Ordinary People
by Judith Guest
Concept Analysis

Organizational Patterns
The chapters alternate between the point of view of Conrad and his father, Calvin. Sometimes it is hard to tell which point of view the chapter is being told from.

Issues related to this Study of Literature

Themes:
Grief: Conrad and the rest of his family must deal with grief after the loss of Buck, Conrad’s brother. Each member of the family deals with it differently.
Suicide: After the death of his brother Buck, Conrad has a hard time moving on. Before the novel even starts, he has tried to commit suicide. Through the rest of the book, he learns to deal with his sadness and his suicide attempt.
Communication: Conrad and his parents all communicate differently and usually have a hard time communicating at all. Throughout the book, each member changes the way they communicate, for the better or not.

Setting: Lake Forest, Illinois, in the Jarrett home, grandparents house, school, and Dr. Berger’s office. Although all are basic locations, it would help if students knew where Lake Forest was located.

Point of View; Narrative Voice: The narrator tells the story. It tells the story showing Conrad and then Calvin.

List of Literary Terms taught in 6th-12th grades:
alliteration
allusion
analogy
character sketch
climax
complication—mother
issues
conflict A
internal/external—conflict
with personal
feelings/family
dialogue
falling action –
figurative language
flashback—to when Buck
died
foreshadowing
frame story

mood plot graph
motivation
narration
plot
resolution—understanding
each other and moving to
Evanston
rising action
setting
theme
tone
voice
Affective Issues Related to the Work

Students will likely relate to family issues and communication. Some might relate to suicide or difficulties dealing with friends. Some important issues to discuss with students are Conrad’s feelings, especially those of loneliness or inadequacy, suicide, and interactions with others.

Vocabulary Issues

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<tr>
<th>coalesced</th>
<th>anxious</th>
<th>sarcasm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>slandering</td>
<td>revoked</td>
<td>indifference</td>
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<td>utilitarian</td>
<td>synchronizing</td>
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<td>panacea</td>
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<td>impediments</td>
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<td>brusque</td>
<td>chaos</td>
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Background Knowledge

Discussing families and how some families have problems may help. Discussing suicide, grief after a death, depression.

Implications for Students of Diversity

Differences in families and suicide/death.

Gender Issues

There are no gender issues.

The Central Question or Enduring Issue

How does the loss of a loved one affect us?

Research Issues/Project Ideas

Suicide, communication strategies, psychological development, search for identity, perfectionism.

Finlayson, BYU, 2008
Information/Functional Texts
“The Suicide” By Edna St. Vincent Millay
“Warning Signs of Suicide” [http://www.befrienders.org/suicide/warning.htm]