

Bless the Beasts Haiku Deck Intro Notes

1. Today we are going to begin a study of a novel published in the year 1970 by American author, Glendon Swarthout: *Bless the Beasts and Children*. It is a novel written during a time of social change, the 1960s, and a novel that also caused social change.
2. This is Glendon Swarthout. He is from the state of Arizona. He was married to a woman name Kathryn, and they had one son named Miles. The dedication in this book is to his son, Miles. The inspiration for this book comes from his son, Miles. He was the author of several adventure stories.
3. The setting of the novel is in northern Arizona in the late 1960s. Many people think of Arizona as being only desert. However, the further north you go in Arizona, it begins to look more like Colorado. It is not just desert. It is a state with a varied landscape.
4. There are several themes in this book, but Swarthout states that two of them are "all living things are kin" and "by freeing others we free ourselves" are two of the most poignant.
5. This is a picture of how different northern Arizona can look from southern Arizona.
6. You can also see red rock in places like Sedona, near Flagstaff.
7. Our novel takes place around the Prescott area and just northeast of it, heading toward Flagstaff.
8. Here is a clearer picture of the roads and smaller cities nearby. I remember these cities well, as I lived in Arizona for 10 years and even went to college in Flagstaff for a year at Northern Arizona University before I finished at Arizona State University in Tempe.
9. Remember I told you that Glendon Swarthout, our author, got the inspiration for this book from his son, Miles. He based the stories of the 6 main camps in the book from the stories his son told him when he came home from a real camp. When his son was a teenager, he sent him to Hidden Valley Ranch Boys Camp in Prescott, Arizona. Glendon was always very interested in the camp stories that Miles told him. The characters he creates in the novel are also based on real people who Miles met while at camp. However, different names are used. The camp is also called Box Canyon Boys Camp in the novel.
10. Today Hidden Valley Ranch boys camp is no longer in existence. It is now a housing development in Prescott. But it used to be a vast camp land where parents would send their teenage boys to summer camp.
11. Quite a bit of the background and events in the novel are true, therefore, we can classify the novel as historical fiction.
12. Swarthout's book has been compared to William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*. This is a book that you may read next year as a sophomore. It is sort of a rebuttal to *Lord of the Flies*. In *Lord of the Flies*, the theme is that humans are bestial in nature. Boys who are stranded on an island do bad things. However, in *Bless the Beasts*, the reverse is true. It proves that with the right

combination of circumstances, if boys are isolated they will do great things. It is a "yes" book.

13. These are the 6 main characters in the novel who are considered misfits among the rest of the teenage boys. They are nicknamed the Bedwetters, for a reason you will find out when we begin reading the novel.
14. Their names are Cotton, Teft, Goodenow, Shecker, Lally 1, and Lally 2 (the Lallys are brothers). You will learn of their life stories through flashbacks.
15. What is interesting about this novel is not just the development of the characters but also how the novel managed to change hunting laws in Arizona. What is in the book is a real and true depiction of the animal atrocity that used to happen to the buffalo. Now, because of awareness from this book and Swarthout's testimony before a committee in state legislature, killing a buffalo is handled differently.
16. The buffalo, also called a bison, has long been a symbol of America. But they faced near extinction in the 1890s. At one time, their number dropped to less than 2,000.
17. Native Plains Indians used to use about every part of the buffalo and killed only what they needed to survive.
18. But European settlers and their greed changed this. When they came, they began mass killing of the buffalo for profit. There used to be about 50 million buffalo roaming freely prior to European settlement, then dropped to less than 2,000. Today the total size of the herd ranges in the 500,000 range, with about 250,000 in Canada.
19. Buffalo hunting became a big sport. Killing a buffalo qualified a hunter to be in the running for the Arizona Big Ten, which is a trophy given out every year by one of the ammunition makers for any sportsman who can bag all of the top-ten game animals in the state over the course of his hunting career. Every year 80 of the animals are marked for 80 peoples whose lucky numbers are drawn for the hunt.
20. Before Swarthout's book was released, buffalo were cruelly being penned up and shot by shooters, not marksmen. It has since been changed. They are no longer penned. Shooters have to hunt the animal on foot. State game rangers used to have to accompany lucky shooters who are drawn to put the animal out of its misery if a nervous shooter only injures the animal, but they no longer have to do this. But at least the "spectacle has been removed from the slaughter". This is one of the few works that has resulted in govt. regulations being rewritten over an animal rights' issue.
21. The Carpenters also made a song after the book. You can listen to it on ¹²youtube. It was a hit in the 1970s. *Give me a hmn where the buffalo roam...*
- 23 Items to look for in the novel...how the story is an allegory, symbols, allusions, character transformation, pilgrimage, journey, themes