

HIGH SCHOOL | BLUE VALLEY DISTRICT NOVEL RATIONALE

***Plainsong* by Kent Haruf**

English Language Arts, 12th Grade

WHAT'S THE STORY?

In the small town of Holt, Tom Guthrie, a high school teacher, fights to keep his life together and to raise his two boys after their depressed mother first retreats into her bedroom, and then moves away to her sister's house. The boys, not yet adolescents, struggle to make sense of adult behavior and their mother's apparent abandonment. A pregnant teenage girl, kicked out by her mother and rejected by the father of her child, searches for a secure place in the world. And far out in the country, two elderly bachelor brothers work the family farm as they have their entire lives, all but isolated from life beyond their own community.

From these separate strands emerges a vision of life—and of the community and landscape that bind them together—that is both luminous and enduring. *Plainsong* is a story of the abandonment, grief, and stoicism that bring these people together, and it is a story of the kindness, hope, and dignity that redeem their lives. Utterly true to the rhythms and patterns of life, *Plainsong* is an American classic: a novel to care about, believe in, and learn from.

CONNECTIONS TO CURRICULUM*

The following are some, but not all, of the connections to curriculum for this novel.

- **Unit 3: Personal Responsibility**
 - Essential Question: "How does personal responsibility affect not only the individual but also the world as a whole?"
- **Unit 4: Universal Human Experience**
 - Essential Question: "How can reading reveal universal truths about the human experience?"

KEY STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- Read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems. RL.12.13
- Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. RL.12.2
- Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging. RL.12.5
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. RL.12.1

Updated Fall 2020

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. RL.12.11
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. RL.12.12

**based on BV School District Curriculum adopted Fall 2020*