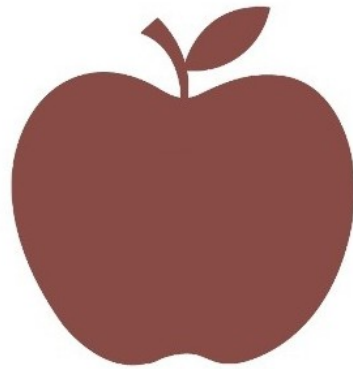


The Teacher's Funeral: **A Comedy in Three Parts**



By

Richard Peck

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

The Teacher's Funeral

By Richard Peck



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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Revisions Completed in 2021

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one or two chapters of *The Teacher's Funeral* and is comprised of the following different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to the following:

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes and **topics** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include rural Indiana in the early 1900s, farms and farming, the importance of friends and family, coming of age and personal growth.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying / creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Identify *personification*
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identification of a *cliffhanger*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists/antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card

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Synopsis

"If your teacher has to die, August isn't a bad time of year for it," begins Richard Peck's novel, a book full of his signature wit and sass. Russell Culver is fifteen in 1904, and he's raring to leave his tiny Indiana farm town for the endless sky of the Dakotas. To him, school has been nothing but a chain holding him back from his dreams. Maybe now that his teacher has passed on, they'll shut the school down entirely and he'll be free to roam.

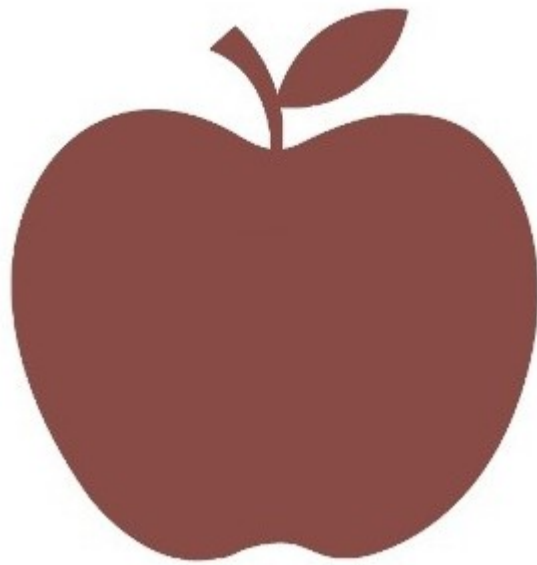
No such luck. Russell has a particularly eventful season of schooling ahead of him, led by a teacher he never could have predicted—perhaps the only teacher equipped to control the likes of him: his sister Tansy. Despite stolen supplies, a privy fire, and more than any classroom's share of snakes, Tansy will manage to keep that school alive and maybe, just maybe, set her brother on a new, wiser course. [Courtesy of the publisher]

Author Biography Richard Peck

Richard Peck (1934–2018) was born and brought up in Decatur, Illinois, about a three-hour car ride from Chicago. His first writing job was in the United States army in Germany where he was assigned the job of ghost-writing sermons for chaplains. Four of his novels are set in the part of the world that the author most likes to celebrate. In Mr. Peck's own words: "***Strays Like Us*** is a story about a girl being fostered in one of those small, old-fashioned towns where it's hard to be a stranger. ***A Long Way From Chicago*** and ***A Year Down Yonder***, two books that have changed my life, are set in the farm town where my father grew up. Grandma Dowdel's house is the house where my grandmother lived: a tall jigsaw gothic with lightning rods. ***Fair Weather*** is a novel in which three farm kids see the future unfolding before them at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893."



The Teacher's Funeral



By Richard Peck

Name: _____

The Teacher's Funeral

By Richard Peck

Chapters 1-2



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *The Teacher's Funeral* is fifteen-year old, Russell, who grew up on a tiny Indiana farm in the early years of the 1900s. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you've seen. What do you think makes for an interesting and memorable **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

infraction	arthritis	converged	rawboned
eclipse	calliope	chaff	agitator

1. The separation of the _____ from the wheat is very important.
2. His blatant _____ cost his team a two minute penalty.
3. The teacher found that Calvin was a real _____ in the classroom.
4. We stayed up last night to watch the _____ of the moon.
5. My sister, Tansy, was a big _____ girl.
6. All the farmers from miles around _____ on the railroad yard.
7. The steam _____ seemed to fling a tune to the four winds.
8. Poor old Mrs. Sweeten's _____ is so bad she can't sew anymore.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the novel for most of Chapters One and Two?

2. Match each name with the proper description:

1	Russell Culver
2	Lloyd Culver
3	Mr. Culver
4	Myrt Arbuckle
5	Lester Kriegbaum
6	Tansy Culver
7	Aunt Maud
8	Uncle Sam
9	Charlie Parr

A	High school student.
B	Was on the school board.
C	No Chef Boyardee.
D	Got a good whupping.
E	The novel's protagonist.
F	Older than Russel, still in grade 8.
G	Twelve feet tall on stilts.
H	Gone to her reward.
I	Was ten that summer.

3. How would you describe Russell's attitude regarding the death of his teacher?

4. How would describe the atmosphere created by the author in these two chapters? Did this atmosphere appeal to you? Why or why not?

5. Miss Arbuckle was:

- a) right-handed b) left-handed c) doesn't say

6. What upcoming event caused quite a stir for Russell and the people of that area?

7. Why were Russell and Lloyd working so hard around the farm on the day of this big event?

8. Explain the following statement by Russell's dad: . . . *the only man who got his work done by Friday was Robinson Crusoe.*

9. The author seems to have a great sense of humor. What statement did you find the funniest in these chapters?

10. Tansy is to play a fairly large part of the storyline in this novel. What was your first impression of her?

11. Describe Russell's future plans. What stood in the way of these plans?

Language Activities



A. Exaggeration

Exaggeration is a literary device defined as *a statement that represents something as better or worse than it really is*. We find several examples of exaggeration in this chapter. One such example is: *And it was already hot enough to fry your brains through your hat*.

Think of an exaggerated way of describing the following

A cold day in winter.	
A bumblebee's sting.	
Your choice.	

B. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. We find an example of this in Chapter Two: . . . *she was just as countrified and rawboned as me and Lloyd* . . .

In this example what two things are being compared?

--	--

Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your imagination:

a) The sound of an old tractor.

b) your own example

C. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **PAN** can also form the word **NAP**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



- read the clue in the right-hand column.
- Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters.

Each of the words in the left-hand column are found in this section of our novel.

Word	Anagram	Clue
sister		Withstand.
paws		Trade.
table		The cry of a goat.
heart		Topsoil.
dream		Equipped with a weapon.
elbow		At a lower level.

D. A **quintet** is a five-line verse that tells a story. The quintet has a syllable pattern and can bring an exciting scene to life. (It doesn't have to rhyme.)

Line 1 – tells when , 3 syllables Line 2 – tells where , 5 syllables Line 3 – tells what , 7 syllables Line 4 – describes activity , 9 syllables Line 5 – contains a thought , 3 syllables.	Now create a quintet poem using ideas from recent events in <i>The Teacher's Funeral</i> .
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TITLE: _____

E. Fascinating Farm Machinery.

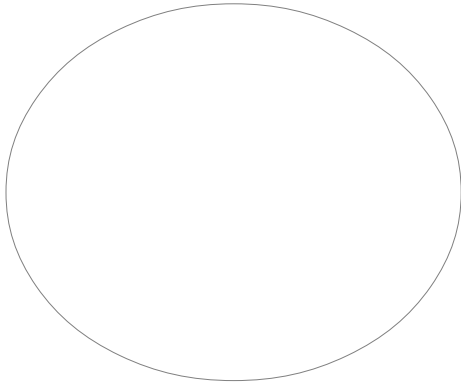
Russell and Lloyd are really taken up with having a look at the latest farm machinery. Below are five examples of the farm equipment manufactured in the early 1900s that are mentioned in Chapter Two. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, match the following pictures with their names.

a.		b.	
Name:		Name:	
c.		d.	
Name:		Name:	
e.			
Name:		Name:	

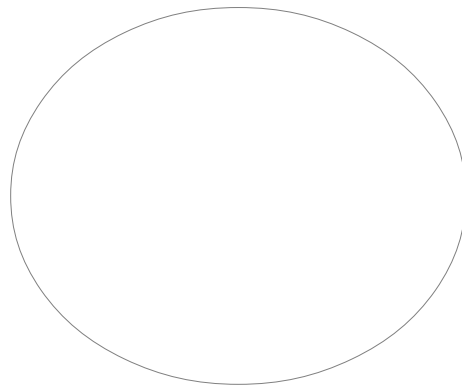
GEISER PEERLESS	MINNESOTA LITTLE GIANT	AVERY YELLOW FELLOW
PITTS CHALLENGER	FRICK ECLIPSE	

F. 5 Ws and an H.

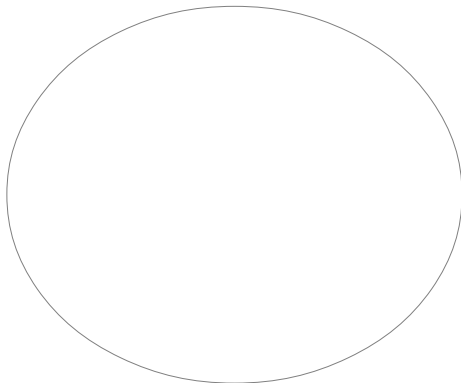
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



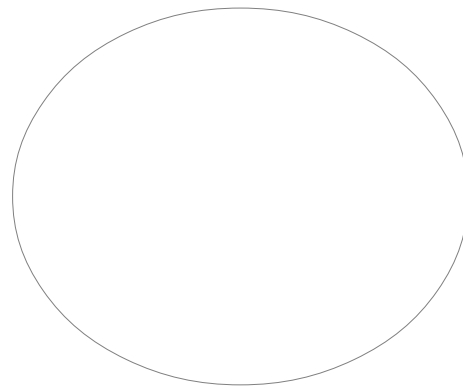
WHO?



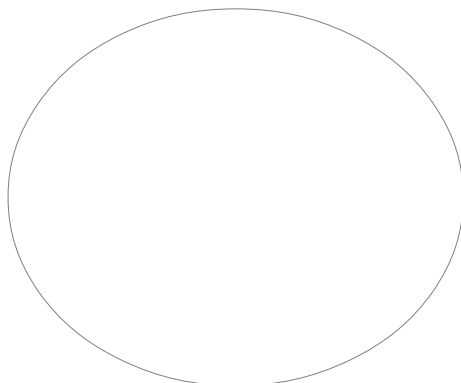
WHAT?



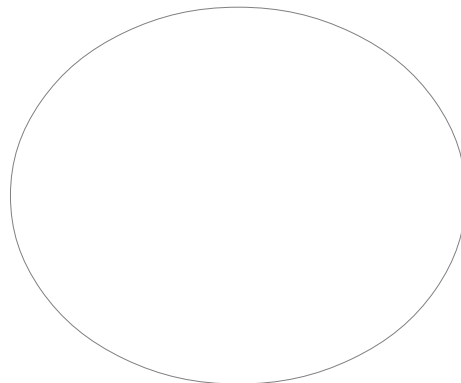
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first two chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6