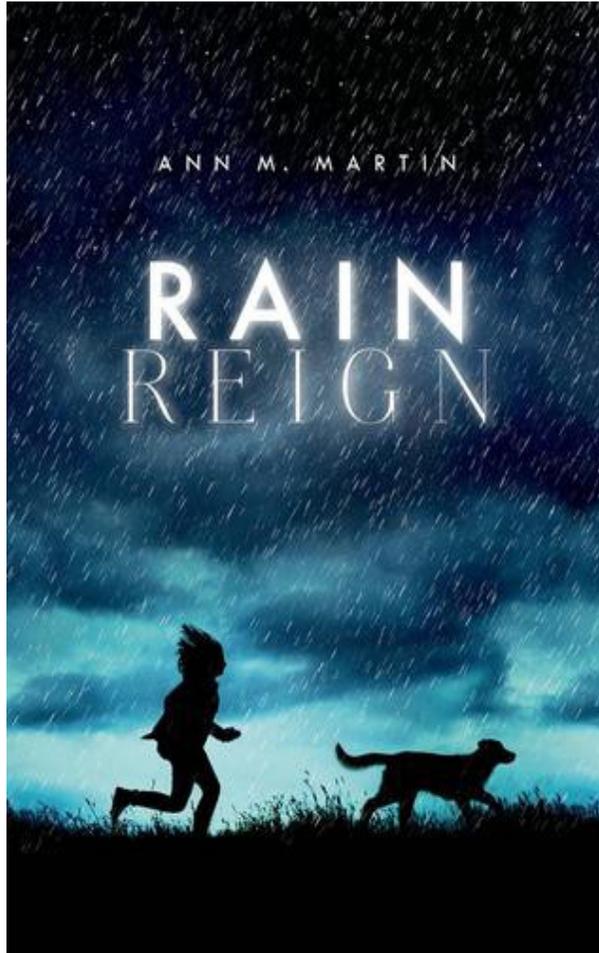


Literature Guide for Ann M. Martin's

Rain Reign



by Robin M. Huntley

Summary

Appropriately titled with a homonym pair, Ann M. Martin's Rain Reign is told through the eyes of a young girl on the Autism spectrum. Rose's two passions in life are homonyms and rules, and her love of these things often stands in the way of her ability to connect with those around her – including

her father, a single parent with little patience for Rose's needs. Through Rose's narration, readers learn about the thoughts that drive her mind and the compulsions that fuel the behaviors that those around her cannot seem to understand.

Rose learns how to forge a deep connection when her father brings her home a dog, who she names Rain due to the very special triple homonym nature of the word (it matches both reign and rein). Rose cares for Rain herself, taking her responsibilities as a pet owner very seriously. But when a hurricane hits Rose's home in upstate New York, Rain is lost in the storm. With homes destroyed, power lines downed, and roads (such as Rose's) washed out, it's nearly impossible for Rose to search for Rain.

More than just a story about a lost dog, Rain Reign touches on themes of family, trust, communication, and understanding. Ann M. Martin weaves clues into Rose's tale of heartbreak and determination that suggest change is to come, and Rose's search for Rain turns out to be a search for much more than just a pet.

The story's easy-to-read text and layers of deeper meaning make it a perfect book for middle grade readers (ages 9-13). The story does include some challenging mature themes (including alcoholism), however, that make it more appropriate for readers on the older end of the middle grade range.

Critical Thinking Questions

Designed for use while the story is still being read, the questions below can be used to help readers deepen their understanding of the story. Additionally, the use of critical thinking questions can help readers develop their skills in critical thinking. Questions are listed in chronological order, but some can be addressed at numerous points in the story.

- How does Rose seem to be different from most people her age? How does she seem

similar?

- What meaning do homonyms have in Rose's life? Why do you think she holds onto them as she does?
- Explain Rose's relationship with her Uncle Weldon. Could there be more there than Rose is aware of?
- Do you think that Rose's peers understand her? What do you think her teacher might do differently to help Rose become a more accepted member of her class?
- Why do you think Rose's father chooses not to worry about the storm? Explain.
- What do you think Rose's daily life and home say about her father?
- Do you notice a pattern in Rose's identification and use of homonyms? When does she use them the most? When does she talk about them the least?
- Why do you think Rose's father let Rain out in the storm?
- Rose's father doesn't seem to think it's important to help her find rain. Why does Uncle Weldon think that it matters?
- Rose connects emotionally with Parvani after the storm. How does she do it?
- Explain Rose's relationship with her mother. Do you notice a pattern of when she goes through her mother's box?
- Rose's father isn't always honest with her, almost as if he's not living in the same reality that she is. What is this all about?
- Why is Rose's father upset when she wants to return Rain to her original owners?
- Rose handles the second loss of Rain incredibly well given her age. What part of Rose's perspective on the world helps her through this difficult time?

Mini-Lesson

Rose's love of homonyms lends itself nicely to a study of spelling. Throughout the story (and throughout her life), Rose collects homonyms due to the special nature of each set. Readers can gain insight into Rose's behavior through her use of homonyms, and can explore the intricacies of the English language by tracking and categorizing the homonyms used in the story – and then some. The mini-lesson below can be used to help readers start tracking and categorizing homonyms (both from the book and from their minds), specifically with a focus on exploring the numerous ways to spell the sounds that make up the English language. Exploring the many ways to spell sounds from the English language can help older readers to strengthen their decoding skills, which are essential to the comprehension of the increasingly complex texts that middle and high school (and the equivalent non-school life experiences) bring.

Sounds the Same

1. Explain to readers that they'll be working on improving their own reading and writing skills by exploring lists of words that share sounds but do not share spellings. Discuss the meaning of the word “homonym” and share some simple examples (buy, bye, and by or blue and blew, for example).
2. Begin the activity by focusing on one set of homonyms first. Choosing a set of 3+ homonyms is best here, so that readers can have ample opportunity to test out the activity while still working in a group setting. Buy, bye, and by will be used here, but the introduction can go smoothly with any trio or quartet. Discuss the shared sounds in each word, emphasizing that the “b” sound in each is spelled the same way (as there is no other way to accomplish that using the English alphabet), but that the “i” sound that each word includes is spelled using a different set of letters. Create a chart for the set of homonyms that includes two columns: one for the original words and one for the spellings of the shared end sound.

Homonyms ending in “I”-sounds

Words	Spellings
buy	-uy
bye	-ye
by	-y

- Challenge readers to create similar charts for other homonym trios or pairs. Depending on the amount of time spent on the activity, facilitators may choose to distribute a list of homonyms – especially ones found within the text. Readers should continue to identify the different spellings of each shared sound found in groups of homonyms.
- Next, challenge readers to add to their charts not by thinking of homonyms that match preexisting pairs and tries, but by identifying other words (with any kind of meanings) that share the same sounds. A continuation of the “I” end-sound might include high, sly, guy, lie, lye, etc. Make a new chart, this time documenting as many different spelling patterns that create the “I” end-sound as possible.

Spelling the “I” End-Sound

Spellings	Words
-uy	Buy, guy
-ye	Bye, lye
-y	By, try, my, sly, ply, pry, cry
-igh	High, sigh
-ie	Lie

- Continue the activity for the duration of the story, and perhaps beyond. While readers' lists will likely start out with mostly single-syllable, simple words, the challenge of this activity arises when larger words are added in. The inclusion of larger words will help readers connect the study of spelling patterns to their own ability to decode and spell larger words. Utilize the homonym and shared-sound charts for support in both vocabulary and spelling word.

Extension Activities

Designed with middle grade readers in mind, the extension activities outlined below utilize Rain Reign as a catalyst for learning of all kinds. Each activity is outlined loosely so as to allow it to be easily adaptable for any educational setting and with groups of varying sizes, ages, and abilities.

Studying the Spectrum

In order to truly understand Rose as a character, it's important for readers to understand the Autism Spectrum. Additionally, it's important to understand the Autism Spectrum because lots and lots of people in the world are somewhere on it, and those who learn to understand neurodiversity will be better suited to create and participate in inclusive environments of all kinds. Interestingly, the term that Rose uses to explain her own neurological differences is going out of style. Asperger's Syndrome is more and more frequently being dropped in favor of referring to the syndrome's characteristics as just being part of the spectrum. Explore the ins and outs of Autism by utilizing both web and print materials – there's a wealth of resources out there! An episode of the popular children's television show *Arthur* (“When Carl Met George”) is a great starting point, and Rebecca Burgess' comic strip titled, “Understanding the Spectrum” explains the non-linear nature of the Autism Spectrum with helpful visuals that make the information accessible to young readers.

Hurricane History

Author Ann M. Martin was inspired to write Rain Reign after Hurricane Irene devastated regions of upstate New York, the area that she calls home. The hurricane did extensive damage across New England, as well. Readers can connect the story to real life by researching the hurricane and exploring photos of the damage and devastation left in Irene's wake. Rose's description of the post-storm landscape is largely devoid of emotion, but images from an actual hurricane's recent damage can deepen readers' emotional understanding of the event. In doing this research, readers can also work to

understand the services that humans rely on in such an event, including ones that repair infrastructure, care for those who have been harmed, and so on.

Mapping the Story

While the places mentioned in the story aren't real, they're definitely based on real places! Keep a list of the towns, roads, and other geographic names mentioned in the story and work to create a map of Rose's world. Readers can use Rose's description of where things are (thanks to her incredibly specific explanations) to create a map of her neighborhood and the surrounding town. Then, using Google Maps and/or paper atlases, readers can work to discover which part of New York Rose's town is based on. Some of the town and city names mentioned in the story are quite similar to actual places – these similarities could be used to put Rose on the map (literally). Such a project would strengthen readers' geographic knowledge, research abilities, and problem solving skills.

The Breaking of Rules

If there's one thing Rose cannot tolerate, it's rule breaking. But sometimes, rule breaking is not only acceptable, but necessary. Rose's mind doesn't allow her the cognitive flexibility to see any gray areas, especially not when rules are concerned – and this brings some major challenges and conflicts her way. Begin a discussion of ethics as related to the breaking of rules by identifying situations in which it would be acceptable to break the rules. Readers can learn about both ethical dilemmas and cognitive flexibility through this activity by addressing not only the black, white, and gray of each situation but by considering the perspective(s) necessary in order to understand the gray of each scenario.



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