



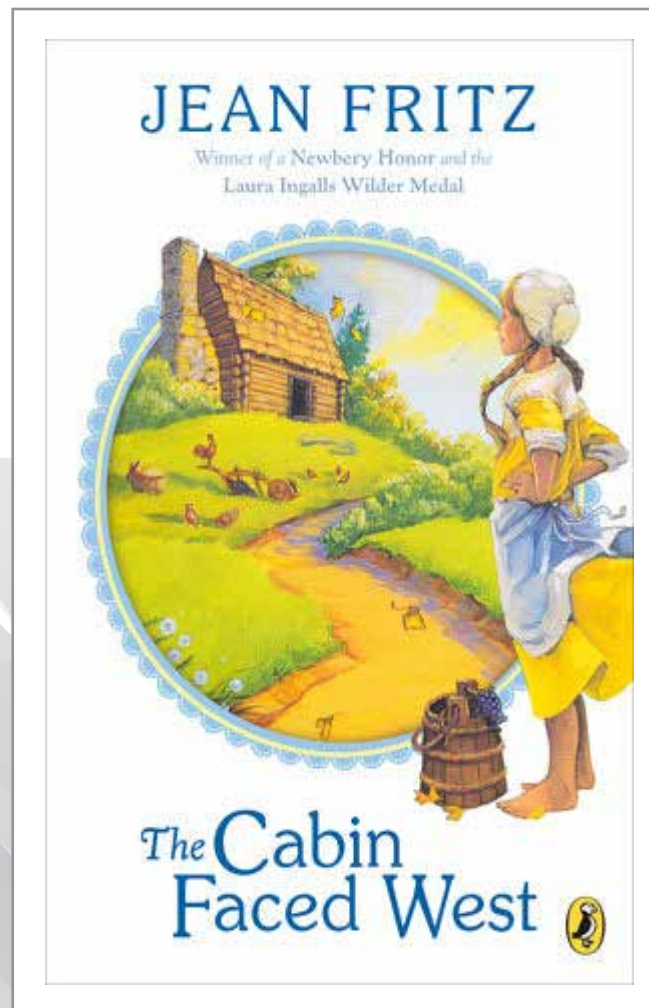
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Cabin Faced West

Jean Fritz



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Cabin Faced West

Jean Fritz

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

Brainstorming, research

Comprehension

Predicting, cause-and-effect,
comparison/contrast

Writing

Journals, step-by-step
instructions, narrative,
creative

Vocabulary

Word mapping, analogies,
antonyms/synonyms

Listening/Speaking

Drama

Literary Elements

Characterization, similes,
point of view, personification,
story elements

Summary

Winner of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal, this historical fiction is based, in part, on the life of a real pioneer girl, Ann Hamilton (great-great-grandmother of Jean Fritz). The story is set on Hamilton Hill, Pennsylvania, during the 1780's. When Ann is ten years old, her family moves "West" from Gettysburg in search of land. Ann finds it hard to share her father's optimism; she is lonely for her old home and friend, Margaret. The closest person to a friend here is Andy McPhale, a strange boy whose family is having a difficult time making ends meet. Ann teaches Andy the alphabet and agrees to teach him to read using a rather unique method: He leaves messages scratched in the dirt and she corrects the spelling when she finds them.

One day, Ann forgets to tend the fire and it dies. A handsome young stranger, Arthur Scott, rides up and rekindles the flame to Ann's relief. That evening, Ann is intrigued by Arthur's stories of General Washington's optimism at Valley Forge and as he describes the courage of one young girl, Ann begins to identify with that girl—Rachel. Ann spends many happy hours talking with Arthur and is sorry to see him leave. (We find out in the prologue that she marries him years later.) To make things worse, her special diary disappears. To cheer herself up, she takes down her special doll, Semanthie, removes some of the family's fine china from its packing, and sets up a tea party under a tree. Her mother discovers her there; and to Ann's surprise, her mother not only fails to grow angry, but joins her for a lovely afternoon.

Days later, a fierce storm destroys the vegetable garden on which Ann has worked so hard. She is determined to ask her mother if she can go back East with Andy's family, but decides not to. When Andy is gone, a glum Ann discovers the diary where he has hidden it—along with a beautiful deerskin cover he has fashioned for it. Depressed, she goes for a walk on the road and meets none other than George Washington and a band of men. They all return to her home for dinner and conversation, and Ann is inspired by what she hears. As he is leaving, Washington rests his hand on Ann's head and tells her he envies her for her part in building the new world rising in the West. The glow lingers long afterward, and her happiness is completed by the arrival of the mail—with a letter from Margaret saying that she is coming for a visit.

Introductory Activities

You may wish to choose one or more of the following prereading discussion questions/activities. Each is designed to help students draw from their store of background knowledge about the events and themes they will discover in the story they are about to read.

Prereading Discussion Questions

1. On Pioneer Days: What do you know about pioneer life shortly after the American Revolution? Why did people move West? What sorts of hardships did they face? What types of homes did they build? How did they get food? What was life like for children? What were their responsibilities? What did they do in their free time?
2. On Optimism: What is optimism? What are some examples? Are you optimistic? Why is it good to be optimistic? Is it always better to keep your complaints to yourself? What are some situations when you should try to be optimistic?

Chapter 1 & “Dear Boys and Girls” (pp. 9-17)

Vocabulary

pouting 10
hearth 12

settlement 11
johnnycake 12

squatters 11
hopeful 16

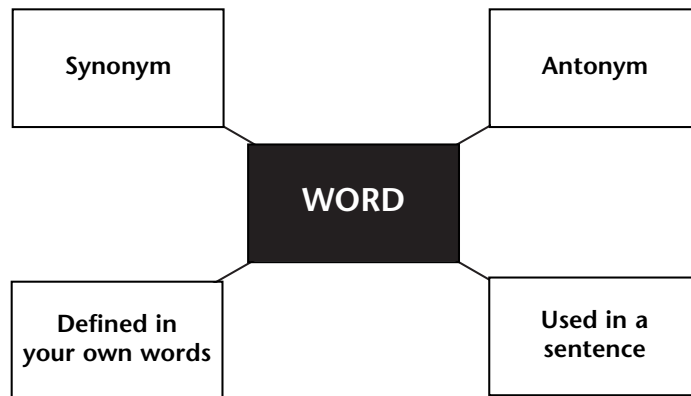
makeshift 12

Vocabulary Activities

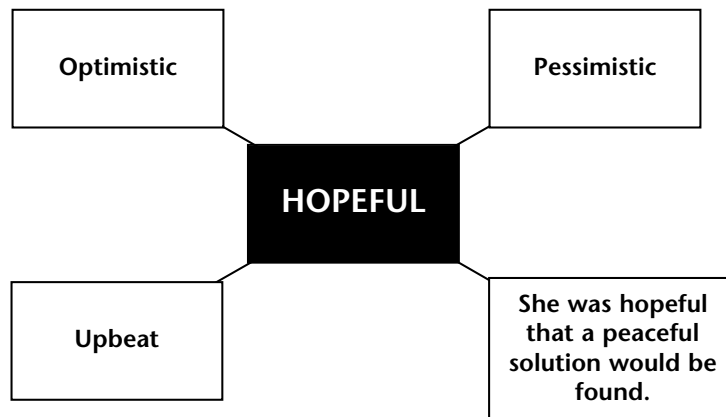
1. Complete the synonym chain begun for you below.

settlement—community—village—

2. Develop word maps for *pouting*, *makeshift*, and *hopeful* using the framework below.



Sample map for *hopeful*



Background information

Colonial settlers ate a lot of corn prepared in several forms (fresh, dried, ground into cornmeal). When fresh fruit and vegetables were scarce, especially during the winter, the women used cornmeal in a variety of porridges, breads, puddings, and pancakes. The cornmeal pancakes were known as JOHNNYCAKES.

Discussion Questions

1. Were you surprised by what you learned in the letter the author wrote to “girls and boys”? Why do you think she wrote the letter? (*She lets readers know that much of the story is true.*)
2. How does Ann feel about her new home? Why? (*She misses her friends, her school, her more comfortable life.*)
3. What is “The Rule”? Do you think it is a good one? (*Anyone who finds fault with the West gets a bucket of cold water poured over his/her head.*)
4. Why did Ann’s mother frown and tell her that her work was finished? What does this show about the mother? (*She could see that Ann was unhappy; she is sensitive to her daughter.*)
5. Who was Semanthie? What else did Ann keep with Semanthie? What else would you have kept there? (*Semanthie was a special doll; Ann kept her with her other special possessions—a diary, her blue shoes, her satin hair ribbons—on a jutting log.*)
6. Why do you suppose the diary was Ann’s “dearest possession”? What is yours? Why did she write in such small letters?
7. What were the two words Ann learned to hate? Why did she hate them? (*“Some day.” She was tired of hearing promises of the better world—with books, her own shelf, windows—which the family would see in the future.*)

Prediction: Why is Ann going down to the road? Where is she going? What is she going to do?

Writing Activity

Begin a double-entry journal. After reading each chapter of the book, write a brief summary in the left column. In the right-hand column react to what you have read. This might include personal experiences of which the story reminded you, other stories which come to mind, questions you have about the reading, what you would have done if you had been Ann, etc.

Chapter 2 (pp. 18-28)

Vocabulary

shuddered 19
impishness 24
smarting 25
scoffed 27

linsey 19
slouch 24
primly 26
scorn 27

scowl 20
mockery 24
breathlessly 27
gruffly 27

churned 20
geography 25
deliberately 27
exasperation 28

Suggestions to use this Jean Fritz novel in integrated instruction

