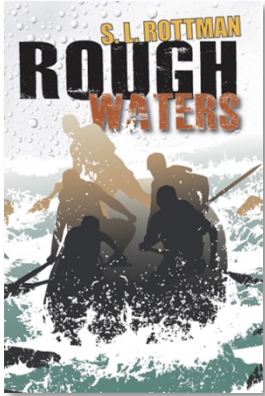


TEACHER'S GUIDE



Rough Waters

Written by S. L. Rottman

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Also available in e-book

Ages 12–16 | Realistic Fiction

AR • RC • Lexile • F&P • GRL Y; Gr 6

ABOUT THE BOOK

When their parents die in an accident, Scott and Gregg are set to live with Rocky, an uncle they never even knew they had. Rocky runs a whitewater rafting company in the remote Colorado Rockies. Hurt, angry, and confused, the brothers must confront their loss and face an uncertain future. Scott determines to make the best of the difficult situation. But Gregg, burying his grief deep within himself, begins to drift away from the only family he has left. Only a crisis on the river can force Gregg to confront the problems he has created and begin to draw the family back together.

THEMES

Grief | Family relationships and dynamics
Personal responsibility | Legal accountability
Loyalty to family and friends

BEFORE YOU READ

Ask students to think about and discuss the following questions:

- How might you react if your parents or caregivers suddenly died? Where would you go? With whom would you live?
- If you were sent to live with someone you didn't know, would it make a difference if you were related to that person?
- Which is more important: family or friends?
- Does a family member automatically deserve love and acceptance?
- When is it wrong to “snitch” on someone? When is it right? Who makes that determination?

- Have you ever had to tell on someone when you didn't want to? How did it make you feel?
- Is it better to be a responsible friend or a loyal one? Can you be both responsible and loyal?

AS YOU READ

Ask readers to consider the following questions as they read:

- How can you help someone who is grieving?
- Why does Scott find it easier to talk to Summer than to Gregg or Rocky?
- Does Rocky's attempt to give the boys space help or hurt their relationship?
- Is it easy to work with and for family members? Friends? What complications can rise from working with someone who is your close friend?

AFTER YOU READ

After discussing the following issues in class, ask students to write a paper or prepare a presentation for the class on their thoughts:

- What should happen to Gregg and the women on the midnight run? Should the police drop the charges? Should the rafters be tried as adults? What kind of punishment should be given? If and when this case goes to court, what might be the opening arguments for either the defense or the prosecution?
- Rocky employs tough love when he decides to let Gregg stay overnight in jail. Why do you think he does this? Do you believe tough love works or should be used? For what behaviors should parents or

caregivers use tough love? For how long a time should parents or caregivers use tough love?

- Why is forgiveness important? Do you receive forgiveness from others or from yourself?
- What different types of meaning does the title have?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

PSYCHOLOGY: GRIEVING AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

- Some of the stages of grief include anger, denial, guilt, and acceptance. Why is anger a part of the grieving process? Gregg is clearly using anger in dealing with his grief, but what about Rocky and Scott? How could the three of them better help each other with their grief?
- Gregg allows Roger to influence him and persuade him to act in ways Gregg probably would not have done if his parents were still alive. Why do Gregg's judgment and behavior change? What, if anything, could Scott or Rocky have done to diminish Roger's influence on Gregg?

SOCIAL STUDIES / BUSINESS / ECONOMICS

- Rocky's business lost money the first year, broke even the second year, and made a small profit the third year. What goes into running a business? What expenses are incurred? What management skills does Rocky have, and what skills does he need to work on?
- Living on credit and/or in debt has almost become the American norm. Is this healthy for the economy? Is there any way to stop it?
- Scott and Gregg's parents left little money for the brothers to live on. What could or should the parents have done to make sure the brothers' futures would be financially secure?

SCIENCE / ECOLOGY

- What is the ecosystem of a river like? What types of plant and animal life live in river areas? Are the river ecosystems in danger? How can we save them?
- What causes rapids in a river? How do rivers change? Why does water level change?
- How are rapids classified? What does each level of classification mean?
- In whitewater, portions of the river current don't always flow downhill. Why is this, and what are the various forms and intensities of these occurrences?

HEALTH / SAFETY

- What are the different categories of drugs? How do they affect a body?
- How does alcohol affect a body? How do body size and weight influence an individual's response to alcohol? How much/little alcohol does it take to impair judgment?
- What is recreational drug use? What is social drinking? Are either of these safe to engage in? Why do laws regulate, restrict, or prohibit the use of drugs and alcohol?
- What are the yearly statistics on deaths caused by alcohol or drugs?
- Whitewater rafting is great fun, enabling rafters to challenge a powerful natural force. Whitewater, though, must be respected because it can be dangerous. When you go whitewater rafting, what safety equipment should you wear? How should it fit?
- Helmets are not required for rafters on the part of the Arkansas River where this story is set. Should the characters have worn them anyway? Why or why not?
- Even in the middle of summer, the water temperature of a fast-moving river can be very cold. Why? What is hypothermia, what are its symptoms, and how should you as a rafter protect yourself from it?
- If you are thrown out of a raft in rapids, how should you position your body to keep yourself safe? Why? If you can get back to the raft, how will you be pulled back in? If you cannot get back to the raft, what should you do?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- Write a long letter to Nancy, from Scott's point of view, explaining everything that happened in the last two days of the story. (Alternative: Write the letter from Gregg's point of view.)
- Split the class in half, and host a debate on what should happen to Gregg. Should he go to court? If so, what are the charges against him? Is he guilty of those charges? If so, what should his punishment be? To what extent should Scott be held responsible for the events of that evening on the river? Or Rocky?
- Research a local or well-known river that has been dammed. Why was the dam built? What were the river and land like before the dam? After the dam? What have been the benefits of and problems caused by the dam?

REVIEWS

“Reminiscent of Gary Paulsen’s *Hatchet...* or *The River...* this quick-paced adventure will be enjoyed by ‘river rats’ and those interested in the outdoors.”

—**VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)**

“With the thrill of the rapids, realistic family dynamics, a little romance, and likable characters, this book is a great read.”

—**School Library Journal**

“The interactions between Scott and his brother are incredibly realistic and filled with emotion. It’s the relationship he forms with his uncle that really impressed me... I really enjoyed *Rough Waters*. With the right mix of emotion, adventure and tension, it’s a gripping read.”

—**Roundtable for Kids blog**

“I would definitely recommend this to any reader who likes action-based books but also enjoys reading about relationships between people...”

—**Crowding the Book Truck blog**

AWARDS

- Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Readers —YALSA
- Young Adults’ Choices —IRA
- Books for the Teen Age —New York Public Library
- Oklahoma Book Awards (finalist, children/young adult category) —Oklahoma Center for the Book
- Colorado Blue Spruce Award (finalist) —CCIRA, CLAS, CLA, CEMA
- Utah Book Award (young adult nominee) —Children’s Literature Association of Utah
- South Carolina Young Adult Book Award (nominee) —South Carolina Association of School Librarians
- Best Books for Young Teen Readers —R. R. Bowker

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

S. L. Rottman is a former teacher and the author of several young adult novels. A graduate of Colorado State University, Rottman lives in Colorado.

slrottman.net

Available from S. L. Rottman:

Head Above Water
Hero
Out of the Blue
Rough Waters
Shadow of a Doubt

Peachtree Teacher’s Guide for
ROUGH WATERS
 prepared by S. L. Rottman

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