

The Eudora Welty Ephemera Prize

“Moon Lake” Lesson Plan

Preparation:

Read Eudora Welty’s story “Moon Lake” from her collection *The Golden Apples*.
Have students write a one-paragraph free response before discussing.

Some Possible Questions for Discussion:

What experiences have you had at a summer camp that are like those in the story?
What is the difference between the “town girls” and the “orphans”?
How do the two groups relate to each other? How does that initiate the story’s conflict?
Why does Eudora Welty have the girls see a swarm of bees? What might that represent?
When Easter nearly drowns, how does that affect Nina, the story’s primary narrator?
What do you find most troubling in the story, and how does Welty handle those issues?
Why do you think Eudora Welty chose to set her story at a camp on Moon Lake?

Assignment:

Write a 1-3 page personal essay, poem, or story about an uncanny (mysterious, ghostly, and even frightening) image or occurrence. The uncanny element doesn’t have to a person, but could be about a natural, yet ominous occurrence like the swarm of bees. Your story, poem, or essay might be based on true events or might be imagined. What inequalities or dangers from real life might the uncanny occurrence foreshadow or represent?

Alternate Assignment:

Write a 1-3 page personal essay, poem, or story in response to this episode from “Moon Lake.” You might take on one of the characters and tell the story from their perspective or tell what you think happens to a character after the ending of the story. Or you might rewrite the story in a modern setting allowing for different characters, different choices, or a different ending.

Activity:

Hold a class workshop. Let groups of students read each other’s writing and discuss together which parts are most compelling and which could be explored further. What is uncanny in each piece? What might it represent? Is it both familiar and unsettling? Encourage students to give each other suggestions for revision before they submit to the contest. Holding a class workshop can allow students to encourage each other and help them get over the hurdle of submitting to a contest.

Have your students submit their poems, stories, or essays to ephemera@muw.edu by Sept. 15, 2026. See the prize announcement for full details.