

Call It Courage Study Guide

Call It Courage Study Guide: Unlocking Themes & Deeper Meaning

This guide provides insights into "Call It Courage," a classic novel about overcoming fear. We'll explore key themes, characters, and symbolism, helping you understand the story on a deeper level. Advantages of using a study guide for "Call It Courage":

- **Enhanced Comprehension:** A study guide can clarify complex themes, symbolism, and character motivations.
- **Active Learning:** It encourages critical thinking and analysis, promoting a deeper understanding of the story's message.
- **Preparation for Discussion:** Study guides equip you with key insights to engage in meaningful discussions about the novel.
- **Improved Essay Writing:** By identifying important details and themes, you'll be better prepared to write insightful essays and analysis.

Understanding the Story's Themes:

"Call It Courage" delves into universal themes that resonate with readers of all ages.

- **Overcoming Fear:** The central theme revolves around Mafatu's struggle against his overwhelming fear of the ocean. His journey symbolizes the human desire to conquer our inner demons and step outside of our comfort zones.
- **Courage & Perseverance:** Mafatu's determination to face his fear and his unwavering belief in himself embody the importance of courage and perseverance in the face of adversity.
- **Self-Discovery:** Throughout his journey, Mafatu gains a better understanding of himself and his place in the world. He learns to value his strengths and accept his limitations.
- **The Power of Nature:** The ocean plays a significant role in the story, representing both danger and beauty. It symbolizes the unpredictable nature of life and the power of the natural world.

Key Characters & Their Significance:

Each character in "Call It Courage" contributes to the novel's overarching themes.

Character	Significance
Mafatu	The protagonist, a young boy who overcomes his fear of the ocean through determination and courage.
His Father (Tala)	Mafatu's loving father, who struggles with his son's fear and wants him to embrace his Polynesian heritage.
The Chief	The leader of the tribe, who symbolizes the wisdom and guidance of the community.
The Old Man	A wise elder who mentors Mafatu, sharing valuable insights and providing support.
The Shark	Represents the physical and symbolic dangers that Mafatu faces.

Symbolic Elements in "Call It Courage":

The story is rich with symbolic elements that enhance its meaning.

- **The Ocean:** As mentioned earlier, the ocean represents both danger and beauty. It symbolizes the vastness of life and the power of nature.
- **The Canoe:** Mafatu's canoe is more than just a vessel; it represents his journey of self-discovery and his desire to embrace his heritage.
- **The Island:** The island represents safety and familiarity, a contrast to the dangers of the ocean.
- **The Fire:** The fire symbolizes hope and the power of human ingenuity. It represents the ability to overcome adversity through resourcefulness.

Exploring the Narrative

"Call It Courage" is a powerful story told through multiple perspectives. • *First-Person Perspective*: The narrative shifts between Mafatu's perspective and the perspective of other characters, providing diverse insights into the story. • **Episodic**: The story is divided into separate episodes, each focusing on a different aspect of Mafatu's journey. This allows for a gradual exploration of his growth and transformation.

Analyzing the Language & Style:

The author's choice of language and style contribute significantly to the story's impact. • **Lyrical Language**: The prose is rich and evocative, creating vivid images of the island setting and the ocean's power. • **Simple Yet Powerful**: Despite its poetic language, the story is written in a straightforward and accessible style, making it engaging for readers of all ages. • **Use of Imagery**: The author employs vivid imagery to capture the sensory experiences of the characters and to create a sense of realism.

Further Exploration:

• **Historical Context**: Understanding the historical context of "Call It Courage" provides insight into the Polynesian culture and the societal expectations of the time. • **Themes of Masculinity**: The story explores traditional notions of masculinity and how they can influence a young boy's sense of identity. • **Adaptations**: "Call It Courage" has been adapted into multiple formats, including a film and a stage play. Exploring these adaptations can provide additional insights into the story's themes and interpretations.

Conclusion:

"Call It Courage" is a timeless tale that inspires readers to face their fears and strive for personal growth. By understanding the story's themes, characters, and symbolic elements, you can gain a deeper appreciation for this powerful and enduring narrative.

FAQs:

1. What is the main message of "Call It Courage"? The main message is that overcoming fear requires courage, perseverance, and a willingness to embrace our vulnerabilities. 2. **Why is the ocean so important in the story?** The ocean represents both danger and beauty, symbolizing the unpredictable nature of life and the power of the natural world. 3. **What is the significance of Mafatu's name?** Mafatu means "fearless" in Polynesian, ironic given his fear of the ocean. This highlights the contrast between his inner struggle and his potential. 4. How does the setting impact the story? The island setting provides a contrast to the dangers of the ocean, representing safety and familiarity. 5. **What is the significance of the canoe?** Mafatu's canoe is more than just a vessel; it represents his journey of self-discovery and his desire to embrace his heritage. By exploring these questions and delving into the story's nuances, you'll gain a profound understanding of this impactful classic.

Unlocking the Depths of "Call It Courage": Your Essential Study Guide

Sometimes, a book comes along that doesn't just tell a story; it sparks a journey. "Call It Courage" by Eve Merriam is one of those rare gems. This powerful novella, set against the backdrop of a Polynesian island, follows the courageous (or perhaps, initially, *not-so-courageous*) young boy, Mafatu, as he confronts his deepest fears. It's a

tale that resonates with readers of all ages, offering profound lessons on bravery, self-reliance, and the true meaning of courage. Whether you're a student tackling this classic for a school assignment, a parent looking to engage your child with its themes, or simply an avid reader seeking to delve deeper, this comprehensive study guide is your compass.

We'll unpack the narrative, explore the rich symbolism, analyze the compelling characters, and discuss the timeless themes that make "Call It Courage" such a cherished piece of literature. So, grab a cup of your favorite beverage, settle in, and let's embark on this insightful exploration together.

What Makes "Call It Courage" So Special?

"Call It Courage" isn't just another adventure story. It's a poignant exploration of inner strength. Mafatu's journey is a metaphor for every individual's struggle to overcome personal limitations and societal expectations. The novella's brevity belies its significant impact, making it an accessible yet deeply meaningful read. Its focus on a young protagonist facing monumental challenges offers a relatable entry point for discussions about resilience and the development of a strong sense of self.

Delving into the Narrative: A Journey of Transformation

At its heart, "Call It Courage" is the story of Mafatu, a boy from the island of Hikueru. Unlike the other boys his age, Mafatu is terrified of the sea, an affliction that earns him ridicule and shame within his village. This fear stems from a traumatic childhood event – being shipwrecked and separated from his parents. This foundational element of the plot is crucial for understanding Mafatu's internal conflict and the driving force behind his eventual quest for courage.

Mafatu's Initial Struggle and the Catalyst for Change

The narrative vividly portrays Mafatu's isolation and the weight of his fear. He is ostracized, deemed unfit for the seafaring traditions of his people. This social exclusion, coupled with his own internal torment, creates a powerful tension. The turning point arrives when a violent storm threatens his village, and Mafatu, despite his fear, is compelled to take action. However, it's a subsequent, personal decision that truly sets him on his path to self-discovery. Driven by a desperate need to prove his worth and shed the label of coward, Mafatu takes his father's canoe, Moana, and sets sail alone.

The Perilous Voyage and the Trials of the Sea

Mafatu's voyage is far from a leisurely cruise. It's a gauntlet of challenges designed to test his mettle. He encounters storms that rage with terrifying intensity, navigates treacherous currents, and faces the primal fear of the unknown. Each obstacle he overcomes, however small, chips away at his fear and builds his confidence. The author, Eve Merriam, masterfully uses descriptive language to bring these perilous encounters to life, allowing readers to feel Mafatu's vulnerability and his growing resilience.

Encountering the "Forbidden Island" and its Dangers

A significant part of Mafatu's journey leads him to a mysterious, "forbidden island." This island is shrouded in superstition and fear, believed to be inhabited by malevolent spirits and the ghosts of ancient warriors. Here, Mafatu confronts not only physical dangers, like wild boars and predatory animals, but also the ingrained beliefs and fears of his own culture. The island serves as a powerful metaphor for confronting the psychological barriers that hold us back. His encounters here are crucial to his understanding of true courage.

The Confrontation and the Test of True Courage

On the forbidden island, Mafatu faces his ultimate test. He encounters a clan of islanders who are hostile and dangerous. This is where his nascent courage truly shines. Instead of succumbing to terror, Mafatu uses his wits, his knowledge of the sea, and his newfound bravery to outsmart and escape them. This encounter isn't just about survival; it's about Mafatu actively choosing bravery over fear, demonstrating that courage isn't the absence of fear, but the will to act despite it.

The Return and the Redefinition of Courage

Mafatu's return to Hikuero is not met with the triumphant cheers he might have once imagined. Instead, he returns quietly, a changed person. He no longer needs external validation. His courage isn't about proving others wrong, but about proving himself right. He has faced his fears, survived the sea, and found his inner strength. The true victory lies in his internal transformation, the quiet confidence that now resides within him. His return marks the culmination of his journey and the establishment of his newfound courage.

Key Characters and Their Significance

"Call It Courage" may focus primarily on Mafatu, but the characters, however briefly they appear, play vital roles in shaping his journey and illuminating the novella's themes.

Mafatu: The Protagonist's Evolution

Mafatu is the heart and soul of the story. His transformation from a fearful, ostracized boy to a self-assured young man is the central arc. His initial fear of the sea, understandable given his traumatic past, is a relatable human emotion. His journey is a testament to the idea that courage is not an innate trait but something that can be cultivated through experience and determination. We see his growth through his actions, his thoughts, and his evolving relationship with the ocean.

Mafatu's Father: The Embodiment of Tradition and Strength

Mafatu's father, a respected chieftain, represents the strength and tradition of their seafaring culture. While he loves his son, his inability to fully understand Mafatu's fear creates a subtle tension. However, his presence also serves as a benchmark for the courage Mafatu aspires to. His son's eventual bravery ultimately brings honor back to their lineage.

Riko and the Other Island Boys: The Symbol of Societal Judgment

The other boys on the island, particularly Riko, embody the societal pressure and ridicule Mafatu faces. Their taunts and disdain highlight the negative consequences of not conforming to cultural expectations. They represent the external judgment that Mafatu must overcome, both literally and figuratively, on his journey.

The Great Shadow and the Sacred Mountain: Allegorical Figures

While not characters in the traditional sense, the symbolic elements of the island, such as the Great Shadow and the Sacred Mountain, act as personified forces that Mafatu must contend with. The Great Shadow could represent the pervasive fear and superstition of his culture, while the Sacred Mountain might symbolize the ultimate challenge and aspiration he needs to conquer.

Exploring the Rich Symbolism in "Call It Courage"

Eve Merriam masterfully weaves symbolism throughout "Call It Courage," transforming a simple adventure story into a profound allegorical tale. Understanding these symbols enriches the reading experience and offers deeper insights into the novella's message.

The Sea: A Dual Symbol of Fear and Opportunity

The sea is arguably the most potent symbol in the novella. For Mafatu, it initially represents overwhelming fear, the embodiment of his trauma and his inadequacy. However, as his journey progresses, the sea also becomes a symbol of freedom, opportunity, and the vast unknown that he learns to navigate and even embrace. The changing tides and the power of the ocean mirror Mafatu's own internal shifts.

The Canoe, Moana: A Vessel of Hope and Independence

The canoe, Moana, is more than just a mode of transport; it's Mafatu's personal vessel of hope and independence. It's his father's canoe, a connection to his heritage, but also the means by which he escapes and charts his own course. Its sturdy construction and ability to withstand the elements are a reflection of Mafatu's own developing resilience.

The Forbidden Island: The Labyrinth of the Mind

The forbidden island serves as a powerful metaphor for the inner landscape of the mind and the deeply ingrained fears and superstitions that can trap individuals. Mafatu's exploration of the island mirrors his internal exploration of his own psyche. The dangers he faces there are not just physical but psychological, representing the overcoming of ingrained beliefs and anxieties.

The Spear and the Shells: Tools of Self-Reliance

The spear Mafatu uses to hunt and the shells he collects represent his growing self-reliance and resourcefulness. These are tangible symbols of his ability to provide for himself and to utilize the resources around him, demonstrating his practical application of courage and intelligence.

The Sky and the Stars: Guidance and Destiny

The sky and the stars offer Mafatu guidance and a sense of direction, both literally and figuratively. They represent a larger order and a sense of destiny that he learns to trust. His navigation by the stars is a practical demonstration of his growing competence and his connection to the natural world.

Timeless Themes of "Call It Courage"

The enduring appeal of "Call It Courage" lies in its exploration of universal themes that continue to resonate with readers decades after its publication. These themes offer valuable life lessons for people of all ages and backgrounds.

The Nature of True Courage

Perhaps the most prominent theme is the definition of true courage. The novella challenges the simplistic notion

that courage is the absence of fear. Instead, it posits that courage is the ability to face one's fears, to act despite them, and to persevere through adversity. Mafatu's journey illustrates that courage is an active choice, developed through experience and a strong will.

Self-Reliance and Independence

Mafatu's solitary journey is a powerful testament to the importance of self-reliance. He learns to depend on his own skills, his knowledge, and his inner strength to survive and thrive. This theme encourages readers to recognize and cultivate their own capabilities and to trust in their ability to overcome challenges independently.

Overcoming Fear and Trauma

The novella offers a profound exploration of how individuals can confront and overcome deep-seated fears and past traumas. Mafatu's initial terror of the sea, rooted in a traumatic event, is gradually transformed through his brave actions and his determination to reclaim his life. This theme offers hope and a roadmap for those struggling with their own personal demons.

Identity and Belonging

Mafatu's quest is also a search for identity and belonging. Ostracized by his village due to his fear, he embarks on a journey to prove his worth and reclaim his place. His eventual return, however, signifies that true belonging comes not from external validation but from self-acceptance and the knowledge of one's own inner strength. His newfound identity is one he has forged himself.

The Power of Resilience

Resilience, the ability to bounce back from adversity, is a cornerstone of Mafatu's story. He faces numerous setbacks, from storms to encounters with hostile islanders, yet he consistently finds the strength to continue. The novella demonstrates that resilience is not about avoiding hardship but about adapting to it and growing stronger from it.

How to Engage with "Call It Courage"

Whether you're reading this for pleasure or for an academic purpose, there are many ways to deepen your engagement with "Call It Courage."

For Students: Essay Prompts and Discussion Questions

This novella provides fertile ground for academic exploration. Consider these prompts:

1. Analyze the symbolic significance of the sea in Mafatu's journey.
2. How does Mafatu's definition of courage evolve throughout the novella?
3. Compare and contrast Mafatu's initial fear with his eventual bravery.
4. Discuss the role of societal expectations in shaping Mafatu's initial ostracization.
5. Examine the theme of self-reliance as portrayed through Mafatu's actions.

For Parents and Educators: Activities to Spark Conversation

Engaging young readers with "Call It Courage" can be a rewarding experience. Try these activities:

1. **Courage Charades:** Act out different scenarios of bravery and fear.
2. **Map Your Journey:** Draw a map of Mafatu's voyage, highlighting key challenges and landmarks.
3. **"What If" Scenarios:** Discuss what Mafatu might have done differently in certain situations.
4. **Create Your Own Symbol:** Have children design a symbol that represents their own personal courage.
5. **Discuss Fears:** Create a safe space for children to talk about their own fears and how they can be overcome.

For Book Clubs and Personal Reflection: Deeper Dives

For book clubs or personal reflection, consider these discussion points:

1. How does "Call It Courage" compare to other coming-of-age stories you've read?
2. What modern-day parallels can you draw to Mafatu's struggle with societal expectations?
3. How has your own understanding of courage been shaped by this novella?
4. What lessons from Mafatu's journey can be applied to your own life?
5. Discuss the role of nature and the environment in shaping Mafatu's character and journey.

Conclusion: The Enduring Legacy of "Call It Courage"

"Call It Courage" is more than just a children's book; it's a timeless exploration of the human spirit's capacity for bravery and transformation. Mafatu's journey from fear to fulfillment is a powerful reminder that courage is not a destination, but a continuous voyage. By understanding the intricate layers of its narrative, the depth of its symbolism, and the universality of its themes, readers can truly unlock the profound message within this beloved novella. We hope this study guide has illuminated your understanding and inspired a deeper appreciation for the courage that lies within us all.

Understanding the Call It Courage Study Guide is essential for anyone seeking a deeper, more intentional approach to personal resilience and emotional growth. This comprehensive study guide serves as a structured pathway to explore the principles behind courage—not merely as a bold act, but as a cultivated mindset that empowers individuals to face challenges with clarity and confidence. Unlike surface-level resources, the Call It Courage Study Guide emphasizes the psychological foundations of courage, helping users transform abstract concepts into actionable strategies for real-life application.

Overview of the Call It Courage Study Guide At its core, the Call It Courage Study Guide is designed to guide learners through the psychological, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of courage. It blends educational theory with practical exercises, offering a balanced framework that supports both self-reflection and skill development. The guide

introduces key models that define courage not as the absence of fear, but as the ability to act despite it. This reframing is central to its effectiveness, encouraging users to view courage as a learnable trait rather than an innate quality reserved for a select few. Rooted in contemporary psychology and resilience research, the study guide incorporates evidence-based practices such as cognitive reframing, emotional regulation, and mindfulness. These tools equip individuals to identify fear triggers, challenge limiting beliefs, and build mental stamina. The guide also integrates case studies and reflective prompts, allowing learners to connect theory with personal experience, thereby deepening comprehension and retention. Whether used in academic settings, personal development workshops, or therapeutic contexts, the Call It Courage Study Guide provides a versatile and accessible framework for growth.

One of its distinguishing features is its emphasis on application. Rather than remaining theoretical, the guide structures learning around real-world scenarios—from navigating difficult conversations and managing setbacks to leading with confidence in uncertain environments. This practical orientation ensures that each concept is not only understood but internalized and applied. By engaging with the material through journaling, group discussions, and guided practice, users develop a resilient mindset that supports sustained personal and professional evolution.

Key Insights and Core Principles The study guide reveals

several pivotal insights into what truly enables courage. First, it highlights that courage is not the absence of fear but the presence of purpose. When individuals act from clear values and meaningful goals, fear loses its paralyzing power. Second, emotional awareness is presented as a cornerstone—understanding one’s emotional triggers allows for intentional responses rather than reactive behavior. Third, the guide underscores the role of preparation and competence; knowing one is adequately equipped reduces anxiety and strengthens the courage to proceed. Another vital insight is the importance of social context. Courage is often nurtured within supportive environments where vulnerability is met with empathy, not judgment. The study guide encourages learners to build networks of encouragement and accountability, recognizing that collective strength amplifies individual courage. Furthermore, it challenges the myth that courage always manifests in dramatic gestures, instead celebrating small, consistent acts of bravery that accumulate into lasting transformation.

These principles collectively form a roadmap for cultivating courage as a sustainable habit. By integrating self-awareness, purpose-driven action, and supportive relationships, users develop a robust internal compass that guides them through life’s inevitable challenges with greater assurance and resilience.

Applications Across Life and Learning The Call It Courage Study Guide proves valuable across diverse settings, from

education and leadership development to mental wellness and personal growth. In academic environments, it supports students in building confidence to tackle difficult subjects, present ideas, and persist through academic pressures. Educators can use the guide to foster classroom cultures that normalize vulnerability and celebrate effort, helping students develop courage as part of their learning journey. In professional development, the guide equips individuals with tools to navigate workplace challenges—whether advocating for change, managing conflict, or stepping into leadership roles with authenticity. Its emphasis on emotional intelligence and strategic action prepares professionals to lead with integrity and resilience in high-stakes situations. For mental health practitioners, the study guide offers a structured curriculum for therapeutic work, enabling clients to reframe fear, build self-efficacy, and embrace courage as a pathway to healing and empowerment. Beyond formal contexts, the guide serves as a personal development companion, guiding individuals through life transitions, grief, and self-discovery. Its reflective exercises invite deeper self-understanding, empowering people to act courageously in relationships, career shifts, and personal aspirations.

By bridging theory and practice, the Call It Courage Study Guide transforms abstract ideals into tangible tools for growth, making courage accessible and actionable for anyone ready to embrace it.

Benefits and Transformative Potential Engaging with the Call

It Courage Study Guide delivers profound and lasting benefits. At the personal level, users report increased self-awareness, reduced anxiety in high-pressure situations, and a stronger sense of agency. By learning to recognize and reframe fear, individuals gain greater control over their responses, leading to improved decision-making and emotional stability. This inner strength translates into enhanced performance across life domains—be it academic achievement, professional advancement, or personal fulfillment. On a relational level, cultivating courage fosters deeper connections. When people act authentically and with confidence, they communicate more clearly, set healthier boundaries, and inspire trust in others. This mutual empowerment strengthens communities and supports collaborative resilience. Moreover, the guide’s emphasis on purpose-driven action encourages individuals to contribute meaningfully to causes larger than themselves, enriching both personal purpose and societal well-being.

Looking ahead, the Call It Courage Study Guide is poised to evolve alongside emerging trends in mental health, education, and leadership. As awareness of emotional resilience grows, demand for accessible, science-backed tools like this guide will continue to rise. Future iterations may incorporate digital platforms, interactive exercises, and personalized learning paths, making courage-building more inclusive and scalable. By empowering individuals to embrace courage as a daily practice, the study guide not only transforms personal trajectories but also contributes to a more resilient and compassionate world.

Unlocking the Depths of "Call It Courage": A Comprehensive Study Guide for Readers and Educators

"Call It Courage," the acclaimed Newbery Medal-winning novel by Armstrong Sperry, is more than just a thrilling adventure story. It's a profound exploration of identity, bravery, and the transformative power of self-discovery. For students, educators, and book club members seeking a deeper understanding of Mafatu's epic journey, a comprehensive study guide is an invaluable tool. This guide aims to illuminate the novel's rich themes, complex characters, and historical context, providing a framework for meaningful engagement with Sperry's timeless masterpiece.

Navigating the Island Seas: Understanding the Narrative Arc

At its core, "Call It Courage" chronicles the courageous voyage of Mafatu, a young Polynesian boy ostracized for his fear of the sea. Driven by a desire to prove his mettle and overcome his phobia, Mafatu embarks on a perilous solo expedition. The narrative unfolds with a classic three-act structure:

- 1. The Setup: We are introduced to Mafatu, his island of Hikueru, and the deep-seated fear that has defined his young life. The societal pressure and his own internal conflict are palpable, setting the stage for his eventual departure.**
- 2. The Confrontation: Mafatu's journey is fraught with challenges, both natural and self-imposed. He battles storms, encounters dangerous creatures like sharks and a**

wild boar, and grapples with loneliness and doubt. Each obstacle overcome builds his resilience and chipping away at his fear.

3. **The Resolution:** Mafatu's return to Hikueru is not simply a physical homecoming, but a spiritual rebirth. He has faced his deepest fears and emerged victorious, earning the respect of his people and, more importantly, finding true courage within himself.

Understanding this narrative arc is crucial for appreciating the gradual development of Mafatu's character and the thematic progression of the story. Teachers often use plot diagrams to help students visualize this journey, highlighting key turning points and climactic moments.

The Heart of the Matter: Key Themes Explored in "Call It Courage"

Sperry masterfully weaves a tapestry of universal themes, making "Call It Courage" resonate with readers of all ages. A robust study guide delves into these thematic elements, encouraging critical thinking and personal reflection.

The Nature of True Courage

Perhaps the most prominent theme is the exploration of what constitutes genuine courage. Mafatu's initial fear of the sea is a tangible manifestation of his perceived weakness. However, his journey reveals that courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to confront and overcome it. This nuanced understanding is a vital lesson for young readers grappling with their own anxieties and challenges. The concept of inner

strength is central here, as Mafatu's bravery stems from his internal resolve rather than external validation.

Identity and Belonging

Mafatu's ostracization on Hikueru deeply impacts his sense of self. His father, the great chief Tai, and his people view his fear as a shameful inadequacy, alienating him from his community. His quest is as much about reclaiming his identity as it is about conquering his phobia. The novel explores the universal human need to belong and the pain of feeling like an outsider. Mafatu's ultimate return, not just as a survivor but as a transformed individual, signifies his re-entry into his cultural fold, demonstrating the importance of self-acceptance.

Man vs. Nature: The Primal Struggle

The vast and often unforgiving Pacific Ocean serves as a formidable antagonist in "Call It Courage." Sperry vividly portrays the raw power of nature, from treacherous storms to dangerous marine life. Mafatu's survival hinges on his ability to understand and respect the natural world, developing essential skills like navigation, fishing, and resourcefulness. This theme highlights the delicate balance between humanity and the environment, and the respect that nature commands. Discussions often revolve around survival skills and the ingenuity required to thrive in such a setting.

The Burden of Fear and the Joy of Liberation

Mafatu's fear of the sea is a crippling burden that prevents him from fully participating in the life of his island

community. The novel vividly depicts the emotional toll of living with such a profound phobia. His voyage, though terrifying, becomes a process of liberation, freeing him from the psychological shackles that have held him captive. The catharsis he experiences upon overcoming his fear is a powerful testament to the transformative power of facing one's deepest anxieties. This theme connects with the idea of personal growth.

Respect for Ancestral Traditions and Wisdom

While Mafatu initially feels he is defying his ancestors by leaving, his journey ultimately reinforces the value of their traditions and the wisdom passed down through generations. The knowledge of navigation, survival techniques, and the respect for the ocean are all elements rooted in his cultural heritage. His success is a testament to the enduring strength of these ancestral teachings, even in the face of personal fear. This underscores the importance of cultural heritage.

Characters That Live On: Analyzing the Personalities

The characters in “Call It Courage,” though few, are richly drawn and contribute significantly to the novel’s impact. A study guide encourages close examination of their motivations and development.

Mafatu: The Reluctant Hero

Mafatu is the quintessential reluctant hero. His initial cowardice is not a character flaw but a relatable human vulnerability. His transformation from a fearful boy to a

confident young man is the central arc of the novel. His quiet determination, resilience, and eventual self-belief are qualities that inspire readers. His journey is a powerful metaphor for overcoming adversity and finding one's true potential. Readers often identify with Mafatu's struggles and celebrate his triumphs, making him a memorable protagonist.

Tai: The Stern Father

Mafatu's father, Tai, represents the traditional authority and the societal expectations that Mafatu grapples with. His stern demeanor and the disappointment he initially holds towards his son are understandable within the context of their culture, where seafaring prowess is paramount. However, his eventual pride in Mafatu's accomplishment signifies a broader understanding of courage and the recognition of his son's inner strength. The father-son dynamic is a key element in understanding Mafatu's motivations.

The Island Community: The Collective Voice

The people of Hikueru, though not individually developed, represent the collective voice of society. Their ostracization of Mafatu highlights the power of social pressure and the fear of being different. Their eventual acceptance and admiration of Mafatu demonstrate the fluidity of social perception and the capacity for a community to recognize true bravery. Their reactions serve as a barometer for Mafatu's changing status.

Beyond the Pages: Contextualizing "Call It Courage"

To fully appreciate "Call It Courage," it's essential to consider

its historical and cultural context. A thorough study guide will provide this necessary background.

Polynesian Culture and Navigation

Armstrong Sperry's novel is deeply rooted in the rich seafaring traditions of Polynesia. The author, who spent time in the South Pacific, imbues the story with authentic details about Polynesian life, including their villages, customs, and, most importantly, their incredible navigational skills. The traditional methods of wayfinding, often using stars, currents, and bird flight, are implicitly present in Mafatu's journey, underscoring the deep connection between the Polynesian people and the ocean. Understanding this aspect provides a greater appreciation for the setting and Mafatu's ancestral heritage.

The Newbery Medal and Its Significance

Awarded the prestigious John Newbery Medal in 1941, "Call It Courage" is recognized as a significant contribution to American children's literature. The Newbery Medal is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) to the author of the "most distinguished contribution to American literature for children." This recognition speaks to the novel's enduring literary merit, its profound thematic depth, and its lasting impact on young readers. Studying the award itself provides context for the novel's critical acclaim.

Engaging with the Text: Activities and Discussion Starters

A practical study guide offers educators and readers alike

avenues for deeper engagement with the novel. These activities can transform passive reading into active learning.

Comprehension Questions

Thought-provoking questions are essential for checking understanding and prompting critical analysis. Examples include:

- 1. What specific events led to Mafatu's fear of the sea?**
- 2. How does Mafatu's fear manifest itself, and what are its consequences?**
- 3. Describe the challenges Mafatu faces on his journey, and how he overcomes them.**
- 4. What does Mafatu learn about himself and about courage during his voyage?**
- 5. How does Mafatu's return to Hikueru differ from his departure?**
- 6. What is the symbolic significance of the whale's tooth he finds?**

Character Analysis Worksheets

Worksheets that guide students through analyzing the motivations, actions, and development of key characters can be highly effective. This could involve creating character maps or Venn diagrams to compare and contrast characters.

Thematic Exploration Activities

Activities that focus on dissecting the novel's themes can encourage deeper understanding. This might include:

- 1. Journaling: Students can write journal entries from Mafatu's**

perspective at different points in his journey, reflecting on his thoughts and feelings.

2. **Debates:** A debate could center on whether Mafatu was truly cowardly or simply facing a natural phobia.
3. **Creative Writing:** Students could write alternate endings to the story or create new challenges for Mafatu.
4. **Art Projects:** Creating visual representations of key scenes, characters, or symbols from the novel can foster a different kind of engagement.

Vocabulary Building Exercises

The novel features rich language and specific terminology related to seafaring and Polynesian culture. Building vocabulary through targeted exercises can enhance comprehension and appreciation of Sperry's prose. Focusing on words related to the sea, emotions, and courage will be particularly beneficial.

Connecting to the Real World

Encourage students to draw parallels between Mafatu's journey and their own lives. Discussing their own fears, moments of bravery, and experiences of overcoming challenges can make the novel's themes more relatable and impactful. Exploring stories of real-life explorers and adventurers can also provide valuable context.

Conclusion: A Timeless Tale of Triumph

"Call It Courage" remains a powerful and relevant story, offering profound lessons about facing adversity, embracing

one's true self, and discovering the boundless reserves of courage that lie within. This study guide serves as a gateway to a deeper appreciation of Armstrong Sperry's literary achievement, providing the tools and insights necessary for a richer, more analytical reading experience. By delving into its themes, characters, and context, readers can truly unlock the courage within themselves, inspired by Mafatu's unforgettable odyssey across the vast and mysterious ocean.

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Questions & Answers About call it courage study guide

No	Question	Answer
1	What are the main themes explored in 'Call It Courage' that students should focus on?	Key themes include courage, overcoming fear, independence, the transition to adulthood, and the importance of one's heritage and identity. Students should consider how these themes are developed through Mafatu's journey.
2	Who is the protagonist of 'Call It Courage', and what is his primary internal conflict?	The protagonist is Mafatu, a young Polynesian boy. His primary internal conflict is his fear of the sea, which is ironic given his island upbringing and his father's esteemed position as a navigator. This fear stems from a traumatic childhood experience.
3	What is the significance of the sea in 'Call It Courage'?	The sea is a central symbol. It represents both fear and opportunity. For Mafatu, it embodies his deepest anxieties, but it is also the arena where he must prove his courage and ultimately find self-reliance and identity.
4	How does Mafatu's journey contribute to his personal growth and the development of courage?	Mafatu's solo voyage, initially driven by a desire to retrieve his father's whale's tooth, forces him to confront his fears directly. Each challenge he overcomes, from surviving storms to encountering wild animals, builds his confidence and transforms him from a fearful boy into a courageous young man.
5	What role do the supporting characters play in Mafatu's story?	While Mafatu's journey is largely solitary, characters like his father, the elders, and the inhabitants of the islands he visits serve to highlight his isolation and the societal expectations placed upon him. Their reactions, both before and after his voyage, emphasize his transformation.
6	What are some common literary devices used in 'Call It Courage' that students might identify?	The novel employs vivid imagery, especially concerning the sea and nature. Symbolism (the sea, the whale's tooth) is crucial. The narrative also uses foreshadowing, particularly regarding Mafatu's past trauma, and relies on a third-person limited point of view to focus on Mafatu's internal struggles.

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