

Banner in the Sky

Lesson Plans

Day 1: (Chapter 1, "A Boy and a Mountain", p. 11-24)

Overview: Sixteen-year-old Rudi Matt works as a dishwasher at the Beau Site Hotel in Kurtal, a small alpine village in Switzerland. On this beautiful day, however, Rudi can't stand to stay indoors and sneaks out to the mountains. He is determined to find a way to climb the Citadel, the only peak in the Alps that has not yet been climbed. As he hikes on a glacier near the base of the mountain, he hears a voice.

Reading the book: Ask students what a banner is. Tell them the title of the book and ask what they think the book might be about. Hand out copies of the book. Let students study the cover illustration and read the back cover. Ask for more predictions about the book.

Read the first page together. Ask students to pay special attention to ways the author "sets the stage" and builds anticipation (makes you want to keep reading). Discuss these points before having students read the rest of chapter 1.

Vocabulary: Hand out copies of the 3-column vocabulary chart. As students read, have them write down words they don't know or aren't sure of in the first column. In the second column, they should write what they think the word means, based on its use in the book. After finishing the chapter, have them look up the dictionary definition of each word and write it in the third column.

To discourage "I already know all this" comments, you might assign a minimum number of words per chapter or start a Word Jar. Have each student choose one or two words from that day's list, write the word, its definition, and their name on a slip of paper, and put it in the Word Jar. Each day, draw one word from the jar and make it the class vocabulary word for the day.

Specialized vocabulary: There is quite a bit of specialized geology and mountain climbing vocabulary in this book. If you'd like to emphasize this, begin a class picture dictionary. Make a list on the board of such words from this chapter, having students identify terms from their vocabulary lists or use the list below. Then assign words to individual students or small groups. Have the student or group design a dictionary page for that word, containing the word, part of speech, definition, and a sentence containing the word. Have them illustrate it as well. Organize pages in alphabetical order in a binder.



Specialized vocabulary in chapter 1: *treeline, glacier, moraine, col, crevasse*

Extension Activities: Locate the Swiss Alps on a map. Look for some of the specific peaks mentioned on p. 17 in the book. Then read the Author's Note (before chapter 1) together. On what real mountain is the Citadel based? (The Matterhorn) Find that mountain on the map. Try to locate pictures of it, and other peaks in the Alps, on the Internet or in an encyclopedia.

Look back to the very first page of the story. In what year does this story take place? (1865) Do some research and find other events that took place during that year.

Suggested field trip during this unit: Make arrangements to take your students mountain climbing or to a climbing wall.



3-Column Vocabulary Chart

Word, page number, part of speech	What I think it means	What the dictionary says it means



Day 2: (Chapter 2, "A Boy and a Man", p. 25-38)

Overview: The voice Rudi hears belongs to a climber who has fallen into a crevasse. Rudi locates him, but has no equipment to pull him out. He also knows he does not have time to go to the village and return with help. The man will freeze to death. Rudi ties his clothing together and ties the makeshift rope to his staff to pull the man out. Then he discovers that the man whose life he has saved is John Winter, a famous mountain climber. He discovers that Captain Winter also believes that the Citadel, the mountain on which Rudi's father died, can be climbed.

Reading the book: Review chapter one briefly. Ask students what happened at the end of the first chapter. (Rudi heard a voice). What did he think it might be? (a mountain demon) Could that really be what it was? How do you know? Take some time to discuss why people might believe in things like mountain demons. This issue will come up again in the story.

Then go on to chapter 2. Have students read the chapter individually or together as a class. Use the study guide (see *Black Line Masters*) as an outline for class discussion or have partners discuss and fill it out together.

Vocabulary: Continue having students fill out the 3-column chart.

Specialized Vocabulary: reconnoiter, face, chimney (the last two specifically as they refer to mountain features)



Banner in the Sky
Study Guide
Chapter 2

1. Why was Rudi reluctant to go for help?
2. Describe how Rudi saved the climber.
3. Why was Rudi surprised when he discovered the identity of the English climber?
4. As Rudi and Mr. Winter head back to the village, the author says, "Behind them, the mountain roared." What do you think he means?

Day 3: (Chapter 3, "Two Hundred Dirty Dishes", p. 26-37)



Overview: Old Teo, Rudi's boss in the hotel kitchen, tries to cover for Rudi's absence, but his mother and uncle soon find out the truth. They are furious. Rudi's mother does not want her son to die climbing mountains as his father did, and has forbidden him to climb at all. As they are scolding him, Captain Winter appears at their door and tells Rudi's family how Rudi saved his life. He plans to climb a nearby peak the next day and hires Rudi's Uncle Franz to guide him. He also requests that Rudi come along as a porter.

Reading the book: Have students read chapter 3 individually or read it together as a class. Have students fill out the "Choices and Consequences" chart (see Black Line Master) and take time to discuss it in class. As you discuss, ask students to identify light-skills that are being used or should be used in the decision-making process.

Vocabulary: Continue working with the 3-column chart.



Banner in the Sky
Chapter 3
Choices and Consequences

Rudi faces a tough situation. He desperately wants to climb mountains, especially the Citadel. His mother just as desperately wants him to stay off mountains altogether.

1. Describe how Rudi is choosing to handle this situation.

2. What other choices might Rudi have?

3. Fill out the chart below, listing some of the choices Rudi has and the possible consequences of each choice. Then, on the back of this paper, write a paragraph telling which choice you think Rudi should make and why.

Choice:	Consequences:
Choice:	Consequences:
Choice:	Consequences:



Day 4: (Chapters 4 & 5, "Trial—", "—And Error", p. 52-72)

Overview: Captain Winter arranges for Rudi to get the climbing equipment he needs, and his mother finally agrees to let him climb the Wunderhorn this one time. All goes well on the climb until, as the group prepares to descend, Rudi decides to find a better way down. His route does seem better until a ledge crumbles, stranding him on an outcropping of rock. His uncle and Captain Winter rescue him, but he descends the mountain roped between them—in disgrace.

Reading the book: Have students read these chapters individually or read them together as a class. If this is too much material for your class to cover in one day, stretch it out over two days.

As a class, brainstorm a list of options Rudi has now that he has failed on his first "official" climb. (He can give up; he can keep sneaking off, etc.) Assign each option to a small group of students and ask them to list possible consequences. Have each group share their list with the class. Discuss light-skills that should be used in making this decision.

Teacher note: In this section, Captain Winter exclaims "By God! That was climbing!" Don't just let that go by. Ask students if they know why we don't use God's name in that way. Use this opportunity to discuss this issue using a fictional character rather than students' own behavior—they are more likely to discuss openly this way.

Vocabulary: Continue using the 3-column note chart.

Specialized Vocabulary: peak, ridge, angle of ascent, buttress, summit, foothills

Extension Activities: Take another look at the author's craft. Reread the section that begins at the bottom of page 65 and goes through the top of page 71—where Rudi tries to find another route down and has to be rescued. Ask students to summarize this section in two sentences or less. Then point out that, although their summaries tell the main events that happen, the author includes many more details. This one event in the story takes five pages to tell. Why? Have students look for specific details, such as Rudi's thoughts, minute actions, etc. Point out that authors often use many little details to draw out the suspense, much as movie producers use slow motion.



Day 5: (Chapter 6, "Master and Pupil", p. 73-88)

Overview: Rudi returns to washing dishes at the hotel, discouraged. After a few days, Old Teo arranges a day off and takes Rudi to a smaller peak, often used as a practice mountain. He spends the day teaching Rudi and practicing climbing techniques with him. He also tells Rudi how his father died, trying to save another man.

Reading the book: Have students read chapter 6 individually or together as a group. Divide the class into pairs or small groups to discuss and answer the questions on the study guide. (See Black Line Masters)

Vocabulary: Continue using the 3-column notes.

Specialized Vocabulary: cleft, pitch, belay, crevice



Banner in the Sky
Study Guide
Chapter 6

1. Why do you think Teo decided to help Rudi? Use details from the story to support your answer.

2. What is a mentor? In what ways was Teo a mentor to Rudi?

3. Think of someone you could mentor. How can you help him or her? Write your plan here:

4. On the back of this paper, retell the story Teo told Rudi about his father.

5. Why did Teo tell Rudi that story?

6. Name one light-skill Josef Matt used. Describe one way in which you can use that same light-skill.



Day 6: (Chapters 7 & 8, "A Prisoner Escapes", "White Fury", p. 89-114)

Overview: When Rudi and Teo return to town, they discover that Captain Winter has left Kurtal. Rudi is devastated. A few days later, he overhears his uncle say that someone is staying in the hut at the base of the Citadel. Rudi knows it must be Captain Winter. In the middle of the night, Rudi sneaks off to join him, taking his father's red shirt and his staff along—hoping to plant them on the summit as his father had planned. Captain Winter is indeed staying at the hut, along with the guide he has hired from a neighboring—and rival—village. Captain Winter, thinking Rudi has permission to be there, permits Rudi to stay and reconnoiter with them the next day. As they climb above the glacier, they are caught in an avalanche.

Reading the Book: Have students read chapters 7 and 8 individually or together as a class. As students read, have them take notes, writing down major events in the order they occur. They should just write phrases of four words or fewer—no complete sentences. After finishing the chapters, have them use their notes to write one-paragraph summaries. Extend this activity over two days if you need to.

Vocabulary: Continue using 3-column chart.

Specialized Vocabulary: ramparts, chasm, saddle, icefall, gradient

Extension Activities:

Discussion: Once again, Rudi disobeys his mother and lies to cover up for it. He prays for forgiveness, telling God "I can't help it." Ask students if they think it's true that Rudi "can't help it." What other choices does he have? Is Rudi's goal a good one? Can a good goal be so important that you have to deceive others to attain it? Have students try to think of specific examples and/or Bible verses to back up their opinions.

Math: On pages 108 and 109, the author talks about the gradient changing from forty degrees to forty-five and then to more than fifty. Show students how to draw these angles using a protractor. Then have them use their drawings and the protractor to model the actual gradients using clay.



Day 7 (Chapters 9 & 10, "The Challenge", "Three to Make Ready—", p. 115-138)

Overview: In the village, the guides learn that Captain Winter has hired a guide from Broli to help him climb the Citadel. As the men watch through the town telescope, they see three men on the mountain. Rudi's uncle realizes that the third man must be Rudi. Six guides from Kurtal, including Rudi's uncle and Teo, decide to go up after him. Meanwhile, Rudi and his companions have managed to dig themselves out of the snow, although Captain Winter has injured his head. He says he will be all right and he and Saxo, the guide, make plans to return to Broli for supplies before beginning their climb. He tells Rudi to return to Kurtal and bring his uncle back with him.

Reading the book: Have students read chapters 9 and 10 individually or together as a class. You might want to spread this over two days, depending on the ability of your students. When students have finished reading, have them complete the study guide with a partner or small group. Or use the study guide as a basis for class discussion on the issues of superstition and cooperation. Be sure to point out that fear is often the basis for superstition.

Teacher Note: The word "damn" appears in this section and again two more times later in the book. Again, use this opportunity to discuss with students why we don't use this term. Students are more likely to be open-minded and honest when discussing the actions of a fictional character.

Vocabulary: Continue using the 3-column charts.



Banner in the Sky
Study Guide
Chapters 9 & 10

1. When the guides of Kurtal hear that men are planning to climb the Citadel, they expect the demons of the Citadel to destroy them. Why do you think they assume this?

2. Imagine you were in the town square in Kurtal that day. What would you tell those men? Remember to be respectful as you stand up for what you believe. Write what you would say here:

3. What is Emil Saxo's attitude toward the guides of Kurtal? Why do you think he feels that way?

4. How could this attitude affect the climb if Rudi goes along?

5. Name one light-skill that might help resolve this situation and tell how you would use it.



Day 8 (Chapters 11 & 12, "Alone", "A Boy and a Ghost", p. 139-163)

Overview: Instead of going back to Kurtal, Rudi heads for the Citadel. He is sure his father had found a route up the mountain before being killed, and he wants to find it. He does find a way past the Fortress, a sheer cliff that marks the highest point his father reached. He climbs past the Fortress, but it is late in the day and he has to descend. On the way down, he gets caught in a sudden storm and takes refuge in a cave. When he realizes this must be the cave where his father died, he panics, thinking he sees his father's ghost leading the mountain demons. Then he remembers that his father was a good man and would not harm his own son. The "ghost" he sees is just mist at the cave entrance. He is then able to sleep.

Reading the book: Have students read chapters 11 and 12 individually or together as a class. Spread this over two days if you need to, depending on the ability of your students. Have students complete the study guide in small groups or individually. Then use it as the basis for class discussion.

Note: In these chapters, Rudi obviously believes his father is in heaven and is watching over him. Be sure to discuss this issue (the study guide and some extension activities deal with it.) Students need to know how to respond to this very common belief.

Vocabulary: Continue to use the 3-column chart.

Specialized Vocabulary: seracs, crag, precipice, promontory, gully

Extension Activities:

As you talk with students about how Rudi's beliefs are different from ours, talk about how we can share our faith and beliefs as well. Your pastor would be a good resource person to help with this lesson. Stress that in sharing our beliefs we need to make sure we show respect for those we are sharing with and not make them feel put down.

Some possible activities to practice this: Write a letter to Rudi, telling him what you believe and at the same time encouraging him to continue his quest to conquer the Citadel. Or develop a Bible study on this topic together and let students practice giving it, with one student giving the study and another playing Rudi's role.



Banner in the Sky
Study Guide
Chapters 11 & 12

1. What did Rudi do instead of going back to Kurtal as Captain Winter asked him to do? Why was this dangerous?
2. As Rudi climbs, he sees a chamois above him. What is a chamois? Describe or draw one here.
3. On his way down, Rudi is caught in a storm. Copy four phrases the author uses to show that this is a fierce storm.
4. What does Rudi think he sees as he waits in the cave? What is it really?
5. Reread Rudi's thoughts as he deals with his fear of the "ghost." (p. 161 & 162) Could his father really be there "not to harm me but to watch over me"? Use these texts to help you answer this question: Eccl. 9:5,6; Ps. 146: 3,4; I Thess. 4:13-17



Day 9 (Chapter 13, “—Four to Go”, p. 164-183)

Overview: When Captain Winter and Saxo return with their supplies, they find the guides of Kurtal at the hut. The men become worried as they realize that none of them knows where Rudi is. Just then Rudi returns to the hut. His Uncle Franz finally agrees to climb the Citadel with Captain Winter and Saxo, although neither guide is excited about climbing with someone from the rival village. He also agrees to let Rudi come as porter.

Reading the book: Have students read chapter 13 individually or together as a class. As students read, have them take notes, writing down major events in the order they occur. They should just write phrases of four words or fewer—no complete sentences. After finishing the chapter, have them use their notes to write one-paragraph summaries. Extend this activity over two days if you need to.

Vocabulary: Continue using the 3-column chart and/or word jar.

Specialized Vocabulary:

Extension Activities: Uncle Franz and Emil Saxo are from rival villages and spend a great deal of time arguing and competing with each other. Although both are good guides, they are prejudiced against each other because of the rivalry between their villages. As students continue to read the book, ask them to watch for ways this rivalry helps or hurts the expedition.

Take time also to discuss prejudice. Why are Uncle Franz and Emil Saxo prejudiced against each other? What are some other reasons for prejudice? What can we do about it? Have students role-play some conflict situations based on prejudice, looking for ways to resolve the conflict peacefully.



Day 10 (Chapter 14, "First of All Men", p. 184-199)

Overview: Rudi, his uncle, Captain Winter, and Emil Saxo set off to climb the Citadel. Teo and the other guides plan to wait for them at the hut. When the climbers get to the Fortress, Captain Winter tells Rudi to lead, since he knows the way. Emil Saxo argues that another route is better, but Captain Winter prevails and Rudi feels honored to be allowed to lead this segment of the climb. They continue up the mountain until it becomes late and they find a good camping place.

Reading the book: Have students read chapter 14 individually or together as a class. As students read, have them take notes, writing down major events in the order they occur. They should just write phrases of four words or fewer—no complete sentences. After finishing the chapter, have them use their notes to write one-paragraph summaries. Extend this activity over two days if you need to.

Vocabulary: Continue using the 3-column chart and/or word jar.

Specialized Vocabulary: shoulder



Day 11 (Chapter 15, "The Needle's Eye", p. 200-221)

Overview: The next morning, the four continue the climb. Captain Winter's head wound bothers him and he becomes weaker as they climb higher. They come to a place where there is no way up except through a narrow cleft. All three men try, but it is too small for them to get through. Rudi convinces them to let him try. He makes it and is able to drop a rope from the top so the rest can climb up.

Reading the book: Have students read chapter 15 individually or together as a class. As students read, have them take notes, writing down major events in the order they occur. They should just write phrases of four words or fewer—no complete sentences. After finishing the chapters, have them use their notes to write one-paragraph summaries. Extend this activity over two days if you need to.

Vocabulary: Continue using the 3-column chart and/or word jar.



Day 12 (Chapter 16, "Darkness and Dawn", p. 222-237)

Overview: It soon becomes obvious that they will have to camp a second night on the mountain before reaching the summit. Captain Winter is weak and coughing. In the evening, after Captain Winter has gone to bed, Saxo and Uncle Franz argue over whether or not to leave Captain Winter behind and climb the rest of the way alone. Franz refuses to leave his client, for whom he is responsible, behind. Early in the morning, Rudi awakens and realizes that Saxo has left to climb the peak alone. He sets out after him.

Reading the book: Have students read chapter 16 individually or together as a class. Have them fill out the "Argument Notes" sheet, listing reasons for and against leaving Captain Winter behind to climb the peak. Then have them write a conclusion paragraph explaining which they would choose and why.

Vocabulary: Continue using the 3-column chart and/or word jar.

Specialized Vocabulary: bivouac



Banner in the Sky
Argument Notes

Issue: Should the guides leave Captain Winter and climb on to the summit alone?

Opinion for:

Reasons:

1.

2.

3.

Opinion against:

Reasons:

1.

2.

3.

Conclusion: _____



Day 13 (Chapter 17, "The Day", p. 238-256)

Overview: The people of Kurtal have been watching the Citadel through the telescope and have seen the men high on the shoulder of the mountain. On the mountain itself, Franz and Winter awaken to find Saxo and Rudi gone. They set out after them and find Rudi's pack on a ridge just below the summit. They can see the summit clearly but see no sign of Rudi or Saxo. Winter sees the red shirt and the staff in Rudi's pack and realizes what they are for. He takes them, and the men continue their climb.

Reading the book: Have students read chapter 17 individually or together as a class. Take time to discuss the chapter and its changes in point of view:

Whose thoughts and feelings have we been seeing up to this point in the book?
(Rudi's)

But Rudi does not appear in this chapter at all. Whose experiences, thoughts, and feelings do we follow in this chapter? (First the villagers; then Winter and Franz)

Why do you think the author chose to do that?

You know what Rudi was doing in the last chapter. How does it make you feel to read about Winter and Franz finding his pack? What do you think happened?

Vocabulary: Continue using the 3-column chart and/or word jar

Specialized Vocabulary: chasm, abyss



Day 14 (Chapters 18 & 19, “The Heights”, “The Conqueror”, p. 257-285)

Overview: Rudi climbs after Saxo and catches up to him on a very narrow ridge with steep drops on both sides. Saxo yells at him to go back, then turns to yell again. As he turns, he loses his balance and falls. Rudi sees him on a ledge below, injured but alive. He has to choose between helping Saxo or climbing on to the summit. He can't do both. He chooses to help Saxo, climbs down beside him, and finds a way to help him back along the ledge until it joins the shoulder near their last camp. Winter and Franz find them there as they return from the summit. Together, the three help Saxo down the mountain; then they, with the guides waiting at the hut, return to Kurtal in triumph. When they are back in town, Rudi looks through the telescope and sees his father's red shirt flying from the top of the Citadel.

Reading the book: Have students read chapters 18 and 19 individually or together as a class. Use two days if necessary. Then have them do the study guide or use the questions as the basis for class discussion.

The study guide asks students to choose one lesson they could learn from this book. Take time to discuss student answers with the whole class. If students don't mention the change in Rudi—from the selfish boy trying to show off on the Wunderhorn to the young man who gave up his dream of reaching the summit of the Citadel to help another climber—be sure to bring it up in the class discussion.

Vocabulary: Review the vocabulary words students have chosen and learned during this unit. Collect all 3-column charts or get out the word jar. Play vocabulary tic tac toe by dividing the class into pairs. Have the younger member of each pair be the X and go first. Read a word from a list or from the jar. The first player defines that word to his or her partner. If the definition is correct, the player places his or her X. Continue playing until you have finished two or three games.



Banner in the Sky
Study Guide
Chapters 18 & 19

1. Who actually reaches the summit of the Citadel?
2. Rudi has two big decisions to make: One when he sees Emil Saxo fall and another when he sees his uncle and Captain Winter climbing above them. What did Rudi decide in each case?
3. Do you think his decisions were good ones? Why or why not?
4. After the climbers return to Kurtal, Captain Winter introduces Rudi as "the conqueror of the Citadel." Why do you think he said this? Do you agree?
5. The title of this book is *Banner in the Sky*. The movie based on this book is titled *Third Man on the Mountain*. Explain how each title fits the story.



6. Which title do you think fits best? Why?

7. Rudi's quest is to complete the "mission" his father began on the Citadel. Do you think he succeeded? Why or why not?

8. What is one lesson you can learn from this story? Use details from the story to show how that lesson is brought out in *Banner in the Sky*.

