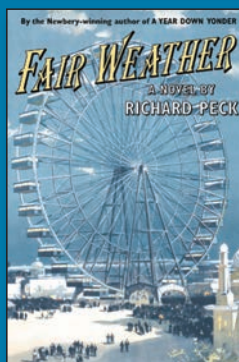
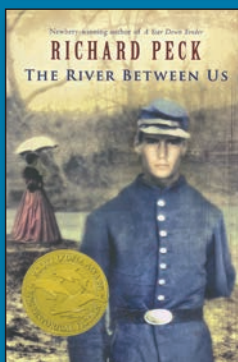
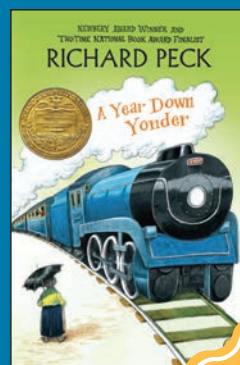
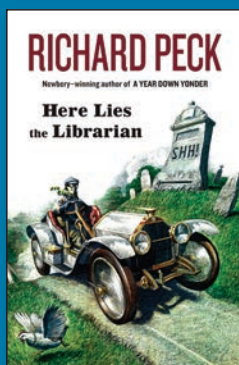
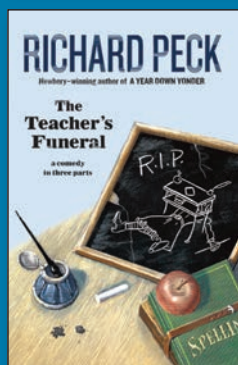
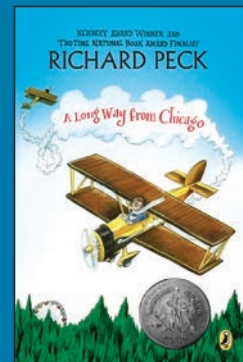
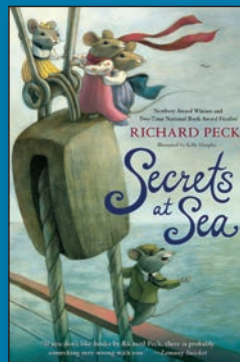
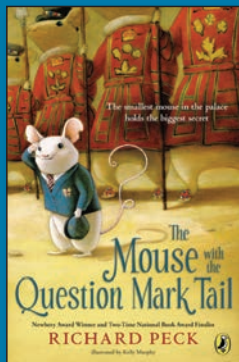


# AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO RICHARD PECK

## NO-PREP LESSON PLANS AND REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS FOR THE CLASSROOM



**NEWBERY  
MEDAL WINNER**  
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MEDAL WINNER**  
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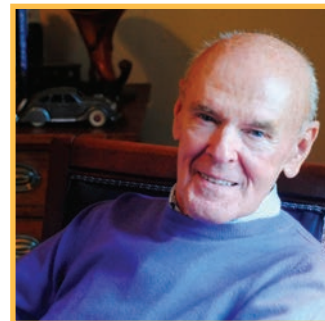
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No-Prep  
Lesson Plans

Reproducible  
worksheets

## LET'S CELEBRATE... RICHARD PECK!



Here's the amazing thing about Richard Peck's books: People love them as much today as they did two years, ten years, twenty-five years ago. If you are first finding your way to his books now, then lucky you. Do you begin with his classic, *The River Between Us* published ten years ago, or with *The Best Man*, his newest classic-to-be? Happily, it doesn't really matter. Every title is a joy to read and equally worthwhile for your purposes as a teacher or librarian. Pick the one that best suits your class interests for the moment. Whether that is realistic or fantastical, contemporary or historical, he has you covered.

Richard Peck is an award-winning writer of middle grade and young adult novels. He has been honored with a Newbery Medal for his novel *A Year Down Yonder*, as well as the Margaret A. Edwards Award for his cumulative contribution to young adult literature, the National Council of Teachers of English/ALAN Award, and the 1991 Medallion from the University of Southern Mississippi. He is also the first children's writer to win a National Humanities Medal. His passion for encouraging children to read, as well as educating parents about the importance of reading to children before they can read independently, is inspiring and a driving force for many educators. Each and every one of his novels is multi-faceted and versatile.

While writing this guide, we spoke with educators and librarians across the country about their experience teaching and reading Richard Peck's books with their students. Educators love these novels for the rich characters, thought-provoking themes, historical context, and incredible writing. This guide focuses on exploring all of the above with your students. It is full of extension activities, supplemental texts, no-prep lesson plans, and reproducible worksheets, all aligned to the Common Core State Standards. It is a celebration of a beloved author and a kickoff point for what we hope will be a really fun and engaging literary experience for your students.

Don't forget to tell us how you use these lessons with your students. Or, let us know about your own!

Tag us #readingrichardpeck @penguinclassroom.

Read on!

*Penguin Young Readers School and Library Marketing*

photo credit: Sonya Sones



# .....TEACHERS ♥ RICHARD PECK.....

"From my first year as a teacher librarian in 1973 until now I have never been disappointed when reading a book written by Richard Peck. Regardless of the genre, realistic fiction, mystery, ghost story, historical fiction, science fiction or fantasy, his skill at making a connection with readers is unparalleled especially in his vivid characterizations. He allows us to see life through a variety of lenses. Richard Peck *understands his audience*, weaving profound life truths into his narratives. We are *always entertained* (particularly with his insightful humor) but leave the reading of his books wiser and more keenly aware of how we could or should choose our life paths."

- Margie Myers-Culver, Certified Teacher Librarian, MI and MO

"Richard Peck is **A FAVORITE OF MINE!** His books are ones that I read and re-read, and love to share with my students! I find it impossible to not get caught up in his story lines, and often forget these stories are fiction. Peck's characters come to life through his writing, and are such complex, interesting people. He is a **MASTER AT WRITING** thought-provoking books for children."

- Kelly Hoover, 2nd Grade Teacher and Affiliate Instructor  
in M.Ed. Reading Program at St Regis University, CO

"Character development is a hallmark of Richard Peck's style. *Fair Weather* helped launch my third grade Chicago History investigation. Because the students felt so connected to the characters, they were invested in learning all they could about the World's Fair."

- Emily Broder, G&T Resource Teacher  
at Pine Ridge Elementary, CO

"As an elementary school librarian and as a parent, Richard Peck's novels have integrated **HONESTY, HISTORY** and **HUMOR**. His narrators ring true, respecting that children's humor and intelligence are far more savvy than many adults credit. My two daughters **ROARED WITH LAUGHTER** through long car rides listening to *A Long Way to Chicago* and *A Year Down Yonder*. His titles are some of my 'go to' books to share with our fourth and fifth grade students who don't know what to read next."

- Wendy Gilson, Media Specialist at Normandy Park School, NJ

"Richard Peck has been an **AUTHOR I CAN DEPEND ON** as a classroom teacher. He brings to his readers characters with **strong voice and emotion**, all told through wonderfully written, and highly engaging, historical fiction. Mr. Peck's books influence my readers to seek out more about the historical time periods and locations of his novels through other fiction and nonfiction texts. I am so appreciative of the work and **dedication to readers** that Richard Peck has demonstrated. I will always highly recommend any novel by him, and my classroom library will always be stocked with Richard Peck novels."

- Scott Filner, 4th Grade Teacher  
at Bowman Woods Elementary, IN

"Richard Peck is the **consummate storyteller**. Whether reading his books or listening to him speak, you are entranced by the characters he creates. You laugh with them, you worry for them, you hope for them. When the story is finished, you are always left wishing you had more time with them and looking forward to the next Richard Peck book."

- Donna Kouri, Library Media Center Director at Longwood Elementary, IL



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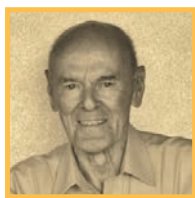


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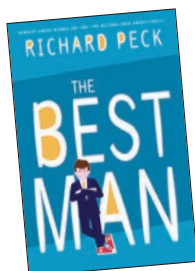


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# THE RICHARD PECK

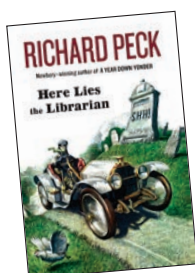
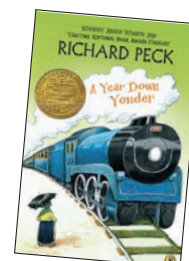


***The Best Man:*** Archer Magill has spent elementary school with one eye out in search of grown-up role models. Three of the best are his grandpa, the great architect; his dad, the great car customizer; and his uncle Paul, who is just plain great. These are the three he wants to be. Along the way he finds a fourth—Mr. McLeod, a teacher. But now here comes middle school and change. Archer doesn't see too far ahead, so every day or so a startling revelation breaks over him. Then a really big one when he's the best man at the wedding of two of his role models. This is a story of small-town life, family, and everyday heroes.

***A Long Way from Chicago:*** Joey and his sister Mary Alice have spent their summers with the irreplaceable Grandma Dowdel. Throughout the years, they have had innumerable zany experiences and created unique memories. Grandma has taught them about taking a stand and doing what is right sometimes using questionable methods.



***A Year Down Yonder:*** Mary Alice is used to spending the summer with Grandma Dowdel, but this time she will be with her for the entire year—without her big brother. Drama and surprises ensue. In the end, Mary Alice realizes what a special place this house is and finds comfort in knowing that she can always go back—because Grandma doesn't lock her doors!



***Here Lies the Librarian:*** Cars, roads, garages, and a run-down library can really bring a small town together. Peewee and Jack are surviving the changes that are coming to their rural Midwest town, but outsiders shake things up when they bring their fancy automobiles and culture to a community that has been living in the past.

***The Teacher's Funeral:*** The death of a not-so-beloved teacher changes the course of the school year for one small town. When a group of kids gets a different teacher, they are exposed to many new things. Much to their surprise, they learn plenty about themselves and each other.

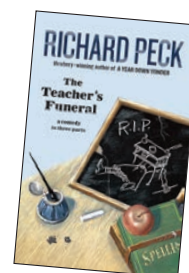


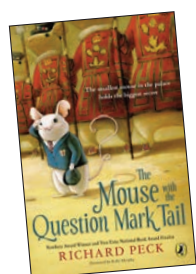
photo credit: Sonya Sones



# CLASSROOM COLLECTION

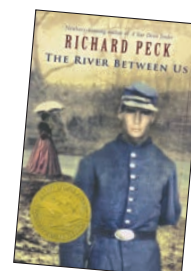


***Secrets at Sea:*** Meet a small mouse family on a big sea adventure. Leaving their comfortable, safe home behind to follow their human family, they step into a world of danger, unfamiliarity, and unraveling secrets. On their journey, will they play it safe or grab onto the ship's wheel, take some risks, and sail their way to a new, unpredictable life?



***The Mouse with the Question Mark Tail:*** In this story of a lovable orphan on an amazing quest, the smallest mouse in London is such a mystery that he doesn't know his parents or even his name. His Aunt Marigold sends him off to be educated at the Royal Mews Mouse Academy, but soon he's running for his life, looking high and low through Buckingham Palace to find out who he is and who he might become.

***The River Between Us:*** Life during the Civil War was filled with disagreement, uncertainty, and challenging relationships. The Pruitt family experiences this first hand when they are joined by two southerners in their northern home. Throughout this story the reader is transported to a different time and place and learns about how Americans navigated this challenging time.



***Fair Weather:*** When the opportunity of a lifetime comes your way, you take it! That was Mama's thinking when she put her children on a train to Chicago to see the World's Columbian Exposition. A whole new world awaits Rosie, Lottie, Buster, and Granddad as they tour the sites of the giant fairgrounds. Their journey shows them things they didn't know existed, opportunities that the world has to offer, and pathways to be discovered. How will they balance the excitement of the new with the nostalgia for the past?

## OTHER WORKS BY RICHARD PECK:

*Amanda/Miranda*  
*Are You in the House Alone?*  
*The Dreadful Future of Blossom Culp*  
*Dreamland Lake*  
*Father Figure*

*The Ghost Belonged to Me*  
*Ghosts I Have Been*  
*The Great Interactive Dream Machine*  
*Lost in Cyberspace*  
*On the Wings of Heroes*

*Past Perfect, Present Tense*  
*A Season of Gifts*  
*Strays Like Us*  
*Three Quarters Dead*



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# *The Best Man*

## Pre-Reading Lesson on Analyzing Writing & Other Techniques



### Rationale:

- “We thought he was weird. He thought we were weird. It was great. It was what multiculturalism ought to be” (*The Best Man*, 150). In all of Peck’s novels, being loved for one’s unique self and being a part of something bigger than oneself are central ideas. *The Best Man* is no different. This lesson gives students the opportunity to analyze how different mediums and artists explore and develop these concepts.

### Essential Questions:

- How do different artists express the same idea? What techniques do they use to do this?

### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9](#)
  - Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1](#)
  - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### Materials:

- The poem “Map” by J. Patrick Lewis, a projection of the painting *Map* by Jasper Johns, projection device, laptop or computer or iPad, internet connection

### Activity:

- Free write on this topic: What do poets and painters have in common? How are they different?
- Students share their thoughts aloud.
- Explain that a central idea in many of Richard Peck’s writing pieces, including *The Best Man*, is a celebration of people’s unique qualities and bringing those unique qualities to a larger group (i.e., a family, a circle of friends, a community) to enhance or add to that group in some positive way.
- Ask: What unique qualities do you have? What groups do you enhance in your life?
- Students share their thoughts aloud.
  - Explain that students will now take a look at how Peck and two other artists each express this same idea of celebrating people’s uniqueness and how these unique qualities often lead to something positive.
- Project Johns’s painting *Map* and Lewis’s poem *Map* onto the board.
- Divide the class into small groups.
- First, groups discuss:



- The painting: How does Johns use his paint to show that people are unique and enhance America? What colors, brush techniques, etc., does he use to get his message across? Groups take notes.
- Second, groups discuss:
  - The poem: How does Lewis use words to show that people are unique and enhance America? What adjectives, imagery, and other techniques does he use to get his message across? Groups take notes.
- Teacher walks around the room checking in with groups and answering any questions.

### Wrap Up / Assessment:

- Come back together as a whole class. Groups share some of their observations using evidence from their discussions and notes to defend their claims. Groups may see different things in the painting and poem—and that is wonderful—as long as they can use evidence to back up their claims.
- Ask: Which medium, the painting or the poem, do you think is most effective in getting across its message? Why?

### Homework:

- Students find another medium (i.e., song, article, video of dance, sculpture) that portrays this same message of people's uniqueness benefiting a group. Write one paragraph explaining how this artist gets his/her message across. What techniques does he/she use in his/her art to express this message? Is it effective? Why or why not?

## *The Best Man*

### Lesson on Adapting to Challenges & Changes

#### Rationale:

- Archer experiences a series of significant events throughout first through sixth grade. Each event is important and plays a part in molding him as a young man. He admits, "I can't turn on a dime. But I'll get there" (231). With each event, an influential person in his life supports him by talking to him, standing up for him, listening to him, and being there for him while he copes with change. This lesson explores our need to be adaptable as our circumstances change and as we grow up. When we are faced with challenges, our support system can help us cope.

#### Essential Questions:

- How do we learn from and adapt to the changes in our lives? How can others support us in our discoveries?

#### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1](#)
  - Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.



### Materials:

- Class set of copies of *The Best Man* worksheet, class set of *The Best Man*

### Activity:

- Ask: How do you feel when you are asked to learn something new? How do you feel when you are faced with challenges? How do you react? On whom do you lean? Discuss as a whole class.
- Distribute *The Best Man* worksheet (next page).
- Divide students into small groups to:
  - Determine the most important challenges and changes that Archer experiences and undergoes.
  - Match the person that helps Archer at that time.
  - List quotations from the characters that affected Archer in some way.
- Use the three-column organizer to guide students as they gather information.

### Wrap Up / Assessment:

- Come back together as a whole class and have each group share one example from their worksheet, examining how Archer's character deals with challenges and changes in his life and how other characters affect him during these periods.
- Discuss: How might you respond to the events, struggles and changes that Archer faces? Have you ever encountered similar experiences? Who are the people in your lives that can or have helped you with the changes that everyone must face when they're growing up?

### Homework:

- Have students write a paragraph about a specific time when a family member or friend influenced a decision that they made. You can supply students with the opening sentence to help them get started: *[Name of person] influenced a decision that I made.* They should write a well-developed paragraph with details about this topic and evidence of how this family member or friend affected their decision.

#### Teacher notes for more lesson plans!

- ✓ Teach the Literary Technique: Foreshadowing
- ✓ Explore the Theme: Growing Up
- ✓ Research & Analyze Current Events: Legalties of Same Sex Marriage - Supreme Court's Decision

- ✓ Read the Article: "10 things you might not know about Wrigley Field"  
[http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-06-09/opinion/ct-perspec-0609-things-20130609\\_1\\_wrigley-field-99-year-old-ballpark-soldier-field](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-06-09/opinion/ct-perspec-0609-things-20130609_1_wrigley-field-99-year-old-ballpark-soldier-field)
- ✓ Read the Article: "Talking to kids about same sex marriage"  
<http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/30/living/feat-same-sex-marriage-talking-to-kids/>



## *The Best Man* - Challenges & Changes

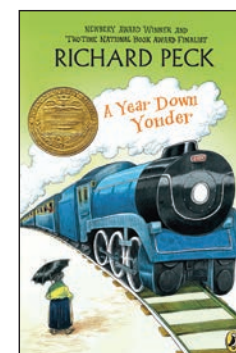
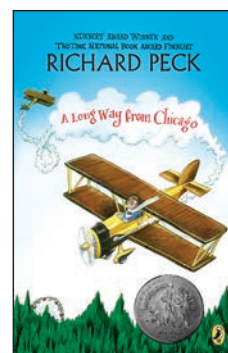
Identify the most important challenges and changes that Archer experiences in the novel. Record a brief description of the event, which specific character(s) helped Archer and how, and the most significant quotations from the situation.

| Important Challenges & Changes                     | Characters Who Helped & How                                  | Quotation and Page Number                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Challenge - Figuring out what a real friend is. | 1. Lynnette - She repeatedly stands up for him and is loyal. | 1. "So that's how Lynette Stanley and I started. She was bossy then. She's bossy now. But she took the rap for me by saying she'd knocked me in the mud. 'You saved my butt,' I still tell her" (14). |
| 2.                                                 | 2.                                                           | 2.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 3.                                                 | 3.                                                           | 3.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 4.                                                 | 4.                                                           | 4.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |



# *A Long Way from Chicago* and *A Year Down Yonder*

## Pre-Reading Lesson on The Great Depression



### Rationale:

- In both *A Long Way from Chicago* and *A Year Down Yonder*, The Great Depression acts almost as its own character—playing a role and serving as the backdrop for Peck’s stories. This lesson explores the real voices behind the hardships and examines the resourcefulness and determination of Americans during this period. During the reading of these two novels, students will later delve into how Grandma and her neighbors find their own strength in the midst of their own struggles.

### Essential Questions:

- How were everyday Americans affected by The Great Depression? How did they prove their resourcefulness? How did the government react to The Great Depression?

### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2](#)
  - Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

### Materials:

- computer projection device, internet connection, laptop or other device that can access YouTube, class set of The Great Depression video worksheet (see page 27), video Stories from The Great Depression

### Activity:

- Create a circle map on the board with the word “depression” inside.
- Ask: What words come to mind when you hear the word “depression”?
- Brainstorm students’ ideas onto the board.
- Tell them that both novels are set during The Great Depression, and that many people focus on the darker parts of the word depression. Today they will watch a film that explores all aspects of The Great Depression including the resilience and resourcefulness of everyday Americans just trying to survive.
- Distribute the worksheet and review with students.
- Direct them to complete the top half of the worksheet by taking notes during the video.
- They will complete the bottom half during their reading of the novels at a later date.
- Watch the 25-minute video.

### Wrap Up / Assessment:

- Discuss students’ notes from the three columns, focusing on the resourcefulness of people during that time because they will witness this again when reading Peck’s novels.
- Ask: What surprised you? What new pieces of information did you learn? How might you have handled the effects of The Great Depression? Are we as resourceful today as people used to be? Why or why not?



### Homework:

- Using your notes, write a one-page monologue from the perspective of a child, a parent, an elderly farmer, or another person who lived during The Great Depression. Be sure to include specific evidence from your notes to help reveal the personal side of the struggle and the resiliency during that time. Be prepared to share with the class.

## *A Long Way from Chicago* and *A Year Down Yonder*

### Lesson on Point of View

### Rationale:

- Both stories follow the adventures of Mary Alice and Joey Dowdel as they spend extended time with their eccentric grandmother, Grandma Dowdel. Behind all of Grandma's schemes and shenanigans there is a purpose; there's always a method to her madness that sometimes her grandchildren don't immediately understand—which is evident through Joey and Mary Alice's narration. This lesson helps students analyze how using first person point of view in one's writing can bias the telling of a story and the information we, as readers, receive.

### Essential Questions:

- How does Peck's use of first person point of view affect the information the reader receives? How can we use first person point of view to reveal how two characters can see the same experience differently—creating bias?

### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3](#)
  - Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1](#)
  - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### Activity:

- Project the following quotation on the board and tell your students: In the prologue of *A Long Way from Chicago*, Joey is the narrator and states this about his summer adventures with Grandma: "But as the time gets past me, I seem to remember more and more . . . Are all my memories true? Every word, and growing truer with the years" (1).
- Ask and discuss: Do you agree or disagree with Joey that "every word" of his memories is true? Why or why not? (Discussion topics that may arise: As people get older, memories fade; he might remember experiences differently than Mary Alice or Grandma, etc.)
- Define *first person point of view* together as a class and write on the board: *When the story is narrated or told by one of the characters and that character uses the pronoun "I."*



- Ask: When the story is told in first person point of view, should we always trust that what this character is telling us is accurate? Why or why not? Connect this discussion back to Joey's quotation about how different characters often see the same experiences differently.
- Brainstorm a list together of interesting experiences and highlights from Joey and Mary Alice's visits with Grandma from both novels (i.e., *A Long Way from Chicago*: Grandma's lie about Shotgun Cheatham, 9; the mouse in the milk, 25; *A Year Down Yonder*: Mildred's boots on a stolen horse, 17; Old Man Nyquist pinned under the bed, 120).
- Tell students that with a partner they will be writing letters as follows:
  - Choose two characters from one of the novels (Joey, Mary Alice and/or Grandma).
  - Choose one experience from the brainstormed list on the board.
  - Write two letters to Joey and Mary Alice's parents back in Chicago in which they describe the particular experience from their two characters' viewpoint, written in first person point of view.

### Wrap Up / Assessment:

- Come together as a whole class. Ask partners to underline one or two sentences from each of their letters that reveal how their characters saw the same event. Several pairs share their sentences aloud.
- Ask the rest of the class after each read aloud: How do the characters' views seem to differ? Why? Should we trust one character and their information more than the other? Why or why not? How does first person point of view affect the telling of the story? Why do you think Peck chose to use this technique in these two novels? How did this activity help you more deeply understand the characters and how they see the world?

### Homework:

- Find an article, social media post, or some other resource that is written in first person point of view. Write one paragraph explaining how first-person narration affects the information you are receiving from the article. Could it be biased? How? Should you trust it? Why or why not?

### Teacher notes for more lesson plans!

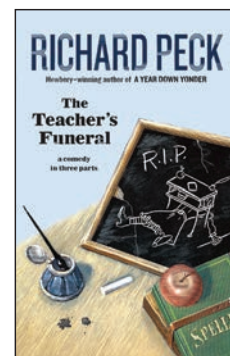
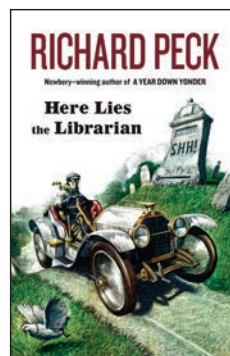
- ✓ Analyze the poem - "The Great Depression"  
<http://poetrypoem.com/cgi-bin/index.pl?poemnumber=7949&sitename=depression&poemoffset=0&displaypoem=t&item=poetry>
- ✓ Share this photo essay - Great Depression  
<http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/depression/photoessay.htm>
- ✓ Read this article - Radio in the 1930's  
<http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/feature/radio-in-the-1930s/>

- ✓ Analyze the poem - "My Worst Enemy and My Best Friend"  
<http://allpoetry.com/poem/3351616--My-worst-Enemy-And-My-Best-Friend-by-Ange-OfInsanity>



# *Here Lies the Librarian* and *The Teacher's Funeral*

## Lesson on Problem Solving and Perseverance



### Rationale:

- In these two novels, big changes are happening and new eras are beginning. There is a whole world out there the characters will soon become a part of. Suddenly, learning and possibility are within the reach of the youth in these old country towns—which often lead to new struggles. This activity will offer your students a car-building STEM challenge (just like Jack and Peewee!) and a taste of what these pioneer engineers experienced: problem solving and perseverance. Let's go for a ride!

### Essential Questions:

- How can we persevere when we are faced with a challenge? How do our problem-solving strategies compare and contrast to those in *Here Lies the Librarian* and *The Teacher's Funeral*?

### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3](#)
  - Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1](#)
  - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.6-8.3](#)
  - Follow precisely a multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks.

### Materials:

- Legos, cardboard, tape, straws, craft sticks, rubber bands, small pieces of wood, round objects for wheels, any recycled materials that may work well for building a car

### Activity:

- (Three to Four Class Periods): These periods may be spread out over the course of the reading of the two novels. They do not need to be done three days in a row. (Great Friday activities or the days before school vacations!)

### Day One:

- Ask: What steps do Jake and Peewee use when building their car? What works for them? What doesn't?
- Building our own cars!
  - Explain that over the next three to four days students will be working in groups to design and build a car that reaches a specific goal.
  - Establish the parameters for success together as a class. For example, the goal may be to have each car be able to roll a certain distance, or to race another car.



- During the car building activity, groups will be taking notice of problems that arise and how they find solutions to those problems—just like Jake and Peewee and other characters in these two novels.
- Discuss with students the engineering design process (below in italics) as a structure for this activity and post it in the classroom so groups may reference it when needed and answer any questions:
  - *Ask: How can you build a car out of household items?*
  - *Imagine: Brainstorm some ideas.*
  - *Plan: Make a diagram of your design and a list of materials you will need.*
  - *Create: Build and test out your idea.*
  - *Improve: What worked? What didn't work? Try again!*
- Provide the following materials: Legos, cardboard, tape, straws, craft sticks, rubber bands, small pieces of wood, round objects for wheels, any recycled materials that may work. Your students may have even more creative ideas and bring some from home!
- Divide students into groups.
- Direct groups to begin the following elements of the engineering design process:
  - Ask, Imagine, and Plan
- Groups continue to Ask, Imagine, and Plan for the remainder of the period.

#### **Wrap Up / Assessment:**

- Direct groups to make a list of what their next steps will be.

#### **Day Two:**

- Direct students to work with their groups to continue with the following steps for the period:
  - Plan and Create: Car Building Day!

#### **Wrap Up / Assessment:**

- Students discuss and list their next steps.

#### **Day Three (and Four, if needed):**

- Students work in their groups to continue with the following steps for the period:
  - Finish the Create process.
  - Hold the competition or the “goal” activity to see if the groups’ cars were successful and reached their goal.
  - Groups discuss what worked and what didn’t work and how they can improve their car based on their discussion. Try to reach their goal again, if applicable.

#### **Wrap Up / Assessment:**

- Day Three (or Four): Now that the class has experienced the engineering design process:
  - What challenges did your groups face during the car building activity?
  - How do those challenges and how you dealt with them compare and contrast with the characters in these two novels and how they dealt with their own struggles? Encourage students to use specific examples from the novels to support their claims.
  - How would your life change without an automobile? What challenges would it cause? Would there be any benefits? Explain.



# *Here Lies the Librarian* and *The Teacher's Funeral*

## Lesson on Setting

### Rationale:

- The youth in these stories are living in a time where change is imminent. Automobile improvements, standards in education, the Second Industrial Revolution, expansion of roads, and the introduction of the Library Science degree are just a few of the areas that are covered in these companion novels. This activity will help students better understand the depth of mastery behind Peck's settings and give them some insight into settings from a different time period. A deeper understanding of the time and place of a story will enhance the reader's experience.

### Essential Questions:

- How were Americans in Indiana affected by the developments that took place at the turn of the century? How were people impacted in small towns? How does an author help readers "see" this when they are reading?

### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1](#)
  - Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2](#)
  - Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

### Materials:

- Printouts of 5 or 6 photographs from turn-of-the-century Indiana hanging around the room with one piece of poster paper under each: <http://images.indianahistory.org/cdm/search/collection/oran>, <http://images.indianahistory.org/cdm/search/collection/chislett>, class set of *Here Lies the Librarian* and *The Teacher's Funeral*, 5 or 6 large pieces of poster paper

### Activity:

- Ask: When you read a book without pictures, how does the author help you imagine her/his characters and the setting?
- Project or give each student the following quotations from Peck's novels that illustrate the time period or help with the visualization of the rural Midwest:
  - "The rest of that particular August of 1914 seemed to melt and run off in every direction. Turning leaves were everywhere you looked, and sumac was red. Up behind us black-eyed Susans took over from the hollyhocks. They were laying slab as near as Beulahland cemetery. The gangs of laborers were mostly farmers working out their taxes by running the road graders and pouring concrete. You could hear machinery from here, running right up till dark" (*Here Lies the Librarian*, 127).
  - "There was a merry-go-round for the kids, powered by a mule on a treadmill. Farm implements littered the landscape, and the Massey-Ferguson people distributed complimentary cardboard fans. The Pigeon Creek log cabin of the Lincoln family was re-created entirely out of corncobs. On a block of ice in the Dairy & Poultry tent was a bust



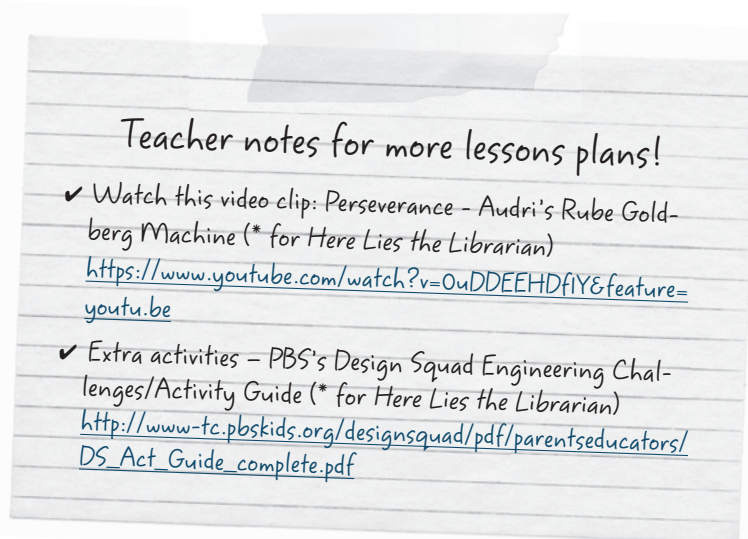
- of President Wilson carved from butter. It was that kind of setup, hayseed heaven" (*Here Lies the Librarian*, 108).
- "You can hear farther in the dark. Now the night life of the river came forth to feed on one another. Above us we heard the crunch of bugs in beaks. Fish flopped. A noisy frog gave itself away and screamed as something bigger swallowed it" (*The Teacher's Funeral*, 17).
  - "I followed Tansy into the schoolroom, which smelled worse. It wasn't a big room, a little longer than it was wide. A row of windows on either side were set too high to see out of, so we couldn't be distracted by the world. The desks were modern with inkwells, though carved up. Down front was the recitation bench, backless" (*The Teacher's Funeral*, 66).
  - Tell your students they will now become Peck's illustrators!
  - Direct students to choose one or two of the quotations and sketch the information/scene they can extract from Peck's details. What does his setting look like?
  - Ask several students to share their sketches, explaining what Peck's words revealed about his setting.
  - Tell students they will now take part in a Gallery Walk and divide the class into small groups.
  - Point out the photographs and the poster paper hanging around the room.
  - Direct groups to:
    - Bring your pencils/pens with you.
    - Look at the photographs very closely.
    - Write details on the poster paper that you extract from the photographs about what life might have been like in rural Indiana in the early 1900s (i.e., What type of work did they do? Where and how did they live? Did life seem easy? Difficult? How do you know? How did they get around? Did they go to school?).
  - After four minutes, teacher tells groups to rotate to the next photograph and repeat.

### Wrap Up / Assessment:

- Come back together as a whole class.
- Ask: What details in the photographs reveal information about the setting of rural Indiana in the early 1900s? (Allow students to choose which photographs they'd like to discuss.)
- Ask: What techniques did Peck and the photographers use to inform us about Indiana at the turn of the century? Which was more effective? Why?

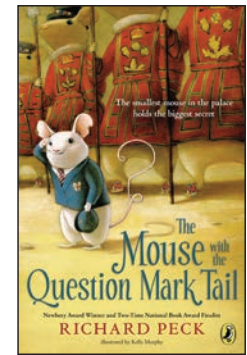
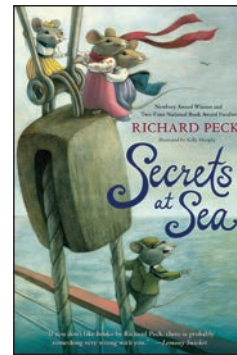
### Homework:

- Ask students to choose a quotation from any source (i.e., newspaper, poem, favorite novel, song lyric). Students highlight the descriptive words that reveal the setting. Illustrate it based solely on the information and details gathered from the source. Be ready to discuss *how* the artist got you to "see" his/her setting.



# *Secrets at Sea* and *The Mouse with the Question Mark Tail*

## Lesson on Characterization



### Rationale:

- Characters, characters, characters! Teachers and librarians across the country can't get enough of Peck's well-developed, zany, original characters. These two whimsical tales follow the adventures of tiny creatures that make a big impact! This lesson celebrates Peck's multi-faceted and multi-layered mice while also exploring *how* authors use characterization in their writing.

### Essential Questions:

- How does Peck use characterization in his writing? How can we use images and symbolism to portray a character and his/her characteristics?

### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1](#)
  - Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

### Materials:

- 8-10 pieces of poster paper, markers/crayons, class set of *Secrets at Sea* and *The Mouse with the Question Mark Tail*

### Activity:

- Ask: What are some words you would use to describe your personality?
- Students share aloud. Teacher shares aloud.
- Ask: How do others know what kind of personality you have (i.e., by watching me, by listening to what I say, by what I do, etc.)?
- Ask: How does an author create a character and reveal his/her personality to us?
- Brainstorm together.
- Define together as a class and project or write on the board: *Characterization: When a writer creates and develops a character through his/her writing by describing a) the character's physical traits, b) the character's words and thoughts, c) the character's actions and reactions, and d) the words and thoughts of others about the character.*
- Tell students they will be working in small groups to better understand how Peck created and developed their favorite character from one of these two novels. In groups on your poster paper:
  - Write your chosen character's name and the novel's title at the top of the paper.
  - Draw a big outline of your character's head. Do not add eyes, mouth, etc.
  - Discuss examples from the novel where Peck writes about your character's physical



- attributes, words, thoughts, etc. (See characterization definition.)
- Find evidence/lines of these examples from the novel and write them inside the head where you think it makes the most sense (i.e., “With one eye on the sky, I rest under a croquet hoop to catch my breath and rest my bulging bag” [Helena, *Secrets at Sea*, 47]. Write on the forehead to show Helena is always very careful and thoughtful about safety).
- Add artwork and images that represent your character’s traits. Be creative! (i.e., “She leaned so near me I felt the breeze off her breath. We were suddenly back in the cheese course of her supper” [the smallest mouse in the Mews who doesn’t have a name, *The Mouse with the Question Mark Tail*, 141]. Draw a smiley face in the mouth area with stinky cheese to show/symbolize that this mouse is very witty, has a sense of humor, and is a bit fresh!)
- Groups begin work.

### Wrap Up / Assessment:

- Each group presents one example from their poster explaining how Peck created their character’s personality through these lines/images. If time allows, groups can share more of their examples.
- Ask: Think of your favorite characters from books. Why do you love them? Why do authors sometimes show their characters’ flaws (i.e., we feel connected because they are more relatable)?

## ..... PRAISE FOR RICHARD PECK .....



*“Nobody messes with kids the way Richard Peck does. They think they have him all figured out: he’s cool; he’s the iconoclast who rips on every form of authority, especially that dreary institution, school. And so he does. Few do better. But then he whips the rug out from under their feet by conjuring up teachers fit to melt boys’ hearts and kick-start girls’ dreams.”*

★ *Washington Post* ★

*“Peck gently places historical and economic background information within rollicking tall tales. Young readers will be effortlessly educated even as they are entertained.”*

—*New York Times*

*“Peck not only understands the fragile emotions of adolescents, he also knows what kind of characters will pique their interest.”*

—*Publishers Weekly*

*“Peck’s conversational style has a true storyteller’s wit, humor, and rhythm.”*

—*School Library Journal*

*“Through sharp wit and strong storytelling, Richard Peck’s novels encourage readers to carefully examine the world around them as well as to seek possibilities beyond immediate view.”*

—*Booklist*



# ***Secrets at Sea* and *The Mouse with the Question Mark Tail***

## Lesson on Theme

### **Rationale:**

- Both stories follow the adventures of mice that are in search of their destiny. The characters survive many challenging situations and learn more about themselves at each turn. Both books include references to the critical questions and themes: Who am I? What is my journey? What does my future hold? This activity will guide students in analyzing how Peck's characters deal with the twists and turns of their journeys. It will also give students the opportunity to compare and contrast Peck's characters' journeys with others in a different medium.

### **Essential Questions:**

- How does a writer convey a theme through her/his writing? How do Peck's characters handle the struggles along their path?

### **Materials:**

- projection device, copy of Li Po's poem "[Hard is the Journey](#)"

### **CCSS:**

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4](#)
  - Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4](#)
  - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2](#)
  - Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

### **Activity:**

- Direct students to free write on this prompt: Who am I? What is my journey?
- Teacher free writes with students.
- Ask if anyone would like to share. Teacher shares his/her own free write.
- Ask: Why do characters' journeys for self-identity and/or other things create such interesting stories (i.e., when we see how characters deal with their struggles along the way, we can relate and compare with our own experiences)?
- Ask: Why is this such a recurring theme in literature? What other books have you read that highlight this theme?
- Define *theme* together and write on the board: *the statement about life the author is trying to get across to his or her readers.*



- Ask: In these two novels, what examples did we read about that highlight this theme of struggling through one's journey? How do the characters react to obstacles put in their way?
- Ask: How does Peck convey this theme to us, his readers (i.e., through important details and events he added into the story)?
- Project Po's poem "Hard is the Journey" onto the board and read the poem aloud.
- Break students into small groups to read the poem together one more time and discuss:
  - What kind of journey might the speaker be on? How do you know? What details does he use to show us?
  - How does the speaker in the poem react to obstacles in his way? How do you know? What details does he use to show us? What literary techniques does he use?
  - How does the speaker in the poem compare and contrast with the mice in the novels in how they deal with their struggles on their individual journeys?
- Teacher checks in with groups to listen/assess and answer any questions.

### Wrap Up / Assessment:

- Come together as a whole class and ask: After discussing the details in the poem and the novels, what do you think the writers' themes are? How did they convey those themes to us?
- Tell students they will now try to convey this same theme through their own Journey Poems. Students begin to write a first draft that includes:
  - Creating a speaker (or voice) of the poem (may be autobiographical)
  - At least ten lines
  - Lots of details and images that reveal a) the journey the speaker is on and his/her struggles along the way, and b) how he/she is dealing with those struggles

### Homework:

- Students continue writing their Journey Poem drafts and should be ready to share.

#### Teacher notes for more lesson plans!

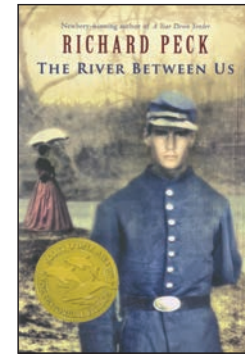
- ✓ Use this website as a research resource: Facts about mice  
[http://www.onekind.org/education/animals\\_a\\_z/mouse](http://www.onekind.org/education/animals_a_z/mouse)

- ✓ Read this article: Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee  
<http://www.history.com/news/queen-victorias-diamond-jubilee>
- ✓ Check out this website: Official Website of the Royal Family  
<https://www.royal.uk/>
- ✓ Listen to these poems: Storynory – free audio stories  
"The Mouse and the Cake" by Eliza Cook  
"The Country Mouse and the City Mouse"  
by Richard Scrafton Sharpe  
<http://www.storynory.com/2006/05/14/two-poems-about-mice/>



# *The River Between Us*

## Lesson on Food and Culture



### Rationale:

- One's experiences during the Civil War depended on whether one was from the North or South, was black or white, or rich or poor. For some groups these circumstances blended together, offering entirely unique situations. Through Delphine and Calinda's characters and delicious ingredients, Peck brings seemingly different worlds together. With your students, explore how food is a basic necessity, how it creates moments of nostalgia, how it can be a cultural symbol, and how it may even sometimes have argumentative implications.

### Essential Questions:

- Why do the characters react so strongly to food in the story? How can people share their culture and lifestyle with others, and what effect might this have? What role does food play in your home? How important is food in daily life, as well as defining who we are?

### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3](#)
  - Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

### Activity:

- Ask: What role do you think food plays in our society? How can food be a vehicle that brings people together? How can food be tied to conflicts (i.e., eating disorders, disagreements over vegan vs. meat-eaters, organic vs. processed foods, government policies over what's served in schools, religious differences)?
- Ask students to work with a partner to find evidence in the book that speaks to this point (i.e., "Jambalaya! Merci! Mon Dieu! We are safe!" 58; "Real abolitionists would never eat rice or cane sugar or anything the South produced. We dug right in." 59).
- Ask: What do these direct quotations about food reveal? What does food mean to the main characters? What do you think Peck is trying to tell his audience by adding these lines throughout the novel? Why do you think he includes them?
- As a whole class, generate a list of foods that evoke certain thoughts, ideas, or memories (i.e., cotton candy = innocence/childhood) and write on the board.
- Plan a classroom food festival!
  - For the remainder of the period, students work independently to choose one family recipe that they would like to share with the class at *The River Between Us* Food Festival (held at a later date).
  - Students draft why this recipe is so important to them and to their families, and why they want to share it with their peers. What significance does it hold? Has the recipe been passed down from generation to generation? Does the food bring back a



memory? Does the particular food symbolize family values? How? Can the recipe be shared or does your family prefer to keep it a secret? Why or why not? Does it inform us about the geography from where your ancestors came or struggles or celebrations they may have had?

- Inform students that parents will be invited to the food festival and students will stand near their dishes explaining their significance while serving the food.

#### Wrap Up/Assessment:

- Ask: What can we learn about people by examining the food that they eat? How do your family dishes relate to the importance of food in *The River Between Us*?

#### Homework:

- Students find and write the recipe and continue working on their drafts.

## *The River Between Us*

### Lesson on Comparing and Contrasting

#### Rationale:

- The United States was divided into two parts during the period of the Civil War: North and South. The Mississippi River became a vital battleground for control. *The River Between Us* explores the differences between the two groups. What each side believed and what they thought was acceptable were vastly different depending on which side of the river they were on. This activity will help your class gain a clear sense of the differing opinions during this polarizing time for our country.

#### Essential Questions:

- What similarities and differences existed between the people on either side of the river during the period of the Civil War?

#### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3](#)
  - Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

#### Materials:

- Class set of *The River Between Us* Compare and Contrast Worksheet (next page), class set of *The River Between Us*, 2 jump ropes or hula hoops or poster paper, sticky notes

#### Activity:

- Ask: How are you the same as your friends? How are you different? How did you get to be the way you are?

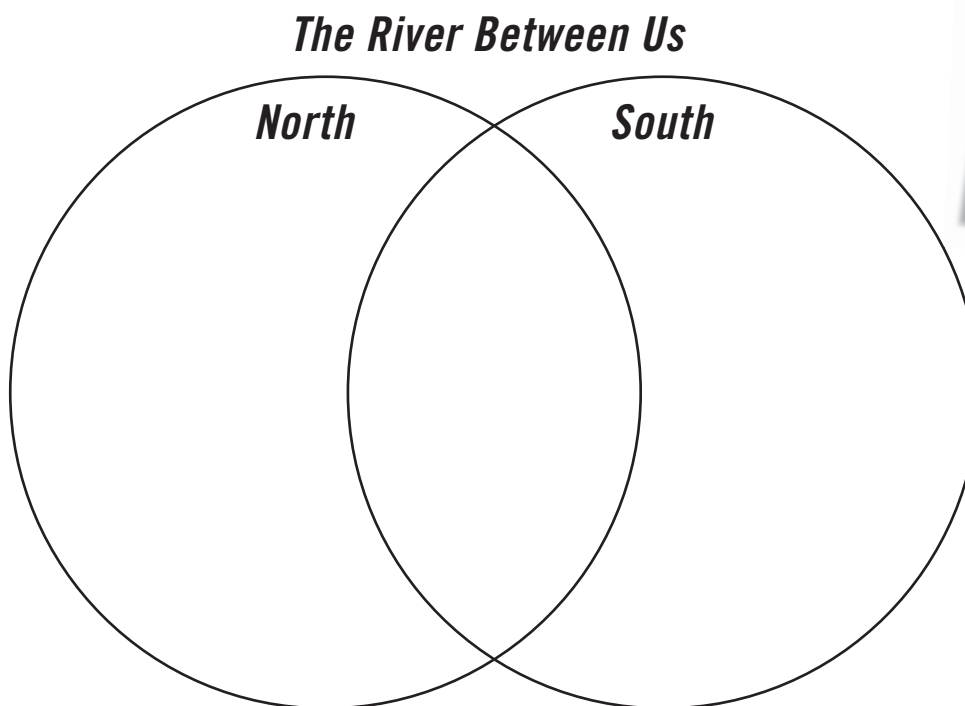


- Ask: What are the similarities and differences between Tilly and Delphine? They both come from different worlds, but how different are they?
- Distribute *The River Between Us* Worksheet.
- Students work with a partner to compare and contrast the two girls and complete the worksheet, including all elements of their lives: family, food, locations, fashion, needs, wants, beliefs.
- Come together as a whole class to discuss the similarities and differences between the two girls.
- The teacher creates a large Venn diagram on the classroom floor using the two overlapping hula hoops (or jump ropes or poster paper).
- Divide the class in half. Each half will examine a different point of view - North or South. Groups:
  - Search through the book to find information that describes their side only (differences).
  - Search through the book to find information that describes how the North and South are the same in some ways (similarities).
  - Jot the descriptive, informative lines from the text onto sticky notes.
  - Place the sticky notes inside the parts of the hula hoops (Venn diagram) where appropriate.

### Wrap Up / Assessment:

- Final Discussion: Ask students to stand in a semi-circle around the hula hoop Venn diagram and answer the following questions:
  - Looking at the large Venn diagram, what similarities and differences do you notice about the North and South? How do they overlap?
  - Do you think this novel is a good source of information? Why or why not? What is the genre of this book (historical fiction)? Is there bias in fiction? Is there bias in historical fiction? Why or why not? Is there bias in nonfiction? Why or why not?

### Worksheet Idea:



Reproduce  
this for your  
students!



# Fair Weather

## Lesson on Main Idea and Details



### Rationale:

- Follow the incredible adventure of two sisters, a brother, and their grandfather as they share an entirely new experience. The year is 1893 and their trip takes them to the World's Fair in Chicago, Illinois. Not only are they far from home, but they seem to have leaped years into the future. Their journey often convinces them that progress is good, but they are also nostalgic for the simple life of the country. Let's explore Peck's main ideas and details to examine why.

### Essential Questions:

- Why do we sometimes omit information when retelling a story to someone? What do the omissions sometimes reveal? Why might a writer omit details in her/his story?

### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3](#)
  - Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2](#)
  - Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

### Materials:

- At least 50 note cards, class set of *Fair Weather*, markers/crayons

### Activity:

- Ask: If your parents ask "How was school today?" how do you respond? Do you tell them every detail? Why or why not? What do you sometimes omit or leave out and why?
- Direct students to re-read the postcards that Rosie sent to her mother (67, 97, 121).
- Ask: What do you notice about the details in the postcards? (Not many!)
- Ask: Why do you think Peck chooses to have his characters limit the amount of information they include on the postcards? What main idea is he focusing on here (i.e. loving their adventure vs. missing home)?
- Inform students that with a partner they will create a collection of two to three postcards that Rosie and Lottie might write to send back home to give their mother more details about their experiences.
- Remind your students that this was the greatest adventure of Rosie and Lottie's lives. Their mother was too frightened to leave the safe haven of her home, but she knew that it was important that her children experience the drastically changing world.
- Postcard messages should include:
  - writing that is succinct to fit onto a small postcard.



- details that will a) bring alarm to Rosie and Lottie's mother, and b) some that will bring her comfort. (Have fun deciding which details to include and which to omit, depending on whether you'd like to worry or comfort Mom!)
- imagery and voice. Add humor to capture the tone and voice of the story and your characters.
- writing on one side of the postcard and illustrations on the other.
- an emphasis on one of Peck's main ideas: Rosie and Lottie's yearning for the excitement of something new AND the nostalgia for the simple country life and home.

### Wrap Up / Assessment:

- Students share some of their postcards with the whole class.
- Ask the other students to listen to their peers' details from the postcards and comment on whether their cards were trying to alarm or calm Rosie and Lottie's mom. How do they know? What details were omitted? Why?
- Ask students to comment on what the postcards' main ideas are.

### Homework:

- Each student creates a personal postcard and mails it to someone they know.
  - The topic: a) describe the town you live in now and what you love about it, and b) describe a place you miss and wish you could return to or visit again.
  - The challenge: Writing in direct, succinct language to fit onto a small postcard.
  - Be sure to write the school's return address and request they write back to you about the same topic. Hopefully a great collection of postcards from near and far will begin arriving!
- Share and discuss the postcards that return and how they connect back to *Fair Weather* and Rosie and Lottie's experiences.

## *Fair Weather*

### Lesson on Character Development

#### Rationale:

- The Beckett family's adventures bring many surprises and changes. They go from being simple countryfolk to wide-eyed tourists at the World's Columbian Exposition. What a dramatic change from their everyday lives of making butter and doing chores! As they experience new things, their opinions change about the world around them. As the story unfolds, the characters grow and gather new information. This activity will help your students see how characters develop as a novel progresses, and how twists and surprises create a compelling and unpredictable story.

#### Essential Questions:

- How can people's impressions of others change as they learn more about them? How does an author develop a character and create an interesting storyline?



### CCSS:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1](#)
  - Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3](#)
  - Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

### Materials:

- Class set of Character Development worksheet, class set of *Fair Weather*

### Activity:

- Ask: Without naming names, has anyone ever judged you without really knowing you? Explain.
- Ask: Have you ever judged someone initially and then realized they were completely different from what you originally thought?
- Distribute the *Character Development* worksheet.
- Direct students to work in small groups to:
  - Locate and discuss evidence from *Fair Weather* that shows how particular characters from the novel felt about another character at different stages of the story.
  - Complete the worksheet together.

### Wrap-Up / Assessment:

- Groups report to the whole class on how people in the story judged one another and how, if at all, certain characters changed and developed over the course of the book.
- Ask: What influenced their development?
- Ask: How does this change in the characters affect the storyline? Would the plot have been more interesting if Peck chose to have his characters not change or develop at all? Why or why not?

### Homework:

- Students write a poem—song, or narrative essay about a time when they judged someone—positively or negatively and the effects of that judgment.
- Students may create artwork to accompany their written piece.

Teacher notes for more lesson plans!

- ✓ Check out the article: "7 Things You May Not Know About the 1893 Chicago World's Fair"  
<http://www.history.com/news/7-things-you-may-not-know-about-the-1893-chicago-worlds-fair>

- ✓ Check out the article: "The Brief History of the Ferris Wheel"  
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/history-ferris-wheel-180955300/>



## Fair Weather - Character Development

Don't judge a book by its cover.

Have you ever heard this expression? It's something that happens often in life and literature. Richard Peck's characters often judge one another, but as the story unfolds new opinions are often formed. Find evidence that supports this, and fill in the table below. Be sure to find specific evidence in the text that supports your ideas.

| Who is judging? | Who is being judged? | Initial Opinion | How did their opinion change?<br>Why did it change, if at all? |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.              |                      |                 |                                                                |
| 2.              |                      |                 |                                                                |
| 3.              |                      |                 |                                                                |

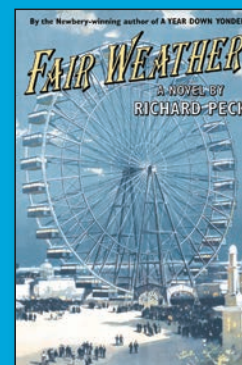
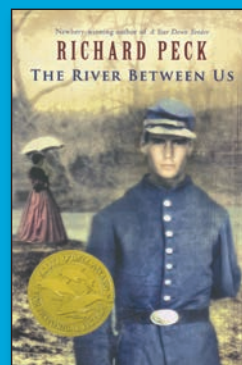
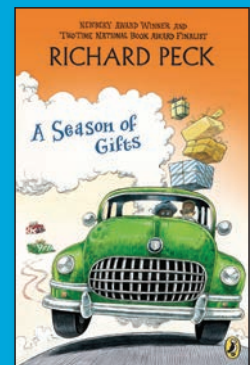
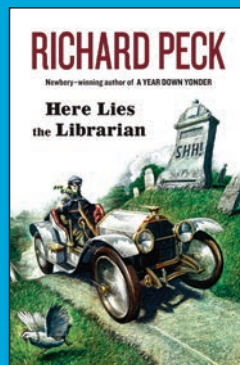
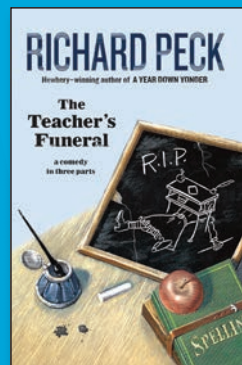
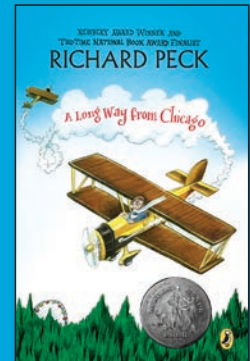
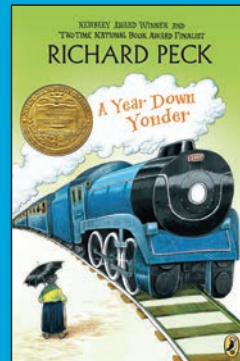
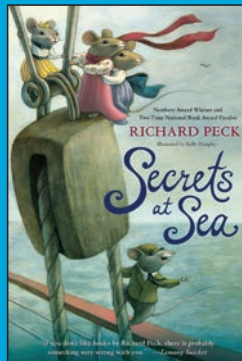
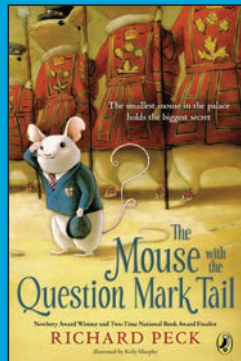
List other characters from other novels you have read that have opinions that have changed over time:

## The Great Depression Video Worksheet (from page 10)

|                                                                 | Examples of<br>Economic Hardship | Examples of<br>Resourcefulness &<br>Resiliency | Examples of How the<br>U.S. Government Got<br>Involved & the Effects |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Great<br>Depression Video                                   |                                  |                                                |                                                                      |
| <i>A Long Way from<br/>Chicago &amp; A Year<br/>Down Yonder</i> |                                  |                                                |                                                                      |



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Find his complete list at [penguinclassroom.com](http://penguinclassroom.com)

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