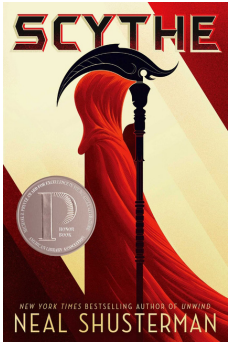




# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



## Scythe

by Neal Shusterman  
ISBN: 9781406379242  
ARRP: \$16.99  
NZRRP: \$18.99  
February 2018

## Outline:

A dark, gripping and witty thriller in which the only thing humanity has control over is death.

In a world where disease, war and crime have been eliminated, the only way to die is to be randomly killed ("gleaned") by professional scythes. Citra and Rowan are teenagers who have been selected to be scythes' apprentices, and despite wanting nothing to do with the vocation, they must learn the art of killing and understand the necessity of what they do.

Only one of them will be chosen as a scythe's apprentice and as Citra and Rowan come up against a terrifyingly corrupt Scythedom, it becomes clear that the winning apprentice's first task will be to glean the loser.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Neal Shusterman is an award-winning author whose books include the New York Times bestselling *Unwind* series and *Challenger Deep*, which won a National Book Award. He also writes screenplays for film and television, for shows such as *Goosebumps* and *Animorphs*. He lives in Southern California with his four children.

## How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

**These notes are for:**

- Secondary years 7-10
- Ages 12+

**Key Learning Areas:**

- English

**Example of:**

- Fiction

**Themes/Ideas:**

- Death
- Utopia
- Honesty/Trust
- Compassion
- Empathy
- Mortality

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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## Discussion Questions and Activities:

### English

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Revisit your answer after reading the book – how close were your predictions to the actual novel?

In groups, discuss how the following values are demonstrated in the novel:

- Courage
- Compassion
- Conscience
- Honesty
- Loyalty
- Bravery

Are there any other values you would add to this list?

Look up the term 'utopia'. Do you think this applies to the world of *Scythe*? Why or why not? Research other authors' takes on possible utopian futures.

Discuss how characters in the novel approach the idea of death. Possible characters could include Rowan, Citra, Scythe Faraday, Scythe Curie, Scythe Goddard and Scythe Volta.

Consider characters we meet right before they are gleaned: how are their attitudes to fear and death different or similar to the scythes and their apprentices?

Discuss moments in the book when characters reflect back on the Age of Mortality – what's changed? What's stayed the same?

Consider the ten Scythe Commandments, and the different ways characters interpret them. Which rules do you think are the most important and why? Compare with your classmate.

Scythe Curie and Scythe Goddard have very different approaches to being a scythe. What do their methods tell us about their morals and ethics? You could consider how they fulfil their quotas, who they choose to glean and why, and how they mentally and physically train their apprentices.

Discuss Rowan's decision to try to ensure Citra becomes a scythe over him, and how he works to achieve his goal. How does Citra and Rowan's relationship change throughout the novel?

The plot in *Scythe* takes many twists – were there any that particularly surprised you? Why or why not?

Reread the scene of Kohl Whitlock's gleaning, and the students' reactions afterwards. Why do you think they behaved as they did? What does this scene tell us about Rowan's personality?

Who do you think the author Neal Shusterman chose to include extracts from the gleaning journals of different scythes? What do these sections tell us about the characters that the main story does not?

In what ways is the Thunderhead different to how we use technology today? How is it similar? What are some of the possible advantages and disadvantages of the Thunderhead?

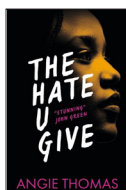
Scythe Faraday says that Citra and Rowan's reluctance to be a scythe is exactly why they should become one. What do you think he means by this? What sort of traits make a 'good' scythe?

Write a short story set in the world of *Scythe*. It could include characters before or after the events of the novel, or even take place in the Age of Mortality.

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