

The Eudora Welty Ephemera Prize

High School Lesson Plan

Preparation:

Have students read Eudora Welty's story "Why I Live at the P.O."

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

Some Questions for Discussion:

Why is the narrator so angry with Stella Rondo?

Why does the narrator get angry with the rest of her family over the course of the story?

What enables the narrator to leave the family home and move into the post office?

Whose side of the story do you believe? The narrator's or Stella Rondo's? Why?

What do you think Eudora Welty suggests about gender roles with these characters?

Assignment:

Write a 1-3 page personal essay, poem, or story about a time you or someone you know about claimed their place. This might be when they moved out on their own or when they took charge of a situation and became more independent. It might be true to life or fictional (whether written as a poem, story, or essay). To give a sense of contrast, you may want to include the main character's rival or other forces that work against them.

Alternative assignment:

Write a 2-3 page personal essay, poem, or story in response to "Why I Live at the P.O." You might take on one of the other characters and tell the story from their perspective or you might rewrite the story in a more modern setting. Where would the narrator live if she moved out on her own today? How would we view Stella-Rondo's return as a single mother? Who would we believe, and why?

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: Whose version of the story do you believe: the narrator's or Stella-Rondo's? What really happened when Stella-Rondo ran off with Mr. Whitaker? Why do Sister and Stella-Rondo fight about it and why does the family take Stella-Rondo's side?

Have your students submit their poems, stories, or essays to ephemera@mwu.edu by Sept. 10, 2019. See the prize announcement for full details.