

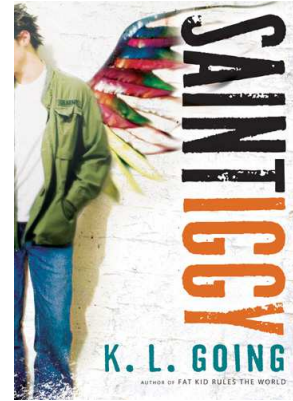
Teacher's Guide for *Saint Iggy*, by K.L. Going

Note to Teachers

What might short stories written by William Faulkner, James Joyce, Philip Roth, or Flannery O'Connor have in common with a modern, edgy teen novel?

Not much? Think again.

When my third novel, *Saint Iggy*, was born, I was taking a short story class in New York City. I'd never studied the classic writers or the short story form, so when I was asked to submit a story to an anthology I decided it was time to learn some new skills.



I wasn't sure what to expect. Would the stories be dull and needlessly complex? Would my classmates, most of whom were retired men and women taking the class for pleasure rather than course credit, have interesting things to say? How would reading short stories influence my writing?

I couldn't have imagined the answer to that last question. Not only did I finish my story for the anthology, but I infused the ideas from the class into my new YA novel. I kept the same gritty, underbelly world of *Fat Kid Rules the World*, and the same musically influenced characters (Iggy is named after Iggy Pop, but he's more like Sid Vicious) but now I combined these traits with literary ideas like tropes - a word repeated throughout the text, often used to imply more than it's literal meaning. (Can you find the trope in *Saint Iggy*?)

If you look at my notes for the course you'll find Iggy's name written in the margins of my papers. "Flannery O'Connor's characters are beaten into the position they're in by life. They can't figure how to get out." *That's Iggy*. "The villains become the heroes because we're allowed to connect with them as characters." *Iggy*. "James Joyce uses the imagery of white snow falling all over Ireland to symbolize something greater than what the text names outright." *Iggy*.

Exploring the work of these writers, along with hearing the comments from the men and women in my class whose observations crossed generational lines and offered glimpses into lives very different from my own, allowed a story to grow that might not have otherwise.

That's fusion. Learning from the past, but applying our own personal twists to make those ideas new and unique in the present.

--KL

Questions for Discussion

- 1) What kind of narrator is Iggy? Is he reliable or unreliable?
- 2) What makes Iggy's voice different from other narrative voices? How might it be similar?
- 3) As in real life, each character is a mix of good and bad. What are some of the actions each character takes that are ambiguous? Which actions are, in your opinion, easily definable?
- 4) Iggy and Mo have conflicting views on poverty. Do you think literature and the media idealize poverty? How? Is there a difference between poverty and not being rich? How does the last paragraph on page 52 relate to this argument?
- 5) Find examples of foreshadowing.
- 6) Light and darkness are literary tropes used throughout this book. A trope is defined by the Oxford dictionary as "the use of a word in other than its literal sense". What do you think the colors or lack of colors in various scenes represent?
- 7) What is the significance of the gray girl? What do you think happened between she and Iggy at the Never Ending party? What does she come to symbolize as the book progresses?
- 8) Read the last paragraph on page 120. What do you think it takes to be a good person? Should this be taught in school or only at home?
- 9) What is your opinion of Mo's mom as a character? Is she strong or weak? How about Principal Olmos?
- 10) How does God fit into this story? Is God present or absent?