DISCUSSION GUIDE

GRADeS 4-8

RODMAN PHILBRICK

ZANE AND THE HURRICANE

A STORY OF KATRINA

Meets Common Core State Standards—SEE INSIDE
Zane Dupree is a twelve-year-old boy of mixed race who lives with his mother in New Hampshire and seldom thinks about his dead father because “you can't miss someone you never knew.” But when his mother tracks down Zane’s father’s grandmother, “Miss Trissy,” living in New Orleans, she thinks it’s time for him to visit her.

Zane and his beloved dog, Bandit, have been in the city’s Ninth Ward just long enough to hear stories about Zane’s father when Hurricane Katrina hits. As they are evacuating, Zane and Bandit are unexpectedly separated from the rest of the family. The two remain trapped in an attic until they are rescued by Trudell Manning, an elderly musician, and Malvina, a young girl whose mother is in drug rehab. The group encounters cruel bigotry and heroic kindness as they struggle to survive in a flooded city that has descended into chaos.

While reading this page-turning story, students will learn vivid details of an important event in recent history. The book touches on many significant issues, including the importance of family and the value of kindness and courage. Maps and factual information further educate readers about Hurricane Katrina.
About This Guide and the Common Core State Standards

*Zane and the Hurricane* is appropriate for Grades 4-8. While it is fiction, the novel offers a very real depiction of the devastation that wrecked the lives of a multitude of people, especially the economically disadvantaged, in New Orleans. Philbrick weaves a riveting story while asking readers to think about “big issues,” such as how the government failed the people of New Orleans. Other themes focus on family, racism, fear, courage, responsibility, and hope. There are natural connections to science, social studies, and the arts. This guide encourages students to be careful readers without jeopardizing the pleasure they gain from reading. It is best to allow students to read the entire novel before engaging in a detailed study of the work.

Throughout this guide we note wherever an activity helps students toward achieving specific Common Core Standards. See the section “Common Core State Standards Referenced in This Guide” at the end of the guide for more information.

Pre-Reading Activity

Have one group of students read eleven facts about Hurricane Katrina on the following website: www.dosomething.org/actnow/tipsandtools/11-facts-about-hurricane-katrina. Instruct another group of students to read eleven facts about Hurricane Sandy on the following website: www.dosomething.org/tipsandtools/11-facts-about-hurricane-sandy. Then have each group construct a bar graph that depicts the devastation of the storms (e.g., deaths, injuries, property damage, etc.) Engage the entire class in a discussion about the differences between the two hurricanes, the devastation, and the government responses.

*Correlates to Common Core Standards in Reading Informational Text – Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 6-7.7; Science & Technical Subjects – Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RST 6-8.7, RST 6-8.9.*
Thematic Connections

FAMILY
Define family from the points of view of Zane, Malvina, and Mr. Trudell Manning. Describe Zane’s relationship with his mother. Why was his mother so determined for him to meet his father’s relative? Discuss Zane’s thought that “you can’t miss someone you never knew.” Why didn’t Miss Trissy tell Zane the reason his father ran away from home? How did her silence make Zane more curious about his dad? Explain why Tru thought a boy should know about his daddy. How did Zane’s idea about family change by the end of the novel?

SURVIVAL
Explain why putting more effort in gym class may have benefitted Zane when he was struggling to survive against the rising water. Why was the Superdome the only chance that some citizens had for survival? Describe the living conditions at the Superdome. Explain how crime ravaged the city and threatened the wellbeing of many people, including Zane, Malvina, and Tru. Why did Tru realize that they had to get out of New Orleans? How did Zane and Malvina call upon their ingenuity to get Tru out of the city? Explain how Tru saved Malvina by risking his life, and how Malvina saved Tru by risking her life.

HOPE
Discuss how the minister at the New Mission Baptist Church instilled hope in his parishioners. Explain how Mr. Trudell Manning managed to stay calm and hopeful. Tru encouraged the children not to look back. Debate whether this advice was hopeful or hopeless. Discuss how the chaos and lack of food, water, and healthcare at the Superdome made Zane feel hopeless. How did Tru’s cousin Belinda give them hope at the end of the story? Explain the irony in the name of her animal shelter.

FEAR
Zane experienced fear throughout the novel. What were his most fearful moments? Explain what Zane meant when he said that being afraid is tiring. How did Malvina and Tru help to calm his fears? At what point did he begin to panic? In what ways did fear cause Zane to feel homesick for his mother? How did the news coverage of Katrina create fear in Zane’s mother, especially when she couldn’t reach her son by telephone? In what ways was Malvina fearless?

COURAGE
Explain what Belinda meant when she told Malvina that she had the “heart of a lioness.” Cite evidence from the novel to support this claim. Discuss Zane’s courageous journey from the moment he arrived in New Orleans until his mother arrived from New Hampshire to take him home. How did Tru and Malvina show courage when they rescued Zane and Bandit?

RESPONSIBILITY
Debate whether Zane acted responsibly when he chased Bandit back to Miss Trissy’s house. How did Tru step up and take responsibility for Zane and Malvina? At what point did the children have to become responsible for Tru? What might Zane’s mother say to him about responsibility once they safely returned to New Hampshire?

RACISM
Discuss Miss Trissy’s opinion on the subject of race and color. She preferred the term “mixed race” instead of “multiracial.” Explain the difference. Define racial profiling. How were Zane, Tru, and Malvina victims of racial profiling? Tru said that the police and fire department weren’t looking out for the people in their neighborhood. How was this a form of profiling? Explain the role of racism in the scene where guards used a helicopter to rescue expensive rugs and threatened Tru’s life.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Reading Literature – Key Ideas & Details RL. 4-7.1, RL. 4-7.2, RL. 4-7.3; Speaking & Listening – Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 4-7.1, SL. 4-7.3.
LANGUAGE ARTS
Miss Trissy goes to live with Zane and his mother in New Hampshire. She finds a church there and joins the choir. And the local newspaper does a feature story on her. Ask students to become journalists and write that newspaper feature. Remember to include who, what, when, and how. Consider including a story that Miss Trissy might tell about her life in New Orleans and her experiences with Zane’s dad. Think of an appropriate title for the article. Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling, and grammar.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Writing – Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.3; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-7.4, W. 4-7.5.

Miss Trissy said that Gerald and James played superhero games when they were boys. Have students use books in the library or sites on the Internet to find a list of superheroes and super heroines and their character traits. Then have students create a five-frame comic strip of a superhero and super heroine that best represents Zane and Malvina at the end of the novel.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Reading Literature – Key Ideas & Details RL. 4-7.3; Writing – Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.3; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 4-7.7.

Rodman Philbrick uses figurative language to create certain mental images, or to pose drama. Review the meaning of the following types of figurative language:

**Simile** – compares two unlike things using words like “like” or “as.” For example, “The house burns like a flaming wooden match dipped into a glass of oily black water.”

**Personification** – gives human characteristics to inanimate objects. For example, “Outside, in the dark, the wind begins to talk.”

Have students find other examples of simile and personification in the novel. Then have them write a simile that describes the scene that Zane, Malvina, and Tru encounter at the Superdome, and then use personification to describe the rising water.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language – Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 4-7.5.

SCIENCE
Instruct students to hold a family meeting and discuss what to include in an emergency survival kit in the event of a natural disaster. The following website of the National Institute of Environmental Health Science is helpful: kids.niehs.nih.gov/explore/nworld/hurricane_katrina. Then have students make an emergency escape plan for their family and present it to the class. They should include a list of necessary items, such as food and first-aid supplies, a map or chart that features home exits and where to take shelter. Have them find out how the type of shelter is dictated by the natural disaster. Then, students can present the plan to the class.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Writing – Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 4-7.8, W. 4-7.9; Speaking & Listening – Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 4-7; Science & Technical Subjects – Text Types & Details RST 6-8.3; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RST. 6-8.7.

Ask students to read about five people on staff at the National Hurricane Center (http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/qa/). Then instruct them to select one person who most interests them and write a one-page profile for a biographical work called “Those Who Watch Hurricanes.”

Correlates to Common Core Standard in Reading Informational Text – Key Ideas & Details RI. 6-7.1, RI. 6-7.3; Writing – Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 4-7.9

Ask students to get to know the weather by completing one of the experiments on the following website: teacher.scholastic.com/activities/wwatch/gather_data/. Then have them write a detailed paper (in paragraph format) about the experiment and state the conclusion.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Science – Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RST. 6-8.9; Writing – Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.2.
SOCIAL STUDIES
Ask students to read about the role of the following organizations in natural disaster relief: Red Cross (http://www.redcross.org), FEMA (www.fema.gov), and the National Guard (http://www.nationalguard.mil). Based on information from the novel, ask students to write a letter to the editor of the Times Picayune in New Orleans from Mr. Trudell that states how these organizations served and failed New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.

Divide students into small groups and ask them to tape a documentary that might have aired on a news channel on September 29, 2005, one month after levees broke in New Orleans. Include interviews with Zane, Malvina, Tru, Miss Trissy, Belinda, and people camped out at the Superdome. Have them reflect on the evacuation plan, the first responders, the living conditions at the Superdome and other shelters, medical issues, lack of supplies, and what the state and national government could have done to help them. Have them find pictures and maps of the storm on the Internet and include them in the documentary. They should cite sources used at the end of the film. Allow time for groups to share their film with other classes.

MUSIC
Mr. Trudell Manning is a musician in New Orleans, a city noted for jazz and blues. Introduce students to this music by sharing recordings. Invite a music teacher to talk with the students about this type of music. What do song lyrics in the jazz and blues genres have in common? Ask students to pick a character from the book and write the lyrics for a jazz or blues song about this character. Read the lyrics aloud in class.

VOCABULARY AND USE OF LANGUAGE
The vocabulary in the novel isn’t difficult, but students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them using clues from the context. Such words may include: Chapter 5, mandatory; Chapter 6, relented; Chapter 8, geyser, torrents; Chapter 10, molten, heft; Chapter 12, submerged, cliché; Chapter 15, commentary; Chapter 21, defiant, sabotage; Chapter 22, demented; Chapter 24, agitated, infectious; Chapter 29, affirmative; and Chapter 30, sepsis.

DRAMA
Malvina wants to be a stand-up comedian. Prepare and present to the class a comedy routine that Malvina might deliver about the time she pushed past the police on the bridge.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Reading Informational Text – Key Ideas & Details RL. 6-7.1, RL. 6-7.2; Writing – Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-7.4

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Reading Literature – Key Ideas & Details RL. 4-7.3; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 4-7.9; Writing – Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.3; Speaking & Listening SL. 4-7.4, SL. 4-7.6.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Reading Informational Text – Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 6-7.7; Writing – Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-7.6; History/Social Studies – Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RH. 6-8.7.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Language – Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 4-7.4.

Correlates to Common Core Standards in Speaking & Listening – Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 4-7-4, SL. 4-7-6.
Other Books by Rodman Philbrick

The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg
The Blue Sky Press
Ages 8 – 12
Paperback: 978-0-43966-821-7
240 pages • $6.99

When his beloved older brother is illegally sold into the Union Army, Homer runs away to save him.

A Newbery Honor Book

★ “Rip roaring adventure.” —Publishers Weekly, starred review

Freak the Mighty
The Blue Sky Press
Ages 8 – 12
20th Anniversary HC: 978-0-54556-645-2
208 pages • $16.99
Paperback: 978-0-43928-606-0
196 pages • $6.99

The unforgettable story of a unique friendship between a troubled, oversized boy and a tiny, physically challenged genius.

An ALA Best Book for Young Adults
An ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers
An IRA Young Adults’ Choices Book

★ “Gritty, unsentimental…an intriguing and unusual story.”
—Kirkus Reviews, starred review

Max the Mighty
The Blue Sky Press
Ages 8 – 12 • 176 pages

The Fire Pony
The Blue Sky Press
Ages 8 – 12 • 192 pages
Guide to the Common Core State Standards Cited in This Guide

Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details
RL. 4-7.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL. 4-7.2 Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

RL. 4-7.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story; drawing on specific details in the text; compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or event in a story; drawing on specific details in the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
RL. 4-7.9 Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Reading Informational Text

Key Ideas and Details
RI. 6-7.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI. 6-7.2 Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI. 6-7.3 Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
RI. 6-7.9 Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Language

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
L. 4-7.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on reading and content.

L. 4-7.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

Speaking and Listening
Comprehension and Collaboration
SL. 4-7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led), building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL. 4-7.3 Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
SL. 4-7.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

SL. 4-7.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes
W. 4-7.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

W. 4-7.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing
W. 4-7.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task.

W. 4-7.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

W. 4-7.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge
W. 4-7.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

W. 4-7.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources, take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

W. 4-7.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Science & Technical Subjects

Key Ideas and Details
RST. 6-8.3 Follow precisely a multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
RST. 6-8.7 Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually (e.g., in a flowchart, diagram, model, graph, or table).

RST. 6-8.9 Compare and contrast the information gained from experiments, simulations, video, or multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic.

History/Social Studies

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
RH. 6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g. in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Discussion guide written by Pat Scales, Children’s Literature Consultant, Greenville, South Carolina