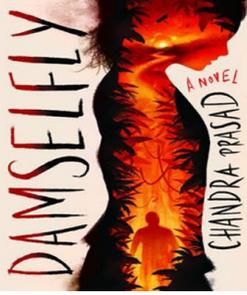


DAMSELFY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

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EXPLORING DAMSELFLY AND LORD OF THE FLIES AS LINKED TEXTS

1

Lord of the Flies is told in the third person, Damsselfly in the first. How does this difference in narration affect the way you interpret the stories and the characters?

2

Compare the chief antagonists in each of the novels: Rittika in Damsselfly and Jack in Lord of the Flies. What commonalities do these characters share? Aside from the obvious differences between them (age, gender, country of origin, etc.), how are Rittika and Jack unique adversaries?

3

Compare the friendship between Ralph and Piggy in Lord of the Flies with the friendship between Sam and Mel in Damsselfly.

4

War and violence are key themes in both novels. WWII is clearly an influence on Lord of the Flies, while Damsselfly makes reference to modern warfare repeatedly, including in this Chapter Six passage:

“We make him our prisoner,” Rittika added. “Torture him till he gives us answers.”

“This isn’t Guantanamo,” Betty said.

“All’s fair in love and war.”

“This isn’t war.”

“Isn’t it?” Rittika asked.

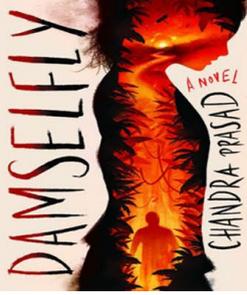
Compare how the characters in both books experience and interpret war, keeping in mind the different eras in which the books are set.

5

Most critics believe Ralph represents civilization and order in Lord of the Flies, while Jack represents impulse and savagery. It has been argued that Mel and Rittika, respectively, represent the same things in Damsselfly. Do you think this is a fair comparison? Explain why.

6

The conch is a powerful symbol of order, civilization, and communication in Lord of the Flies. Conches also appear in Damsselfly. Rittika calls the shell distinctly “feminine” in appearance in Chapter Two. “Conch Lake” is the body of water the kids build their camp beside. Conch meat is a form of sustenance throughout the story. Finally, the giant conch Rittika finds in Chapter 17 beckons Pablo and the old man to appear. How is the role of the conch similar in the two books? How is it different?



EXPLORING DAMSELFLY AND LORD OF THE FLIES AS LINKED TEXTS (CONTINUED)

7

The old man at the end of *Damselfly* wears old eyeglasses on his belt that bear a resemblance to the kind Piggy wore in *Lord of the Flies*. The old man also calls himself “Chief.” Do you think he represents the kind of adult Jack from *Lord of the Flies* could have become? Why or why not?

8

At the end of *Lord of the Flies* the boys are rescued. They will survive their own savagery, at least for the time being. The end of *Damselfly* is less clear, for Mel and Sam leave the island while their classmates remain. What do you predict will happen to each of these groups (the boys from Golding’s novel, Mel and Sam on their raft, and the kids who stay on the island in *Damselfly*)? In your opinion which group stands the best chance of long-term survival? What about long-term peace?

9

Do you think the gender of the characters in the novels affects the way they approach leadership, communication, and conflict? Explain why or why not.

10

The teens in *Damselfly* are diverse in terms of race, class, gender, and upbringing, while the boys in *Lord of the Flies* seem to share a fairly homogenous background. Do you think diversity—or a lack thereof—makes a difference in terms of how the characters in each book perceive and treat one another?

11

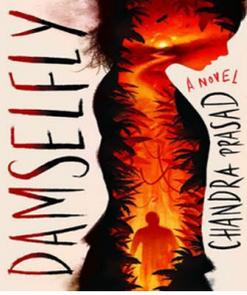
Isolation from society is central to the storylines of both novels. But in *Damselfly*, the garbage that washes ashore on the beach is a constant reminder of human influence and destruction. Do you think true isolation is still possible in the 21st century? Why or why not?

12

Compare the theme of nature in *Lord of the Flies* and *Damselfly*. Which characters in each book try to subjugate nature? Which are subservient to it? Which try to live in peace with their natural surroundings?

13

Lord of the Flies is often interpreted as one long allegorical tale. Do you think *Damselfly* is an allegory too? Why or why not?



EXPLORING DAMSELFLY AND LORD OF THE FLIES AS LINKED TEXTS (CONTINUED)

14

Compare the concept of democracy in the two books. In both cases, democracy eventually disintegrates and autocrats attempt to seize control. Do you think democracy is always unsustainable in the absence of rules, law, and oversight?

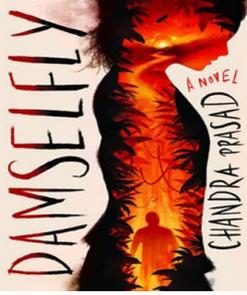
Explain your reasoning.

15

Piggy and Anne Marie are similar in that both are vulnerable and bullied within their respective peer groups. What characteristics of these individuals make them easy targets? Do you think either Piggy or Anne Marie would be better protected in regular society? Why?

16

Consider the titles of the two novels. How are they linked? Why do you think Prasad chose the title *Damselfly*?



DAMSELFLY QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1

From the outset of *Damselfly*, Mel seems to represent the orderly, civilized, and compassionate side of human nature, while Rittika typifies the violent, selfish, animalistic side. In what ways is Sam pushed and pulled between these two opposing forces? Though Mel and Rittika usually appear radically different, in what ways are they similar?

2

In the first pages of *Damselfly*, Sam reveals, “I didn’t know how to function without my cell, my iPad, and my laptop. They were as much a part of my everyday life as my toothbrush.” Like Sam, many people—especially teenagers—are more connected to technology than at any other time in history. In what ways does an absence of technology, and in particular an absence of social media, affect the teens’ experience on the island?

3

It can be argued that the girls—specifically Sam, Rittika, and Mel—are the central characters in *Damselfly*, and that the boys are more peripheral. Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not? How might the plot of *Damselfly* have been different if Chester, Rish, and Pablo were in charge of major decisions?

4

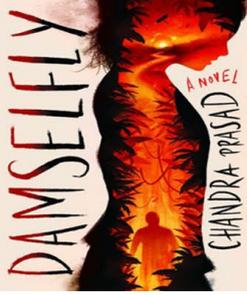
Why do you think the novel is named *Damselfly*? Do you think the title is appropriate? Why or why not? What title might you pick for the book?

5

Throughout the book Sam painfully recalls her troubled home life. Conversely, she describes the Sharpe household in glowing, happy terms. At Mel’s house, she fondly recalls “whooping and hollering and running amok, five blondes and one brunette, all of us clutching birch spears we’d whittled ourselves. All of us ecstatically free.” Compare and contrast Sam’s own home with Mel’s.

6

Like Chester and Ming, Sam is mixed-race (half South Asian, half Caucasian). In what ways does Sam’s multiracial identity seem to affect her sense of self both on and off the island?



DAMSELFY QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION (CONTINUED)

7

In Chapter 7 Rittika describes how the kids on the island fall into two groups: the Golds and the Pales. She says, “We’re naturally stronger, Sam. Me, you, Rish, Pablo, too. And it’s not just our skin I’m talking about. Darker people in general—we’re survivors. We’ve always been survivors. Unlike the Pales over there.” Why is Rittika trying to convince Sam of this distinction? Do you think her argument is logical? Why or why not? Do you think she would be able to make the same argument at Drake Rosemont?

8

Anne Marie reveals to Sam in Chapter 9 that she is experiencing side effects as a result of not having access to her daily medication. “I have a hard time figuring out what’s real and what’s not. The world, like, loses its structure,” she says. In what ways does Anne Marie’s untreated mental health condition make her experience on the island unique?

9

Animals and nature abound in *Damselfly*. From wild boars, ibises, poison dart frogs, ants, and monkeys to bamboo canes, giant trees, creepers, conches, and sharks, Mother Nature is in every chapter of the book. How does nature’s abundance impact the setting and tone of *Damselfly*?

10

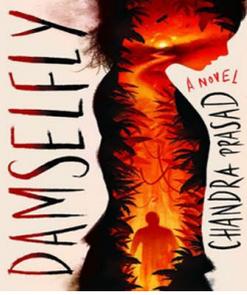
When Mel breaks her arm, she suddenly becomes as reliant on Sam as Sam has been on Mel in the past. How does this shift in power dynamics affect their friendship?

11

In the end, Sam and Mel leave the island on a raft, while the others stay behind. Which characters do you think stand a better chance of survival? Why?

12

If the kids in *Damselfly* eventually return to regular society, how might life be different for each of them as a result of having spent time on the island?



DAMSELFLY PROJECT IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

1

Build or draw—and label—a topographical map of the island in Damsselfly based on descriptions and conversations in the book.

2

Imagine and write a conversation between Rittika, Ming, and Avery as the three scheme to “overthrow” Mel so that Rittika can become the de facto leader of the island.

3

Because Jeremiah and Warren die early on in Damsselfly, we don’t know much about their characters. Pretend that one of them is still alive and create a character profile, including—but not limited to—his personality, family background, relationships with the other characters, favorite and least favorite aspects of island life, etc.

4

Betty greatly improves the quality of life at “Camp Summerbliss” by weaving tents and capitalizing on her creative ingenuity to make other useful objects. Brainstorm more ways the teens can utilize the materials around them to improve their primitive living conditions.

5

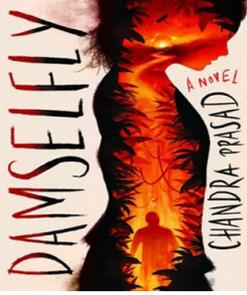
Imagine that Pablo, Damsselfly’s environmental activist, not only lives, but is rescued. Now imagine that later in his life he becomes extremely wealthy and purchases the island. A fervent advocate of sustainable tourism, Pablo wants to make the island accessible to others, but also ecofriendly and carbon-neutral. Design a flyer he might use to promote this new vacation destination.

6

Pretend that you are a wilderness guide giving a tour of the island to visitors. Describe some of the plants and animals you see as you make your way around the island using both new research and information you’ve gleaned from Damsselfly.

7

Compose a song or musical score that depicts and/or evokes the mood of a major scene in Damsselfly.



DAMSELFY PROJECT IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM (CONTINUED)

8

Create a comic or graphic novel of at least ten panels that retells a pivotal scene in Damsel fly

9

Re-create one of Anne Marie's pieces of art as described in Damsel fly. Write a few paragraphs explaining the significance of the artwork as it relates to her character's experiences.

10

Pretend to be one of the characters from Damsel fly and write a eulogy for Anne Marie. Be sure to describe Anne Marie's experiences, personality, and accomplishments as you commemorate and celebrate her life.

11

Pretend that one of the characters is keeping a journal of his/her time on the island. Write at least eight entries based on developments in the book.

12

Experience Mel's square foot analytical exercise for yourself! Follow the instructions she gives the characters in Chapter 10. Describe how your square foot exercise is similar/dissimilar to those performed on the island.

13

Join one or more of your classmates and act out a scene from Damsel fly. Use your imagination and add additional dialogue based on information in the book.

14

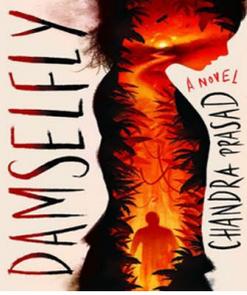
Raft? Hot air balloon? Long-distance endurance swimming? Choose your own way off of the island and write an essay to convince readers why your way is the best way.

15

Create a video trailer for Damsel fly: The Movie based on your own interpretation of the novel.

16

Create a menu or prepare a "Camp Summerbliss meal" for your classmates using the foods and edible resources mentioned in Damsel fly



DAMSEFLY PROJECT IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM (CONTINUED)

17

Have ideas about a sequel (or even a prequel) to *Damselfly*? Write a summary or an outline of the story you would tell.

18

Dress up as your favorite character from *Damselfly* and give a soliloquy based on your character's ideas and experiences.

19

The old man in *Damselfly* has presumably been on the island for decades, living a lonely and primitive existence. Imagine and write "A Day in the Life of the Chief," keeping in mind the information revealed about him in Chapter 18.

20

Think about the textures featured in *Damselfly*: the rough bark of the giant trees, the scratchy creepers, the damp smoothness of the "fake eye," etc. Bring in objects with textures that remind you of *Damselfly* and share them with your classmates.



DAMSEFLY CAST OF CHARACTERS



Samantha (“Sam”) Mishra

Half Asian and half Caucasian, Sam comes from a dysfunctional blue-collar family and has internalized a lot of conflict, especially the turmoil between her domineering father and her self-harming sister. A high school student at tony Drake Rosemont Preparatory Academy, Sam feels like a fish out of water until she meets Mel, who becomes her best friend.



Amelia (“Mel”) Sharpe

The youngest of five intrepid sisters, Mel is a gutsy combination of her father, a survivalist adventurer, and her mother, an accomplished botanist. Mel is neither pretty nor popular, but she is also unconcerned about the opinions of others. Her natural inclination is to learn, invent, and protect. She is the de facto leader of the group and Samantha’s ally in good times and bad.



Rittika Singh

The wealthy daughter of an Indian business tycoon, Rittika seems to have it all: confidence, beauty, brains, and social status. While she cares about her twin brother, Rish, she is often self-serving and unwilling to compromise. Her charisma is a powerful force capable of luring Sam away from Mel.



Anne Marie

Lacking prescription medication that stabilizes her mental health, Anne Marie is especially vulnerable to danger, both within her group of friends and beyond it. Fragile, artistic, and incredibly creative, she is keenly attuned to the island’s dark secrets.





DAMSELFY CAST OF CHARACTERS (CONTINUED)



Pablo

This self-proclaimed environmental activist is a bright, sociable, good-hearted young man. He is awed by the pristine state of the island and distraught by the inhumane way some of his friends begin to behave. As the group frays, though, Pablo's extremist viewpoints may be cause for worry.



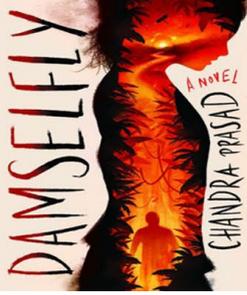
Chester Motega

The captain of the boys' fencing team at Drake Rosemont, part-Native American Chester is popular, athletic, and well-liked by all. Strong and decisive, he may have been the protagonist in another novel, but in *Damselfly* he is outmatched by Mel and Rittika. Though Sam has a crush on him, Chester is romantically drawn to others.



Betty

Clever and industrious, Betty is an indispensable member of the group. She weaves tents out of vines, makes "Camp Summerbliss" a habitable place, and is often at the service of her peers. With so many strong personalities around her, Betty comes across as refreshingly balanced and diplomatic.



PRAISE FOR DAMSELFLY FROM TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS AND AUTHORS

“Prasad breathes fresh life into this fusion of *Lost*, *Prep*, *Gossip Girl*, and William Golding’s classic.” — Jake Halpern, Pulitzer-prize winning author of “Welcome to the New World,” a visual narrative about Syrian refugees published in *The New York Times*

“Chandra Prasad gives us a terrifying, modern-day *Lord of the Flies*, rendered in exquisite and exacting prose. A brave take on teen cruelty, identity, mixed race experience, class, and survival.” — Marina Budhos, author of *Ask Me No Questions*

“Who are we when we are only accountable to ourselves? This bold, deft novel exposes how fragile the world we inhabit really is and what it might take for us to survive.” — Neela Vaswani, co-author of *Same Sun Here* and Grammy-winning audiobook narrator of *I am Malala*

If *Lord of the Flies* met *Gossip Girl* and spawned a first-rate book, filled with adventure and moving, surprising struggles against Nature and our nature, *Damselfly* would be it. —Amy Bloom, author of *Away: A Novel*

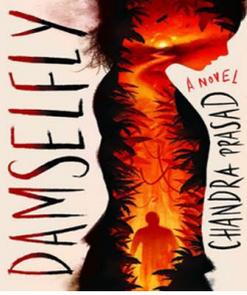
“Smart, surprising, and utterly engrossing.” —Charlotte Rogan, author of *The Lifeboat: A Novel*

“*Damselfly* is a fabulous novel for literature classrooms across the country, especially when used as a companion piece together with its mentor, *Lord of the Flies*. — Lisa Marini, English III Honors and AP Language & Composition Teacher, Lakeland, FL

“At its core—literary references and big ideas aside— *Damselfly* is a gripping narrative that will engage teenage audiences” — Ryan McGuirk, English Teacher, Washington, NJ

“I cannot wait to put this book in the hands of my students.” — Liz Carr, Honors English 9/10 Teacher, Western Michigan University





PRAISE FOR DAMSELFLY FROM TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS AND AUTHORS

“I would strongly recommend Damsselfly to my teenage patrons...You will be quickly turning the pages to see the outcome of this compelling novel. Be prepared to stay up all night! — Pat LaTerza, retired manager, Children’s Library Department, North Haven, CT

“Well-drawn characters who constantly make difficult decisions make this well-paced novel highly engrossing. — Catherine Simmons, Language Arts 9-12 Teacher, Monroe, NJ

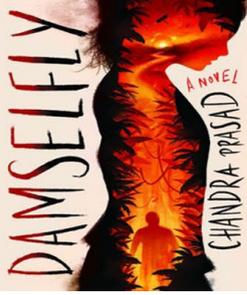
“Damsselfly, in essence, is the type of novel that holds classic literature up to a modern mirror.” — Joel Neft, 10th Grade English Teacher, Baltimore, MD

“I think Damsselfly and Lord of the Flies are an excellent pairing. I would look forward to teaching them together and having students compare and contrast points of view and analyze theme, plot, and tone.” —Dr. Hillary M. Weissman, English Department Chair, Los Angeles, CA

“Not merely an updated version of William Golding’s classic Lord of the Flies, however, Damsselfly manages to simultaneously address contemporary issues of class, ethnicity, and what it means to be human—and humane—in the 21st century.” —Brian T. Murphy, English Instructor, Garden City, NY

“Damsselfly is engaging, exciting, and suspenseful without being frivolous or superficial—a balance that I desire in YA choices for my students.” —Kristen Degnan, English Teacher, North Haven, CT





A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR: THE STORY BEHIND THE BOOK

When I first read *Lord of the Flies* in 8th grade English class, I found it riveting. The novel nibbled at my conscience and made me question the true state of human nature, which hitherto I had assumed to be (mostly) good. Some of the scarier sections wormed their way into my sleep, giving me nightmares. Yet I was pretty sure my teacher would manage to find a way to make Golding's book boring. She had a knack for sucking the life out of literature with her cold, clinical presentation style.

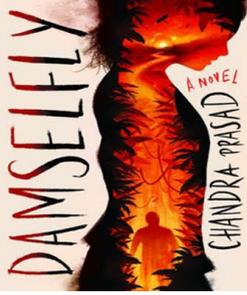
As we started the LOTF unit, history seemed bound to repeat itself. The droning of her voice sounded like static. She listed literary devices with all the panache of a robocaller selling used car tires. But just when I was about to tune out completely, she uttered a remark that made me instantly alert.

“So you see, class, Golding's island was a perfect microcosm of human society.”

A perfect microcosm? Seriously? The island couldn't possibly be a “perfect” microcosm because—guess what?—there were no girls on it! Nor were there any people of color. Nor was there any class hierarchy, except maybe by age. All of the kids on the island fit more or less the same mold.

I didn't speak up about my skepticism. But I still remember how frustrated I felt that my teacher didn't see what seemed so obvious to me. Those unvoiced feelings of discontent and exasperation, which carried over into adulthood, were the inspiration for *Damselfly*. Since 8th grade, I've wanted to read (and write) a novel with similar themes to LOTF, but one that presents a more realistically diverse modern society.

As with my other novels, I made a detailed outline of the plot. And as with my other novels, I veered off course from it almost immediately. *Damselfly* started out as an indirect response to Golding's novel. I attempted to ask and answer some of the same questions Golding did. What happens when vulnerable young people are displaced and left to fend for themselves? Do they create new rules and order? Or does the very notion of civilization disintegrate? If violence and chaos reign, does that mean that human beings are naturally depraved? Is civilization just a cover-up for our savage instincts?



A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR: THE STORY BEHIND THE BOOK (CONTINUED)

Somewhere along the line, however, *Damsselfly* became its own unique, self-contained, autonomous narrative that was less homage to *LOTF* than crucible for a whole different set of questions. Would girls act and react differently than boys if placed in similarly terrifying circumstances? Would one sex take a position of leadership over the other? How much does race matter when we are removed from regular society? What about class?

Almost all of these questions are addressed by the protagonists of *Damsselfly*. Samantha “Sam” Mishra and her best friend, Amelia “Mel” Sharpe, quickly emerge as the heart, soul, mind, and central nervous system of the novel. The reader experiences and interprets the world of *Damsselfly* through their discussions, thoughts, and actions.

Sam was the easier of the two girls to create. She is mixed-race, observant, and possesses an uneasy sense of self. Her voice is not my voice, but it is one I know. Mel was different. In my notes, I wrote that she should have a little of the spirit and verve of the following characters:

1. Anne Shirley from *Anne of Green Gables*
2. Huckleberry Finn
3. Nancy Drew
4. Elizabeth from *Pride and Prejudice*
5. Encyclopedia Brown
6. Laura Ingalls from *Little House on the Prairie*
7. Jo from *Little Women*
8. MacGyver (the inventive secret agent from the ‘80s television show that only olds will remember)

Not an easy recipe, to be sure! Happily, Mel Sharpe turned out to be not a cockamamie combination of all these characters, but a fully formed person in her own right. She is someone I wish I could have known when I was a kid. How refreshing it would have been to hang out with someone who didn’t care how she looked; who’d rather invent and discover new things than crush on boys; who was unmoved by bullying, peer pressure, popularity, and gossip. I didn’t know a Mel then, but I’m glad to have made her acquaintance now.

As for my 8th grade English teacher, I still don’t think she was right about that “perfect microcosm” thing. But you know what? No microcosm can be perfect. Each is destined to be as complicated and provocative as the characters who inhabit it.

