

## Tips for Supporting Your Student



### In general:

1. Have a quiet place in your home where your student can go to study.
2. Keep reading material interesting to a middle school student available in your home, such as: young adult novels, magazines, and comic books.
3. Set a time in your home when every family member sits down and reads. Discuss as a family what you're reading.
4. Ask to see your student's homework assignments.

### For reading the novel *Crispin*:

1. Discuss what your student is learning in school about the story. For example, ask your student to summarize events in the story as he or she reads new chapters.
2. The story contains many important issues that you can discuss with your student such as:
  - a. what it means to be a family
  - b. how education empowers people
  - c. decision-making and growing upAsk your student how the main character, Crispin, deals with each one of these issues.
3. Ask to see a schedule of assignment due dates and/or directions for writing assignments and large projects related to *Crispin*.

### About the Author

Avi (not his real name) was born in 1937 in Brooklyn, New York. Avi was a shy young man who struggled with writing and failed all of his high school courses before being placed in a small school which emphasized reading and writing. By the time he was a senior in high school, he made up his mind to become a writer. To date, Avi has written over 85 books, from comedies to young adult novels, historical fictions to adventure and fantasy novels, mysteries to early readers and short stories.

Among his awards for writing, Avi won the Newberry Award for his novel *Crispin*.

#### Other historical fiction titles by Avi include:

*The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*  
*The Fighting Ground*  
*The Man Who Was Poe*  
*Beyond the Western Sea Books 1 and 2*  
*Finding Providence*



## Edmonds School District

Bridgette Belasli  
Director, Secondary Education  
20420 68th Avenue West  
Lynnwood, WA 98036-7400

Phone: 425-670-7341  
Fax: 425-670-7123  
Email: [belaslib@edmonds.wednet.edu](mailto:belaslib@edmonds.wednet.edu)

## Edmonds School District

### **Crispin** By Avi



### A 7th Grade Required Unit of Study

*"I was unfettered, alive to an earth  
I hardly knew but was eager to  
explore."  
-Crispin*

# Crispin



*Crispin*, by Avi, is a coming-of-age story set in England at the close of the medieval period. It chronicles a young man's odyssey of self-knowledge as he is forced to flee his community and must struggle to survive while searching for the truth about his birth and upbringing. The story offers multiple lessons in individual growth and addresses such concepts as human behavior, justice, religion, and social order.

For seventh graders, the book offers an easy accessible way to immerse students in the life of the medieval ages as students encounter life during the Black Plague, the emphasis on the church in daily life, and ongoing struggles to find food during famine years caused by the plague and changes in weather patterns. The book offers an in-depth look at plot, similar in its journey motif to Homer's *Odyssey*. It integrates with the Medieval Europe unit students are studying in 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies. It also is a great vehicle for exploring the medieval arts through music, architecture, dress, and other fine arts. The story lends itself to helping students reflect on life today versus life in the Middle Ages. It also explores the power of language and how language changes.

The book contains great vocabulary choices for 7<sup>th</sup> grade, a number of literary devices to study, and a memorable use of imagery. It draws students in through its study of teenage awkwardness—a timeless concept.

The novel allows students to experience the importance of looking at another people's belief systems. The character

Crispin starts his journey ignorant and unlearned. He becomes empowered when he learns to read, write and develop other important skills, thus highlighting the importance of education. Crispin learns to make decisions for himself as he grows up, paralleling the growth of all teenagers throughout time.

## What Your Student Will Learn in This Unit

**The story allows teachers and students to explore topics across multiple subjects:**

### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade English

Students will study story-telling elements, such as: Plot, symbolism, oral story-telling, and the difference between autobiography, biography, and fiction. Students will study the power of persuasion and learn how listening and observing skills play a part in the development of Crispin's character.

Students will practice writing skills, such as: The writing process, writing a summary, writing a narrative, and descriptive writing.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies

*Crispin* explores the feudal system and references the Crusades. Students will learn about the inventions and agricultural system of the medieval period. These concepts tie to what students are learning about in their 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Medieval World History class.

### Visual and Performing Arts

Students will study medieval art, music, architecture.

### Health

The character Crispin suffers from low self-esteem at the beginning of the story and a lack of self-awareness. The novel gives students a chance to explore these important middle school health topics.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Science

Plagues were a major part of medieval European history and a concern to the character Crispin in the story. This connects with the required 7<sup>th</sup> grade science unit: Human Body Systems. Also, weather and climate played a large role in the lives of the characters and this connects with the required 7<sup>th</sup> grade science unit: Weather and Water.

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