LOOKING AT LITERARY ELEMENTS

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS
Making thematic connections: consider the following themes of *Navigating Early*: belonging, friendship, father/son relationship, courage, fear, loneliness, survival and death. In small groups, have students identify scenes that support each theme. Then ask each student to write a brief analytical essay that shows the relationship between several themes. (For example, courage and survival, or belonging and friendship, and loneliness.) Make specific reference to scenes or direct quotes in the novel.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details, R.L. 6.2; Writing Text Types and Purposes N.8.1.

EXPLORING POINT OF VIEW
The novel is told in first person from Jack’s point of view. How does this limit the readers’ view of Early? Jack refers to Early as “strange.” In class, list adjectives that best describe Early as Jack gets to know him better. How does Vanderpool use dialogue to reveal Jack through Early’s eyes? Select a partner and identify a scene that best describes the bond that develops between the two boys. Take roles, and read the dialogue aloud in class.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Craft and Structure R.L. 6.6; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L.6.5.

FOCUSING ON USE OF LANGUAGE
Jack wishes that he could see what Early sees— “color, landscape, texture, and voice.” (p. 125) Explain the following metaphor: “I suppose if color could be sound, I said, these trees would be playing a whole symphony.” (p. 127) Select a scene from the novel, like the cave, crossing the river, the night at Gunnar’s, or finding Fisher, and write a metaphor that explains how Early sees the scene.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 6.4; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4.

UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER
In class, write an acrostic about Jack. Remind students that an acrostic is a poem that spells a word or phrase vertically, based on the first letter of each line.

Have students make a list of the most important characters in the novel. What does Jack, the narrator, reveal about each character? Instruct students to select one character and write an acrostic about each of them.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 6.1; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4.

EXAMINING PLOT
The climax of a novel is a dramatic turning point in the story. Have students write a brief essay that discusses the climax of *Navigating Early*. They should defend their opinion by considering the changes that happen within Jack and Early. Engage the class in peer editing for clarity.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 6.1; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.6.2; Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Clare Vanderpool loves to read, research, and travel. Writing *Navigating Early* gave her the opportunity to do all three. On a research trip to Maine, she explored lighthouses, walked on sandy beaches, visited a boarding school, and even took her own trek on the Appalchian Trail. *Navigating Early* started writing at the age of five and writing at age six, when her first poem was published in the school newspaper. Her first novel, *Moon Over Manifest*, was awarded the 2011 John Newbery Medal for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children. She lives in Wichita, Kansas, with her husband and four children.

ALSO BY CLARE VANDERPOOL
Winner of the Newbery Medal

*Moon Over Manifest*

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INCLUDES COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS CORRELATIONS
 QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

In the Author's Note, Vanderpool says, “By our standards today, Early would be diagnosed with a high-functioning form of autism.” As a class, make a list of the behavioral characteristics of a person with a high-functioning form of autism. Which of these characteristics apply to Early? Have students select three of the most pertinent characteristics and write a two-page case study of Early that Jack might write for a psychology textbook.

Discuss how the faculty and students at Morton Hill discuss Early. Debate whether the school allows him to stay out of loyalty to his dead mother. How are students like Early served in schools today?

By our standards today, Early would be diagnosed with a high-functioning form of autism. As a class, make a list of the behavioral characteristics of a person with a high-functioning form of autism. Which of these characteristics apply to Early? Have students select three of the most pertinent characteristics and write a two-page case study of Early that Jack might write for a psychology textbook.

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What is Jack's greatest obstacle? What is Jack’s direction by the end of the novel?

In the Author’s Note, Vanderpool says, “By our standards today, Early would be diagnosed with a high-functioning form of autism.” As a class, make a list of the behavioral characteristics of a person with a high-functioning form of autism. Which of these characteristics apply to Early? Have students select three of the most pertinent characteristics and write a two-page case study of Early that Jack might write for a psychology textbook.

What is Jack's greatest obstacle? What is Jack’s direction by the end of the novel?

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What is Jack's greatest obstacle? What is Jack’s direction by the end of the novel?

In the Author’s Note, Vanderpool says, “By our standards today, Early would be diagnosed with a high-functioning form of autism.” As a class, make a list of the behavioral characteristics of a person with a high-functioning form of autism. Which of these characteristics apply to Early? Have students select three of the most pertinent characteristics and write a two-page case study of Early that Jack might write for a psychology textbook.

What is Jack's greatest obstacle? What is Jack’s direction by the end of the novel?
QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Explain what Jack means when he says, “You get what you get and you are what you are.”

In the Author’s Note, Vanderpool says, “By our standards today, Early would be diagnosed with... done upon arrival at Morton Hill to help his situation. How might he interact differently when he arrives back at school after his adventure with Early? Debate whether Early is lonely. What is significant about Early thanking Jack for coming with him?

Discuss how the faculty and students at Morton Hill dismiss Early. Debate whether the school...

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.6.1; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.6.2; Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4, 6.7.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Lead a class discussion about the relationship between a protagonist and antagonist of a novel. Have each student write a brief essay about who they believe is the protagonist and antagonist of a novel they have read as a part of their journey. Share the essays in class. Finally, read the Prologue to Navigating Early. Who is the protagonist? Who is the antagonist? What one thing do you know about them from reading the Prologue?

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.6.1, 6.2, 6.3; Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.6.2; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.6.1, 6.2; Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

In the Author’s Note, Vanderpool says, “By our standards today, Early would be diagnosed with a high-functioning form of autism.” As a class, make a list of the behavioral characteristics of a person with a high-functioning form of autism. Which of these characteristics apply to Early? Have students select three of the most pertinent characteristics and write a two-page case study of Early of what Jack might write for a psychology textbook.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.6.1; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.6.2; Production and Distribution W.6.4, 6.7.

Early has a collection of clippings hanging on a bulletin board in his room. There are specific articles about the Invasion of Normandy and D-Day. Why is Early interested in these two important subjects? Use books in the library or sites on the Internet to research these two World War II events. Write a front-page story for a national newspaper titled “D-Day, June 6, 1944.” Remember to include who, what, when, where, and how. Download or photocopy old photographs pertinent to the story and include with the article.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.6.1, 6.2; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL.6.7; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4, 6.7; History/Social Studies: Key Ideas and Details W.6.4, 6.7; Integrating of Knowledge and Ideas W.6.4, 6.7.

Jack finds some of his old illustrations, Raman and Captain Avernus comics mixed in with the stack of National Geographic magazines that he brought to school. In class, discuss the quick and share a superhero. Why does Jack think that Fisher is Early’s superhero? Write and illustrate a superhero comic book titled “Fisher” that Jack gives to Early as a gift: Include a dedication page.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.6.1, 6.2; Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4, 6.7.

Little was known about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among veterans returning from World War II. Read about the disorder on the following website: www.helpguide.org/mental/post-traumatic_stress_disorder_symptoms_treatment.htm. Debate whether Fisher is suffering from this disorder. What is the best treatment for Post Traumatic Stress? How does Captain Baker convince Fisher to accept help? In small groups, develop a care plan for Fisher based on recommendations from the website. What other characters suffer from Post Traumatic Stress, though not war related?

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.6.1; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.6.2, 6.7; Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4.

Fisher Auden, a 1943 graduate of Morton Hill Academy, was one of the school’s most outstanding athletes. The school retired his #67 number and his accomplishments are featured in the school’s trophy case. His boat, the Nook, is in the Nook. Why is there no plaque memorializing him when he is reported killed in action? Fisher is recovering in a hospital at the end of the novel. Plan a school ceremony for Fisher once he has recovered. Cast Mr. Connolly as the headmaster, as master of ceremonies. Include music chosen by Early. What might Fisher say to the students? How might he thank Early, Jack, and Captain Baker?

Correlates to Common Core Standard Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.6.1, 6.2; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL 6.4, 6.5.
**PRESENTING THE BOOK**

Jack Early was only nine when his father, a naval officer, went to fight in the European Theater in World War II. Just as the war was winding down, Jack’s mother died, and his father returned to collect thirteen-year-old Jack, and deliver him to Morton Hill Academy. Missing his father and home, his only real friend is Mercury, who he knows as Tiny. He is startled when Jack, unexpectedly, tells him about his mother. Jack is lonely and feels disconnected from his classmates until he meets Early Auden, a strange boy who lives in a janitor’s closet. When two boys are alone at school during fall break, they set out for the Appalachian Trail to find a great black bear. They encounter a number of strange characters that have lost their way and eventually discover things about themselves and others.

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**QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

- **What does Jack mean when he says, “You get what you get and you are what you are.” (p. 3)?**
- **Later Jack says, “Somehow Early maintained a sense of direction. He knew who he was and where he was going. I did not.” (p. 101) What is Jack’s greatest obstacle? What is Jack’s direction by the end of the novel?**
- **Discuss how the faculty and students at Morton Hill dismiss Early. Debate whether the school allows him to stay out of loyalty to his dead mother. How are students like Early served in schools today?**
- **Early has a collection of clippings hanging on a bulletin board in his room. There are specific articles about the Invasion of Normandy and D-day. Why is Early interested in these two important subjects? Use books in ... what, when, where, and how. Download or photocopy old photographs pertinent to the story and include with the article.**
- **Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.6.1; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.6.1, W.6.2; Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4, W.6.7.**
- **Early says that the stars are “connected in unexpected ways, just like people.” (p. 36). Discuss the unexpected connections between the following characters: Jack, Early, McScot, Martin, Gunnar, Emmaline, Eustasia Johannsen, Fisher, and Captain Baker. How does each of these stories contribute to the overall quest in the novel?**
- **Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.6.1, SL.6.2, SL.6.3.**
- **Correlates to Common Core Standard Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.6.1, SL.6.2.**
- **Little was known about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among veterans returning from World War II. Read about the disorder on the following website: www.helpguide.org/mental/post-traumatic-stress-disorder_symptoms_treatment.htm. Debate whether Fisher is suffering from this disorder. What is the best treatment for Post Traumatic Stress? How does Captain Baker convince Fisher to accept help? In small groups, develop a care plan for Fisher based on recommendations from the website. What other characters suffer from Post Traumatic Stress, though not war related?**
- **Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.6.1; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.6.2; Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4.**
- **How does Jack figure out that Miss Bellefleur, the Morton Hill librarian, is Gunnar’s Emmaline? He hands her Gunnar’s personal quest to find peace with his violent past. How does Miss Bellefluer respond to Jack’s story?**
- **Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Reading: Informational Text RH 6-8.2, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RH6-8.7.**
- **How does Fisher navigate his post-school life?**
- **What are the implications of Fisher’s past on his future?**
- **How does Miss Bellefluer respond to Jack’s story?**
- **Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.6.1; Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.6.2; Production and Distribution of Writing W.6.4.**
- **Correlates to Common Core Standard Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.6.1, SL.6.2.**
- **Correlates to Common Core Standard Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.6.1, SL.6.2.**

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**CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

In the Author’s Note, Vanderpool says, “By our standards today, Early would be diagnosed with a high-functioning form of autism.” As a class, make a list of the behavioral characteristics of a person with a high-functioning form of autism. Which of these characteristics apply to Early? Have students select three of the most pertinent characteristics and write a two-page case study of Early that Jack might write for a psychology textbook.

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**PRE-READING ACTIVITY**

- Lead a class discussion about the relationship between a protagonist and antagonist of a novel. Have each student write a brief essay about a novel they have read in the past where the antagonist takes a significant role in helping the protagonist resolve an inner conflict. Share the essays in class. Finally read the Prologue to Navigating Early. Who is the protagonist? Who is the antagonist? What one thing do you know about them from reading the Prologue?

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**ABOUT THE BOOK**

_Navigating Early_ by Clare Vanderpool is a story of healing and hope. In this novel, Jack Early, a student at Morton Hill Academy, battles with his past and learns to cope with the loss of his mother. He meets a new friend, Early Auden, who introduces him to the world of nature and self-discovery. Together, they embark on a journey that leads them to understanding and acceptance. The novel explores themes of loss, friendship, and the power of nature. It is a heartwarming tale that reminds us of the importance of connecting with others and finding our own path in life. **In the Author’s Note, Vanderpool says, “By our standards today, Early would be diagnosed with a high-functioning form of autism.”** As a class, make a list of the behavioral characteristics of a person with a high-functioning form of autism. Which of these characteristics apply to Early? Have students select three of the most pertinent characteristics and write a two-page case study of Early that Jack might write for a psychology textbook. **Early has a collection of clippings hanging on a bulletin board in his room. There are specific articles about the Invasion of Normandy and D-Day. What is Early interested in these two important subjects? Use books in history to support the claims. Download or photocopy old photographs pertinent to the story and include with the article.** Discuss the unexpected connections between the following characters: Jack, Early, McScott, Martin, Gunnar, Emmaline, Eustasia Johannsen, Fisher, and Captain Baker. How does each of these stories contribute to the overall quest in the novel? How does Jack figure out that Miss Bellefluer, the Morton Hill librarian, is Gunnar’s Emmaline? He hands her Gunnar’s personal quest to find peace with his violent past. How does Miss Bellefluer respond to Jack’s story? How does Fisher navigate his post-school life? What are the implications of Fisher’s past on his future? How does Miss Bellefluer respond to Jack’s story? **In the Author’s Note, Vanderpool says, “By our standards today, Early would be diagnosed with a high-functioning form of autism.”** As a class, make a list of the behavioral characteristics of a person with a high-functioning form of autism. Which of these characteristics apply to Early? Have students select three of the most pertinent characteristics and write a two-page case study of Early that Jack might write for a psychology textbook.
LOOKING AT LITERARY ELEMENTS

THEMATICAL CONNECTIONS

Making thematic connections: consider the following themes of Navigating Early: belonging, friendship, father/son relationship, courage, fear, loneliness, survival, and death. In small groups, have students identify scenes that support each theme. Then ask each student to write a brief analytical essay that shows the relationship between several themes. (For example, courage, fear and survival, or belonging, friendship, and loneliness.) Make specific reference to scenes or direct quotes in the novel.

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EXPLORING POINT OF VIEW

The novel is told in first person from Jack’s point of view. How does this limit the readers’ view of Early? Jack refers to Early as “strange.” In class, list adjectives that best describe Early as Jack gets to know him better. How does Vanderpool use dialogue to reveal Jack through Early’s eyes? Select a partner and identify a scene that best describes the bond that develops between the two boys. Take roles, and read the dialogue aloud in class.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Craft and Structure RL.6.6; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use L.6.5.

FOCUSBING ON USE OF LANGUAGE

Jack wishes that he could see what Early sees—“color, landscape, texture, and voice.” (p. 125) Explain the following metaphor: “I suppose if color could be sound, I said, these trees would be playing a whole symphony.” (p. 127) Select a scene from the novel, like the cave, crossing the river, the night at Gunnar’s, or finding Fisher, and write a metaphor that explains how Early sees the scene.

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UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER

In class, write an acrostic about Jack. Remind students that an acrostic is a poem that spells a word or phrase vertically, based on the first letter of each line.

Have students make a list of the most important characters in the novel. What does Jack, the narrator, reveal about each character? Instruct students to select one character and write an acrostic about each of them.

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EXAMINING PLOT

The climax of a novel is a dramatic turning point in the story. Have students write a brief essay that discusses the climax of Navigating Early. They should defend their opinion by considering the changes that happen within Jack and Early. Engage the class in peer editing for clarity.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clare Vanderpool loves to read, research, and travel. Writing Navigating Early gave her the opportunity to do all three. On a research trip to Maine, she explored lighthouses, walked on sandy beaches, visited a boarding school, and even took her own trek on the Appalachian Trail. Vanderpool started reading at the age of five and writing at age six, when her first poem was published in the school newspaper. Her first novel, Moon Over Manifest, was awarded the 2011 John Newbery Medal for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children. She lives in Wichita, Kansas, with her husband and four children.

ALSO BY CLARE VANDERPOOL

Moon Over Manifest

Winner of the Newbery Medal

Prepared by Pat Scales, Children’s Literature Consultant, Greenville, SC.

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