

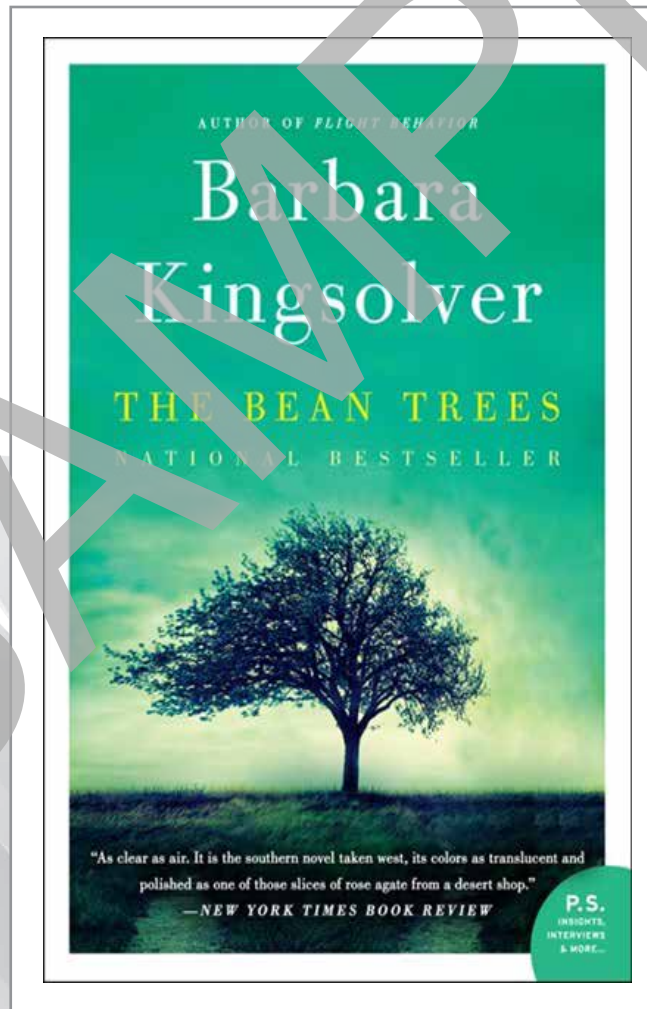


STUDENT PACKET

GRADES 9-12

The Bean Trees

Barbara Kingsolver



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Bean Trees

Barbara Kingsolver

STUDENT PACKET

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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Directions

Rate each of the following statements before you read the novel. In a small group, discuss your ratings and compare with those of others. After you have completed the novel, rate the statements again. Have any of your opinions changed?

1 ————— 2 ————— 3 ————— 4 ————— 5 ————— 6

agree strongly

strongly disagree

Before After

- | | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| 1. A family consists of a mother, a father, and their children. | _____ | _____ |
| 2. There is just no excuse for being poor if you live in America, the land of opportunity. | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Illegal aliens should be sent back to their own countries, even if doing so will endanger their lives. | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Immigrants shouldn't come here in the first place. | _____ | _____ |
| 5. "If it's you against the world, bet on the world." (Kafka) | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Most of the things you worry about never happen. | _____ | _____ |
| 7. There are some people in America who are invisible. | _____ | _____ |
| 8. The adoption process should be less difficult. | _____ | _____ |
| 9. We all need one another, and we should act accordingly. | _____ | _____ |
| 10. An adult should never strike a child. | _____ | _____ |
| 11. My country is my country, right or wrong. | _____ | _____ |
| 12. A wife should always try to please her husband, even if he doesn't treat her well. | _____ | _____ |
| 13. With good friends on your side, you can get through anything. | _____ | _____ |

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Chapters 9–11

- *1. Why do you think Kingsolver begins Chapter 9 with such an abrupt statement: *“Esperanza tried to kill herself”*?
- *2. Taylor tells Estevan about the cliques in her high school and the “no mixing” rule? How is this like our society? like your school?
3. What happened as a result of Estevan and Esperanza knowing the names of members of an underground union?
- *4. Why does Estevan say, *“You live in that world”* (page 137)?
- *5. To what—in your life—might you compare the Family of Dolls (page 138)?
6. As Taylor, Lou Ann and Turtle look up at the wisteria, they see three different things. What are they?
7. What does Taylor find out about Edna Poppy?
8. Why is “Esperanza” an appropriate name for this character?
- *9. How do you think Lou Ann felt after the interview at the convenience store?
10. Why does Taylor call Red Hot Mama’s a sweatshop?
11. What “unjust truth” does Taylor face at the end of Chapter 11?

Prediction

Will Lou Ann move to Montana? Will Estevan and Esperanza get to safety?

Chapters 12 & 13

1. What surprises Taylor most about the desert?
2. What makes this night (Chapter 12) so terrible?
3. Why do you think Kingsolver included the bird in the house?
4. Why is Taylor so depressed?
5. What bad news does the social worker, Cynthia, have for Taylor?
6. How do Lou Ann and Mattie prove to be real friends to Taylor?
7. How does Taylor’s opinion of Cynthia change (pages 180-181)?
8. What decision has Taylor made (page 183)? What are the risks?
- *9. Why does Taylor say, *“It’s a sad day for us all if I’m being a hero here”* (page 188)?

Prediction

Will Estevan and Esperanza get safely to Oklahoma? Will Taylor find Turtle’s relatives?

The Bean Trees
Activity #7 • Critical Thinking/Writing
 Use After Chapter 1

Taylor makes it very clear that she owes a lot to her mother for making her feel good about herself in spite of not having much money and never knowing her father. Taylor had specific goals in high school—things to avoid, and things to do. Think about your own goals, and what a parent, teacher, or other adult could say to you to help you reach those goals. Then write a letter to yourself from that adult. Tell yourself how great you are!

Before you begin writing the letter, jot some notes on the diagram below.

What Taylor wanted to avoid	What I want to avoid
Taylor's goals in high school	My goals
What Taylor's mother said to make her feel able to reach her goals	What I would like to hear about myself from _____:

Write your letter on the back of your paper or on a separate sheet.

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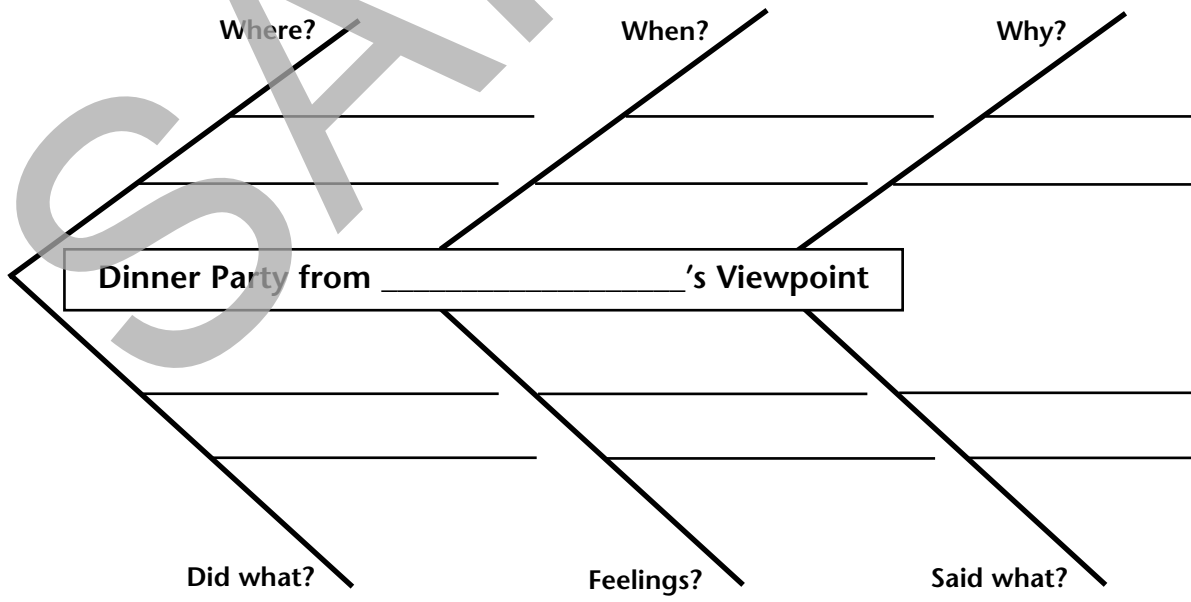
The Bean Trees
Activity #9 • Critical Thinking:
 Point of View/Writing
 Use After Chapter 8 or Later

Point of view is the vantage point from which the narrator presents the story to us. The narrative may be in **first person** or in **third person**. A story told completely in first person limits our knowledge to what the narrator observes, knows, and thinks about. We don't know the hidden thoughts in other characters' heads. Third-person narrators may be **omniscient**—seeing and knowing everything that happens—or **limited** to what is observed by one or a few characters. Another technique used frequently by modern authors is multiple points of view. While most of *The Bean Trees* is told in first person by Taylor, Chapters 2 and 4 are told from a **third-person-limited** point of view.

What if Kingsolver had decided to describe the dinner party (pages 102-108) from the points of view of all who attended? What would be Esperanza's impression of Taylor? of Virgie Mae? What would be going on in Turtle's and Dwayne Ray's minds? What is Estevan thinking as he watches Mattie being interviewed on TV?

Choose one of the characters who appears in the dinner-party scene (other than Taylor). On the fishbone map below, make a few notes about this character's probable thoughts. Then re-write the scene from this character's point of view.

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Directions

Place each character below in one or more of the boxes. Discuss in a small group why you think the characters in a given box belong together:

Characters

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|--------------------|------------|
| Taylor | Newt Hardbine | Taylor’s mother | Edna Poppy |
| Lou Ann | Hughes Walter | Ivy Logan | Mrs. Hoge |
| Turtle | Mattie | Granny Logan | Sandi |
| Jolene | Estevan | Angel Ruiz | La-Isha |
| Mr. Hardbine | Esperanza | Virgie Mae Parsons | Cynthia |

Victims	Victimizers	Dreamers
Lonely Ones	Kind Ones	Heroes
Mean Ones	Clueless Ones	Growing to Maturity

Writing Assignment

Choose one or two groups of characters as the basis for an essay. One way of developing your essay would be to compare and contrast how the characters within the group manifest the common characteristic. Give supporting evidence—actions the characters take, statements they make, statements others make about the characters in this group, etc. What might Barbara Kingsolver be saying about people with this quality?

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