



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

WITNESS

based on the book by  
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## INTRODUCTION *Witness*

This LitPlan has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *Witness*. It includes twenty one lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to the title and themes of the book. This activity forces students to realize that the outward appearance of people/objects isn't always as important as what is inside. Following the introductory activity, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are approximately thirty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for selected vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for selected vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the vocabulary review, a lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis, and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel.

There is a **hate crimes project** in this unit. This project requires students to research hate crimes against a specific group.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first writing assignment asks students to write from the perspective of someone in the 1920's time period. The second asks students to persuade someone to practice tolerance, and the third asks students to write about one of the many issues related to this book.

There is a non-fiction **reading assignment**. Students must read non-fiction articles, books, etc. to gather information about their themes in our world today.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: multiple choice or short answer. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer unit test for advanced students.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **Unit Resource Materials** section includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The **Vocabulary Resource Materials** section includes similar worksheets and games to reinforce the vocabulary words.

The **level** of this unit can be varied depending upon the criteria on which the individual assignments are graded, the teacher's expectations of his/her students in class discussions, and the formats chosen for the study guides, quizzes and test. If teachers have other ideas/activities they wish to use, they can usually easily be inserted prior to the review lesson.

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## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS *Witness*

### **Assignment 1**

#### Act 1

1. Why are several young girls in the town upset about Miss Harvey's decision regarding "The Fountain of Youth"?
2. Who is Willie Pettibone?
3. How does Leanora's mother die?
4. Aside from liking Leanora despite her race, what sets Esther Hirsh apart from the other speakers in the novel?
5. Why does Leanora walk out into the cold without a coat, hat, or shoes?
6. What does Sara Chickering do when Leanora shows up at her door in the freezing weather with no coat, hat, or shoes?
7. Iris Weaver owns her own restaurant but also has another, more secretive job. What is it?
8. How do Harvey and Viola Pettibone feel about the Ku Klux Klan?
9. What happens to Lewis, a boy from school?
10. What reason does Sara Chickering give for never marrying?

### **Assignment 2**

#### Act 2

1. Who is Bobby Franks?
2. Why does Leanora help Mr. Field?
3. Where does Esther think her mother is?
4. Harvey Pettibone tells his wife about what Johnny Reeves was preaching in his store earlier that day. What does Johnny say about women and happiness?
5. What has Iris Weaver done with the money she has made smuggling in illegal alcohol?
6. Mr. Field offers Leanora gifts that she would love to have. Each time he offers her something she wants, she declines his offer. Why doesn't she take his gifts when she wants them so much?
7. Why does Merlin Van Tornhout get arrested?
8. When does the KKK set the cross on fire?
9. What groups does the KKK target?
10. Why does Ira Hirsh consider moving out of Sara Chickering's house?

### **Assignment 3**

#### Act 3

1. What happens when Iris Weaver gets caught with illegal alcohol in her car?
2. What does the KKK do to keep up the appearance that they are serving the community?
3. Why does Esther stand on the railroad tracks and refuse to move as a train approaches?
4. Why is there an article about Leanora in the newspaper?
5. Leanora's father gets a threatening letter in the mail. What does it say?
6. What does the KKK have against Esther and her father?

7. The lawyer who is arguing Leopold and Loeb's trial is not arguing that they were innocent. He admits they were guilty. What is his argument instead?
8. What could Merlin Van Tornhout do to advance in the KKK?
9. What ends up happening to Leopold and Loeb, the two boys being tried for the murder of Bobby Franks?
10. Harvey puts brooms on sale for one penny and women stampede his store to get one. Twelve women are injured as a result and have to go to the doctor for medical attention. Viola says the doctor might just charge Harvey for the medical bills, since he hasn't been too happy with him lately. What does Harvey say will happen if the doctor unfairly tries to charge him for the medical bills?
11. What happens to Merlin Van Tornhout when he picks up a fellow Klansman on the way to a KKK meeting?

#### **Assignment 4**

##### Act 4

1. What is Leanora's relationship with Mr. Field?
2. What does Harvey do that makes Viola angry?
3. Who is Jerry? What happens to him?
4. What threat did Reynard Alexander receive?
5. What holiday does Esther enjoy celebrating?
6. Why does Johnny Reeves get kicked out of the KKK?
7. Why does the KKK think the Hirsh family is worse than the Sutter family?
8. What does the KKK want Merlin Van Tornhout to do?
9. What happens to Ira Hirsh?
10. Why does Merlin Van Tornhout run away?

#### **Assignment 5**

##### Act 5

1. How does Leanora know that Merlin didn't shoot Ira Hirsh?
2. Who saw the person who shot Ira Hirsh?
3. What does the KKK do to Johnny Reeves?
4. What does Percelle Johnson find in a box behind the tree?
5. Why doesn't Iris tell anyone that she saw Merlin while she was in New York?
6. What finally happens to Johnny Reeves?
7. What does Mr. Field do when he sees three Klansmen at the courthouse?
8. Why does Merlin return home?
9. Why does Merlin say he would never hurt Mr. Hirsh?
10. What surprise does Leanora get in the mail?
11. Who clears Merlin's name and provides evidence that he did not shoot Ira Hirsh?

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS ANSWER KEY *Witness*

### Assignment 1

#### Act 1

1. Why are several young girls in the town upset about Miss Harvey's decision regarding "The Fountain of Youth"?  
*Miss Harvey asks Leanora to dance in the production, but several of the girls don't want to dance with a black girl.*
2. Who is Willie Pettibone?  
*Willie is a white boy at school who hassles Leanora about her race.*
3. How does Leanora's mother die?  
*The night Leanora's family comes to town their wagon gets stuck in the mud. Leanora's dad goes to find help but no one wants to help a black man and his family. Leanora and her mother are left out in the cold for too long and Leanora's mother gets sick. She later dies from that illness.*
4. Aside from liking Leanora despite her race, what sets Esther Hirsh apart from the other speakers in the novel?  
*Esther's speech is very different from others'. She phrases her sentences in an odd structure.*
5. Why does Leanora walk out into the cold without a coat, hat, or shoes?  
*Willie tells Leanora the Klan is talking about burning both her and her father. She is so upset she walks out of school without her coat, hat, or shoes.*
6. What does Sara Chickering do when Leanora shows up at her door in the freezing weather with no coat, hat, or shoes?  
*Sara brings Leanora in, gives her warm broth and a blanket, and gives her a seat by the fire. Sara then runs a half mile into town to get the doctor and sends someone to get Leanora's father.*
7. Iris Weaver owns her own restaurant but also has another, more secretive job. What is it?  
*Iris smuggles alcohol into the town.*
8. How do Harvey and Viola Pettibone feel about the Ku Klux Klan?  
*Harvey wants to join the KKK, but his wife, Viola, is against the idea of being a member of such a violent group.*
9. What happens to Lewis, a boy from school?  
*While he is playing in a sandbank, it caves in. He is buried in it and suffocates.*
10. What reason does Sara Chickering give for never marrying?  
*She says she watched her mother work hard all the time while her father occasionally got breaks from his work. She saw her mother work harder to keep a household in order than her father ever did at his job.*

### Assignment 2

#### Act 2

1. Who is Bobby Franks?  
*Bobby Franks is a rich, white boy from Chicago who is murdered. His murderers wanted ransom, but he is already dead when the ransom note is sent.*
2. Why does Leanora help Mr. Field?  
*Mr. Field has been feeling sick. Leanora's father sends her to help him.*