



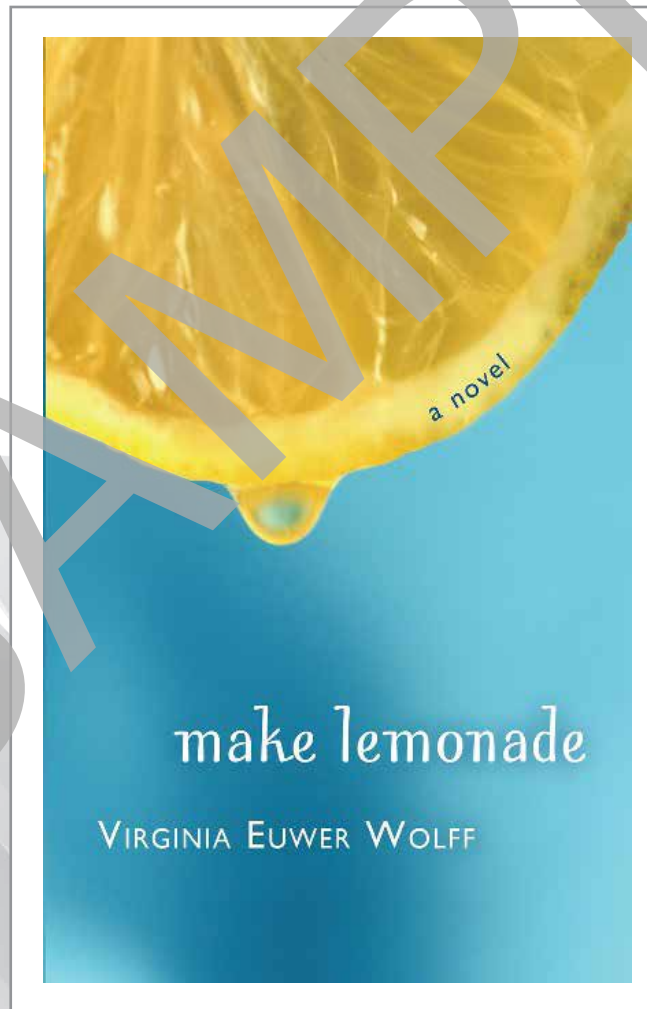
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Make Lemonade

Virginia Euwer Wolff



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Make Lemonade

Virginia Euwer Wolff

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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3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, pros/cons, critical thinking, brainstorming, predicting, decision making

Comprehension

Cause/effect, value assessment, evaluation, retelling

Writing

Informative, descriptive, creative, letter, poetry, short story, journal, review, character sketch, essay

Listening/Speaking

Oral presentation, discussion, interview

Vocabulary

Definitions, parts of speech, glossaries

Literary Elements

Symbolism, characterization, genre, theme, conflict, figurative language

Across the Curriculum

Art—sketches, paintings;
Health—STDs, self-defense;
Math—estimation, budgets;
Science—plants, vision, anti-drug campaigns

Genre: young-adult fiction

Setting: a poor area in a large city

Point-of-View: first-person narrative

Themes: poverty, hope, justice, survival, family, determination

Conflict: person vs. self, person vs. person, person vs. society

Style: narrative

Tone: candid

Summary

LaVaughn, a poor 14-year-old with the desire to escape her environment and one day attend college, takes on a babysitting job for 17-year-old Jolly, mother of two. As LaVaughn spends time with Jolly and her children, she comes to love them and helps Jolly join a Moms Up program to continue her education. Jolly and LaVaughn's friendship changes over time as each girl challenges the other about the way she sees life. After Jolly is able to pull part of her life back together, she drifts away from LaVaughn.

About the Author

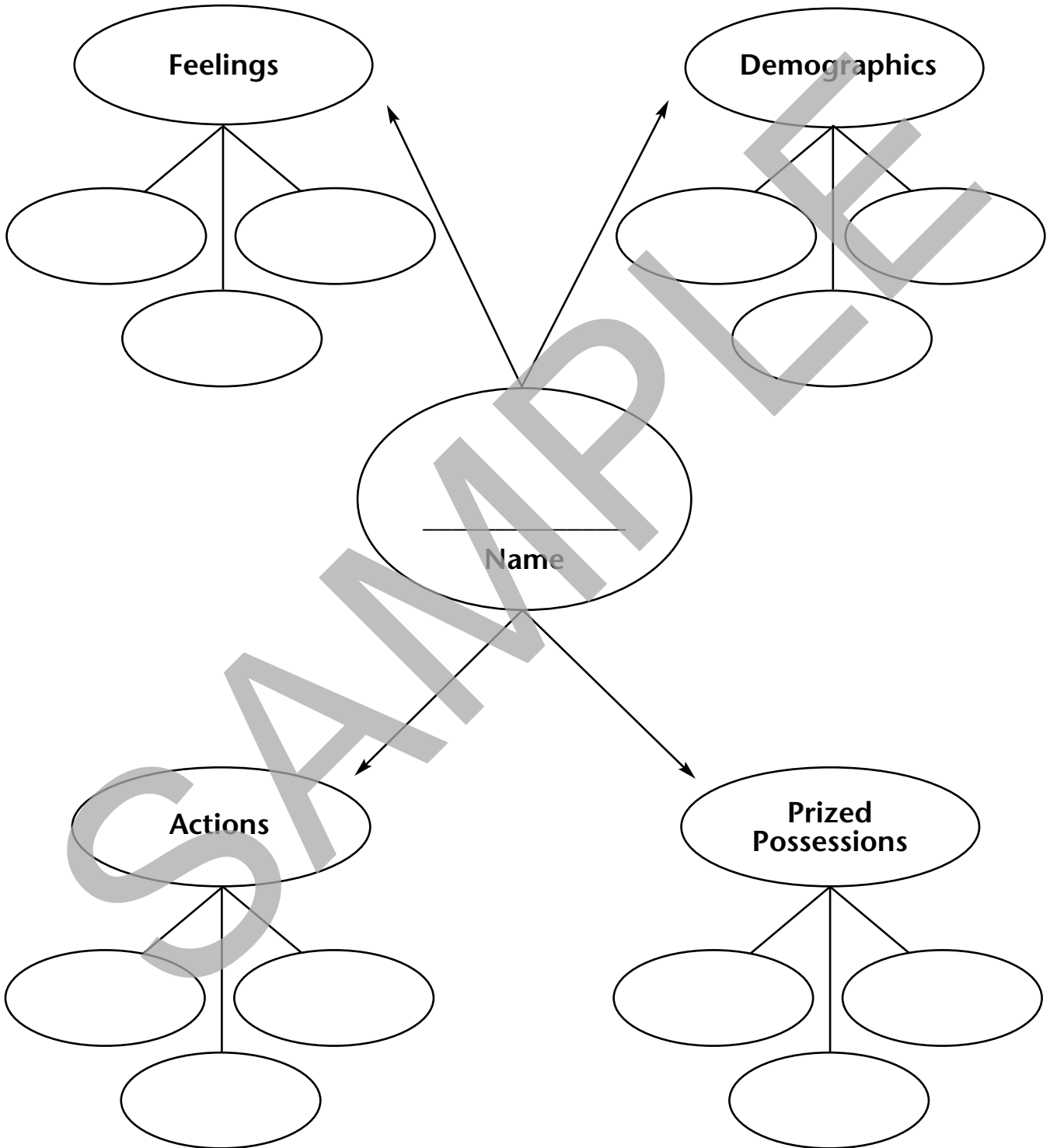
Virginia Euwer Wolff was born in Oregon in 1937. She was raised in a log house with no electricity, surrounded by books. She graduated with her bachelor's degree from Smith College in 1959 and became an elementary and high-school English teacher. She has a son and daughter and two grandchildren. Today, she still lives in Oregon. Her hobbies include playing the violin, hiking, swimming, and gardening. She enjoys listening to classical music while she writes.

Wolff's first book for young readers, *Probably Still Nick Swansen*, was published in 1988. It won both the IRA Award and the PEN-West Book Award. Among her other works for young adults are *Bat 6*, *The Mozart Season*, and *True Believer*, the second book in the *Make Lemonade* trilogy. This award-winning author has also been honored with the Golden Kite Award for Fiction and the Jane Addams Book Award for Children's Books that Build Peace.

Regarding aspects of *Make Lemonade*, Wolff says that she intentionally did not assign a specific race or ethnicity to her characters, giving readers freedom to make the characters their own. While she is aware *Make Lemonade* is poetry, Wolff prefers to refer to it as a free-verse narrative. The form came from the author's desire to make the story accessible to a variety of readers, and she says she wanted the "friendliness of white space on a page" (www.hbook.com/publications/magazine/articles/may01_wolff_sutton.asp [active at the time of publication]). Once she began writing in free-verse, she found it virtually impossible to rearrange the text into true paragraph form. Originally, Wolff did not intend the book to have a sequel, but she became intrigued with LaVaughn's character and was willing to write more about LaVaughn at her editor's suggestion.

Character Web

Directions: Complete the attribute web by filling in information specific to a character in the book.



Chapters 1–13, pp. 3–28

Fourteen-year-old LaVaughn is determined to save money for college to escape the life of poverty she knows. To earn money, LaVaughn convinces her protective mother to let her babysit two young children for a struggling single teenage mother named Jolly.

Vocabulary

dormitory (9)
span (12)
patrolling (15)
clench (21)
sooty (25)
continent (26)
pities (27)

Discussion Questions

1. To what does the narrator compare the story she is about to tell? After reading page 3, do you want to hear the narrator's take on the tale, or not? Explain. *(to a bird that only you saw eating and walking on the sidewalk; Answers will vary. p. 3)*
2. What causes LaVaughn to pull a tab from the ad for a babysitter rather than the housecleaning ads her friends choose? What would you have done? *(because no one else had; Answers will vary. p. 4)*
3. What surprise does LaVaughn experience when she meets Jolly and her children for the first time? How do you think she was feeling about taking the job before and after this surprise? Explain. *(Jeremy sneaks his hand to hers and holds her fingers. Answers will vary, but note how she mentions this detail to her mother when trying to convince her to approve the job. pp. 7, 19)*
4. Jolly's first impression of LaVaughn is that she is not "beefy" enough to handle her children. What is your first impression of Jolly? Discuss whether one should trust their first impressions of someone else, as LaVaughn does not agree with Jolly's impression of her. *(Answers will vary. Suggestions: Jolly is a struggling young mother who loves her children but cannot afford much for them. Her house is messy and her job low-paying. She has probably been on her own for a long time, as she almost scoffs at LaVaughn's need to get her mother's permission to take the babysitting job. pp. 6–8)*
5. What does college symbolize to LaVaughn and her mother? *(freedom from the life they live now, pp. 9–12)*
6. What reasons does LaVaughn list for why she should take the job with Jolly? Does she have reasons she shouldn't? Why does LaVaughn choose to leave out some of her reasons when talking with her mother? Is she right to do this? Is it a good persuasive strategy? *(Her reasons include needing money for college, the job has good hours and leaves time for homework, she knows how to babysit, the way Jolly looked and sounded, how easy it is to get to the apartment by bus, and how Jeremy held her hand of his own volition. Some of the reasons she shouldn't may be hidden in Jolly's looks or in the messiness and instability of the house. Being so poor and desperate, it is possible Jolly will not be able to pay her. Answers will vary. pp. 14–15)*
7. What does the verse about Jeremy's bad dream say about why LaVaughn keeps going back to Jolly's? *(Answers will vary. Suggestion: She feels like she is doing the children some good by being there to care for them. She can provide temporary comfort even though she can't permanently change their circumstances, just as Jeremy's crying started up again after he was calmed for a moment. p. 20)*
8. On page 24, why does LaVaughn say she is afraid? *(Answers will vary. Suggestion: She is afraid that she might not actually escape from the kind of life Jolly leads, even though she wants to.)*

9. What do you think the title *Make Lemonade* has to do with the book? Explain why you think the author chose this title. *(Answers will vary. Note Jeremy's lemon plant he is watching, waiting for it to bloom. He is hopeful of something new and fresh. Also note LaVaughn's desire to take her current bitter situation and turn it into something wonderful by going to college and escaping a life of poverty. p. 25, throughout)*
10. In what form is the book written? Do you find it easy or difficult to read? Discuss the pros and cons of writing a book in this form. *(a type of poetry called free-verse; Answers will vary.)*
11. **Prediction:** Will LaVaughn be able to keep her job at Jolly's?

Supplementary Activities

1. Character Web: Begin the Character Web on page 9 of this guide for each of the main characters as they are introduced into the story. Continue completing the webs as you read the book.
2. Literary Devices: Use the chart on page 10 of this guide to keep a list of metaphors, similes, or personification that especially strike you. After you have compiled a list of at least ten examples, write a paragraph explaining whether or not these analogies would have been as effective if written as prose rather than poetry.
3. Art: Draw or sketch a picture that depicts at least two characters in the story. Compare your drawings with those of others in the class, and have a discussion about why people picture the characters differently or in the same way.

Chapters 14–22, pp. 29–53

LaVaughn potty-trains Jeremy and teaches him to make his bed. Jolly comes home one night with a bloody face, and LaVaughn's mother doctors Jolly. Jeremy cuts off part of Jilly's hair, and Jolly and LaVaughn talk a little about their pasts. LaVaughn tells Jolly when her father died, and Jolly talks about going to the funeral of a young man who lived in boxes on the street like she did when she was younger.

Vocabulary
solemn (32)
pleading (33)
tetanus (35)
tenant (36)
sinuses (38)
queer (40)
toupee (43)
remnants (46)
pleated (47)
daffodil (48)
quadruple (49)

Discussion Questions

1. Consider how LaVaughn and Jolly treat Jeremy and Jilly and how LaVaughn's mother treats LaVaughn. Discuss what it takes to make a good parent or babysitter. *(Answers will vary. Note how LaVaughn is careful when punishing the children and how she takes time to potty-train Jeremy and is patient with the process. Jolly loves her children, and it is clear she does everything she can for them, even though she can't do much more than love them. LaVaughn's mother is protective of her but knows she cannot hide LaVaughn from the darker side of life. While allowing LaVaughn to experience difficult situations, she is also careful to make sure LaVaughn keeps her goals and priorities straight. Discussions will vary.)*