

Approved for use in English IV

Summary of the Work:

Siddhartha is a young Brahmin searching for Nirvana. Believing that bodily suffering is the key to self-knowledge, he joins the Samana, a group of ascetics who practice self-denial and meditation. After a few years, he is inspired to leave the Samana by his encounters with the Buddha, but Siddhartha ultimately decides to turn away from all teachers and seek knowledge through physical experience. Disillusioned with his spiritual quest, Siddhartha immerses himself in fleshly delights and riches. He spends years as a wealthy merchant and companion to a famous concubine. Siddhartha eventually becomes disgusted with his vices and plunges into despair. He finally achieves enlightenment after spending the latter portion of his life as a ferryman, listening to the voice of the river.

Rationale:

The low reading level makes *Siddhartha* accessible to most high school levels; however, the book is especially meaningful for seniors, who are facing the next stage of life's journey after graduation. The book is used in English IV: World Literature, where the curriculum emphasizes universal themes of self-search and enlightenment.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

- "Siddhartha." *Magill Book Reviews*. Salem Press, 1995.
- Timpe, Eugene E. "Hesse's *Siddhartha* and the *Bhagavad Gita*." *Comparative Literature* 10 (1969): 421-426.
- "Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* as Divine Comedy," in *University of Dayton Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Winter, 1993-94, pp. 71-79.
- "Ticino Legends of Saints and Sinners," in *Hermann Hesse's Fictions of the Self: Autobiography and the Confessional Imagination*, Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 173-87.

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

- Herman Hesse, Nobel Prize in Literature, 1946
- Wilson's Senior High School 11/01/97
- Wilson's Fiction 01/01/96

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 1010
- Readability Level: 8.9

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: [\(link\)](#)

Approval:

Submitted to Committee: 1992

Approved for Adoption: 1992

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

Hesse's simple book does not need to preach the theme that true enlightenment cannot be taught and that too much searching can get in the way of what one is looking for; the character lives the lesson. This book, set in India in the 500s B.C.E., can be used to discuss the stylistic methods used to support tone and theme. Its simple narration uses figurative language and symbolism to reinforce theme.

Connection to the Curriculum:

Although *Siddhartha* is short and easy to read, it promotes higher-level thinking skills, such as analyzation, interpretation, and application. Senior World Literature students enjoy discussing the philosophies of the work and applying them to other journey/search works commonly taught in World Literature as well as to their own lives.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)

Siddhartha can be taught in conjunction with other Indian epics, such as *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. The book can also be used to exemplify Hindu and Buddhist concepts, such as the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.