



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

Homecoming

based on the book by  
Cynthia Voigt

Written by  
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## **Introduction**

### **Homecoming**

This unit plan has been carefully designed to give teachers all of the tools they need to present twenty-three daily lessons on Cynthia Voigt's novel, **Homecoming**. All exercises, activities, and assignments in the unit will develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills. In addition to the essential elements, the unit contains a wide variety of extra resource materials and suggested activities.

The **first lesson** uses a bulletin board activity to introduce the theme of what "home" means to different people. All subsequent lessons are designed to maximize the teacher's time while assuring that students at a variety of learning levels are able to progress successfully through the novel.

**Reading assignments** consist of chapters of the book, beginning with Part I and continuing through Part II. The assignments average twenty-five pages in length. Students do approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work in conjunction with each reading assignment. Pre-reading involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some brief vocabulary work connected to the section of reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact based; the answers are right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. It is probably best to use the short answer questions as study guides for students and the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies and to aid in their understanding of the book. Students will complete a two-part vocabulary worksheet for each section of reading. 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 then write down what they think the words mean based on their usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and asking students to match the words to the correct definitions. There are a total of one hundred vocabulary words in the unit.

Although students can attempt the vocabulary work prior to reading the appropriate section of the book, it is probably best to encourage them to do the vocabulary work while they are reading. Thus the contextual clues that students use in understanding the words would include not just those in the individual quotes but those in sentences surrounding the quote and often in an entire paragraph. By the time that students have finished the reading assignment and completed the companion worksheet, they should have a clear understanding of the meaning of each word.

Students should be encouraged to use the study guide questions to round out their understanding of the text and to prepare for the unit test. The material covered in these questions serves as a way of reviewing the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

In this unit there is a **Critical Based Questions Option (CQ option)**, which gives the teacher a choice of adding to the fact-based questions some that require more critical thought. These will be found in Lessons Five, Eight, Nine, Eleven, Twelve, and Fifteen. Teachers may use all, some, or none of these optional questions.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit.

The first assignment, in Lesson Six, asks students to write from personal experience. Students are given two options. They may write about their own lives, mirroring the kinds of information conveyed about the Tillerman children in the novel, or they may write about one of the Tillerman children, explaining why they do or do not admire that character. Either choice will encourage students to examine the text closely and to try to understand the characters better.

The second writing assignment, in Lesson Nine, asks that students write to persuade. The assignment comes at the time that Dicey Tillerman and her family have decided to leave Bridgeport and seek out their grandmother. Students are encouraged to give Dicey advice, (1) to return to Provincetown, (2) to stay in Bridgeport, or (3) to go on to Crisfield to find their grandmother.

The third writing assignment, found in Lesson Thirteen, requires students to write to inform. Just as Dicey Tillerman is good at setting a course and reading maps, students are asked to choose something that they know how to do well and then tell an audience how to do it. Whatever process students choose, they will have to think through all of its steps and then convey the whole process to their audience.

The **nonfiction reading assignment** in this unit focuses on aspects of the area of the Chesapeake Bay and is a precursor to the major class project topic. For the nonfiction assignment, students are given a variety of topics relative to the Chesapeake Bay area and asked to choose one and read about it. After reading their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. You are also provided with a KWL (What I Know, What I Want To Know, What I Learned) Sheet that may facilitate students' nonfiction reading.

The major **class project** is optional. Project Chesapeake Bay Country is an attempt to get students to move beyond the knowledge they acquire through reading the novel to gain firsthand understanding of a variety of facets of life on or near the Chesapeake Bay. The project is geared to having students discover concerns that need addressing educationally and then to address those concerns in meaningful ways.

You are encouraged to do **group activities** whenever time and circumstances permit. Numerous opportunities are possible for group activities throughout the unit.

Students also will have ample opportunity for **reading aloud** and **making presentations**. Also, a great deal of opportunity will present itself for having rich **class discussions** about the novel and relevant ancillary topics.

One of the most flexible sections of the unit is the **Extra Discussion Questions/Writing Assignments**. In this section you will find interpretive, critical, critical/personal, and personal response questions and quotations from the text that can be used in a number of ways. Some of these questions and quotations are used as the basis for parts of the unit tests.

**Review lessons** offer chances to review the novel's main events and ideas and to re-examine its characters through **vocabulary review** and **review with games and puzzles**.

The **unit test** comes in five different formats: two different Short Answer Unit Tests, one Advanced Short Answer Unit Test, and two different Multiple Choice Unit Tests. Answer keys are given for all parts of all tests except for the subjective questions that appear in some of the tests.

At the end of Part I of the book is an exercise designed to give you and the students a change of pace through **role playing**.

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 a variety of bulletin boards to supplement the unit. In addition, there is a section called **More Activities** which provides the teacher with even more valuable activities to choose from.

Student materials throughout the unit may be reproduced for use in the teacher's classroom without infringement of copyrights. For a fuller statement of the Teacher's Pet Publications copyright policy, see the back of the title page in this unit.

## Author's Notes

One of the first things one notices about **Homecoming** by Cynthia Voigt is her use of a strong, intelligent, and resourceful female protagonist. Dickey Tillerman is a heroine for every season. Not only does she shoulder a lot of responsibility when her mother is around, but she assumes unheard of burdens for a thirteen-year-old once her mother has left the family. She is tough and gentle, serious and funny, and totally honest yet willing to bend the rules just a bit when her family's survival is in question.

When Dickey's mother simply walks away from her four children in the parking lot of a shopping mall, not only do the younger children look to Dickey for guidance and leadership, but she herself steps into her mother's role.

So many burdens are placed on Dickey's shoulders that her character would seem unrealistic were it not for Voigt's ability to present Dickey consistently as a young teenager. She is no adult. But Dickey is a thirteen-year-old girl who faces enormous obstacles and overcomes them one at a time. For the time that she must be in charge, Dickey simply reaches into her incredible depths of maturity, sensitivity, and street smarts and comes out a winner. By the time she has delivered herself and her younger brothers and sister to their grandmother's home in Crisfield, Maryland, Dickey is a strong, courageous, and thoroughly human girl who maintains her own value system and sense of self against almost insurmountable odds.

If your students like **Homecoming**, they're in luck, for it is only the first in a series of books about the Tillerman family. **Dickey's Song**, **A Solitary Blue**, **The Runner**, **Sons from Afar**, and **Seventeen Against the Dealer** are all part of the series.

Voigt received a bachelor's degree from Smith College in 1963. She taught high school English for a couple of years in Maryland and later taught and was department chair at The Key School in Annapolis, Maryland. Born in 1942, she currently lives with her family and their dog in Maine. Some of her other books are **Tell Me if the Lovers are Losers**, **The Callender Papers**, **Building Blocks**, **Jackaroo**, **Izzy**, **Willy-Nilly**, **Tree by Leaf**, and **On Fortune's Wheel**.

A great deal of information about this prolific writer is available both in print and via the internet. I encourage you to have your students seek out information on the author as well as to read her other books. **Homecoming** was, after all, only her first novel. More enjoyment lies ahead.

## Unit Objectives

### Homecoming

1. Through reading **Homecoming** by Cynthia Voigt, students will gain a better understanding of a variety of themes, such as what makes a home, friendship, family ties, love, mental illness, and religion.. The themes in the book are almost too numerous to mention.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical, and personal.
3. Students will define their own viewpoints on the vast number of issues presented in the novel.
4. Students will be exposed to new ways of looking at their own lives and the lives of other people.
5. Students will study various aspects of modern farming and will create plans for dealing with some of the needs of the farming community.
6. Students will be practice reading aloud as well as silently.
7. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with it.
8. Students will practice writing through a variety of assignments.
9. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
  - a. to check the students' reading comprehension
  - b. to make students think about the ideas presented in the book
  - c. to allow students to write from personal experience, to inform, and to persuade
  - d. to provide the opportunity to review standard English
  - e. to encourage critical and logical thinking
10. Students will be encouraged to make connections between the book and real life.

## Unit Outline Homecoming

1 Introduction Distribution of materials	2 PVR I 1 & 2 Oral reading assignment and evaluation	3 PVR I 3 & 4 Character discussion	4 Nonfiction Reading Assignment	5 PVR I 5 & 6 Report fact on NFRA Assign I 7 & 8 CQ option
6 Check work for I 7 & 8 or do in class WA #1 (pers exp)	7 Finish WA #1 if necessary Quiz on lst 8 chapters PVR I 9	8 PVR I 10 & 11 Start optional class project CQ option	9 PVR I 12 WA #2 (persuade) CQ option	10 END BOOK PART I Role playing exercise
11 Quiz on Part I of the book PVR II 1 & 2 CQ option	12 PVR II 3 & 4 Project updates or Theme/character discussion CQ option	13 PRV II 5 & 6 WA #3 (inform)	14 Finish WA #3 PVR II 7	15 PVR II 8 Quiz on last 7 chapters CQ option
16 PVR II 9 & 10 Discussion of characters in the book	17 Quiz on whole book to date Review of ideas and	18 PVR II 11 & 12 Brief review	19 Review with Extra Discussion Questions/Writing Assignments	20 More review with Extra Questions or use of suggested variations
21 Vocabulary review	22 Review with games and activities	23 Unit Tests		



## Lesson One

### Objectives

1. To introduce the unit on **Homecoming**
2. To distribute books and other related materials (study guides, reading assignments, etc.)
3. To begin consideration and discussion of one theme in **Homecoming**, namely defining what “home” means to different people

NOTE: Prior to this lesson, students should have been instructed to think about what “home” means to them. One of the continuing themes in **Homecoming** is Dicey Tillerman’s attempts to figure out what makes a home a home. Is it a person? Who must be in the home? Where must the home be? Is a home safety? Is it freedom? Is it always the same? Different people must answer these questions for themselves. You will have prepared ahead of time a bulletin board that has the title MY HOME: WHAT HOME MEANS TO ME. You may want to place pictures on the board. Remember to include pictures of both tangible and intangible things. For instance, you might have some pictures of things that people might have in their homes but will also want to show pictures of people embracing, people laughing together, people sleeping, people eating, etc. The point, of course, is that home can mean different things to different people.

### Activity #1

Ask students individually to explain what home means to them. If they like, they can have prepared ahead of time a brief written description or they may just define home in a few sentences verbally. Whatever technique they choose is fine, as long as they demonstrate clearly some of the ways they would define “home.” After they have explained their views, each student should go to the bulletin board and write one word that, for him or her, would follow the phrase, HOME IS . . . . But they may follow the phrase with only **one** word. A suggestion: Sometime near the end of the unit, if you have time, you may want to ask the students to repeat this assignment pretending that they are the Tillerman children. In fact, you might tell the students ahead of time to be thinking during the whole unit about which word each child—Dicey, James, Maybeth, and Sammy—would choose and why. This technique might help to tie the beginning and end of the unit together nicely and also serve to keep students focused on a main theme of the book.

### Activity #2

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

Study Guides Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment before beginning the 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.

## **Writing Assignment #1** **(Writing from Personal Experience)**

### PROMPT

In the sections of the novel that you have read so far, you have learned a lot about the lives of the Tillerman children. You have gained an understanding of each child's personality, what makes each angry and what makes each smile, their value systems, their views in regard to their mother and to each other, and the relative strengths of each child. In eight chapters, then, the author of **Homecoming** has brought her main characters to life for you.

Your assignment is to choose one of two options:

One, you may write your assignment about yourself. Or, two, you may write your assignment about any of the four children in **Homecoming** and why you do or do not admire that character. If you choose the first option, you should be sure that at the end of your paper, your audience knows about at least three areas of your life. If you choose the second option, you should give at least three reasons for your decision.

Your choice should be relatively easy: if you find yourself especially interested in one of the characters, positively or negatively, then write about that character, or, if you are not particularly interested in any of the characters but would like to write about your own life, then write about yourself.

### PREWRITING

For whichever choice you have made, make a list of the things that you would like to talk about. If you are writing about your own life, make a list of what you consider to be important areas in your life. If you are writing about one of the characters, make a list of what you consider to be favorable or unfavorable aspects of that character's life or traits that would make you do or do not admire.

Write down everything that occurs to you, and then go back and sort through them and combine ideas that are essentially the same. Pare your categories down until you have three basic points to make about yourself or about the character you have chosen. Then you can begin to write your paper.

### DRAFTING

You will probably want to begin your paper with an interesting introductory paragraph in which you state your main point: I do/do not admire (your character). I lead an exciting life filled with interesting challenges. I lead a humdrum life filled with many boring experiences. Whatever you choose to say, state your point clearly in the first paragraph so that your audience knows what you are writing about.