



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

The Contender

based on the book by
Robert Lipsyte

Written by
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A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Lipsyte

Robert Lipsyte was born on January 16, 1938 in New York City. He graduated from Columbia University in 1957 and almost immediately began his writing career with the *New York Times* as a copyboy and later a sports reporter. Mr. Lipsyte has also worked for the *New York Post*, CBS-TV as a sports essayist for *Sunday Morning*, NBC-TV as a sports correspondent, PBS-TV as host of the program *The Eleventh Hour*, and as a journalism teacher and radio commentator.

Mr. Lipsyte has written several books from an edited collection of his sports columns, to a biography of Muhammad Ali, to young adult fiction. Robert Lipsyte's works of fiction for young people are usually about young people who through work and ethical standards grow into responsible, productive citizens. They also usually portray a realistic view of sports in the lives of everyday people. In *The Contender* (1967), his first noteworthy young adult novel, Mr. Lipsyte drew on his experiences as a sports reporter and combined them with his philosophy about the role of sports in the everyday lives of everyday people.

Other novels Mr. Lipsyte has written include *One Fat Summer*, *Summer Rules*, *The Summerboy*, *Jack and Jill*, and *The Brave* (a sequel to *The Contender*).

INTRODUCTION - *The Contender*

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *The Contender* by Robert Lipsyte. It includes eighteen lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to one main theme of the novel through a bulletin board activity. Following the introductory activity, students are given a transition to explain how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are approximately thirty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 8 to 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer required or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes. It might be a good idea to make transparencies of your answer keys for the overhead projector.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 8 to 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

A lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel.

The **project** which follows the discussion questions has students working to create goals for themselves and plans by which they could achieve their goals.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment is to express personal opinions: students tell whether or not they think they are "contenders." The second assignment is to inform: students state their goal(s) and the plans by which the goal(s) will be achieved. The third assignment is to persuade: students write the script for a scene between James and Alfred when Alfred tries to persuade James to become a contender.

In addition, there is a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students are required to read a piece of nonfiction related in some way to *The Contender*. After reading their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. During one class period, students make **oral presentations** about the nonfiction pieces they have read. This not only exposes all students to a wealth of information, it also gives students the opportunity to practice **public speaking**.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: all multiple choice-matching-true/false or with a mixture of matching, short answer, multiple choice, and composition. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **unit resource section** includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra vocabulary worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The student materials may be reproduced for use in the teacher's classroom without infringement of copyrights. No other portion of this unit may be reproduced without the written consent of Teacher's Pet Publications, Inc.

UNIT OBJECTIVES - *The Contender*

1. Through reading Lipsyte's *The Contender*, students will consider the merits of being a "contender," of taking charge of one's own life, setting goals and achieving them.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical and personal.
3. Students will set a goal and think through a plan for achieving that goal.
4. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
5. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *The Contender* as they relate to the author's theme development.
6. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
7. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
 - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
 - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
 - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
 - d. To encourage logical thinking
 - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
8. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *The Contender*

Date Assigned	Chapters Assigned	Completion Date
	1-4	
	5-8	
	9-13	
	14-16	
	17-20	

UNIT OUTLINE - *The Contender*

1 Introduction	2 PVR 1-4	3 Study ?s 1-4 PVR 5-8	4 Study ?s 5-8 Writing Assignment 1	5 PVR 9-13
6 Study ?s 9-13 Grammar Worksheet	7 PVR 14-16	8 Study ?s 14-16 PVR 17-20	9 Study ?s 17-20 Extra ?s	10 Quotes
11 Project	12 Writing Assignment 2	13 Vocabulary	14 Library	15 Nonfiction Reports
16 Writing Assignment 3	17 Review	18 Test		

Key: P=Preview Study Questions V=Prereading Vocabulary Worksheet R=Read

LESSON ONE

Objectives

1. To introduce the *Contender* unit.
2. To distribute books and other related materials
3. To preview the study questions for chapters 1-4
4. To familiarize students with the vocabulary for chapters 1-4

NOTE: You need to have students bring in pictures of something that represents a dream of something they would like to be or do or have in the future, something that represents their "dreams."

Also in preparation, you need to put up the background paper and title for a bulletin board entitled I HAVE A DREAM or some other suitable phrase. Leave space for students to post their pictures.

Activity #1

Ask students to clear their desks except for the pictures they have brought to class. Have each student explain what his/her picture represents and then let the student post it on the bulletin board.

TRANSITION: Explain that you are about to read *The Contender*, a story about a young man from Harlem who decided to try to achieve his dream.

Activity #2

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment prior to beginning the reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in the section they are about to read. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Vocabulary Prior to reading a reading assignment, students will do vocabulary work related to the section of the book they are about to read. Following the completion of the reading of the book, there will be a vocabulary review of all the words used in the vocabulary assignments. Students should keep their vocabulary work as study materials for the unit test.

Reading Assignment Sheet You need to fill in the reading assignment sheet to let students know by when their reading has to be completed. You can either write the assignment sheet up on a side blackboard or bulletin board and leave it there for students to see each day, or you can "ditto"

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *The Contender*

PROMPT

Alfred decided to become a contender, to work towards his goal, to be involved with the direction of his own life. Your assignment is to answer the question, "Are you a contender?" Your composition should thoroughly explain your reasons for thinking you either are or are not a contender.

PREWRITING

One way to begin is to think about the question and answer it honestly. Jot down the reasons why you came to the conclusion you did. Give examples of the characteristics you attribute to yourself to support your claims.

DRAFTING

Write a paragraph in which you introduce the idea that you are (or are not) a contender.

The body of your composition should be composed of several paragraphs, one paragraph for each reason you think you are (or are not) a contender. These paragraphs will be filled out with the examples you have chosen to support your claims.

Write a concluding paragraph summarizing your points and stating whether or not you are satisfied with being (or not being) a contender. (Would you want to change?)

PROMPT

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask a student who sits near you to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary.

PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.