

Teacher Guide

Grades 5–6

A Long Way from Chicago

Richard Peck



**NEW WAYS TO TEACH READING,
WRITING, & CRITICAL THINKING**



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A LONG WAY FROM CHICAGO

by
Richard Peck

Teacher Guide

Written by
Elizabeth Klar

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Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
About the Author	3
Introductory Activities	3
Vocabulary Activities.....	4
Chapter-by-Chapter.....	11
Chapters contain: Vocabulary Words, Discussion Questions and Activities, Supplementary Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions.....	27
Post-reading Activities	28
Assessment	30

Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Identifying attributes,
compare/contrast, pros/cons,
brainstorming, research

Listening/Speaking

Dramatizing, interviewing,
discussion, music, story-
telling

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,
summarizing, cause and
effect, main idea

Literary Elements

Characterization, setting,
plot, development, humor,
idioms

Vocabulary

Target words, context clues,
root/base, synonym,
antonym, word maps

Other

Social studies—maps,
research, science, math—
graphs, art—drawing and
design

Writing

Character journal, poem,
sensory writing, eulogy

Discussion Questions

1. Why didn't Mary Alice want to go back to Grandma's house? (*Going to Grandma's house meant another week away from her friends and she claimed she hadn't recovered from the last visit and was still having nightmares.*)
2. What happens to Grandma's mailbox? (*The Cowgill brothers blow it up.*)
3. Why does Grandma tell Ernie Cowgill she does not need milk and cream delivered the next morning, as she is taking her grandchildren to see her cousin? (*She is setting a trap for the Cowgill brothers.*)
4. Why do you think Joey is afraid of the Cowgill brothers? (*Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. **Music:** Have each of the students write and then sing an original jump rope song.
2. **Critical Thinking:** Have the students discuss the bombing of Grandma's mailbox. Why do you think someone would destroy her property? Do you think it was done for a joke or for pure meanness? Why do you think Grandma knew exactly who had done the deed?
3. **Research:** Have the students research the Winchester Gun Company. What year did they begin to make guns? In what state was the factory located? What types of guns were made at the beginning and at the present time? What famous people or groups are known to have used these firearms?
4. **Listening/Writing:** Have the students write a policeman to the class to learn about gun safety. Students should then design a poster that emphasizes gun safety.

The Mouse in the Milk—1930

Part 2/Pages 27-35

Vocabulary

swayed (27)	confident (27)	file (27)	terrified (27)
scuffle (28)	crinkle (28)	linoleum (28)	manure-caked (29)
singed (29)	voiceless (29)	maw (29)	paw (29)
depot (29)	ragtime beat (29)	tambourines (29)	rafters (29)
dwell (30)	pinned (31)	raying (31)	clung (31)
tumbling (31)	squinting (31)	bulb (31)	pilfering (31)
reform (31)	temptation (31)	liable (31)	glimmer (31)
wickedly (31)	spectacles (31)	specialty (31)	chairs (31)
whimpered (32)	conscience (31)	high-spirited (32)	phones (32)
smirk (32)	unwilling (33)	explanation (32)	travelled (33)
remarked (33)	ransack (33)	capable (33)	knugs (33)
prey (33)	shrank (34)	stroke (33)	squealed (34)
lamented (34)	clattered (34)	discarded (34)	britches (35)
linger (35)	bobbing (35)		

Discussion Questions (continued from Part 1)

5. Why do the Cowgill brothers break into Grandma's house? (*They want to steal her shotgun.*)
6. Why do you think the Cowgill brothers blow up Grandma's mailbox, tip over Effie's outhouse, and try to steal Grandma's shotgun? (*Answers will vary.*)

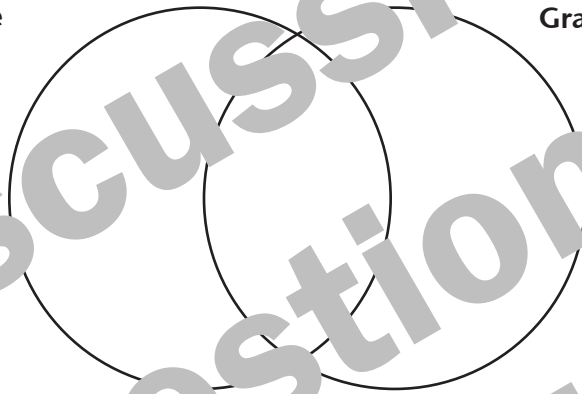
7. What does Grandma do to catch the Cowgill boys in the act of stealing? (*She tempts them with the shotgun, waits for them to take the bait, then throws a cherry bomb at them.*)
8. Why do you think Effie acts so surprised to see Joey in the church? (*Answers will vary.*)
9. What does Grandma mean when she says, "Oh, they wandered into the wrong house all right, and they'd already blowed up the wrong mailbox"? (*Grandma was not going to let the brothers get away with vandalism and stealing.*)
10. Why do you think Grandma puts a mouse in her milk? (Answers will vary.)

Supplementary Activities

1. **Discussion:** Have the students discuss their answers to the following: Compare today's household conveniences to those of Grandma Dowdel's 1930s home.
2. **Critical Thinking:** Have the students make a Venn diagram that shows the similarities and differences between Cowgill's and Grandma Dowdel's life in farm town in Illinois.

Cowgill's Life

Grandma Dowdel's



3. **Writing:** Have students write a paragraph that begins with the following phrase: I'd rather live in the city now/better in the city than Grandma Dowdel's house because . . .
4. **Discussion:** Have the class discuss the following question: Do you think Grandma Dowdel received "justice" when Mr. Cowgill "whaled the hell" out of his four sons? Why or why not?
5. **Writing:** Have students think about the "mouse incident" in the chapter about "The Mouse in the Milk." Have them write about the event, then share their comments with a partner.

Decision-Making Grid

Directions: Use this decision-making grid to assess other ways Grandma Dowdel might have helped Mrs. Wilcox after she loses her home.

CHOICES	CRITERIA			
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				