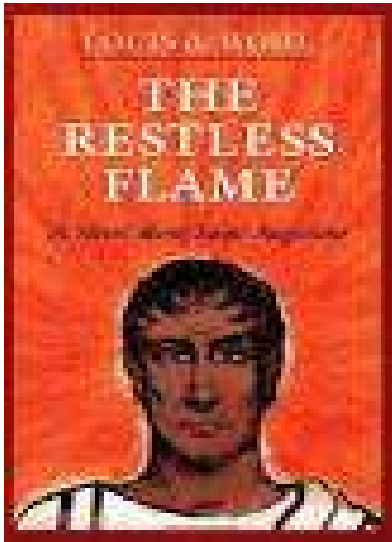


COHORT (10TH / 11TH 12TH) GRADE SUMMER READING



The Restless Flame by Louis de Wohl - This book provides a dramatized retelling of St. Augustine's Confessions. The primary text will be read during the first semester of sophomore year. By understanding the events that shaped St. Augustine's life, students will be better prepared to appreciate Confessions, one of the greatest works of Western literature. The book follows his career from his early Christian training by his mother Monica, his disavowal of his belief for the tenets of Manichaeism when he went to Carthage to study, and his continuation in that theology as he went to Rome and later Milan. There the work and teachings of the good Bishop Ambrose and his human and healthy wisdom reveal Augustine's blindness, and he again embraces the true faith. St. Augustine's life is a life of conversion, and he experienced many successive conversions throughout his journey to God. ISBN 978-0898706031

STUDY GUIDE

THE CONVERSION OF THE MIND

St. Augustine experiences an ethical conversion to Cicero, a moral conversion to Manes, and an intellectual conversion to Plato (through the writings of Porphyry and Plotinus). Locate each of these conversions in the text and write the pages of each conversion.

- Cicero
- Manes
- Plato

THE CONVERSION OF THE WILL

During his early years, the future Bishop of Hippo struggled to control his passions. He first discovered his taste for sin as a boy when he stole the pears, and later, in his relationship with a slave woman (named Melania in the novel). He realizes how weak he is in building virtue. During his conversion moment, he is pulled by the figures of lust behind him and Lady Contenance, surrounded by the Saints in their purity, in front of him. Detail this dramatic moment of Augustine's conversion. It is as if he is being ripped apart by the two forces, unable to reject the one and embrace the other. How does Lady Contenance chastise him?

THE CONVERSION OF THE HEART

Augustine experiences much loss during his journey towards the Father. His earthly father dies, as does his best friend; he abandons his mistress, child, and mother, and is later abandoned by his mistress. Bishop Ambrose is a father figure that remains aloof just like his earthly father. His mother is a constant force throughout his life. His friends are loyal and true. Describe each of

these major relationships with five adjectives. Provide a citation with page number to substantiate each of these adjectives.

- Patricius
- Monica
- Alypius
- Melania
- Adeodatus
- Ambrose

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

As you read the text, find passages that provide answers to the following questions. Record the page numbers next to the questions.

1. What is 16-year old Augustine like?
2. Describe the character of Monica in the opening chapter of the book. How is she different from her husband, Patricius?
3. Who is Alypius? Why does Melania call him a “good fool?”
4. What was Carthage like? How did Augustine’s studies there influence him?
5. What is the nature of Melania and Augustine’s relationship?
6. How does the death of Patricius and Melania’s pregnancy affect Augustine?
7. What do the Manicheans believe? Why do you think Manichaeism appealed to Augustine? Was he zealous about the Manichean faith and how did it change his life?
8. What makes Augustine restless in the Manichean faith? Why was he not satisfied with the answers of Bishop Faustus?
9. What was Augustine’s experience in Rome?
10. How was Augustine received in Milan?
11. Discuss the character of Bishop Ambrose. What is happening in his diocese? How is Ambrose an exemplary bishop? How does he influence Augustine?
12. The events between Bishop Ambrose and the Empress-Mother Justina are dramatic and come at a turning point in the life of Augustine. How are these events intertwined? How do they relate to the departure of Melania?
13. What was his reaction to learning about St. Anthony? What happened to Augustine in the garden?
14. How does Augustine struggle with lust and how does he overcome this?
15. Augustine has many character flaws. What are some of his actions which you found to be the most cowardly or vicious?
16. In many ways, Monica is the hero (or queen!) of the book. In ancient society when men did not always recognize the dignity of women, Monica’s role is all the more admirable. Describe Monica’s virtues. How do they counteract the vices of her son?