

Author Study

Darcie Little Badger

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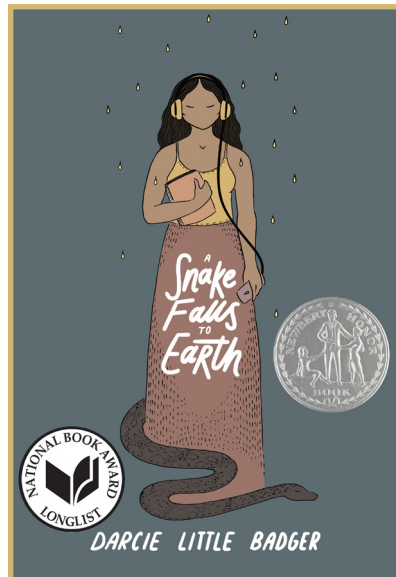
An author study can encourage students to become a community of readers and develop their critical reading and literacy skills. This author study will introduce a new literary voice. Guiding questions will help students investigate the author, Darcie Little Badger, and her writing. Readers will delve into her two novels, *Elatsoe* and *A Snake Falls to Earth*, which are on national bestseller lists and have received starred reviews.

Although these books fit into the realm of speculative fiction and fantasy, Darcie Little Badger weaves her unique Lipan Apache perspective throughout her stories. Students will understand the power of story as the author embeds current issues like climate change, racism, dealing with grief, language revitalization, and gender roles within her novels.

Let's Explore!

Make Novel Connections in a Journal

While reading the two novels, keep a journal (digital or paper). Try to keep an open mind as you read. Try not to interrupt your reading pace. Flag or highlight words, sentences, or paragraphs that capture your attention. Or maybe surprised you somehow. (There are no right or wrong answers!) Return to your flagged selections to take notes later—perhaps after you’ve finished a chapter or the end of your reading session. Make quick notes on the characters, their choices, and plot events as you read, as well as any personal responses or reflections you’d like to remember. Once you finish reading, write a summary of each book.



Discussion Questions

1. Both *Elatsoe* and *A Snake Falls to Earth* have received high praise for the author’s work. Why do critics recommend these books? How did the author earn a starred review?

Use one of these professional literary review websites to read at least two different reviews for each story:

ELATSOE

Kirkus Reviews <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/darcie-little-badger/elatsoe/>

BookPage <https://www.bookpage.com/reviews/25447-darcie-little-badger-elatsoe-ya/>

The Horn Book <https://www.hbook.com/story/review-of-elatsoe>

Publishers Weekly <https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-64614-005-3>

A SNAKE FALLS TO EARTH

Kirkus Reviews <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/darcie-little-badger/a-snake-falls-to-earth/>

Booklist <https://www.booklistonline.com/A-Snake-Falls-to-Earth/pid=9750524>

Publishers Weekly <https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-64614-092-3>

The Horn Book <https://www.hbook.com/story/review-of-a-snake-falls-to-earth>

2. Darcie Little Badger is a talented writer. Her character descriptions paint crisp images of the protagonists, yet the information doesn't distract the reader from the events in the story. Readers learn about Ellie and her companion Kirby on p1 of *Elatsoe*. In similar fashion, the author reveals Nina's inner character in description on pp158 – 159 of *A Snake Falls to Earth*. Read these two selections out loud to a partner. What do you notice? Locate two (2) more sections of description that explain more about the characters. What does the author do in these passages that provide depth and further understanding of the characters?
3. The author uses unique descriptions to create a sense of tone. She concentrates on a particular physical trait of a character, or reveals how other characters react toward the protagonist, or uses sensory details to show a change in setting. Locate a passage in each story where the author's writing and tone stands out. How does her word choice, sentence structure, and/or paragraphing affect the tone?
4. *Elatsoe* and *A Snake Falls to the Earth* differ in point of view. Skim the first pages of chapters 5 – 6 of each story. Discuss how the point of view affects the story. What happens when the author uses first person point of view? What changes with a third person point of view?.

5. Provide evidence that shows a unique perspective. (i.e. character – Oli (*A Snake Falls to Earth* p101): “Everyone knows—straight from the egg—it’s safer to wait if you tumble from the nest. Just hunker down and shriek.” Lipan Culture (*Elatsoe* p330): Ellie had sensed them, these marvelous dogs who recognized her as part of their extended family. With all her strength, she summoned the pack. Ellie called to them in every language they might understand: English, Spanish, Lipan.”) Read your favorite passage to a partner.
6. What caused each protagonist to start their journey in the story? What is the major conflict in each story? Are the protagonists isolated or do they have a team that works together to solve a problem? What does each character want (the goal that takes them through the entire story)? How does each character grow by the end of the story?
7. Identify and analyze various important issues found in the *Elatsoe* and *A Snake Falls to Earth*. Use the chart below to organize your thoughts. What are the common threads found in the two books? What perspectives are missing?

| BOOK TITLE | CONNECTIONS (FAMILY, ANIMAL WORLD, ANCESTORS, STORIES, ETC.) | LANGUAGE | GENDER | ENVIRONMENT/ CLIMATE | TECHNOLOGY | *(CHOICE) |
|---------------------------|---|----------|--------|-------------------------|------------|-----------|
| ELATSOE | | | | | | |
| A SNAKE FALLS TO EARTH | | | | | | |

8. Locate 3 – 4 examples of similes and metaphors the author used in her stories. Make a list of things she compared. What conclusions can you make about the author’s background?

9. Research the author. How has Darcie Little Badger integrated her life experiences into her novels? Do you have something you're still curious about? Write the question and share with your classmate/group/teacher.

Here are a few links to help you get started:

<https://darcielittlebadger.wordpress.com/>

<https://diversebooks.org/qa-with-darcie-little-badger-elatsoe/>

<https://cynthialeitichsmith.com/2020/10/native-voice-darcie-little-badger-on-persistence-elatsoe/>

<https://www.texasmonthly.com/arts-entertainment/darcie-little-badger-new-novel/>

<https://time.com/6110495/darcie-little-badger-profile/>

10. Create a culminating project to share the information you've collected on Darcie Little Badger. Possible Ideas: presentation, newsletter, graphic novel, Read-Aloud session of your favorite passages, an Author Fair with tri-fold posters for the library, take action based on one of the author's issues, create a playlist, plan a party based on the author's background/themes.