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Introduction

A General Literature course is the perfect place to start high school literature study. Typically a general literature course includes the study of novels, poetry and short stories; a variety of literature genres, such as historical fiction and science fiction; as well as a solid introduction to literary devices, such as plot elements and figurative writing.

Using excellent literature offered by timeless authors provides a valuable context to explore what makes great writing... well ...great. Gaining an overall understanding of literature at the high school level will build your student's knowledge and provide that necessary foundation for more difficult high school literature courses, as well as the ones that will follow in college. As well, integrating writing, verbal skills, higher level thinking and project organization provides further training for more intense academic studies.

All high school students should complete the Train up a Child Publishing *Essays Styles* course, or a comparable high school composition course, as a prerequisite for or along with General Literature. If a student attempts this course without previous essay writing instruction, he may find the essay assignments overly challenging. Particularly because General Literature is designed as a ninth grade course, we suggest your ninth grader take both General Literature and Essay Styles in the 9th grade year. This is also possible in the 8th grade year provided your student is ready for high school level work.

This curriculum was designed to reveal and explore the unique qualities of literature. The books were carefully chosen bearing in mind such components as literary elements, writing styles, quality of writing, story content and character value.

Our goals for the students who utilize our high school curricula include:

- A greater love for reading
- The capacity to identify valuable literature
- Enhanced knowledge of literary elements and the written word
- Increased skills related to researching, organizing, writing and editing

- Improved oral narration abilities
- Overall confidence in language arts proficiency at the high school level

As with all our curricula, we have included distinctive and helpful components for both the student and the teacher. Some valuable highlights of this particular curriculum include:

- An introduction with information about the writing process and how to fully use the curriculum.
- Assignment units including reading levels, goals and objectives, literature summaries and comprehensive instructions for writing and evaluating each assignment.
- Step-by-step instructions offering a wide variety of activities and writing assignments directly related to the selected literature.
- Evaluation directions, rubric usage and recommendations for the teacher.
- The opportunity to utilize the course for Honors credit.
- A glossary of terms.
- Appendices containing helpful tools such as:
 - a Student Writing/Editing Checklist
 - Outline Examples
 - Notes on Conflict as a Literary Device
 - Various Graphic Organizers to better understand plot elements, major and minor characters, figurative language, and conflicts and resolutions in fiction
 - Plot Map
 - Vocabulary words listed per novel along with study and evaluation suggestions
 - Grading rubrics predesigned for specific assignments and instructions on how to calculate rubric grades
 - Various answer keys, answers to comprehension questions, special suggestions for grading initial drafts and other “teacher tips.”
 - Instructions for grading papers using Microsoft Word’s editing tools

As well as lessons and reading assignments, we have included literature summaries and evaluation guidelines designed to assist teachers with content and grading without adding the burden of you having to read each book thoroughly. However, you may certainly desire to go even deeper into the content and meaning of the literature by reading it in full. If you should choose to further explore the materials using the Internet, we warn you against assuming that web material is accurate. With

literature in particular, we have found distortions in interpretation with little or no basis in the actual writing. For example, with William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, two of the main male characters are close friends. Despite the fact that Shakespeare has both of these men in love with women, some analysts want students to evaluate whether the two men could have been homosexuals. In examining the material, we've found little evidence of that situation, but there are quite a few websites on the Internet that imply such a relationship and suggest that students examine that possibility.

The selections for this course are as follows and the editions we used of each may be ordered at trainupachildpub.com on the *Books!* page for General Literature:

- *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* by Ernest Gaines (fictionalized autobiography)
- *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok (historical fiction)
- *A Morbid Taste in Bones* by Ellis Peters (historical fiction novel)
- "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," by Mark Twain (short story)
- "The Three Questions," by Leo Tolstoy (short story)
- *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells (science fiction novel)
- *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien (fantasy novel)
- "The People Upstairs," by Ogden Nash and "Caged Bird," by Maya Angelou (poetry)
- *The Scarlet Pimpernel* by Baroness Orczy (historical fiction novel)

Teacher's Notes

Group Activities

You may want to consider working on this curriculum with a small group of other high school families. It is ideal for weekly discussion groups and group projects. Having other students and parents with whom you and your student can discuss and share the assignments may enhance the overall course experience. As well, certain assignments can be completed by individuals or in groups.

Choosing Assignments

One decision that you will need to make is how many and which assignments you'll want your student to complete. Although you may work through the assignments as written, especially with those books with multiple assignments, you may want to limit your choice somewhat. You may also adapt an assignment to better meet the needs of your student. For example, you might want to make an assignment shorter, or you could have your student provide regular oral narrations over her reading rather than having her answer discussion or comprehension questions.

In general, you might use these guidelines in choosing assignments: for a college prep course, the student should complete approximately 8-10 assignments for the year, which would average into 1-2 of the regular assignments for each book selection. Every book should have at least one meatier assignment rather than just the quicker, oral assignments. Also consider quality over quantity. Particularly with challenging writing assignments and essays, allowing the student more time to create a better end result often makes more sense than having the student complete several different shorter assignments.

Honors Credit

As you examine this course, you will note that certain assignments are suggested for Honors credit. Before beginning, you will want to decide whether to work through the Honors course load or the College Prep course load. An Honors curriculum is more challenging and time consuming, typically requiring higher level thinking skills and more effort. However, it is an asset to any student's transcript when seeking college admission and scholarships, particularly if you happen to be homeschooling in a state with a weighted grade point average. For Honors credit, the student will need to complete the previously mentioned number of assignments plus at least four of the Honors assignments for the entire year. (Perhaps one per quarter would work best.) This means that the student will not need to complete an Honors assignment for every book selection. Obviously, if the teacher feels that the student should complete more than recommended, that is entirely up to the discretion of the teacher. Another option for Honors is that the student can complete a research paper for the year, in addition to the 8-10 normal assignments. There is any number of topics presented within the curricula that would support a research paper.

Concerning Writing

As there are many writing assignments associated with this curriculum, we've included the following information to assist you and your student as needed.

The Process of Writing

Understanding the process of writing is essential for completing the writing assignments in this course. With most essay writing and many paragraph writing assignments students will be required to minimally do the following:

- Take sufficient notes to complete the writing assignment
- Write a thesis statement
- Create an outline
- Use the outline to write an essay 4-8 paragraphs in length
- Use the checklist in Appendix A to self-edit writing
- Write multiple drafts that improve with each effort
- Complete a final draft that demonstrates knowledge of the essay style, content and writing skills.

It is imperative that students complete every step of the writing process. Even if a student is talented enough to write an essay without an outline (and not many demonstrate such ability), it is essential to develop this skill for more challenging work in the future. Initially, the teacher should evaluate each step of the process to make sure that the student is completing it thoroughly and correctly.

The process of writing is covered in more detail in the Train up a Child Publishing *Teacher's Manual* for sixth grade through high school and in our *Essay Styles* high school course, available on our website.

Essay Presentation

It is assumed that by this point, students are able to use the computer and type essays rather than write them. Hand writing multiple drafts of an essay is time consuming and frustrating. As students save their work, require them to number and save each draft.

We recommend that the following computer formatting style be implemented for consistency and general practice of all written assignments:

1. Fonts should be 12 point and readable rather than decorative. Recommended fonts include Times New Roman, Arial, or Tahoma.
2. Titles for essays should be in a 14 point font and bolded. The titles are typically centered on the first page of the essay with the student's name and the date of the assignment in 12 point, not bolded, below the title.
3. Paragraphs should be indented and double spaced.
4. Titles (book, magazine, etc.) should be bolded or italicized, but not both, rather than underlined. Quotes should contain quotation marks or be italicized, but not both.
5. Spelling and grammar checks are optional and their usage should be determined by the teacher. By high school, we suggest that students use spell check and grammar check on their computers because in college and as adults, they will most likely do so.

Understanding the Units

Each of the General Literature units is similarly designed but is not necessarily in chronological order based on the time periods of the writing or the story settings. We chose this order to best execute assignments and related skills rather than simply putting the materials in order by publication date or time period setting. The assignments may be chosen by the teacher and student, but note the abbreviations listed before each numbered assignment to determine when an assignment is best completed. The abbreviation key is: **PR** – Prior to Reading, **AR** – As you Read and **FR** – Following Reading.

Pay particular attention to who is to read each section, as some sections are written to the teacher, some are to be read by both the teacher and the student, and some are written directly to the student. For clarity, the sections written directly to the student will be indicated throughout the curriculum by a light bulb  at the beginning of the section.

Particularly in the evaluation sections, directions are often repeated, but they may vary by a few significant words and therefore, should still be read carefully. In fact, we suggest that teachers adequately prepare to teach each unit by first reading it through several times.

The unit sections are as follows:

- *Reading Level* – this curriculum uses books with a variety of reading levels and we noted the levels as we perceived them. Included in parentheses are the reasons for our noted level indication. It shouldn't be assumed that a short story is naturally easier than a long book. If you find that a book is too challenging for your student, there are several ways to overcome this issue:
 - Give him more time to read the material so he can read less in each sitting.
 - Let him listen to an audio version of the book.
 - Read the book aloud with him. When doing so, plan extra time because reading aloud takes longer than reading silently. Discuss the book in small segments with your student as he reads to insure comprehension.
- *Timeframe for Completion* – this is an estimate for the average student. Your student may need more or less time with either the reading or the written assignments, which is fine as long as the work is properly completed. Honors students should be given additional time to complete their extra assignments, as needed. This is an excellent opportunity for high school students to learn to set and meet deadlines. You may want to have consequences for late deadlines to reinforce this vital life skill.
- *Objectives* – While *written to the teacher*, these two types of goals should be read and understood by the student, as well. They provide direction for what the student should accomplish with this unit and also focus on what will be evaluated in the end.
-  *Literature Summary* – *Directed to both the student and the teacher*, this overview provides an introduction to and preview of the written work.
-  *Assignments* – *Written for the student* to follow, they provide detailed instructions on how to complete the various literature assignments and activities. The order of most of the assignments is not relevant and the teacher, along with student, may select the most desired or appropriate assignments. If there are rubrics connected to the evaluation of the assignment, it will benefit the student to read through the rubric before starting and to check it again before completing the assignment. This way he has a clearer picture of what is expected of him and doesn't forget an aspect of the assignment.

Special Features

- *Graphic Study Guide* – There are several graphic organizers that when completed, could form the basis for an Honors Assignment. (See note about the Graphic Study Guide in the *A Morbid Taste for Bones* unit for more information.) This assignment is more easily completed as the student reads. Having the student spend time each day working on the study guide will ease the challenges that can occur with longer assignments. If using this assignment with a class, the teacher might consider working on the study guide in pairs or groups during class and discussing the work in the classroom setting. Another option would be to assign portions of the study guide to different students who then share the information with the other students.
- *Bolded words* – The bolded words found throughout the units are defined in the glossary section at the back of the curriculum.
- *Appendices* – Throughout the curriculum there are references to the Appendices as previously listed. It is important to review this section before you begin teaching to have an overview of the tools and helpful notes available to you and your student.

Evaluation Methods

There is more than one way to grade assignments. While we make specific grading suggestions in Appendix H, Teacher’s Evaluation Tips, feel free to use the evaluation method with which you’re most comfortable. Some of the evaluation methods referred to in this curriculum include:

- *Pass/fail* – this evaluation type is most often used with smaller projects in which the student completes the assignment competently or not. It shouldn’t be used too often, but works well when the assignment grade isn’t vital, but you still want the student to have the assignment experience.
- *Oral presentations* – almost any of the assignments can be changed to or include an oral presentation component. A percentage grading key may be found in the evaluation section, but typically looks like this on a 100 point scale:
 - Preparedness of material to be presented. 25%

- Presentation of material including eye contact, smooth speech patterns and organized speaking. 25%
- Clear articulation. 15%
- Topic is well represented by content of material. 35%
- *Essay and longer writing assignments* - Like the oral presentation grading, these assignments may be graded on a 100 point scale as in the following example for a Persuasive essay:
 - Essay style instructions maintained 25%
 - General essay rules (introduction, thesis statement, paragraph transition, well-formed paragraphs, conclusion) 20%
 - Grammar, punctuation, and spelling 15%
 - Clarity of written communication 15%
 - Deadlines maintained and all components included (thesis statement, outline, notes, drafts and final essay) 15%
 - Presentation (typed, titled, etc.) 10%
- *Rubric grading* – For some assignments, it is advisable to use a rubric. (Use the rubric *or* the percentages if both are listed for that assignment.) **Prior to the assignment, go over the rubric with your student so that he has a clear picture of what you’re expecting of him.** Rubrics are easy to use and understand. You can adapt or use the following predesigned rubrics that we’ve included in Appendix E.

There are two keys to success for purposeful evaluation. First, you need to insure that your student has a clear understanding of what will be evaluated and how you will be evaluating specific assignments. Second, you need to be consistent in how you grade your student’s work and return it graded in a timely manner.

Final Note

General Literature was specifically designed as a gentle introduction to high school level literature study, and therefore most successful with 9th grade students or advanced 8th grade students who are ready for high school level work. For younger students, you may find the content and readability a challenge. It’s better to take longer to read or begin reading earlier (maybe the summer prior to the school year) than to rush through the material. If you have any questions about how to use this curriculum, please contact us at infodesk@trainupachildpub.com and we will do our best to get back to you within one business day. We are here to help you succeed!

The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman

by Ernest Gaines

Setting Time Period: Civil War period through the Civil Rights Movement (roughly 1860-1960)

Reading Level: Challenging

Time Frame for Completion: 4-6 weeks

Objectives

Literary:

1. Recognize how the author’s background influenced his story.
2. Understand and identify examples of the literary devices **irony** and **foreshadowing** in drama.

Language/Other Subject Connections:

1. Learn about the historical events that took place during the time period of this novel to gain a deeper understanding of the plot.
2. Discover how important names were to freed slaves and learn the origins of your own name.



Literature Summary: This is the fictionalized “**autobiography**” of an elderly black woman whose life spanned nearly one hundred years, from slavery to the Civil Rights movement in American history. Set in the South, Miss Pittman’s narrative reveals the hardship and tragedy of life as a slave. Eventually she is “freed,” yet still bound by a class system...



Literature Assignments

PR, AR 1. Research the author, Ernest Gaines, and create a bulleted list of what you discover about him. In particular, focus on details that relate to his writing. You should have at least ½ page of typed, bulleted notes. Your teacher may want you to orally narrate what you learned or just discuss it.

AR 2. For each of the vocabulary words listed under this book in Appendix D, note the word, the part of speech and a brief, but clear definition **in your own words**. Do not copy a definition from the dictionary or the Internet. Read the definition and then write in your own words. If you don’t understand the first definition, read others until you do understand. Make sure to look at how the word is used in the book. As you look at the words, note that none are capitalized. If you have

automatic capitalization on, you'll need to pay attention to this and only capitalize words that are proper nouns. There is no period at the end of the example definition, because it isn't a sentence.

Example: 1. facet (noun) – a particular element or feature

PR, AR, FR 3. This novel was written in a time period setting that directly affects the plot of the story. Research the time period of American History from 1860-1960. Create a timeline of major historical events in the United States between 1860-1960. You may design your timeline however you like as long as it is clear and the dates are as specific as possible. To make your timeline more interesting, include relevant graphics. As you read the novel, reflect on the events from your timeline to help you better understand the plot. Make sure to look at the rubric for this assignment in Appendix E to see how you will be evaluated before you begin and as you work on the assignment. Before turning in your assignment, double-check the rubric to make sure you have covered everything.

AR 4. As you read, keep a character T-chart with major characters listed on one side and minor characters listed on the other. For definitions of “major” and “minor” characters, see the Glossary of Literary Terms in Appendix C. Find the T-chart with the graphic organizers in Appendix B.

AR, FR 5. Write 2-3 paragraphs about each of the following topics. If you need to research the topic, do so, but write in your own words and note the URL(s) of where you found your information. Think about how each relates to the novel.

1. **Freedom** – What does freedom mean to you? Be specific.
2. **The Freedman's Bureau** – What was its role in Post-Civil War South? Was it effective or not?
3. **Reps and Dems** - Research the history of Republican and Democratic politics. How have the parties changed, and remained the same?
4. **KKK** – Research to discover how this group came about and what it represented. Is it still around today?
5. **Home** – What does home mean to you? How does home relate to the novel?

AR, FR 6. Names were very important to freed slaves. Today, many black families still carry the name that their ancestor slaves created. Find out what you can about your name, either first or last. Were you named after someone in particular? Why did your parents choose your name? Research what your name means historically and Biblically. Are there any famous people who have the same name (first, middle, last or any combination thereof) as you? Present all of your answers in bulleted notes about what you discover about your name and be prepared to discuss what you find out.

AR 7. Authors use certain tools, or **literary devices**, to make their stories more interesting and believable. With the two devices noted below, find 2-3 examples of each in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. For each example, note specific quotes from the book that demonstrate the device and 1-2 complete sentences explaining why your example represents the device. For definitions of these literary terms, see Appendix C.

1. **Foreshadowing**
2. **Irony**

We hope you've enjoyed this sample of General Literature, our brand new high school literature course, designed especially for 9th grade!

