

The Eudora Welty Ephemera Prize

High School Lesson Plan

Preparation:

Have students read Chapter One of Eudora Welty's novel *Delta Wedding*.

Have students write a one-paragraph free response to the story before discussing together.

Some Questions for Discussion:

How does Laura feel about visiting her Fairchild cousins in the Delta?

How would you feel if you were in her shoes, traveling to distant relatives on your own?

Do you think that Laura will be able to fit into this family? Why or why not?

Why do you think the Fairchild family tells "happenings like narrations" (pg. 23)?

What does it mean that they tell stories "as if the ear of the world listened" (pg. 23)?

What happened on the trestle that is worth telling a story? Do you believe the story?

What other momentous events have happened as the family prepares for the wedding?

Assignment:

Write a 1-3 page personal essay, poem, or story about listening to a story or about someone who tells a story as if the world listened. Your writing may be based on an actual memory or may be fictional. Is the story heard? By whom? Why is this story worth listening to? Try to paint the world and the characters of the story in vivid detail.

Alternative assignment:

Write a 2-3 page personal essay, poem, or story about the desire to fit in. One of the themes of the novel is belonging to a group (or belonging in the world). When have you wanted to fit in? Were you able to do that or not? Have you ever felt like Laura does, as an insider (part of the family) and an outsider (because her mother recently died and she's from the city)? You may also give these qualities to a fictional character or persona.

Activities:

Hold a class contest: Let all the students read each other's work and decide together which pieces are the most well-written. Encourage the top students to revise their work based on class discussion and submit it to the contest. (All students are welcome to submit, even if the class didn't pick their work. Our judges might find value that your class overlooked, so encourage everyone to revise and submit!) Holding a class contest might help some students get past the hurdle of submitting to the main contest.

Hold a class debate: do you think that Uncle George should have tried to help Maureen? Or should he have jumped off the trestle to save himself when it looked like the train was going to run them over? Was he foolish to try unsuccessfully to help or is he a hero?

Have your students submit their poems, stories, or essays to ephemera@mwu.edu by Sept. 15, 2018. See the prize announcement for full details.