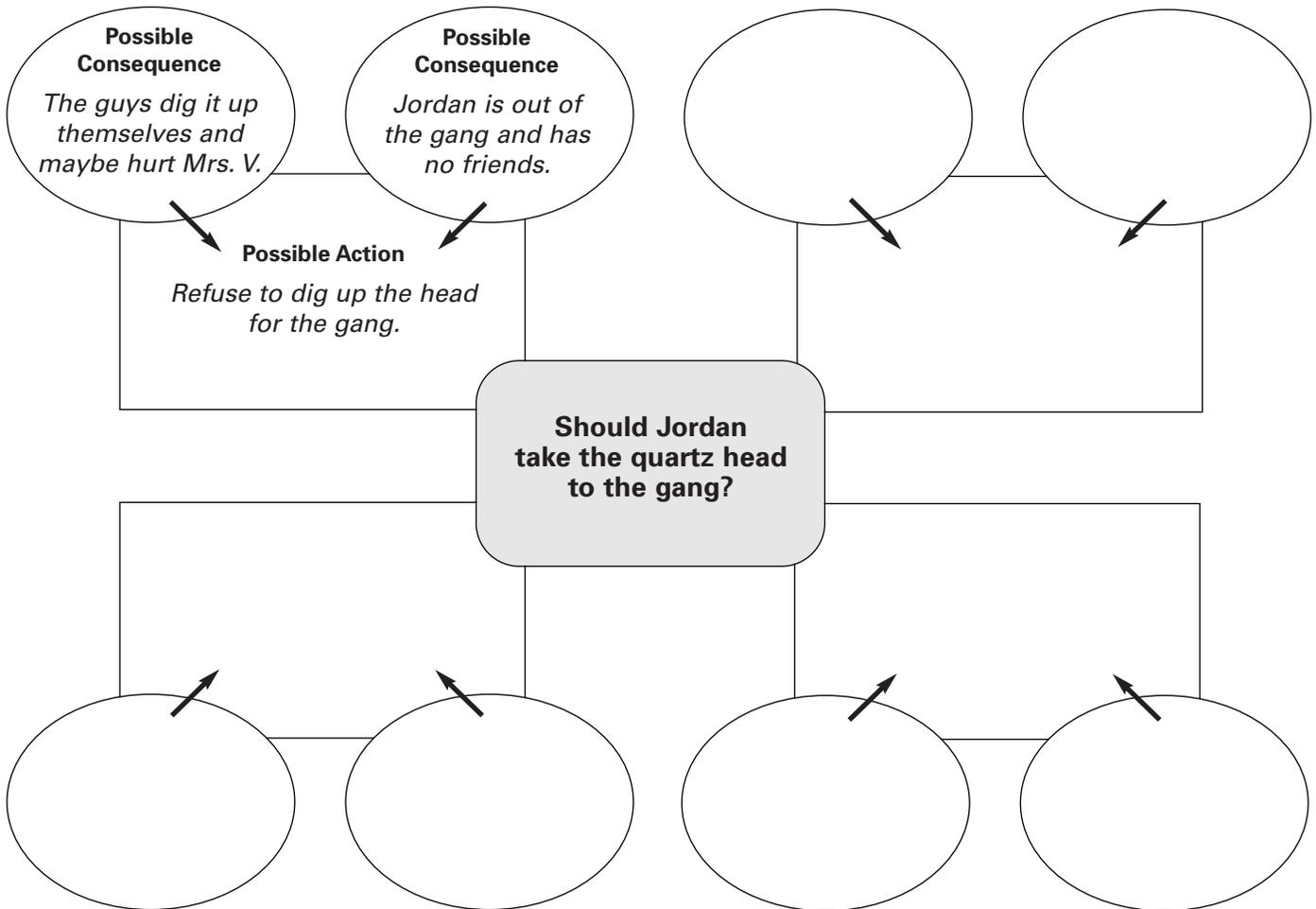
Research: *Initiation rites and adolescent rites of passage are found all over the world. In North America, high school and college hazing is still common. In other countries, the rites of passage are very different. Internet and encyclopedia research will reveal much on this theme.*

Making Decisions

Jordan has a serious dilemma at this point in the novel. Should he retrieve the quartz head for the gang? What if he doesn't? What alternatives does he have?

Whenever we have a serious decision to make, the best thing is to look at the choices and the consequences of each. Use the organizer to help Jordan weigh his alternatives.

In each rectangle, write one possible solution. In the ovals around each rectangle, write two possible consequences for each. An example is done for you.



Which alternative do you think Jordan should choose? Why?

The Conflict Resolved

Chapter Summaries:

Jordan is harassed by his mother about his new friends, especially Cullen, and about Jordan's apparent change of attitude. Jordan far prefers the time he spends at Mrs. von Loewen's house. On his next visit there, the Countess gives him an antique shaving kit that once belonged to her husband. In Chapter 9, Jordan digs up the skull, feeling vaguely guilty but rationalizing what he does. Afterward, he feels ill, takes a nap to recover, and then has a fight with his mother. Storming out of his house, he presents the skull to the gang and a new kid, Mordock. Jordan has passed initiation.

Guiding Questions

Before Reading

In this chapter, Jordan's mother comments that he has changed. How do you think he has changed since the beginning of the book?

Jordan betrays the Countess right after she gives him a gift. Why do you think he did this? What would you do?

After Reading

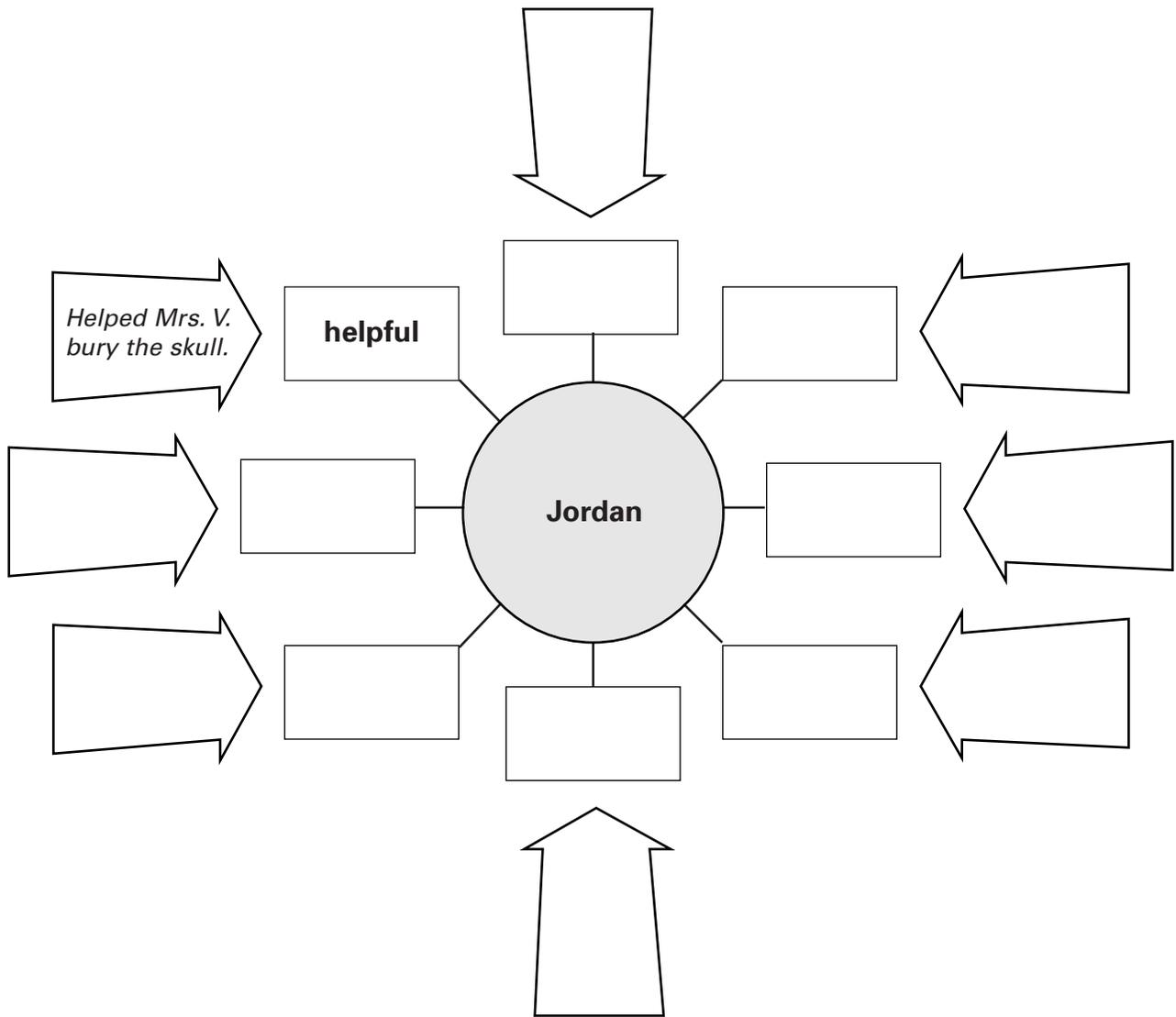
1. Why do you think the Countess gave Jordan the antique razor? Why do you think the author chose a razor as a gift for the Countess to give Jordan?

2. How did Jordan feel when he was digging up the skull? How do you know?

Symbolism: *The antique razor is symbolic in many ways — of Jordan's relationship with Mrs. von Loewen, of his growing maturity, of the dangers of adolescence. It also ties into the rites-of-passage theme running through the book. For top-level students, these literary issues can be discussed.*

Character Analysis

We learn a lot about a character from what the person says, does and thinks. We can sometimes learn more by what others think of the character. In the chart below, put a word describing Jordan in each box around his name. Then find an example from the story to show why you chose that character trait.



Two Contrasting Parties

Chapter Summaries:

Mrs. von Loewen has a party to celebrate the completion of the garden gazebo Jordan has constructed. Jordan is the guest of honour, of course. His work is praised by his mother and by the other guests. In Chapter Eleven, Cullen and Geoff host an end-of-exams pool party. Jordan spends most of the evening with Kathryn (Ryan's sister) and receives his first romantic kiss. At midnight, however, a group of outsiders break into the party and begin fighting with the guests. Jordan punches a boy who is pestering Kathryn, then runs off as the police arrive.

Guiding Questions

Before Reading

After the tension of the previous chapter, the garden party offers a kind of relief. Is this just the "lull before the storm?" Why do you think so?

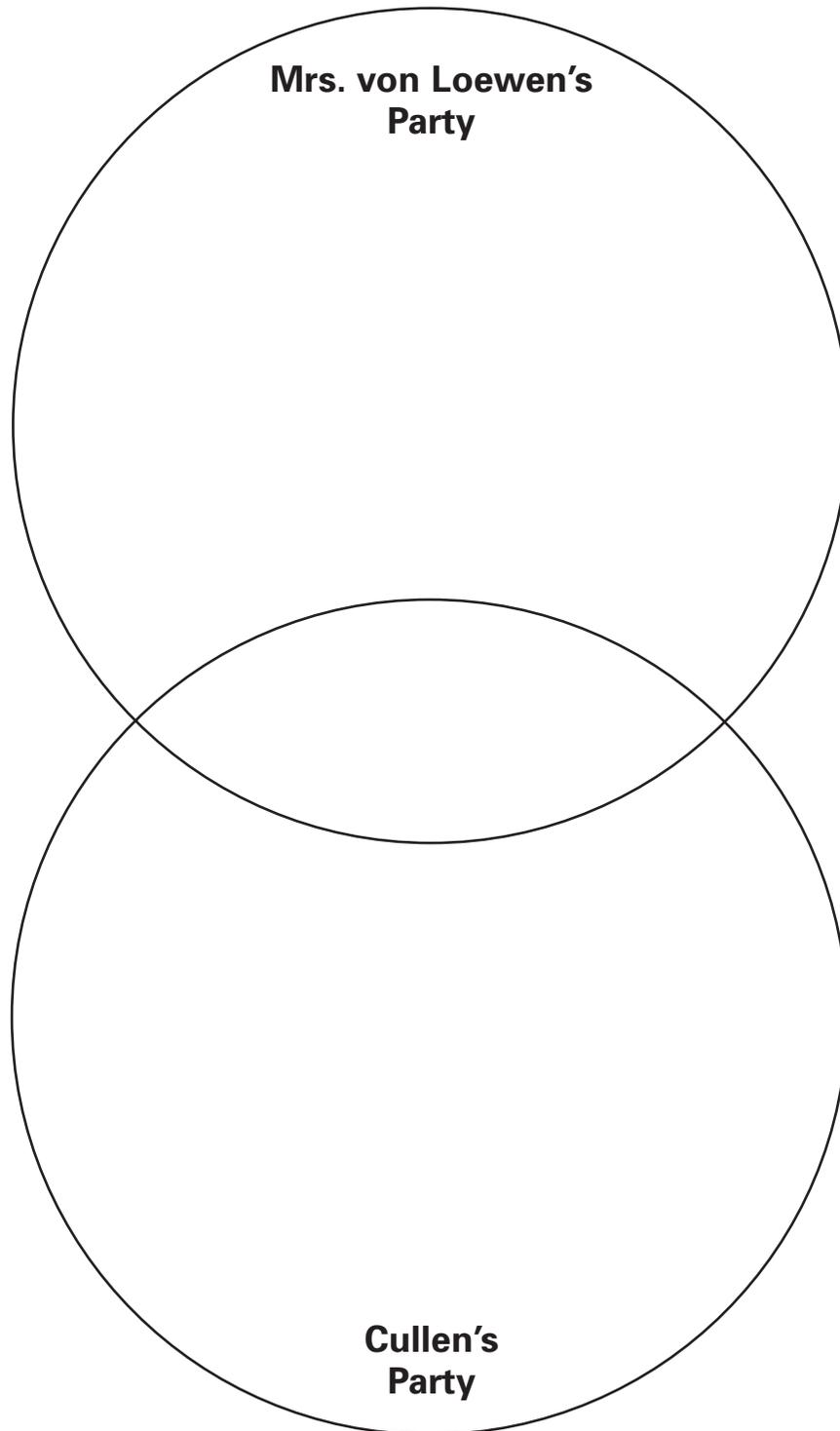
After Reading

1. What does Mrs. von Loewen's party contribute to the story? How does it add to the suspense, conflict or irony of the story?
2. What new aspects of Jordan are revealed at the end of Cullen's party?
3. Read like a writer. As you read, think about what the author is doing to build suspense, conflict and irony in the story.

Discussion: *What makes a good party? What can spoil a party? This is a good topic for tying into your students' own experience.*

Venn Diagram

Compare and contrast Mrs. von Loewen's garden party with Cullen's pool party. How are these parties similar? How do they differ?



The Climax

Chapter Summaries:

Jordan is woken up by flashing police lights. Mrs. von Loewen’s home has been broken into and ransacked while she was held a prisoner in her bedroom. Later, Jordan meets Mrs. von Loewen’s son Heinrich and Detective Bartkowski, who explain that money, the pearls and the quartz head were stolen. Jordan realizes that Mordock was behind the break-in. In the next chapter, Jordan goes to Cullen’s house without a clear plan. He decides to sneak inside to see if he can find the stolen pearls. Just as he gets inside, Jordan is caught by the gang. They threaten to implicate him in the break-in, but do return Mrs. von Loewen’s pearls. Jordan is told to keep his mouth shut and is thrown out of the house.

Guiding Questions

Before Reading

The title of Chapter Twelve is “Sirens in the Night.” What do you think the sirens might be for?

The climax is the high point of the story. What do you think will happen next in the novel? If you were the author, how would you write the climax of the story?

After Reading

1. Read like a writer. Reread Chapter Eleven. Did the author give you any hints that something like this was going to happen?

2. A good writer makes the characters complex, neither “all bad” nor “all good.” In this section, we find that both Cullen and Heinrich have bad and good points. What are they?

Revisiting the Text: Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a literary technique in which the author gives the reader hints of what is to come, without making the future events too obvious. Now that we know about the break-in at Mrs. von Loewen's house, reread the story to see if you can find four examples of foreshadowing. The first is done for you.

1. *"So, like how do you know she's rich?" Nick asked, still grinning at me, just waiting for me to do something stupid.*

"Cause she pays me a lot. And she's got a lot of nice stuff in her house. I mean, you should see all the clocks and things." (p. 58)

2.

3.

4.

“Wrapping it Up”

Chapter Summaries:

Jordan goes to the hospital to visit Mrs. von Loewen. Asked by her son, Heinrich, if he has “heard anything,” Jordan decides to tell the truth. He names the gang and admits his own role in what happened. Mrs. von Loewen forgives Jordan, but Heinrich forces him to call the police. In the months that follow, Mordock and Nick are charged with the break-in, Cullen and Geoff are grounded. The gang falls apart. Jordan feels ostracized at school, but seems to have earned the respect of his mother and sister. In a final scene, Jordan admits to Mrs. von Loewen that he dug up the skull to impress the gang, and that it has now disappeared. The Countess regrets that she didn’t destroy the skull earlier, and blames the curse for what happened to both of them.

Guiding Questions

**Before
Reading**

What choice do you think Jordan has to make? What would you do?

How do you think the story is going to end?

**After
Reading**

The word “hero” has been tossed around in this story a lot. Jordan says he “didn’t feel heroic or righteous or anything like that.” Do you think he is a hero? Why or why not?

What do you think will happen to Jordan in the future?

Reread the closing paragraph. Do you think this is a good ending? Why or why not?

Tying Up Loose Ends

Writing a conclusion is often one of the hardest parts of a piece of writing. A good author makes sure all the loose ends are tied up and the story wraps up neatly.

Complete the chart to note how all the “loose ends” in the story are tied up.

Character or Situation	How it is resolved
The theft at Mrs. von Loewen’s house	Jordan gives the pearls back and reports it to the police
Jordan’s friendship with “the gang”	
Jordan’s relationship with his family	
Nick and Murdock’s crime	
Jessica and her novel	
The romance with Kathryn	
Having no friends at school	
The missing skull	
Smoking	
How Jordan feels about himself	

Section II: General Activities

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Working with Words

Though the book is written in a first-person voice, there are still a number of vocabulary words that may be somewhat unfamiliar to the students. Some examples from the story include:

eccentric
melodramatic
cynical

initiation
circumstantial

Use the following organizer to define and clarify unfamiliar words and concepts:

Word Parts	I think this word means...	It is...
Derivatives	Target Word in sentence from the story.	It is not...
	Examples	

Literary Irony

Irony is an apparent difference between what is said and what is meant. When someone says “Is it cold enough for you?” they really mean that it’s very cold. This is **verbal irony** — when the speaker says one thing and means something else. **Literary irony** occurs when the reader knows something that a character in a story does not. For example, when Mrs. von Loewen calls Jordan a hero, we know that he is anything but a hero because he has just stolen the quartz skull.

There are many examples of irony in the story. Explain the irony of each of these quotations or situations:

“Nobody’s ever topped Nick and the statue. That was heroic.” (*Chapter 6*)

Jordan exaggerates Mrs. von Loewen’s wealth to the gang. (*Chapter 7*)

Mrs. von Loewen has a party in honour of Jordan. (*Chapter 9*)

“You are such good boy.” (*Mrs. von Loewen to Jordan in Chapter 14*)

Story Pyramids

Summarize this story using key words and phrases:

Row 1: **One word** naming the main character

Row 2: **Two words** describing the main character

Row 3: **Three words** describing the problem or conflict

Row 4: **Four words** describing the first event

Row 5: **Five words** describing the second event

Row 6: **Six Words** describing the third event

Row 7: **Seven Words** describing how the story is resolved

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For example:

Jordan

New, friendless

Wants to belong

Gets job with Countess

Steals quartz head as initiation

Gang breaks into the Countess's house

Jordan returns pearls; reports theft to police

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Throughout the book, particularly in chapters 1-3, there are several detailed descriptions of Mrs. von Loewen. For instance:

“She looked at me with this strange grin, so right away I thought she was kind of loony. Or eccentric — that’s the name for a loony with style or class, but still a little gone in the head. Here she was wearing a hat, a black dress, and what looked like pearls, out digging in the garden at eight o’clock at night.”

“The old lady was wearing one of those Tilley hats, like she had just come off a safari, except with a plastic flower on it, and her white-grey hair frizzed out underneath it. Her skin looked like it didn’t see much sunlight, and was about as wrinkled as any I’ve ever seen. I mean, my grandma has a couple million wrinkles, but this lady had wrinkles in her wrinkles.”

Use the descriptions above, and elsewhere in the book, to draw a picture of Mrs. von Loewen.

Internet Research

Use the Internet to find answers to the following questions:

1. Try eBay or another auction site to find out how much a quartz skull would be worth.
2. What is quartz? Why is it a suitable material to carve a skull?
3. What is a Count, a Baron and a Duke? Explain the differences.
4. Is there such a thing as a supernatural curse?
5. Mrs. von Loewen is almost always wearing pearls ... and then they are stolen. Where do pearls come from and what kind of value do they have?

More to Read

The themes in *The Countess and Me* can be further explored in other young adult novels. Students may want to compare the two books in a report.

Alice Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin But a Sandwich

Robert Cormier, I Am The Cheese

S.E. Hinton, The Outsiders

John Knowles, A Separate Peace

Tim Wynne Jones, The Maestro

Paul Zindel, The Pigman (and two subsequent "Pigman" books)

Themes and Explorations — Writing an Essay

The Countess and Me explores a number of important themes:

- What is a hero?
- Gangs and the need to belong
- Moral dilemmas — When doing “right” is the toughest choice
- Rights of passage — The difficult movement from childhood to adulthood

Write a three-paragraph essay exploring one of these issues. Define the issue and give your position on it. Be sure to back up your position with examples and details. A strong essay will have examples from your own life, from people you know well, or from other books you have read. Then conclude with a summary, restating your idea.

The Supernatural

Throughout *The Countess and Me*, the author plays with the idea that the quartz skull has supernatural powers. Although Jordan doesn't take this seriously, Mrs. von Loewen certainly does.

Looking back into the story for evidence, find five quotations or events that show the supernatural power of the skull. The first one is written for you.

1. After Jordan digs up the skull in Chapter Nine, he feels sick and has to lie down to rest.

2.

3.

4.

5.

A Final Quiz on *The Countess and Me*

1. Match the character to the action: **(5x2 marks)**

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Geoff | (a) Suspects Jordan is guilty of the break-in and robbery |
| Nick | (b) Kisses Jordan at Cullen's party |
| Kathryn | (c) Writes Jordan into a book |
| Jessica | (d) Drives the gang around in his car |
| Heinrich | (e) With Mordock, plans and executes the break-in |

2. True or false: **(5x3 marks)**

- (a) Mrs. von Loewen is supportive of Jordan.
- (b) Jordan's mother approves of his hanging out with Cullen.
- (c) Kathryn warns Jordan about the gang.
- (d) Mrs. von Loewen buries the quartz head because her son wants to sell it.
- (e) Jordan always tells the truth to people in the story.

3. Explain the importance of each of these items to the story in a sentence or two. **(5x4 marks)**

- (a) the Countess's pearls
- (b) a silver dollar
- (c) the garden gazebo
- (d) a suntan

4. In a few sentences, explain the role of Jessica in the story. **(10 marks)**

5. Mrs. von Loewen thinks the quartz head has a curse. List three examples of this curse in the story. **(3x5 marks)**

6. Write a three-paragraph essay on Jordan's decision at the end of the book. What is his choice? What are the reasons on both sides? Did Jordan make the right choice? **(30 marks)**

About the Author

The author of *The Countess and Me* is Paul Kropp. He's an experienced creator of young-adult fiction whose first work, *Wilted*, was published back in 1978. Since then, he has written fiction for teenagers and younger readers, as well as non-fiction titles for adults.

Paul Kropp's work for young people includes six award-winning young-adult novels, 30 novels for reluctant readers and three humorous books for younger children.

Mr. Kropp's earlier novels for young adults, including *Moonkid and Prometheus*, *Ellen/Elena/Luna* and *Moonkid and Liberty*, have been translated into German, Danish, French, Portuguese and two dialects of Spanish. They have won awards both in Canada and abroad.

Mr Kropp was born in Buffalo, New York in 1948. He took his Bachelor's degree at Columbia, in New York City, and a Master's degree—with a thesis on 17th-century English poetry—at the University of Western Ontario in London. Today, he lives in Toronto, Ontario in a century-old townhouse in the city's Cabbagetown district. He has three sons (Alex, Justin and Jason) and two step-children (Emma and Ken), ages 21 to 34. He taught high-school English in Hamilton, Burlington and Toronto for twenty years, but now spends his time writing and editing.

For more information on Paul Kropp, see the Website: <http://members.rogers.com>



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