

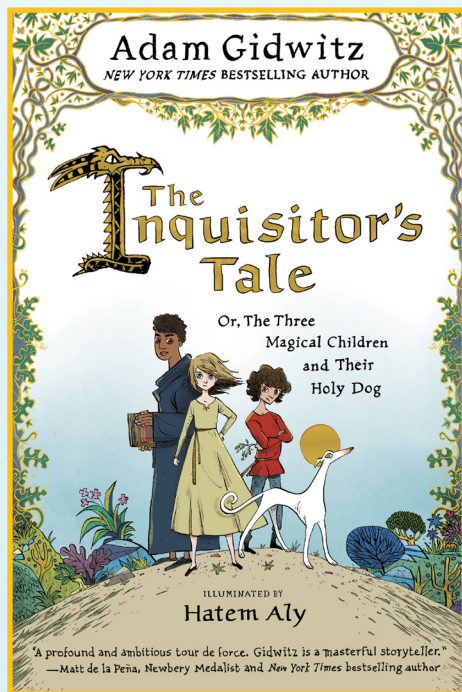


An Educator's
Guide to

The Inquisitor's Tale

by Adam Gidwitz





Dear Educator,

*I'm at the Holy Crossroads Inn,
a day's walk north of Paris.
Outside, the sky is dark,
and getting darker...
It's the perfect night for a story.*

Critically acclaimed Adam Gidwitz's new novel has "as much to say about the present as it does the past." (*Publishers Weekly*). Themes of social justice, tolerance and empathy, and understanding differences, especially as they relate to personal beliefs and religion, run throughout his expertly told tale. The story, told from multiple narrator's points of view, is evocative of *The Canterbury Tales*—richly researched and action packed. Ripe for 4th-6th grade learners, it could be read aloud or assigned for at-home or in-school reading. The following pages will guide you through teaching the book. Broken into sections and with suggested links and outside source material to

reference, it will hopefully be the starting point for you to incorporate this book into the fabric of your classroom. We are thrilled to introduce you to a new book by Adam, as you have always been great champions of his books. Thank you for your continued support of our books and our brand.

Penguin School & Library

About the Author:

Adam Gidwitz taught in Brooklyn for eight years. Now, he writes full-time—which means he writes a couple of hours a day, and lies on the couch staring at the ceiling the rest of the time. As is the case with all of this books, everything in them not only happened in the real fairy tales, it also happened to him. Really. You can find him online at adamgidwitz.com, on [facebook.com/adam.gidwitz](https://www.facebook.com/adam.gidwitz), and on Twitter @AdamGidwitz.



★ "Gidwitz strikes literary gold with this mirthful and compulsively readable adventure story. . . . **A masterpiece of storytelling that is addictive and engrossing.**" —*Kirkus*, starred review

★ "**Gidwitz is on fire** here, making medieval history feel fresh and current." —*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ "Gidwitz proves himself a nimble storyteller as he weaves history, excitement, and multiple narrative threads into **a taut, inspired adventure.**" —*Booklist*, starred review

★ "A well-researched and **rambunctiously entertaining** story that has as much to say about the present as it does the past." —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

BEFORE READING *THE INQUISITOR'S TALE*

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. Ask students: Is it possible to learn to like someone you hate—even if they don't change?
 - Reflect on the question in a response journal.
 - Share your opinion with the class.
2. Extend the class discussion: Can you think of groups of people in your school, your neighborhood, or around the world who don't get along? What would it take for a member of one group to befriend a member of another?

TITLE DISCUSSION

Conduct a discussion around the title of Adam Gidwitz's book *The Inquisitor's Tale* by focusing on the word inquisitor.

- Ask students to identify and define familiar forms of the word, i.e., inquire, inquisitive, inquisition.
- Provide historical context for students, specifically around twelfth-century inquisitions. The Catholic Church conducted an inquisition, or a method of harsh questioning, to root out those whose beliefs were against its teachings. [See "Author's Note: Where Did This Story Come From?" for further guidance.]
- Vocabulary to include: heretic, heresy, (un)orthodox, Christian, Christianity, pagan, heathen, martyr, martyrdom, saint

UNIT REFERENCE TOOLS

- Map of the city of Paris (to show cathedral locations, i.e., Saint Denis, Notre Dame)
- Map of France / Europe (to show relative locations of Flanders, Venice, Constantinople, Mont-Saint-Michel)
- Map of thirteenth-century Crusades
- Response journal
- Plot timeline (by tale)
- Character trait organizer [See "Character Comparison" activity in the Characters & Conflict section.]
- Venn diagram
- Character growth chart [See "Using Characterization" activity in the Theme section.]
- Argument planning sheet

SETTING: Medieval Life in Europe

To prepare students for reading *The Inquisitor's Tale*, have them research different topics about medieval life that will affect the plot and characters in the book. [See "Medieval Museum Exhibition" activity in Extension Activities section.] [Common Core Standards Addressed: Writing-5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9]

1. Assign the following topics to individuals or groups of students based on interest and/or readiness:
 - Reconquista
 - Crusades
 - the Bible: Hebrew Bible v. Christian Bible
 - superstition in the Middle Ages
 - medieval village life
 - medieval town life
 - Jewish life in medieval towns
 - cathedrals—structure and purpose
 - castles—parts and purpose
 - feudal structure—kings, lords, knights, peasants, etc.
 - role of monks and monasteries
2. Instruct students to:
 - investigate key facts about the topic so that they can act as experts, ready to inform the class as each topic is introduced in the novel
 - present their research orally, using visuals to illustrate what they say

DURING READING *THE INQUISITOR'S TALE*

PLOT & STRUCTURE

Since the first five chapters of the book are not told in strict chronological order, help students develop a timeline of events leading up to the three children meeting at the Holy Crossroads Inn. This should:

- help your students keep track of the plot
- illustrate how the author chose to structure his story

Suggested Activities:

1. **Visual Time Line** [*Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-6.3, 7.3*]
 - Have students draw key events identified on the plot timeline suggested above.
 - Refer to visuals as class discusses how each narrator contributes to the overall plot.
2. **Frozen Tableau** [*Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-5.5, 6.5, 7.5*]
 - Have students take turns engaging in a frozen tableau of the key event in each tale. In this kind of exercise, students use their bodies, as well as gestures and facial expressions, in a frozen pose to recreate a key event of a scene from the tale.
 - After the class has identified the event, discuss its significance in telling the story.

CHARACTERS & CONFLICT

Help students track how the three main characters grow and change in order to:

- develop skills in analyzing characters and using text-based evidence
- build understanding of a central idea in the novel: It is better to connect with others—over your similarities, as well as your differences—than it is to use your differences to push others away.

Suggested Activities:

1. **Character Traits Analysis** [*Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-5.1, 6.1, 7.1*]
 - Divide students into groups of three, assigning each student to one of the three main characters—Jeanne, William, or Jacob.
 - Tell students that their purpose for reading will be to focus on what their character says, how they act, or what is said about them.
 - Instruct students assigned to the same character to complete a character trait organizer that requires a listing of physical and personality traits, along with the text-based evidence that supports each trait identified or inferred.
2. **Character Comparison** [*Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3*]
 - Have students share their character's traits with their assigned group of three.
 - Distribute a Venn diagram for each group to use to compare and contrast their characters' traits.
 - Ask students: In what ways are Jeanne, William, and Jacob similar? In what ways are they different? How might they use their similarities to overcome their differences?
3. **Point-of-View Character Reflection** [*Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-5.3, 5.6, 6.3, 6.6, 7.3, 7.6*]
 - Ask students to journal from the point of view of their characters about how their views are changing from tale to tale.
 - Instruct students to engage in a conversation with the other two characters in their group as these changes are being recorded in their journals.
 - Draw conclusions with the class about the big ideas the characters are learning to understand. [*See "Using Characterization" activity in Theme section.*]
4. **Narrative Style Comparison** [*Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-5.6, 6.6, 7.6*]
 - Guide students in showing how the author develops the point of view of the narrators in each tale.
 - Select two short descriptions from two tales.
 - Instruct students to compare and contrast the tone in words the narrator uses, as well as how the accent and style of speaking affects the telling of each tale.

THEME

By engaging students in the activities below, scaffold student discovery of the different ways in which Adam Gidwitz reveals the themes in *The Inquisitor's Tale*.

Suggested Activities:

1. Using Characterization [Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-5.2, 5.3, 6.2, 6.3, 7.2, 7.3]

[See "Point-of-View-Character Reflection" activity in Characters & Conflict section.]

- Have students use Post-it notes as they read to cite how characters change in regards to what they say, how they act, and what is said about them.
- On a classroom chart, record how each character changes and how this is revealed in each tale.
- Use the chart to help students determine the novel's central idea. Ask: What do these character changes have in common? How do these changes show what the author wants to teach us about how human beings should treat one another?

2. Using Figurative Language [Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-5.4, 6.4, 7.4]

- Conduct a class discussion of how the author uses similes and metaphors to convey the central ideas in the novel. Some examples include:
 - Jeanne's self-questioning of her "grand castles of comprehension" (p. 180)
 - Jacob's comparison of life and people to gooey French cheese—"too many things at once." (p. 225)
 - Jacob's reading in the Talmud: "You are like pomegranates split open. Even the emptiest among you are as full of good as a pomegranate is of seed." (p. 304)

3. Using Word Choice & Tone [Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-5.2, 5.6, 6.2, 6.4, 6.6, 7.2, 7.4, 7.6]

- Point out the words used to indicate tone, e.g., how William and Jacob describe Rabbi Yehuda in Chapter 13 (p. 158).
- Have students summarize a character's point of view, e.g., the first meeting between Queen Blanche and the children in Chapter 20 (pp. 242-243).
- Connect quality of tone to author's message.

4. Using Symbolism [Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-5.2, 6.2, 7.2]

- Show students how the author uses characters or events in the story to symbolize themes. Some examples include:
 - Gwenforte's death in Chapter 1 symbolizes the need to question before drawing conclusions about a person or event.
 - The transformation of Etienne d'Arles, the inquisitor, in Chapters 24-26, represents being open to changing your mind about people and about how you treat them.
- Have students find other moments that symbolize themes in the novel.

5. Using Other Genre: "Song of Hildebrand" [Common Core Standards Addressed: RL-5.2, 5.7, 6.2, 6.7, 7.2, 7.4, 7.7]

- Have students read the "Song of Hildebrand," the ninth-century High German heroic poem in alliterative verse (pp. 283-286).
- Ask them to sum up what happens in the poem.
- Have students close their eyes as you read the poem aloud, and then as they listen to the singing of it.
- Ask students: Is there anything that has changed in your understanding of the poem after listening to it read (or sung)? If so, explain what and why.
- Lead a class discussion about this poetic example of the author's theme. Ask students:
 - What choice did the father have to make?
 - What made this difficult for him?
 - What did he think about before he made the choice to risk his or his son's life?
 - What themes of the novel are reflected in this poem?

WRITING

Suggested Activities:

1. Journal Writing: Text-to-World Connections [Common Core Standards Addressed: Writing-5.1, 5.10, 6.10, 7.10]

- As an ongoing homework assignment, ask students to observe situations outside the classroom—in school, at home, or in the news—that demonstrate a lack of acceptance of others.
- Have students reflect in their journals about these incidents.
- Ask students to connect these examples to the characters or themes in *The Inquisitor's Tale*.

2. Narrative Story Writing [Common Core Standards Addressed: Writing-5.3, 5.5, 6.3, 6.5, 7.3, 7.5] [See “Tales of Acceptance” activity in Extension Activities section.]

- Instruct students to select one of the real-life incidents they have written about in their journals.
- Use the example to draft an original story that shows the central themes of *The Inquisitor's Tale*, but applied to their world.
- Have students peer review their stories.
- Instruct students to use peer and teacher comments to write the final version of their story.

3. Argument Writing

- Mini-Lesson: What Do Arguments Look Like?
 - Use the dialogue in Chapter 19 between Michelangelo and William and Jeanne and Jacob (pp. 232-237) to show students the thinking process behind the formation of arguments. Together, sketch out the structure of the argument.
- Reflect & Debate: [Common Core Standards Addressed: Writing-5.1]
 - Pretending to be one of any of the characters in the novel, students reflect on an answer to the sic et non (yes and no) argument mentioned in Chapter 18: Is God or free will the cause of evil in the world? (Or: Is God or are human beings the cause of evil in the world?)
 - Have students engage in a debate on the question, still acting as characters from the book, using evidence from the text whenever possible to support their characters' perspectives. For example, a debate between Queen Blanche and Jeanne.
- Summative Assessment: Is it possible to learn to like someone you hate—even if they don't change? [Common Core Standards Addressed: Writing-5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.9, 5.10, 6.1, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.9, 6.10, 7.1, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.9, 7.10]

Before reading the novel . . . [See BEFORE READING THE INQUISITOR'S TALE section.]

While reading the novel . . .

- Work with students to gather evidence for both sides of the argument.
- Instruct students to look for evidence in the character words/actions or author ideas.
- Write the evidence for both sides of the argument on classroom planning chart.

After reading the novel . . .

- Conduct a mini-lesson on how to write an argument, i.e., support a claim using reasons and evidence. [Student news magazines, such as *Upfront*, can provide age-appropriate models of written arguments.]
- Using the classroom chart, guide students as they review the evidence to support each side of the argument. Ask: What does the evidence say is an overall reason for a “yes” answer to the question, or for a “no” answer to the question?
- Instruct students to (1) choose one side of the argument to support and (2) list evidence (from *The Inquisitor's Tale* and/or from personal knowledge and life experience) to support their reason(s) on a two-column prewriting/planning sheet.
- Instruct students to write an argument supporting their side of the question with evidence to support their claim.
- Evaluate student arguments to determine not only writing form, but also the level of understanding of the themes of the novel.
- Consider publishing arguments, i.e., in a school newspaper or community newsletter, or as part of a school-wide focus on the theme of acceptance. [See Extension Activities section.]

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Medieval Life Museum Exhibition [Common Core Standards Addressed: Writing-5.7, 5.8, 5.10, 6.7, 6.8, 6.10, 7.7, 7.8, 7.10]

- Organize a museum exhibition to highlight student research on medieval life. Students, individually or in groups, should choose an element of medieval life, research it, and create a piece of art or an artifact showcasing what they've learned. Examples might include artifacts, paintings, illuminations, dioramas, dramatic scenes captured on video, and books.
- Instruct students to publish their research as a museum provides information to its visitors. For example, brochures or exhibit label copy could go along with the art and artifacts that the students make.
- On the day of the exhibition, have students complete a knowledge hunt of facts on medieval life, using each other's museum products as sources. Provide research questions in a booklet for them to answer.
- Their research booklet can be used as a reference source on medieval life while they read the novel or continue their studies of the Middle Ages.

2. Tales of Acceptance [Common Core Standards Addressed: Writing-5.3, 5.6, 5.9, 5.10, 6.3, 6.6, 6.9, 6.10, 7.3, 7.6, 7.9, 7.10]

- Students can convert their narrative stories based on the themes in *The Inquisitor's Tale* into a school play. Classmates may read one another's works and nominate the best ones. The selected plays could be performed as part of a school-wide focus on the theme of acceptance. Or, they may be published as an e-book titled *Tales of Acceptance* to be shared with students in other communities.

3. Medieval Art and Storytelling [Common Core Standards Addressed: Writing-5.3, 5.10, 6.3, 6.10, 7.3, 7.10]

- Have students select a medieval work of art that shows life at the time, and then use it as the setting for a behind-the-scenes narrative between characters to add to the *The Inquisitor's Tale*. [See the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History @ <http://metmuseum.org/toah/> for images, essays, and other resources for educators about medieval works of art.]

