

Spring, 2000

Dear Colleague:

I met Roland Smith quite by chance at the 1999 Michigan Reading Association Conference. I presented on Saturday and had planned to return home that evening, but a snowstorm kept me in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Early Sunday morning I dressed and hurried to my first session. It was full! I checked across the hallway and the room was almost empty, but the speaker was showing slides of wolves. I am a huge animal lover, so I sat down and listened. Within the next few hours, I bought all of Roland's books; and, within the next few weeks, I read them all and became a huge fan.

I brought the novels to school and tried *Thunder Cave* with my seventh grade class. They enjoyed the book so much the students strongly encouraged me to bring Mr. Smith to our school. Last March, he came to Shepherd, Michigan, and mesmerized the entire school. He was not only knowledgeable and interesting, but he was gracious to a group of 11-15 year olds. This unit and others are a result of that day.

The *Sasquatch* unit combines all the areas of Language Arts—literature, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing, as well as technology and research. The unit is carefully structured; the instructor reads the majority of the text as students listen and actively follow along, stopping to complete individual and group assignments throughout the novel.

The anticipatory set for the unit is a peek at who Roland Smith is. Before students read *Sasquatch*, they can find out how much of Roland is in this novel, and that authors are real people who enjoy hearing from their readers. The culminating activity is an exciting game with teams somewhat similar to Jeopardy called Sasquatch Q and A. An extension writing activity is included that asks students to take the Hickock men and perhaps woman, on another adventure; remember Dylan's mother is studying anthropology. Who knows what adventures the Hickock family could find?

Included is a student packet and an appendix with instructor notes that has most everything you will need to explore and share *Sasquatch* with your students. Activities are applicable and enjoyable for fourth through eighth grade students. While creating the student activities, I have especially kept in mind the following: special education students, reluctant readers, and inclusion classrooms. The unit can take four to six weeks, depending upon the length of class periods, how much homework is required, and how many activities you decide to initiate. Whatever you do with the unit, it is critical that you are the primary reader of the novel. Please do not assign pages or chapters for students to read alone. Experience this novel together!

Working With You
Julie D. Sprague