

A Madness So Discreet – Classroom Lesson Plan

By Mindy McGinnis

Includes Virtual Author Interview

Book Synopsis

Set in the late 1800s, *A Madness So Discreet* follows Grace Mae, a young woman confined to an asylum after becoming pregnant by her abusive father. As she trains in forensic analysis under a progressive doctor, Grace begins rebuilding her identity while uncovering criminal investigations. The novel explores trauma, resilience, justice, autonomy, and the historical treatment of women's mental health.

Banned / Challenged Status

A Madness So Discreet has been challenged due to themes of sexual abuse, pregnancy, and depictions of violence within historical context. Critics cite mature subject matter. Supporters emphasize the novel's critical examination of gender injustice, survivor strength, and historical realities surrounding women's rights and mental health treatment.

Essential Questions

- How does society define and control women's autonomy?
- What does resilience look like after trauma?
- How can historical fiction illuminate systemic injustice?

Lesson Objective

Students will analyze theme and characterization to evaluate how the novel critiques historical gender injustice and portrays survivor resilience.

Lesson Structure (60 Minutes)

- Warm-Up (5 minutes): How does society determine what is 'normal'?

- Direct Instruction (15–20 minutes): Examine historical context and forensic elements. Define: autonomy, trauma, institutionalization, justice.
- Guided Practice (15 minutes): Analyze a key turning point in Grace’s development. Synthesis Question: How does Grace reclaim agency in a restrictive system?
- Independent Practice (15 minutes): Choice-based analytical response.
- Exit Ticket (5 minutes): Identify one example of systemic injustice.

Independent Practice Options

- Option A: Analyze the theme of autonomy.
- Option B: Reflect on resilience after trauma.
- Option C: Compare historical and modern views of mental health.

Creative Interpretation Option

- Character agency timeline
- Historical injustice infographic
- Symbolism illustration

All creative responses must include an artist statement citing textual evidence.

Reader Impact + Student Voice

- How does the novel portray survivor strength?
- Why might books addressing sexual abuse be challenged?
- How can literature confront difficult history responsibly?
- Should schools include historical novels dealing with trauma? Why or why not?

Intellectual Freedom Connection

Writing Prompt: Should schools provide access to literature that addresses sexual abuse and systemic injustice in historical context? Support your reasoning with textual evidence.

Author Interview

Author interview provided by UNBAN COOLIES.
Visit: <http://www.youtube.com/@unbanCOOLIES>

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