

WHS Book Rationale

Title: Animal Dreams

Author: Barbara Kingsolver

- **Intended Audience**

English 11 and English 11 Honors

- **Brief summary and educational significance**

Codi Noline returns to her hometown to face her past and her ailing, distant father. She discovers a town threatened by a silent environmental catastrophe and some startling clues about her own identity. Blending flashbacks and dreams, and a multi-vocal style (interchanging point of view between chapters), this novel explores the interrelationship between family, community and the environment.

- **Purpose of teaching the work and how it will be used**

- Required summer reading
- Kingsolver is an important, popular American writer whose voice and style (as fiction and nonfiction author) provide students with a variety of texts to understand writer's voice, audience, and purpose.
- This book explores the importance of family and community.
- Recurring themes for the year: environment, differing points of view on the role of the individual and community in American society.
- Connects to *A Lesson Before Dying* and both books share themes of community, self-understanding, and responsibility.

- **Potential problems**

- Premarital sex
- Teen pregnancy
- Presentation of American political and military action

- **Addressing potential problems**

- A major motif in the novel is barrenness and rebirth; Codi's loss of her mother and her child all develop this theme of loss which is echoed in the environmental death of the local river and land (destroyed by run off from a copper mine). The conclusion (marriage of Codi, rebirth of the soil and river), are all important ways of developing this motif.
- Exploring attitudes toward U.S. political and military action are important ways of understanding authorial voice and how writers develop an argument through a variety of literary forms (novel, essay, etc.). Students will be writing their own persuasion and argument writing, and Kingsolver is one model of that rhetorical style.