

A Lesson before Dying
Summer Reading Project

2010-2011

Junior

Overview:

This reading project is designed to give incoming juniors the opportunity to think analytically. The text being used was chosen because of its significant contribution to the literary and historical aspects of literature that must be combined for comprehension. This is a skill that will be utilized throughout 11th grade English at Aiken College and Career High School. Students will read the novel and respond to various writing prompts (short answer and extended response) using the available technology of the day (specifically ning.com). Students will learn new vocabulary and apply literary terms to the novel for understanding.

The Novel

A Lesson Before Dying is a deceptively simple novel that explores numerous complex themes. On the surface, the novel is the story of one man's struggle to accept death with dignity while another man struggles with his own identity and responsibility to his community. But on a deeper level, it explores the process of an oppressed, dehumanized people's attempt to gain recognition of their human dignity, acknowledgment of their human rights, and freedom to pursue their dreams. Gaines' manipulation of time, focusing on the day-by-day struggles of ordinary people, is a definitive structural element in the novel. Unlike many black American writers, Gaines focuses on a cultural perspective of time that views history from an Eastern (Afrocentric) view, as opposed to a Western (Eurocentric) view. The primary difference between these two perspectives is the definition of time as it impacts our view of the past, present, and future. Viewed from the Eurocentric perspective, history is a series of "significant events" that document the accomplishments of "heroes." Time is a commodity that, like money, can be spent, saved, lost, and managed. Time consists of the past, present, and future, each separated by distinct barriers; death is the end of life. Viewed from the Afrocentric perspective, however, history is a series of individual and collective stories that document the accomplishments of everyday people. According to this view, time is a continuum. Like an endless river, it cannot be controlled, contained, or manipulated. Time consists of the past and present; events that have not yet occurred exist in a separate realm of "no time." All elements of time are interconnected; death is part of life. In this context, Jefferson's death with dignity becomes even more of a validation of his life and the lives of his community, despite the indignities suffered while living.

Assessment

Assessment will be divided into three parts

1. Discussion Board
2. Vocabulary
3. Summer Project

These assessments are outlined below:

1. Students will log-on and sign up for my website specifically designed for this class through ning.com
2. Students will respond to one extended response and one short answer twice per month
3. Entries will be graded and recorded towards first quarter grading
4. Proposed site: ACC-A Lesson Before Dying Revels-Davis.ning.com
5. Students will be required to not only respond to the post, but respond to that of their peers (at least one response).
6. A comprehensive list of vocabulary will be included with the assignment (much of this novel is written in dialect), however students will include and post a list of no less than ten words encountered that they did not know the meaning of and this list will be compiled to create a vocabulary list for the school year.
7. Discussion responses from the prompts will be worth 50 points and one written response to peer responses will count as 10 points (a paper record or scores will be kept throughout the summer; students will be aware of their scores immediately electronically and then again the first week of classes).

Summer Project

In addition to the aforementioned requirements, students will be required to complete one of the following projects by Friday of the first two weeks of classes:

For your project, always include the book title and author.

****Art-based projects will be assessed on artistic quality and creativity. You may only use paper that is 11 x 17 or smaller---no large posters or backboards.**

****Written projects should be typed (Times-New Roman 12p) or neatly hand-written.**

- A. Collage:** Make a collage illustrating the theme, mood, or setting of the book. You can use almost anything in a collage to get the effect you want. Clippings from magazines, books and other paper images, stamps, paint, small objects of any type may be used, as long as they will adhere to your backing or paper. Cloth, string, leaves, and shells all can be used as well. The collage must be on paper that is at least 8 ½ X 14 and should include at least 15 different items. On the back explain in one paragraph (5-7 sentences) what theme, mood, or setting you are representing and how the items are relevant.

B. PowerPoint: Create a PPT. presentation that promotes your book to other readers. Include at least 10 – 15 slides with at least 1 image/graphic per slide. The PowerPoint slide show should use text, color, graphics, and animation. Your PowerPoint needs to have depth. It should explain the plot, setting, main characters, symbolism, historical context, and the main themes. The final slide should be your opinion of the novel. The PPT Presentation should be at least 10 -15 slides text, color, graphics, and animation. Each slide should represent a different element of the novel. (characters, setting, plot, climax, denouement, protagonist, antagonist, symbolism, themes, etc.) The presentation itself should persuade others to read the novel. Be sure to cite every source on the Internet from which you take information—text, pictures, video, clip art, backgrounds, and so forth. Print a copy and create a disk/CD for your teacher.

C. Timeline: Make a colorfully illustrated timeline of events in the book. Make sure your timeline includes at least 10 events with a 2 sentence description and small picture, drawing, or clipping describing each event. Use paper that is 11 x 17 or smaller---no large posters or backboards.

D. Characterization Poster of a Major Character: Create visually appealing poster (at least 8 ½ x 14) that reflects your impression of a major character. Draw, paint, cut out or copy and paste a large, vivid picture that represents how you visualize a major character in the novel. On the back explain in one paragraph (5-7 sentences) what you are representing and how it is relevant in your poster. Written portions must be typed or neatly handwritten and attached to the poster.

E. Character Analysis: A successful character analysis demands that one infers abstract traits and values from literal details contained in a text. Write a five-paragraph essay analyzing the main character of your novel. Using evidence from the text to support your conclusions, describe at least three significant personality traits of the character. For each trait you discuss, you must include at least three supporting examples/details from the story. Explore the physical and personality traits of different characters and the way their actions affect the plot of the book. Some suggestions:

- Explore the way a character dresses and what impression that leaves with the reader.
- What positive characteristics does the character possess?
- Does the character have a “fatal flaw” that gets him/her into trouble frequently?
- Use examples of dialogue and analyze the way a character speaks. Discuss the words he/she chooses and the way his/her words affect other characters.
- Finally, tie all of your observations together by explaining the way the characters make the plot move forward.

F. Compile a Scrapbook or Memory Box: Choose one of the major characters in your book and, as that person, put together a scrapbook or memory box of special memories and mementoes. Letters, photographs, postcards and souvenirs are all good items for the memory box and can be easily created! Think about whom your character is close to and what he/she does for fun. Remember, this should represent your chosen character! Draw, create, collect, or find at least six souvenirs that the main character would have put into the scrapbook or collect in a memory box.. These objects should reflect events in the story or important aspects of your character. Include an explanation next to each object describing its significance. Be true to your character.

G. Design a Travel Brochure: Design a travel brochure for the destination of the book’s setting. Clearly tie the destination to your book. Illustrate and advertise the setting of your novel. Use words and pictures to convince your readers that this setting is an exciting (interesting, educational, relaxing, scenic, historical, etc.) place to visit. Your brochure must include facts about the destination, reasons for visiting, possible attractions, events or sights to see. It must include text and graphics.

H. Character Diary: Select a character who appealed to you. Generally, you should write a diary entry for each chapter or you may write a diary with at least one week’s worth of entries that this person might have kept. Be sure it relates to the events in the book.

- A diary entry should be in first person from the selected character’s point of view.
- The entry should include a summary of what happened in the chapter OR elaborate on a major scene.
- The diary entry should include a personal statement from the character’s imagined point of view.

I. Storyboard: Complete a series of five drawings that show five of the major events in the plot of the book you read. Divide a white sheet of paper (11 x 17 or smaller) into five boxes. As you read your novel, periodically draw scenes in the squares to create a storyboard that will summarize the events of the novel. Write captions for each drawing so that the illustrations can be understood by someone who did not read the book. On the back justify in one paragraph (5-7 sentences) why you chose to create your storyboard in the way you did. Make sure to use evidence and quotes from the text to help support your answers.