

A Common Core State Anchor Standards-Aligned Educator's Guide for Grades 7 to 12

ON THE HOOK



- ★ "A staggering and fearless book." -- *Kirkus Reviews*
- ★ "Intense, at times brutal, but so vital for today's polarized society, this book will hopefully encourage readers to have compassion for others..." -- *Booklist*
- ★ "Unflinching..." -- *Booklist*

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Publisher: Scholastic Press

ISBN-10: 1338692151

ISBN -13: 978-1338692150

About the book:

Hector has always minded his own business, working hard to make his way to a better life someday. Until Joey singles him out. Joey, whose older brother, Chavo, is head of the Discipulos gang, tells Hector that he's going to kill him: maybe not today, or tomorrow, but someday. From that day forward, Hector's death is hanging over his head every time he leaves the house. But when a fight between Chavo and Hector's brother Fili escalates, Hector is left with no choice but to take a stand. The violent confrontation will take Hector places he never expected, including a reform school where he has to live side-by-side with his enemy, Joey. It's up to Hector to choose whether he's going to lose himself to revenge or get back to the hard work of living.

About the author:

Francisco X. Stork was born in Monterrey, Mexico. He came to El Paso, Texas with his adoptive father when he was nine-years-old. He studied English Literature and Philosophy at Spring Hill College, a Jesuit College in Mobile Alabama. He obtained an M.A. from Harvard University where he studied Latin American Literature with, among others, Octavio Paz, the Mexican Nobel Laureate. After four years of graduate studies at Harvard, he entered Columbia Law School. After graduating from law school, he practiced law in a number of private and public settings while pursuing his vocation to write. For the last fifteen years of his legal career, Francisco worked as an attorney for a Massachusetts State Agency that develops affordable housing. Francisco retired from the practice of law in April of 2015.



Pre-Reading Discussion Questions:

- Describe the scene depicted in the illustration on the cover.
- How do the young men shown in the scene feel about each other? How do you know?
- Examine the car featured in the illustration. Consider how the damage might contribute to the conflict between the young men portrayed in the scene.
- Determine how the phrase, "How far would you go for revenge?" adds meaning the scene.
- Predict what ON THE HOOK is going to be about.

Post-Reading Discussion Questions:

"You asked me if I was afraid of Chavo. I'm afraid that Gloria is too good for me. That this happiness is all a big tease. I am afraid that something could happen to Mami or Aurora to to you because of Gloria or this guy Chavo...Even if this guy is stubborn and wants to make trouble, why should we let him rule our lives" (pg. 54)?

- Consider how Fili references the emotion of fear in this scene. Are his fears rational? Explain your answer.
- Fili describes the risks involved in pursuing a relationship with Gloria. Identify which fear you think troubles him the most. Why is this so?
- Make a connection between the topic of Hector's award-winning essay and Fili's desire to be with Gloria. Is there a price to pay to pursue happiness? What would be lost if Fili did not follow his heart?
- Is courage required to pursue happiness? Explain your answer.



Post-Reading Discussion Questions continued:

Oh, man, what's the matter with you? Don't worry, be happy. Why can't you just not be afraid that something bad is coming around the corner? The light at the end of the tunnel is not an oncoming train. Snap out of it, as Aurora would say (pg. 93).

- Analyze the internal struggle Hector is experiencing in this scene. Which of his fears are rational? Which are emotional?
- In this scene, Hector tries to convince himself to act *dignified*, which means to possess a strong sense of character and self-respect. Explain why Hector is struggling to do so.
- Which do you think is causing Hector the most distress – cowardice because of Joey's threats or concern over disappointing those that he loves, including his deceased father? Support your claims with examples from the text.

What Joey saw on Hector's face was a wink and a grin. The fear was still there, but for once he wasn't showing it. It wasn't a fear of Joey this time. It was the path he had chosen. The opportunity has presented itself and he had chosen to balance things out (pg. 145).

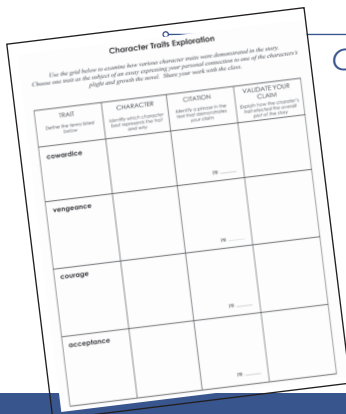
- Determine how Hector's reaction to the opportunity presented being at Furman Academy with Joey was much like analyzing a strategic move in the game of chess.
- Explain why, in this scene, Hector was more fearful of the consequences of his actions rather than Joey.
- The word *retaliation* is defined as vengeance, retribution, and revenge. Tell how planning for retaliate against Joey will bring about the balance Hector references.
- Discuss the similarities and differences between cowardice and courage. Explore how cowardice and courage are at the core of Hector and Joey's inner struggles.

"No man, He was in control. He came out looking strong" (pg. 213).

- Explain how the play of force on the basketball court left Joey being perceived as strong, rather than Hector.
- How does Hector's motivation to be recognized as being strong connect with his desire to balance things out (pg. 145)?
- Though he is willing to arrange for a grudge match, X-Man tells Hector there is no point to avenging his brother's death by fighting. Do you agree with X-Man? Explain your answer.

"Listen man. This is the only way I can think of to stop the pain in my head. I either get on with life, like you're doing or go the prison or get killed by you. Those are my only options. We do this. It's over for me. I'm square with my brother. It's over. No more revenge. You can kill me later if you still want to" (pg. 280).

- Explain why Hector's injuring Joey by striking his hand with a hammer brought about peace and acceptance for both characters. Why did Hector have to inflict pain in this way? Why did Joey willingly permit Hector to do so?
- Identify the fear both characters overcame in this scene.
- Determine how avenging his brother's death by facing Joey head-on, establishes the balance Hector has been seeking throughout the story.
- The word *absolution* means to pardon, forgive, and set free. Tell how, after this act of absolution, both Hector and Joey are free to pursue happiness in their own way.



Character Trait Exploration

The grid below is created from various character traits used throughout the story. Choose one trait or the subject of an essay expressing your personal connection to one of the character's flight and growth the novel. Share your work with the class.

TRAIT	CHARACTER	CLAIM	VALIDATE YOUR CLAIM
cowardice			
vengeance			
courage			
acceptance			

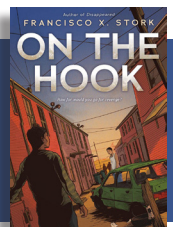
Character Trait Exploration:

Use the grid on the following page to examine how various character traits were depicted in the story.

- Consider each trait listed in the far-left column. Define the term listed as it relates to the story.
- In the column labeled CHARACTER, identify the character that best demonstrate each trait. Explain how and why they did.
- Next, cite an example from the text that supports your claim.
- Lastly, explain how the character's depiction of the trait impacted the plot.
- Write an essay expressing your personal connection with a character's growth in the novel as result of inhabiting a specific trait.
- Share your work with the class.

COMMON CORE STATE CORE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Reading: CCRA-R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.7, R.8, R.10
 Writing: CCRA-W.1, W.4, W.5, W.7, W.9
 Speaking & Listening: CCRA-SL.1, SL.2, SL.4, SL.6



Character Traits Exploration

Use the grid below to examine how various character traits were demonstrated in the story. Choose one trait as the subject of an essay expressing your personal connection to one of the characters's growth in the novel. Share your work with the class.

TRAIT <i>Define the terms listed below</i>	CHARACTER <i>Identify which character best represents the trait and why</i>	CITATION <i>Identify a phrase in the text that demonstrates your claim</i>	VALIDATE YOUR CLAIM <i>Explain how the charater's trait effected the overall plot of the story</i>
cowardice		pg. _____	
vengeance		pg. _____	
courage		pg. _____	
acceptance		pg. _____	

