

# SOVEREIGN

# SOVEREIGN

AJ WHITNEY

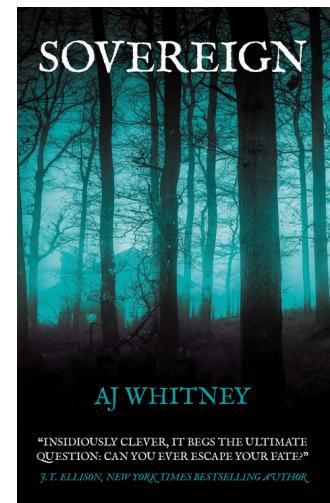
Grade Level: 6-12

Ages: 12+

Themes: Religion, violence, death, superstition, found family, adoption, selflessness, self-sacrifice, starvation, discrimination, dehumanization of a specific group

ISBN: 978-1955058247

TEACHER'S GUIDE



## SUMMARY

13-year-old Orphan Number 332 was raised to be sent to be sacrificed, but when her village stops believing in their mysterious gods, will her real life finally begin, or will the Sovereign take their revenge?

*Sovereign* is the first book in the Sovereign Trilogy.

## PRE-READING DISCUSSION

Have a discussion about the idea of group-think, asking students the following questions:

- Have you ever been in a situation where you were influenced to think like everyone else in a group, even if it led to harmful actions?
- What did you do? What were the consequences?
- What would it take for someone to stand up against the rest of the group and lead people in another direction?
- What makes it difficult to go against popular thinking?
- Think of a time in history when an entire community gave in to group-think. What were the results? Did anyone stand up against that thinking, and what happened?



**CONNECTING TO THE WORLD**

The Orphans in *Sovereign* have been dehumanized by their religion and by the people in their village for over three centuries. Create a human rights campaign to promote the idea that Orphans are people who deserve the same rights as everyone else. Your goal is to stop the Sending and find families to adopt the Orphans. Choose from the following options to help promote your cause:

- Create a social media video speaking about the Orphans
- Create a poster with images and persuasive text
- Record a mini podcast episode
- Write an article persuading the village of your viewpoint

Follow-up discussion:

- Identify a group in our country's past that has been dehumanized like the Orphans were.
- Did anyone stand up against that dehumanization like Maggie, and if so, what happened?
- Identify a group that is currently being dehumanized.
- Who is standing up for them now?

**CONNECTING TO THE TEXT*****Sensory Language***

Throughout the book, the author uses heavily descriptive language to engage all of the reader's senses in each scene. Find examples of descriptions that use each of the five sense -- sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch -- and describe what emotions or reactions each one evokes for you personally.

***Multiple Points of View***

This book contains dual storylines that seem unrelated at first. Describe how the grey-haired woman's story enhances Harper's. What is the connection between the two? What were your theories about the gray-haired woman throughout the story? How did those stories shift and change as you got deeper into the book?

SOVEREIGN



***Foreshadowing***

In Chapter 14, the gray-haired woman and the other leaders discuss their true fears about the events that have been taking place. This is the first time the blue glow on the horizon is mentioned. The people consider it an ominous sign that something supernatural is coming. In the next chapter, Harper and Matthew admire the “comforting blue glow on the horizon” as the walk home from the barn dance. What is the significance of the blue light? How does it foreshadow what is to come?

Explain the significance of the chase game that 32 plays with her friends in Chapter 2. Where else in the text does the author use the same language?

**CONNECTING TO THE STUDENTS: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- The truck that crashed through fence and into the cornfield in Chapter 1 is never explained. What do you think was really happening? Why do you think the author chose not to reveal the truth?
- When we first meet 31/Matthew, 32/Harper describes him as self-righteous and thinks he’s self-important. Later she calls him overbearing and smug, but the author hints that something else might be going on. What clues did you find that 31/Matthew is not exactly how 32/Harper perceives him?
- What is the significance of the Orphans having numbers instead of names?
- Why do you think the author never names the gray-haired woman?
- 32/Harper is sarcastic and pragmatic, but 33/Ava is more sensitive and empathetic. Discuss their conversation in Chapter 8. Ava wants to take the other children with them when they run away, but Harper doesn’t think that’s a very good idea. Who do you think is right? Whose personal characteristics are more helpful? Support your opinion.
- In Chapter 9, Mr. and Mrs. Aaron try to call 31 by the name they’ve chosen for him, but Harper becomes angry with them and insists that they call him 331. What is the significance of this moment? How might this situation relate to real life?
- In Chapter 11, Harper deduces that Matthew must have gone to the place where the Sending used to happen. How did she figure that out?



## SOVEREIGN

**CONNECTING TO THE STUDENTS: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- When the Sovereign attack Harper, Ava, and Matthew up close, Harper describes seeing “a long, narrow cylinder, about the size of a large man’s finger and made of glass,” with a “thin, sharp-looking piece of metal” protruding from one end. What do you think that is?
- How is Harper different in Chapter 17 than she was in Chapter 8? What do you think brought about this change?
- What are your thoughts about the gray-haired woman’s response to the riots in the village?
- Describe your reaction to the quote, “It’s the last thing I hear before I die,” in Chapter 20.
- What evidence can you find that the Sovereign may not be who the villagers think? What theories do you have about who they really are?
- When you were first reading the book, which story did you believe was the past and which was the present -- Harper’s or the gray-haired woman? What do you think now, and what evidence do you have to support your theory?
- Now that you’ve read the entire book, what do you think is the significance of the gray-haired woman’s story? What impact does her storyline have on Harper’s?

**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**

**AJ Whitney** is a Kansas City author and high school counselor writing dark speculative YA fiction. Her debut, *Sovereign*, launched a twisty, high-stakes trilogy. She champions teens, anti-bullying, and LGBTQ+ education, writing stories that challenge norms, celebrate individuality, and prove the dark can be just as powerful as the light.

