

The Eudora Welty Ephemera Prize

Losing Battles Lesson Plan

Preparation:

Read an excerpt from Eudora Welty's novel *Losing Battles*, pp. 247-271
Have students write a one-paragraph free response before discussing.

Some Questions for Discussion:

What seems to be the dark thread that runs through Gloria's story?
Why doesn't Miss Juila want Gloria to marry Jack Renfroe?
Why does Gloria want her identity to remain a mystery?
Why do you think Miss Julia tells Gloria she is ignorant?
Why do you think Gloria does not want to be identified as a Beecham?
Do you think the family has really figured out who Gloria's parents were?
Do you think it was right or wrong of Gloria to marry Jack? Why?
Why do you think Eudora Welty includes this story in her novel?
How might a story about a secret or mysterious origin be relevant today?

Assignment:

Write a 1-3 page personal essay, poem, or story about a secret that was revealed or that remained a mystery. The secret doesn't have to be about a person, but could be about something in history or a current event. You might make up a fictional secret that is symbolic of a real secret, the way that Gloria's story might symbolize issues Welty wanted to address in her world. What are the dangers of finding out the truth behind a secret like this? What are the dangers of leaving questions about the secret unexamined?

Alternate assignment:

Write a 1-3 page personal essay, poem, or story in response to this episode from *Losing Battles*. You might take on one of the other characters and tell the story from their perspective or tell what you think happens to a character after the ending of the novel (or the excerpt you read). Or you might rewrite the story in a modern setting allowing for different characters, different choices, or a different ending.

Activity:

Hold a class contest: Let all the students read each other's work and decide together which pieces are the most compelling or give each other suggestions. Encourage students to revise their work 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.

Have your students submit their poems, stories, or essays to ephemera@muw.edu by Sept. 15, 2025. See the prize announcement for full details.