

Rural Life during the Great Depression

Summary

In this literary unit, students explore rural life during the Great Depression by analyzing Richard Peck's *A Year Down Yonder*.

Main Core Tie

English Language Arts Grade 8

[Reading: Literature Standard 2](#)

Additional Core Ties

English Language Arts Grade 8

[Reading: Literature Standard 1](#)

English Language Arts Grade 8

[Reading: Literature Standard 3](#)

English Language Arts Grade 8

[Reading: Literature Standard 4](#)

English Language Arts Grade 8

[Reading: Literature Standard 6](#)

Time Frame

10 class periods of 60 minutes each

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication

Materials

Each student will need a copy of *A Year Down Yonder* by Richard Peck.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will determine a central theme in *A Year Down Yonder* and analyze its development throughout the text.

Students will cite evidence from the text as they analyze the story.

Students will analyze two characters in *A Year Down Yonder* and cite specific evidence to support that analysis.

Students will learn about four literary devices, will cite examples of each one, and will explain how the use of these devices impact the meaning of the text.

Students will examine *A Year Down Yonder* to find examples of humor created through dramatic irony.

Instructional Procedures

Background Knowledge: Grandmother assignment

This assignment will get students ready to read. They will think about their grandmothers in order to prepare for the thematic elements of the story as well as the character analysis required in the unit.

Students complete the worksheet.

Share some info about your grandmothers.

1930s rural life assignment and slide show

Show slides and allow for discussion. Give students time to share their thoughts and impressions.

Students should complete the analysis assignment by themselves.

Put students in groups of 3-4 to share their ideas from the assignment.

Literary terms and applications

Discuss the terms.

Explain that students will fill out the applications column as we read. As students read (either as a group, listening to the audio book, or individually), they should fill in some examples of each term. The teacher might need to point these out depending on the skill level of the students.

Discuss at end of book.

Read pages 1-74.

Character web

Make a list of main characters on the board.

Students will choose one and fill out a character web.

Go through each character listed and discuss as a class.

Read pages 75-130.

Character web

Make a list of main characters on the board.

Students will choose one (DIFFERENT FROM THE FIRST TIME) and fill out a character web.

Go through each character and discuss as a class. Focus on the development of characters throughout the book.

Revisit the literary terms and applications. Discuss the examples the students found. Focus on examining how these literary devices affect the story, the characters, and the thematic development.

Humor assignment

Before beginning, discuss the difference between the kind of humor in *A Year Down Yonder* and the kind of humor so prevalent in TV and movies today.

Put students in pairs to complete this assignment. They will each need a copy of the book.

As a class, discuss the impact of this kind of humor on the overall tone and mood of the book.

Figures of speech

Since this is a review of previously learned figures of speech, complete the definition column of the assignment as a class.

Put students into pairs to find examples of each figure of speech.

Match each pair with another partnership. They should compare and discuss their examples. Students can change their examples if they are not correct.

Collect the assignments.

Analysis questions and discussion

Have students complete this by themselves.

Collect the assignments.

Have a final discussion about the book.

You can find a Word version of these steps in the Attachments section.

Assessment Plan

This unit relies on ongoing assessment. Teachers will use the completed assignments and the class

discussions to assess progress. The final assignment serves as an assessment of thematic understanding.

Bibliography

Library of Congress www.loc.gov

Some activities in this unit have been adapted from lesson plans by Michelle Bagley.

Authors

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