Advanced Reading and Writing
Kendall Myers

*Blood Brothers* Notes

Chapter 1

1. What are the two major categories of books? (fiction/nonfiction) Are there any books in between the two categories? What kinds of nonfiction do we have? Talk about memoirs a bit. *Blood Brothers* is probably a type of memoir.
2. What is it called when a person tells a story using “I”? first person perspective
3. What is the setting that is given in the opening story? Give me 12 facts about the setting…historical, political, geographical, sociological, racial, religious, ethnically, climate, economic, etc.
4. What was the name of the village where the Chacours lived? Biram
5. What is a grotto? a cave-like structure
6. What physical characteristic of Elias’s father is surprising? blue eyes
7. What is the significance of the building described at the bottom of page 20? Why would it be considered sacred to these people?
8. Page 22—How is the relationship between the different people in the region depicted? (segregated but friendly)
9. What was the name of the Jews who were coming through the village of Biram?
10. What are a number of ways that something bad is foreshadowed in this chapter?

Chapter 2

1. Stories about Jesus…notice the advantage that someone like Elias had in understanding the life and teachings of Jesus (32-33)
2. What do we learn about the history of Elias’ group of Christians from Ch. 2?
3. Notice how much emphasis Elias places on the stories that both his father and mother told him…do your parents tell you stories about where you come from? stories about your family in past generations or about the church in past generations? Why do you think they do not? Part of the answer is that we live in a different kind of society—a literate society, actually maybe a post-literate society. Talk about these shifts. In a post-literate society, the screen with its multimedia format (video, image-based) replaces the printed page as the primary source of information and communication. This is having profound effects on how people’s minds work.

“Literacy: the ability to read and interpret the written word. What is post-literacy? It is the condition of semi-literacy, where most people can read and write to some extent, but where the literate sensibility no longer occupies a central position in culture, society, and politics. Post-literacy occurs when the ability to comprehend the written word decays. If post-literacy is now the ground of society, questions arise: what happens to the reader, the writer, and the book in post-literary environment? What happens to thinking, resistance, and dissent when the ground becomes wordless?” --Bruce Powell

1. What is the value of intentionally maintaining and developing the literacy of our subculture? How would we do that?

Chapter 3

1. At the end of chapter 2, one of Elias’s brothers had asked his dad why the visiting Jews were carrying guns…what is the father’s response? Someone read the paragraph with his response. Do you think that he is right?
2. Describe the sequence of events that brought huge changes to the Palestine region.
3. What kind of a movement was Zionism? Who supported it? Who opposed it? (Interesting how orthodox Jews view it) (see ppt on this topic)
4. How were the Chacours unique among the various group involved in this conflict?
5. How did the Chacours lose their home and farm?
6. Review location of Biram and Gish
7. What were the events that unfolded in the second half of Chapt. 3?

Chapter 4

1. Why might it be worse to have the men taken and not know what happened to them than to know that they were dead?
2. What is meant on the top of p. 60 when it refers to the women stepping into “the blackness of the mind from which there is no return”? Do you believe that circumstances can literally drive a person crazy? What do you think it would take to drive a person crazy?
3. Look at the prayer that Elias prayed on p. 61. Why do you think that he said this was one of the most important prayers of his life? Was this a conversion experience for him?
4. The return of Father and brothers…a very emotional and touching time for the family. Rehearse their experiences. How were they treated by the Arabs of the neighboring countries?
5. What was the hardest part of this whole experience for Elias’s dad?
6. Talk about Father’s response through this? What is his theory? Or what motivates him? I wonder where he got this wisdom and how he came to this understanding of Jesus’ teaching…I mean, so many Christians in history have offered other explanations of Jesus’ teachings.
7. Does anyone want to read their account?
8. What is the balance of seeking justice for yourself and suffering injustice silently? Is it ever right to fight for justice or perhaps, ask for justice? What about the action that the elders of the village took in the Supreme Court of Israel?
9. Elias talks about how the experience of mistreatment was sort of an answer to his prayer that God would use his hands, feet, and tongue—how was this an answer? (read bottom of p. 74) What good can come of rejection and humiliation? Faith in God, getting weaned from others’ approval, resilience of spirit

Chapter 5

1. Notice the lofty purposes that Father had in mind for Elias’s education… Why are you going to school? Really. What is the purpose of education? Is the value of education the ability to make life more comfortable and fun? Or is it to equip you to serve others and be a blessing to them?
2. The significance of Elias’s journal…have you ever tried keeping a journal? Not so much a history of things as a way to reflect and process.
3. Do you think that the Zionists commander chose Dec. 25 purposefully?
4. P. 87—the anger, the buried feelings, the danger of unresolved anger and bitterness

Chapter 6

1. Friendship with Faraj
2. Have students identify and read the places in this section (pp. 89-99) that depict significant experiences in Elias’s life—turning points or coming of age moments or insights that lead to maturity and growth
3. Do informal, non-graded reading quiz to test the students’ memory
4. What weakness do we see in Elias’s character in this chapter? How is it also a strength? Do you realize that your greatest weakness is probably connected to your greatest strength? Discuss some examples—speaking the truth vs. showing compassion; decisiveness vs. thoughtfulness; creative vs. meticulous; see printout
5. The conflicting desires and visions inside Elias—look at the first two paragraphs on 101. This kind of intangible, yet real sense or conviction inside of us is something to pay attention to. This insistent voice is part of the way that God directs our lives.
6. Father Ghazal’s comments on “letting God occupy your body” p. 103. And the knowledge of God’s work dawning in Elias’s mind.
7. What series of events brought about the plans for Elias and Faraj to go to Paris to study?
8. Comments on parents letting children go…I’m dreading this already…be considerate of your parents when you go

Chapter 7

1. In what ways did Elias and Faraj experience a clash of cultures, values, and beliefs in Paris?
2. The young men learned that the Parisians saw the Zionists as the good guys and the Palestinians as the bad guys…how do you think that the people of Paris arrived at that perspective? (the power of media)
3. The clash between the God-centered worldview and the man-centered worldview—discuss what has happened in the West
4. Describe what happened on the train when Elias was travelling to West Germany? What was the importance of this experience for Elias?

Chapter 8

1. History of Zionism and the formation of the new Israel
	1. 1897-meeting in Basle; led by Theodore Herzl, father of Zionism in Europe—question of the location for a homeland
	2. Meanwhile, the Palestinians were under the control of the Ottoman Empire, until in fell in WWI
	3. British govt. makes an agreement with Palestinians to help oust the Turks and establish a mandate govt, with future plans to turn over control
	4. Zionist activity and sympathy among British politicians lead to the proposal for a Jewish state in Palestine (Balfour Declaration)
	5. In the years following WWI, more and more Jews began migrating to Palestine, establishing *kibbutzim* throughout the region
	6. Some voices among Zionists called for a respectful treatment of Palestinians but were sidelined
	7. As new people kept flooding into the territory, some Palestinians began to resort to violent protests; these were labeled as “The Arab Rebellion” by Zionist leaders in the media; they also used words like “terrorists” and “guerillas” to refer to the Palestinians
	8. In 1939, the British tried to slow immigration but were met with violent responses by some of the Zionists, particularly the *Haganah* and the *Irgun*
	9. WWII and the Holocaust boosted the Zionist cause as many people around the world became aware of the horrible things that Jews had suffered
	10. Truman gives support to Zionism
	11. British govt. pulls out in 1947 and 1948, allowing the radical Zionists to take over the territory that they wanted
	12. Terrorism tactics by the *Haganah* against the Jews in Iraq to speed up the immigration of Jews
2. The demon of militarism—using military force to accomplish one’s goals—
3. Elias’s growing conviction that he was supposed to do something about the injustice of the situation in Palestine
4. Elias’s return to Palestine—How old is he by now?

Chapter 9

1. Elias’s ordination ceremony—two memories kept replaying
	1. the difficulty at entering the country of Israel in spite of having a passport
	2. not being able to let his car on the street in the Palestinian village
2. Visit to Biram…the memories of childhood…contemplating the grafted fig tree as a symbol of the church and the land of Palestine
3. Who does Elias think the land of Palestine belongs to? (God) Why does Elias not believe that this territory belongs solely and exclusively to the Jews?
	1. Gentiles have been grafted in and are heirs according to God’s promise
	2. The promises to Abraham about the land being his did not mean that he simply drove everyone out and took their land by force
4. According to OT prophecies, God would gather his people back together to show His holiness and his character to the world—creating a secular nation through military might did not show God’s character and holiness. They were also to bring other people to knowledge of God and into His people—could not this include the Palestinians.
5. And so the new Israel was to be a nation that lived out God’s character and demonstrated his righteousness and it was to be a nation that incorporated all those who came to worship God—much needed to change in order for the Zionist Israel to become the prophesied Israel
6. The Mt. of Beatitudes—
	1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—it wasn’t genetics that determined who would be part of this kingdom; it would be the humble in heart
	2. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth—Moses was meek, but he wasn’t passive; and inherit the land? maybe that include Palestine
	3. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled—this is what Elias had always wanted—for things to be right, for things to be fair, to be just; what was right, what was just was for everyone to have a sense of worth, a sense of human dignity—it’s here that Elias finally was able to put into words and gain clarity what he was being called to and what he needed to do in life
	4. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God—this was another way of thinking about what his true calling was—to make peace, to bring reconciliation
7. Assignment at Ibillin

Chapter 10

1. What are your questions or comments? Go around the room
2. Tell me about the village of Ibillin—what was it like? Look it up on Google maps if time permits
3. What is the Druze religion? –see printout for notes
4. What was Elias’s strategy for implementing his vision of peacemaking?
5. Wasn’t it great what happened to the nuns as soon as the sick child showed up?

Chapter 11

1. What was the “another step that was vital” for reconciliation? (top of 177)
2. Discussion about the way that some Christians interpreted the War of 1967 as a fulfillment of prophecy and an act of God
3. Was Elias’s time at the Hebrew University a positive or a negative experience for him? In what ways?
4. Was the march successful? What did the peace march accomplish?
5. Peace march—What kind of public demonstrations against evil are good? What unjust/immoral issues do we face in our context?

Chapter 12

1. Tell me about the visitor that Bishop Raya received…who was he? Why was he there? Was the march the problem or the reason for the march?
2. The challenge to work…don’t just talk about it, do something! Don’t just complain about the problem—find a remedy!
3. Work for the night is coming…time for each of us is limited; we need to make the most of the time we do have.
4. Idea of the importance of people having dignity as a cure for prejudice, hatred, resentment—how does this work? What does it mean to “have human dignity”? What does that look like? What does it look like to lack human dignity, to have little or no sense of worth or personal value? Picture the person lounging on a beat-up sofa inside of a rundown trailer surrounded with trash, loafing in their pajamas, eating greasy fries and smoking a cigarette, watching TV. How much human dignity does that person have? How do they treat themselves as a result? Think about the attitude some of the blacks here in the South had about themselves in the past. It was always yes sir, yes sir, and stay out of the way. This might help us to see why Elias keeps talking about the need to restore human dignity among the Palestinians.
5. What were some of the signs that some progress was being made through the efforts of Elias?
6. Planting olive trees in Biram—and also taking a bell to put in the finished church
7. What do you think of Elias’s actions after he and the children were turned away from Biram?
8. The despair and discouragement that Elias felt—what happens when you find yourself here?

Chapter 13

1. What should a person do when they find themselves discouraged to the point of giving up something important—something they had clearly believed in at some point in the past?
2. The PLO—who is this group and what are they about?
3. How does the news of the destruction of the refugee camps spur Elias to return to Palestine instead of simply confirm his decision to stay away from there?
4. The taming hand once again…Elias comes to accept suffering again in new way

Epilogue

1. Elias’s appeals to the Jews, Palestinians, and readers in the West—these are heartfelt pleas…what do you make of them? Read them together and discuss them.
2. The written comments at the very end of the book…don’t take sides, creating good guys and bad guys, but rather be a common friend—great challenge for many situations. Let’s be people who can bridge divides and be friends with opposing sides.