

# *The Eudora Welty Ephemera Prize*

## *High School Lesson Plan*

### **Preparation:**

Have students read Eudora Welty's story "The Wide Net"

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

Note: Welty uses the n-word to describe Robbie Bell and Sam, as was common at the time. In preparing students to read the story, it may be wise to discuss this language.

### **Some Questions for Discussion:**

Why does William Wallace think he needs to borrow the wide net?

Who goes along on the trip to the river, and why do they agree to go?

Why does Doc call this the "changing time"?

Why does he say "Everything just before it changes looks to be made of gold"?

What do the townspeople catch with the wide net, and how do they react to the trip?

What really happened to Hazel and how does William Wallace react to this news?

### **Assignment:**

Write a 1-3 page personal essay, poem, or story about a time you, someone you know, or a fictional character experienced a major change or was searching for someone or something. You may include the how things changed, or whether the person or thing was found, or you may end your piece before we know the outcome. You may also write about the uncertainty of our current situation and how things may or may not change. Do you agree with Doc that just before the change things look "to be made of gold"?

### **Alternate assignment:**

Write a 2-3 page personal essay, poem, or story in response to "The Wide Net." You might take on one of the minor characters and tell the story from their perspective or you might rewrite the story in a more modern setting. What would a woman like Hazel do today if she were in the same situation? How would Doc, Virgil, Robbie Bell, or Sam act?

### **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: Which characters do students sympathize with? Was Hazel right to leave William Wallace the letter? Should he have used the wide net to drag the river? How should he respond to her at the end of the story?

Have your students submit their poems, stories, or essays to [ephemera@muw.edu](mailto:ephemera@muw.edu) by Sept. 15, 2020. See the prize announcement for full details.