



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

The Slave Dancer

based on the book by  
Paula Fox

Written by  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Slave Dancer*

Introduction	5
Unit Objectives	8
Reading Assignment Sheet	9
Unit Outline	10
Study Questions (Short Answer)	13
Quiz/Study Questions (Multiple Choice)	26
Pre-reading Vocabulary Worksheets	49
Lesson One (Introductory Lesson)	67
Nonfiction Assignment Sheet	70
Oral Reading Evaluation Form	85
Writing Assignment 1	69
Writing Assignment 2	87
Writing Assignment 3	93
Writing Evaluation Form	78
Project	89
Vocabulary Review Activities	101
Extra Writing Assignments/Discussion ?s	95
Unit Review Activities	103
Unit Tests	107
Unit Resource Materials	149
Vocabulary Resource Materials	165

## A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paula Fox

FOX, Paula (1923- ). Paula Fox was born in New York, New York. Her father was a writer, and he and her mother moved around a lot. Paula did not always live with them. She spent her early years living with a Congregational minister and his aged mother, in a big Victorian house that overlooked New York's Hudson River. The minister, a former newspaperman himself, often read to her from his own work. Their house was filled with books which Paula began reading at the tender age of five. She's been reading ever since. It seems to her that it's the essential work of the writer.

She left the minister's house when she was six years old to live with her parents in California and then on a sugar plantation in Cuba. In Cuba, she attended a one-room schoolhouse and became fluent in Spanish. Later, she was taken back to New York City. By the age of twelve, she had gone to nine schools. It was an unsettling childhood, one she is still trying to understand many years later through her writing. Each character in her books reflects her life's experiences, in ways she can't always explain. "I wasn't on a slave ship," she says, referring to Newbery Award Medal Winner, *The Slave Dancer* (1975). "I wasn't a boy who thought he shot a cat," referring to Newbery Award Honor Book, *The One-Eyed Cat* (1982). "But those experiences are somehow rooted in my own sense of life, or how I see life, how I've experienced it."

When Paula Fox first got the idea for *The Slave Dancer*, she knew she had to do a lot of research to make the story come alive. She remembers someone at the library guiding her to a tremendous area of books on slavery. Her heart sank. She didn't know how to do research. But she learned. She forced herself to open the first book. Then everything became possible. She admits, "You have to pick a point. And it's not that you can find a beginning, because there is no beginning. From that first point, I went on. It's like crossing a stream on stepping stones. One step leads you to another." After a year of research, she threw the notes away when she started writing because they paralyzed her with information.

Paula Fox wishes kids would read instead of watch TV. She says, "When you begin to read, read everything. Reading helps you think about things, imagine what it feels like to be somebody else...even somebody you don't like!" She has written over thirteen books including *Monkey Island* (1991), *The King's Falcon* (1992), *Amzat and His Brothers*, and *Western Wind* (1993). She currently resides in Brooklyn, New York.

## INTRODUCTION - *The Slave Dancer*

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *The Slave Dancer* by Paula Fox. It includes twenty lessons supported by extra resource materials plus a class project.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to background information about places, people, and events mentioned throughout this novel. It also doubles as the first writing assignment for the unit. Following the introductory activity, students are given an explanation of how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. The next lesson following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit.

The **reading assignments** are approximately twenty 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 ten to twelve 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 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 ten to twelve 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 extra discussion questions, 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.

Following the reading of the book, two lessons are devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments/activities**. 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. These questions are done as a **group activity**. Using the information they have acquired so far through individual work and class discussions, students get together to further examine the text and to brainstorm ideas relating to the themes of the novel.

The group activity is followed by a **reports and discussion/ activity** session in which the groups share their ideas about the book with the entire class; thus, the entire class gets exposed to many different ideas regarding the themes and events of the book.

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 inform: students write a composition about one of the background topics assigned in Lesson One. The second assignment gives students the chance to persuade: students pretend they live in the 1840's and are violently opposed to all aspects of slave trading. They are to convince slaveowners to stop promoting this practice. The third assignment is to give students the opportunity to express personal ideas: students will share how music influences and colors their lives.

The **nonfiction reading assignment** is tied in with Writing Assignment 1 and the introductory lesson. Students are required to read a piece of nonfiction related in some way to *The Slave Dancer*. In this case, the topics are assigned in Lesson One. 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**.

There is an optional **class project** ( Multicultural Awareness ) through which students will gain an appreciation of many cultures and the challenges of multicultural equality. They also will have the opportunity to take part in helping to do something to foster this ideal in their community.

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, and composition. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **resource sections** include 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 Slave Dancer*

1. Through reading Paula Fox's *The Slave Dancer*, students will gain an understanding of the effects of cruelty and the vicious cycle it can create.
2. Students will be exposed to gross racial injustice portrayed through the horrors of slavery.
3. Students will do background research to become familiar with relevant geographical locales and the history of slave trade.
4. Students will become familiar with and able to identify ship terminology.
5. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical and personal.
6. Students will gain appreciation for and demonstrate proficiency in identifying and using figurative language.
7. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
8. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *The Slave Dancer* as they relate to the author's theme development.
9. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
10. 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

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *The Slave Dancer*

<b>Date to be Assigned</b>	<b>Chapters (pages)</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
	History; The Errand (vii-11)	
	The Moonlight (12-34)	
	The Shrouds (35-48)	
	The Bight of Benin (49-68)	
	Nicholas Spark Walks On Water (69-89)	
	The Spaniard (90-112)	
	Ben Stout's Mistake (113-132)	
	The Old Man; Home and After (133-152)	



UNIT OUTLINE - *The Slave Dancer*

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Library  Writing Assignment #1	Introduction	PVR History; The Errand	Study? History; The Errand  PVR The Moonlight	Study? The Moonlight  PVR The Shrouds
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Study? The Shrouds  Characterization	PVR The Bight of Benin  Writing Conference	Study ? The Bight of Benin PV Nicholas Spark Walks On Water	Group Activity  Figurative Language	Read Nicholas Spark Walks On Water  Oral Reading Evaluation
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
Study? Nicholas Spark Walks On Water PVR The Spaniard Writing Ass't. 2	Study ? The Spaniard  PVR Ben Stout's Mistake	Study ? Ben Stout's Mistake PV The Old Man; Home and After	Read The Old Man; Home and After	Writing Assignment #3
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
Extra Discussion Questions	Extra Discussion Questions/ Activities	Vocabulary Review	Review	Test
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
Project				

Key: P=Preview Study Questions V= Vocabulary Work R= Read

## LESSON ONE

### Objectives

1. To give students background information for *The Slave Dancer*
2. To give students the opportunity to fulfill their nonfiction reading assignment that goes along with this unit
3. To give students practice using library resources
4. To prepare students for the introductory activity in Lesson Two.
5. To give students the opportunity to write to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information.

### Activity

Assign one of each of the following topics to each of your students. Some topics will require a pair of students, or a small group to research. Distribute Writing Assignment #1. Discuss the directions in detail. Take your students to the library so they may work on the assignment. Students should fill out a "Nonfiction Assignment Sheet" for at least one of the sources they used, and students should submit these sheets with their compositions.

### **Topics**

1. Locate the state of Louisiana. Find the city of New Orleans and its French Quarter, Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Borge, Baratarian Bay, and the Mississippi River.
2. Were New Orleans and Louisiana always a part of the U.S.A?
4. Define Creole.
5. What is a Quaker? What are their beliefs?
6. Where are Whydah, the Bight of Benin, and the Gulf of Guinea located? What other name is this area given?
7. Locate Cuba and the West Indies. Describe their climate.
8. Locate the island of Sao Tome. What is distinct about its location?
9. What is a slave market? What is Congo Square in New Orleans?
10. Where is Charleston? Why would molasses be an important delivery there in the 1840's?
11. When was the Civil War? What were the issues? Where was Andersonville and what is it known for?
12. Describe the similarities and differences among these fabrics: brocade, silk, muslin, lace, damask, gauze, and velvet.
13. Make a timeline of slave trading starting with the 1500's through 1860's.
14. Who are the Ashantis? Yorubas? Ibos? Compare their cultures.
16. What was the British Blockade? U. S. Revenue Cutters?
17. What is a levee, a bayou?
18. What are doldrums? Where do they geographically occur?
19. Where is Cape Verde located? Describe its geography.
20. Name three of the Great Empires of West Africa.
21. Where and what is the Middle Passage?

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *The Slave Dancer*

### PROMPT

You are going to read a story about a boy your age from New Orleans who goes on an errand for his mother, and does not return for many months. It takes place in the 1840's in the South, a time of slave trading. It is realistic or historical fiction (the events in the novel *could* have taken place, but the characters and events are *fictional*). Before you read it, however, you should have some background information about some of the places and things mentioned in the story.

You have been assigned one topic about which you must find information. You are to read as much as you can about that topic and write a composition in which you relate what you have learned from your reading. Note that this is a *composition*, not just a sentence or two.

### PREWRITING

You will go to the library. When you get there, use the library's resources to find information about your topic. Look for books, encyclopedias, articles in magazines- anything that will give you the information you require. Take a few notes as you read to help you remember important dates, names, places, or other details that will be important in your composition.

After you have gathered information and become well-read on the subject of your report, make a little outline, putting your facts in order.

### DRAFTING

You will need an introductory paragraph in which you introduce your topic.

In the body of your composition, put the "meat" of your research- the facts you found- in paragraph form. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence (a sentence letting the reader know what the paragraph will be about) followed by an explanation, examples or details.

Write a concluding paragraph in which you summarize the information you found and conclude your report.

### PROMPT

After you have finished a rough draft of your paper, revise it yourself until you are happy with your work. Then, ask a student who sits near you to tell you what he/she likes best about your work, and what things he/she thinks can be improved. Take another look at your composition, keeping in mind your critic's suggestions, and make the revisions you feel are necessary.

### PROOFREADING

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