

Group Members:

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<b>Anchor Text</b>	<b>Unit Focus</b>
<p><b>Novel:</b> <i>A Lesson Before Dying</i> by Ernest Gaines</p>	<p><b>English/Language Arts</b> <b>Grades 9-12</b></p> <p><b>Students examine aspects of regional literature and the topic of race in a southern setting.</b></p> <p><b>Guiding Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What role does <b>RACE</b> play in <i>A Lesson Before Dying</i>? How does race influence the actions of African American characters? of white characters? of mulatto characters?</li><li>● How does the <b>SETTING</b> of <i>A Lesson Before Dying</i> influence the turn of events in the novel? What impact does setting have on the main characters?</li><li>● Which <b>SOCIETAL PROBLEMS</b> in the novel have been resolved over time? What problems in this novel still exist today?</li></ul> <p><b>Unit Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The learner will explore biographical information on the author.</li><li>2. The learner will note how regional setting, culture, and language influences literature.</li><li>3. The learner will differentiate between societal norms in the novel and societal norms today.</li><li>4. The learner will analyze Jefferson’s and Grant’s development as characters.</li><li>5. The learner will role-play in a mock trial and point out weaknesses within the court system.</li></ol>
<b>Unit Overview</b>	
<p><b>Pre-Reading Lesson:</b> “Exploring the Author’s Background”</p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> 1 Day</p> <p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Lecture/Biography excerpt</li></ol>	<p><b>Lesson Details:</b> Exploring the author’s personal background and its influence on the fictional <i>A Lesson Before Dying</i></p> <p><b>Discussion Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Author Barbara Kingsolver said, “Don’t try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It’s the one and only thing you have to offer.” With this in mind, what</li></ul>

<p>from the life of Ernest J. Gaines  <a href="https://achievement.org/achiever/ernest-j-gaines/">(https://achievement.org/achiever/ernest-j-gaines/)</a></p>	<p>elements of Ernest Gaines’s life stand out to you? Because of his life experiences, what does Ernest “have to say,” as Kingsolver says?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What life elements might you expect to read about in his novel?</li> </ul> <p><b>Journaling Activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For 5-10 minutes, write in your journal about interesting aspects of your own life. What unique experiences do you have?</li> </ul>
<p><b>During-Reading Lesson:</b>  “Identifying Setting and Its Influence”</p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> 1 Day</p> <p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lecture/video detailing the life of Willie Francis  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdWXODwOcds">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdWXODwOcds</a></li> </ol>	<p><b>Lesson Details:</b>  The Louisiana setting in <i>A Lesson Before Dying</i></p> <p><b>Discussion Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What elements of the setting of the novel do you think are unique to the state of Louisiana and/or Louisiana regional culture?</li> <li>● What elements of Willie Francis’ story are incorporated into Gaines’ <i>A Lesson Before Dying</i>?</li> <li>● Why do you think Ernest Gaines felt it was important to incorporate Willie Francis’s real life story into his novel?</li> </ul> <p><b>Journaling Activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Think about the area where you live, or maybe another place your family came from, etc. What regional aspects, events, interesting/amazing people, or folklore might you include in a novel? Write in your journal for 5-10 minutes, recording these ideas.</li> </ul> <p><b>Analysis of Text:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Find one quote from what you have read thus far that relates to the following aspects of setting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Jim Crow Era</li> <li>○ Regional Louisiana</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Share direct textual evidence as a class and discuss the impact these details have on the story.</li> </ul>
<p><b>During-Reading Lesson:</b>  “Predicting Jefferson’s Journal”</p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> 1 Day</p> <p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Article on why journaling is important - student’s will begin the lesson by reading this  <a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/health-fitness/mind/dear-diary-surprising-health-benefits-journaling/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/health-fitness/mind/dear-diary-surprising-health-benefits-journaling/</a></li> </ol>	<p><b>Lesson Details:</b>  Before reading Jefferson’s journal, students will discuss and write about what they predict Jefferson’s journal says.</p> <p><b>Discussion Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What do you believe the perspective will be from Jefferson?</li> <li>● Why do you think Gaines added Jefferson’s journal and strayed away from Grant’s point of view?</li> <li>● What do you think the journal will reveal about Jefferson?</li> <li>● Would you have kept a journal if you were in Jefferson’s situation? Why or why not?</li> </ul> <p><b>Journaling Activity:</b>  Write a journal as Jefferson or describe what you believe will be discussed in his journal. Write in your journal for 10-15 minutes using this prompt.</p>
<p><b>Post-Reading Lesson:</b>  “Analyzing Grant’s Character Development”</p>	<p><b>Lesson Details:</b>  After reading the novel, students will analyze Grant’s character and examine ways he changes and grows as a man.</p>

<p><b>Timeframe:</b> 1 Day</p> <p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Video on flat, round, static, and dynamic characters  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOODHYmpJ6k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOODHYmpJ6k</a></li> </ol>	<p><b>Discussion Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is Grant round or flat? Is he static or dynamic? Why?</li> <li>● In what ways is Grant different at the end of the novel from the beginning?</li> <li>● What role does Taunte Lou play in Grant’s transformation?</li> <li>● Find evidence in the beginning of the novel that reveals Grant’s bitterness towards his home, his culture, or uneducated people.</li> <li>● Find evidence at the end of the novel that shows a change in Grant’s behavior.</li> <li>● What sort of “double meaning” does the title <i>A Lesson Before Dying</i> hold?</li> </ul> <p><b>Journaling Activity:</b>  Write a journal from Grant’s perspective. Include details on what Grant learned from Jefferson and his plans for the future.</p>
<p><b>Post-Reading Lesson:</b>  “Mock Trial”</p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> 3 Days</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Videos on how to perform a mock trial.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General Overview of Mock Trial  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xvg62f4mya4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xvg62f4mya4</a></li> <li>2. Opening Statement  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xvg62f4mya4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xvg62f4mya4</a></li> <li>3. Direct Examination  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xvg62f4mya4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xvg62f4mya4</a></li> <li>4. Cross Examination  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05uaOrBdtbE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05uaOrBdtbE</a></li> <li>5. Closing Statement  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jD4SgHyM2k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jD4SgHyM2k</a></li> </ol>	<p><b>Lesson Details:</b>  Students will perform a mock trial to grasp the severity of a wrongful conviction and the importance of the power that a jury and judge have in determining the sentence that a defendant receives.</p> <p><b>Discussion Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do you believe that Jefferson was wrongfully convicted? Why or why not?</li> <li>● What evidence, if any, points to the wrongful conviction of Jefferson?</li> <li>● What evidence, if any, proves that Jefferson did indeed commit the crime that he was convicted of?</li> <li>● Do you believe that Jefferson was represented fairly, or do you think that he was denied the right to a fair trial? Why?</li> <li>● Do you believe that death by electrocution was a justified punishment for Jefferson in this case? Why or why not?</li> <li>● Based on what you read, do you believe that there are weaknesses in the court system?</li> </ul> <p><b>Mock Trial Activity:</b></p> <p><b>Day 1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The teacher should assign roles for the judge, jury, lawyers, witnesses, plaintiff, and the defendant.</li> <li>● Plaintiff and defendant sides will prepare arguments. Students will use <b>textual evidence</b> from the novel to support their arguments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Plaintiff’s counsel will make its opening statement.</li> <li>● The Defendant’s counsel will make its opening statement.</li> <li>● Each side’s counsel will question the witnesses about the murder, including the plaintiff and the defendant.</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 3:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Each side will conclude by providing a closing statement.</li> <li>● The jury will convene to determine a verdict, complete with <b>evidence</b> from the trial/book.</li> </ul>

**Closure:**

The class will discuss what was learned from the activity. Students will write a reflection summary for homework where they will summarize the trial and decide if they agree or disagree with the jury's verdict.