

AUTHOR REVEALED

ABOUT BRIAN L. TUCKER

Q. WHAT IS YOUR BIRTHDATE?

A. 11/9 (I like to think of it as an antithesis to 9/11)

Q. NAME OF YOUR FAVORITE COMPOSER OR MUSIC ARTIST?

A. The Stones

Q. FAVORITE MOVIE

A. A Perfect World

REVEALING QUESTIONS

Q. WHAT IS YOUR MOTTO OR MAXIM?

A. Just happy to be here

Q. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE PERFECT HAPPINESS?

A. Looking within instead of looking at my neighbor's house

Q. WHAT'S YOUR GREATEST FEAR?

A. I'm Type 1 diabetic, and I'm constantly trying to monitor my blood sugar. So losing a foot. Definitely losing a foot.

Q. IF YOU COULD BE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD RIGHT NOW, WHERE WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO BE?

A. Fishing on a boat with Charleston Harbor in the distance

Q. WHAT ARE YOUR MOST OVERUSED WORDS OR PHRASES?

A. 'Just.' I never know why I fill that word into every gap. (See Motto above.)

Q. IF YOU COULD ACQUIRE ANY TALENT, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

A. It would be to play the piano like Bill Evans.

Q. WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE FICTIONAL HERO?

A. Mattie Ross. She's so determined and authentic in her quest. I love her.

Q. WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE FICTIONAL VILLAIN?

A. Screwtape from The Screwtape Letters

Q. IF YOU COULD MEET ANY HISTORICAL CHARACTER, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO HIM OR HER?

A. John Galt: He would be exceptional at discussing the current fabric of society.

Q. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OCCUPATION, WHEN YOU'RE NOT WRITING?

A. I pose as a coffee connoisseur at Meeting House in Chattanooga. They have bottomless coffee on their menu. So that's a no-brainer.

Q. WHAT'S YOUR FANTASY PROFESSION?

A. Captain of a fishing vessel on the East coast; they give tours and help people land 'the big one.'

Q. IF YOU COULD EAT ONLY ONE THING FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAYS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

A. Watermelon

ON BOOKS AND WRITING

Q. WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE AUTHORS?

A. Charles Portis, Harriette Simpson Arnow, Leo Tolstoy, Wendell Berry, and Thomas Merton

Q. IS THERE A BOOK YOU LOVE TO REREAD?

A. I love Tom Franklin's *Poachers* collection.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR NEW WRITERS?

A. Read and explore new cities. You have to plan it out, but visiting a new city that inspires you can lead you to that story you've always wanted to tell.

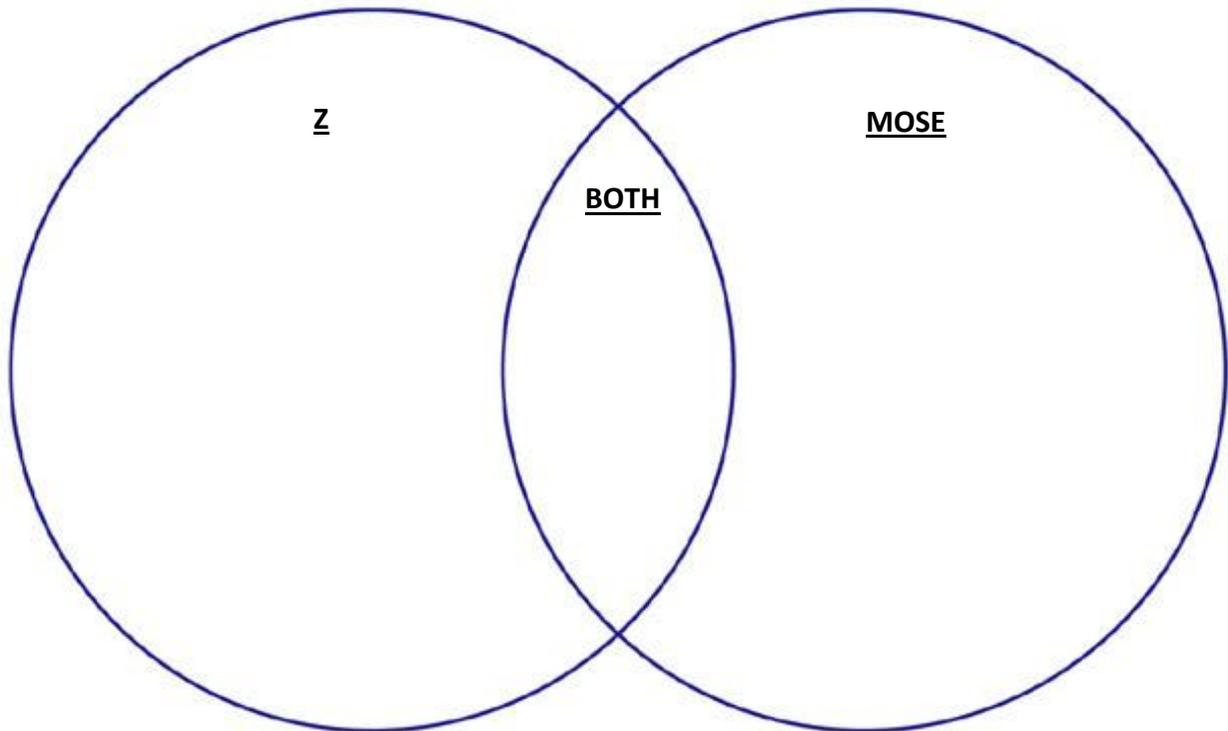
Extension Activities

1. The first line of *Pokeweed* reveals a murder using a literary technique known as a hook: “My name is Z Snopes, and my sister was killed for a measly five Greenbacks.” Introduce the narrative hook as a device for grabbing the reader’s attention, including types such as: dramatic action, mysterious setting, engaging characters, and thematic elements. Throughout the book, the author employs narrative hooks at the beginnings (and conclusion) of chapters. As students read, have them keep track of this device (alongside others: such as simile, metaphor, juxtaposition) in a journal. At the conclusion of the book, have students choose one example to illustrate each.
2. Ezekiel, Mose, Ms. Layton, Roger, and even, bonesaw Branson, all play an important part in the Snopes’ journey to find home. Have students choose a favorite scene from the book and, using what they’ve learned about each of these five characters, rewrite the scene from a different character’s point of view.
3. Ezekiel and Mose’s father is an abusive figure. Throughout the text, the children navigate a stark distance between themselves and his ever-present wrath. Have students work in groups to conduct a research project on the types of anger he presents and possible causes for such malice against his children. After research is concluded, give students time to present their findings. (Research can also focus on farming, chores, and obedience in a post-Civil War community).
4. Early in the story, Ezekiel witnesses his sister Isabel’s murder and learns of the feud happening around him in Hazard, KY. Conduct a lesson on famous historical feuds, what prompted them, and what their resolution ultimately was. Place students in pairs and have them create a map of these places across the continental US.
5. Loyalty, risk-taking, justice, fear, perseverance, war, trust, and friendship are the major themes in *Pokeweed*. Assign sections of the book to small groups to reread. As they read, have them record examples of the themes in a list. Next, using magazine clippings, meaningful words, phrases and descriptions from the text, and original artwork, have groups work together to create a theme collage. Choose a strong central image for the piece, and add layers of images and text around the center. Each group should present their finished work to the class.

TOPIC: Z & MOSE -

TRACKING PERSPECTIVES, THOUGHTS & FEELINGS

Instructions: Use this Venn diagram to track the perspectives, thoughts, and feelings of Z and Mose throughout the course of the novel.



Name: _____

Date: _____

WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE?

Instructions: If you were to pack a backpack for a long journey such as Ezekiel's, what would you bring? In the space below, write the items that you would bring with you in your backpack, along with a brief explanation of why you would bring each item.



Pokeweed

By **Brian L. Tucker**

Reading Group Guide

A Reading Group Guide to

Pokeweed: An Illustrated Novella

By Brian L. Tucker

About the Book

It's 1888, in Hazard, Kentucky...

What will one day be known as The French-Eversole Feud (due west of the notorious Hatfields & McCoys) has ignited.

Teenager Ezekiel Snopes must recover quickly from the loss of his younger sister—gunned down by a greedy feudist. He must now decide if he wants to live or die, remain at home, or, take a stand against such lawlessness in the Appalachian hills.

Regardless of what he does, the feud wages on...

This is a real period of American history.

And Ezekiel Snopes is just unlucky enough to be born in the midst of it.

Discussion Questions

1. *Pokeweed* is set in post-Civil War America. How does the violence described impact those involved in Hazard, Kentucky? Does it bring to mind any other episodes in American history?
2. With all of the recent school shootings, think about how this town's education suffers in the midst of the violence? How does it impact Z's community, his neighbors?
3. How do the illustrations complement the subject of this book: *The French-Eversole Feud*?
4. If you were making *Pokeweed* into a movie, who would be in it? Why?
5. What's your favorite quote? Why does that particular quote stand out?

6. What emotions does this novella stir in you?
7. What songs does this book make you think of?
8. If you could ask the author one question, what would it be?
9. If you could meet one character in real life, who would you choose?
10. What do you think of the book's cover? How well does it describe the story?
11. What do you think the author's purpose was in writing this book? What ideas was he trying to convey?
12. How original and unique was this book to you?
13. If you could hear this same story from another person's point of view, who would you choose?
14. How well do you think the author built the world in the book?
15. Did the characters seem believable to you? Did they remind you of anyone you know?

