



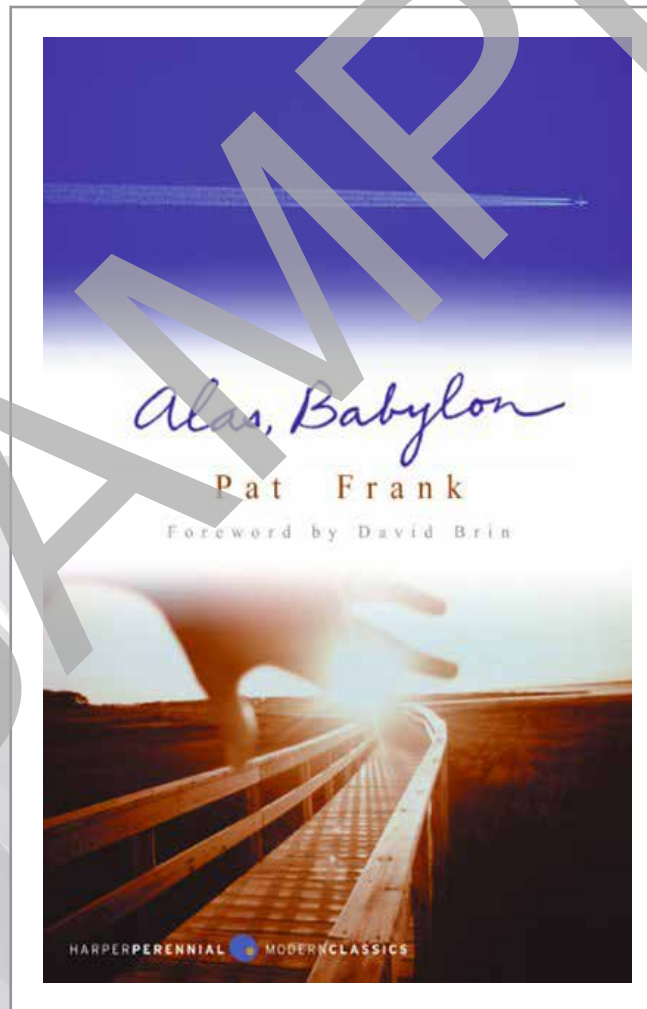
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Alas, Babylon

Pat Frank



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Alas, Babylon

Pat Frank

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Analysis, compare/contrast,
brainstorming, research,
critical thinking, evaluation

Vocabulary

Target words, definitions,
applications

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, reports,
monologue

Comprehension

Cause/effect, predicting,
inference, plot development,
thematic development

Literary Elements

Metaphor, simile,
personification, symbolism,
foreshadowing, irony,
characterization, setting,
theme, genre, tone

Writing

Poetry, prose, TV script,
journal, eulogy, lament,
sequel, brochure

Across the Curriculum

Music—lyrics, appropriate
selections; Art—montage,
collage, caricature; Drama—
TV script; Current Events—
magazine and newspaper
articles

Genre: apocalyptic fiction

Date of First Publication: 1959

Setting: Fort Repose, Central Florida; 1959

Point of View: third-person omniscient

Themes: survival, nuclear war, isolation, resourcefulness, interdependence, civilization, handling adversity, relationships

Conflict: nation vs. nation, person vs. person, person vs. self, person vs. adverse living conditions

Style: narrative; portrays the determination to survive and restore order following nuclear attack

Structure: sequential; chronicles a period of one year

Summary

Randy Bragg's brother Mark, who is in SAC Intelligence, informs him that nuclear war is imminent and sends his family to live with Randy in Fort Repose, Florida. Randy warns some of his closest friends, and they are able to make minimal preparations before the first nuclear attack. Because Fort Repose is in a low-radiation area, its citizens survive but are left with few necessities. Randy assumes leadership as the town's citizens face the struggle to survive. He gains their respect and establishes a system of law and order to combat the adversities and lawlessness of the isolated community. His own neighborhood on River Road becomes resourceful and creative in supplying essentials such as water, food, and shelter. After a year of the group surviving under adverse conditions, a helicopter carrying a military officer who is a friend of Randy's arrives. He brings news of the nuclear war and the ensuing catastrophic conditions throughout the country, and advises the people that it may take centuries before the contaminated regions can be restored to normal. Although he offers to take the residents of River Road to another part of the country, they choose to remain in their own community.

Characters

Randy Bragg: protagonist; lawyer who works sporadically and lives on his family's land in Fort Repose; has recently run for and lost his political campaign for representative to the state legislature; a former Army Reserve officer

Dan Gunn: Fort Repose's doctor; Randy's best friend; heroically serves the community in the aftermath of the nuclear attack

Elizabeth (Lib) McGovern: Randy's girlfriend; becomes his wife; attractive, resourceful, intelligent

Lavinia McGovern: Lib's mother; dies from diabetes complications due to lack of insulin

Bill McGovern: Lib's father; moves with Lib into Randy's home after his wife's death; helpful and encouraging

Mark Bragg: Randy's brother; Deputy Chief of Intelligence at Strategic Air Command; dies in the initial attack

Helen Bragg: Mark's wife; mother of their two children; brave and resourceful

Character Chart

Directions: In the boxes across from each of the feelings, describe an incident or time in the book when each of the listed characters experiences that feeling. You may use “not applicable” if you cannot find an example.

	Randy Bragg	Dan Gunn	Lib McGovern	Helen Bragg
Frustration				
Anger				
Fear				
Humiliation				
Relief				
Happiness				

Chapter 8, pp. 179–211

Four months after the The Day, hunger is ever present, and people gather to barter for food and other necessities. Dan encounters three cases of radiation poisoning. He and Randy finally pinpoint its source: Porky Logan has been distributing contaminated jewelry he seized outside Miami the day of the attack. Logan dies, and Gunn insists that the other victims get rid of the jewelry.

Vocabulary

inured (180)
maelstrom (181)
barter (182)
disparity (184)
insidious (186)
remunerative (188)
marauders (192)
ludicrously (193)
capriciously (195)
avocation (200)
highwaymen (210)

Discussion Questions

1. Examine changes during the four months since The Day. Note the cooperative, innovative survival tactics of the community on River Road. *(Their staple diet of citrus, fish, and eggs leaves them always hungry, but they are basically in good health. They all look forward to an improved diet when the Henrys' pigs, corn, and sugar cane are ready for consumption. Randy realizes they must help the Henrys more when someone or something begins to steal their chickens and pigs, and each male, including Ben Franklin, will take a watch to guard the Henrys' place. All the people work together to compensate for shortages of necessities. Florence, Helen, and Hannah Henry do the sewing with only needle and thread. Randy anticipates deficiencies and plans ahead in order to keep the house warm. Alice Cooksey is the only person on River Road who continues with her regular work, and the library is the center for entertainment, escape, and information. She does not have enough chairs to accommodate all the readers. Ministers of diverse denominations and different races plan an Easter service. Randy's faith and hope are rekindled when he reads the announcement and makes plans to go to the service. pp. 179–193)*
2. Discuss the “things” Randy misses. Assess the importance of the “little things” in life and what you would miss most if faced with challenges such as the characters in the novel face. *(He misses a painless shave, music, cigarettes, and his morning coffee. He does not miss whiskey and has felt no need of it since The Day; in fact, he now considers whiskey to be useful as an anesthetic and for trading. He most longs for coffee, which comes from South America and cannot be grown in Florida. Answers will vary. pp. 179–180)*
3. Discuss the implications of the bartering system. *(Dan employs a barter system in which his patients pay for his services with gasoline. People from the Fort Repose area gather at the park to barter for supplies. Racism is no longer a factor as people of different races tackle the laws of hunger and survival. Randy is unable to find coffee for any price. People are offering cars, boat motors, and other expensive items in exchange for food, and food items for such things as ammunition and toothpaste. Jim Hickey's gift of honey to Randy exemplifies the kindness and generosity so many have lost since The Day. The park also serves as a meeting place to speculate about the war: e.g., is the war still raging, and if so, who is winning? pp. 182, 190–197)*
4. Examine Dan's assessment of the three cases of radiation poisoning. Note the source and the effects on its casualties. *(The three serious cases of poisoning have Dan puzzled. He does not believe it is from delayed fallout because that would result in a large number of cases. In addition to the usual symptoms, the three victims have burns that are typical of radium or X-ray exposure. Porky Logan was the first victim. Bill Cullen and Pete Hernandez are also affected. Dan assures Randy that radiation is not transmitted via a germ or virus and that a victim must come in direct contact with something that is radioactive. Randy believes that Porky, who was in southern Florida*

on *The Day*, is the key to the problem. This proves true when the two men visit Pistolville and discover a radioactive burn underneath a ring on Rita Hernandez's finger. Rita reveals that Pete got the jewelry from Porky, who seized it from a store near Miami shortly after the nuclear blast. He has traded the jewelry to Pete and Bill for food and drink. Pete has symptoms of leukemia and will ultimately die. Randy and Dan discover Porky dead, with his hands and arms buried in the jewelry. Bill is dying, and his wife has discovered his hidden stash of jewelry and run away with it. Greed has literally and figuratively destroyed them. pp. 186–187, 204–211)

5. Examine conditions in Pistolville and Randy's assessment of the area. (*The area is filthy and malodorous, and the streets are filled with waste. The starving people have consumed every animal of any type. Randy compares the scene to the degradation in Suwon, South Korea, after the Korean War and believes the dreadful living conditions symbolize a regression of 4,000 years and that the same or worse conditions must exist throughout the country. The area of Pistolville in which Porky Logan and Rita and Pete Hernandez live is more bearable, with less filth and more fresh air, but the threat of crime is obvious.* pp. 198–201)
6. Analyze Rita Hernandez, noting her reaction to the nuclear attack and her interaction with Randy. Refer to the similes that describe her. (*She is a blend of Spanish, Caribbean Indian, and Mediterranean Minorcan blood. She is strikingly attractive with "features carved like a Malayan mask in antique ivory." She can "look, and behave, like an Egyptian queen of the Eighteenth Dynasty or a Creole whore out of New Orleans." She is intelligent and quick and has made men "her hobby," always making some kind of profit from the men she "collects." Her perfume reminds Randy of their liaison a year before. He realizes she is trying to entice him again, but her comments about the two women in his household repulse him. He now sees how used and tired she looks, indicative of the effects of the past four months on both of them, and refuses even to consider bartering with her for anything. Her house is filled with beautiful, expensive items she has obtained since *The Day* by trading food and supplies. They represent her plans for a future of wealth and ease after the war. She is frightened when she learns that her jewelry is radioactive and that Pete may die.* pp. 200–204)
7. Analyze the inference of Dan's statement, "in a few more months the jungle will take over" (p. 211). (*Fort Repose becomes more like a jungle each day, both literally and figuratively. The lush, overgrown foliage around the empty McGovern house reminds Dan of a jungle, and the effects of four months of starvation, rampant looting, and death indicate "survival of the fittest" just as in a jungle. Strong predators prey on the weak and devour them.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Quote: "The economics of disaster placed a penalty upon prejudice" (p. 190).
2. Write a poem in which you personify greed.
3. **Metaphor**—beer case filled with radioactive jewelry: furnace (p. 208); see also pp. 186, 188, 196; **Simile**—" (horn) raucous as an angry goose" (p. 197); see also pp. 181, 191, 193, 200, 205, 206