



Winged Victory

FOUNDATION

Advancing liberty through storytelling and the arts

Syllabus for *Just the Truth* by Gen LaGreca

Just the Truth will help students understand historical themes of the individual's struggle against tyranny and desire to be left free, and the role of the free market as the best hope for prosperity. Other skills taught include: quality writing through expressive word usage, identifying parts of a storyline, comprehension, and research. There are opportunities for thought-provoking discussions on topics such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, U.S. Constitution, election process, role of journalism, and how a free press can protect our foundational freedoms. Plan early for a tour of a local news station or the Indiana State House as an enjoyable way to tie in the novel *Just the Truth*!

Prologue and Chapters 1-3, pages 1-37

- **Discussion or essay questions:** Do you like Laura Taninger? What are the qualities she has that you admire? How has her grandfather, Julius Taninger, influenced her life? As James Spenser is dying, what word does he struggle to say? (Fox.)
- **Assignment:** Identify story elements: setting, characters, and plot. Hand out the Storyline Organizer so students can use it as a guide for making a small poster that they can fill in as they read the novel.

Chapters 4-6, pages 38-62

- **Discussion or essay questions:** Any citizen petitioning information from the government can face the "tools of silence" that Laura Taninger faces when there are "stalls and delays" by the government. Name 2 or more tools from pages 44, 45, and 46 that the government uses to hide the truth or to silence its critics. How does the media and technology influence public opinion as indicated on page 58?
- **Assignment:** On your Storyline Organizer fill in an event that puts more pressure on Laura to give up her investigation. Write in complete sentences. (Example: Irene T. loses the Pinnacle deal and her sponsors.)

Chapters 7-10, pages 63-86

- **Discussion or essay questions:** Laura states earlier on page 61, "The issue before us now is that the Feds changed the entire election process. They took control of the presidential election away from the states and gave it to themselves." In Chapter 10, the Martin administration's scheme to manipulate the upcoming election is revealed. Is central control by the federal government over elections a bad idea? Does the U.S. Constitution (Article I) primarily give states the power to oversee their election process? Which Amendment in the Bill of Rights also leaves

control over elections to each individual state? (10th Amendment)

- **Assignment:** Bill of Rights Note Pad activity.

Chapters 11-14, pages 87-116

- **Discussion or essay questions:** How does the government regulation for “Stadium Ordinance 472.01” affect Billie? What does Laura mean by “selective use of rules and regulations” on page 94? Is this an abuse of power? Why or why not? How can economic regulations lead to the business community’s being unable to criticize the government? What are the threats to Kate Taninger’s freedom of expression on her university campus?
- **Assignment:** On your Storyline Organizer poster fill in 2 or more events that make it even more difficult for Laura to continue her investigation.

Chapters 15-17, pages 117-132

- **Discussion or essay questions:** Earlier, on page 98, we learn that the dean of Collier University liked to say that all viewpoints were welcome. Did Collier University violate Kate’s freedom of expression? In the story, the government is financially funding the protestors on campus. Are they then acting as substitutes to do something for the government that it cannot do directly? Was it fair to punish Kate? Who should be punished?
- **Assignment:** Quick Search activity asks students to define and explain freedom of the press.

Chapter 18, pages 133-143

- **Discussion or essay questions:** Should citizens trust news received through “anonymous sources” as stated on page 138? Why or why not? What is the difference between primary sources and secondary sources?
- **Assignment:** List additional tools of silence from pages 142-143 to show the government’s relentless attack to silence Taninger News.

Chapters 19-21, pages 144-172

- **Discussion or essay questions:** Faced with the intense pressure from the Martin administration and from family members who are her business partners, should Laura give up her investigation? What keeps her going?
- **Assignment:** Cite evidence from page 159 that shows ways in which the Martin administration can clamp down on the Taninger’s corporation to pressure Laura into giving up her investigation. Students may be asked to add to their Storyline Organizer more events or intense hurdles that advance the plot. (Example: Taninger News comes under investigation for being a monopoly.)

Chapters 22-25, pages 173-200

- **Discussion or essay questions:** Do excuses by the Bureau of Elections mean it should continue to get away with not having to provide the information Laura has legally filed for

months ago? (page 183) How is the public hurt by these delaying tactics? How can the public benefit from journalists' receiving timely information from government agencies?

- **Assignment:** Research the topic of David and Goliath. How does Laura's fight against the Martin Administration compare with that of David and Goliath? Can seemingly insurmountable obstacles be overcome by determination and courage? What weapon does Laura have in her fight? (The power of the truth.)

Chapters 26-32, pages 201-227

- **Discussion or essay question:** How is investigative journalism and all of our foundational freedoms threatened when government grows too powerful and controlling?
- **Assignment:** Complete your Storyline Organizer. **Climax:** Describe the climax of the story where the characters and the dangers to them reach a peak and something dire is about to happen, and the mysteries and puzzles are about to be solved. What dangerous scheme was revealed? **Resolution:** Are there remaining issues that are resolved? Are there any indications about the future path of the characters? Are the villains brought to justice? Is the truth revealed? Is the country saved from disaster? Is the ending satisfying? **Theme/moral to the story:** What is the theme? Hint: Read the book's back cover for various indications of the theme.

End-of-Unit Wrap Up

- **Discussion or essay question:** What is your favorite part of the novel *Just the Truth*?
- **Assignment:** Perform a dramatic reading in class. Have one student read the narrator's part and other students play the characters. We recommend the following scenes, which are pivotal to the story and have multiple characters for greater student participation:

Chapter 1, pages 7-13, the Taninger Enterprises management meeting (introduces the plot, theme, 5 characters, and the central conflict of the story), or

Chapter 20, pages 156-165, the board of directors meeting (intensifies the hurdles for Laura to a new level when she is fired and has no way to continue her investigation, making her quest for the truth seem hopeless—or is it?), or

Excerpts from Chapters 26-31, pages 201-221, the showdown at the Meadowlark Gardens (constitutes the climax of the story in which all of the main characters meet, shocking revelations occur, and all mysteries are solved.) Has the truth been revealed and has justice been done?

- **Activities:** Take a tour of a local news station or of your statehouse or state capitol. See additional after-reading activities, which are listed in the accompanying Student Activities guide.

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