



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Slake's Limbo

Felice Holman

READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

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Felice Holman

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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

novelunits.com

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Identify attributes, research, compare/contrast, pros/cons, brainstorming, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking

Listening/Speaking

Dramatizing, interviewing, story telling, discussion, oral reports, music

Literary Elements

Literary analysis, story mapping, plot development, setting, characterization

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing, foreshadowing, cause and effect, inference, anticipating

Vocabulary

Charades, word maps, synonyms, antonyms, defining, parts of speech

Writing

Character journal, poetry, personal, creative, headlines, directions, news article, letter, summary

Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—maps, labor laws; Science—eye care, animal research, geography; Math—calculating; Art—drawing, design, murals, comic strips, advertisements; Health—nutrition; Computers—Web page development

Summary

Slake's Limbo tells the story of Aremis Slake, a nearsighted, thirteen-year-old boy, who escapes to the New York subway to avoid the harassment of his classmates. Although Slake hides in the underground tunnels of New York, he cannot break away from his burden of fear and misfortune. Through many trials and hardships, Slake learns to face his adversities through his stubborn will to endure.

About the Author

Felice Holman was raised in the suburbs of New York. She has written many noteworthy books for young people including *The Escape of the Giant Hogstalk*, *The Cricket Winter*, *The Future of Hooper Toote*, and *Real*. Ms. Holman lives in Connecticut.

Introductory Activities

1. **Previewing the Book:** Have students look at the cover and answer the journalist's questions about what they see: Who? Where? What? When? and Why? Based on their answers, students predict what the book will be about.
2. **Predict:** Given the following clues, students write a paragraph predicting what they think will happen in the story.
subway courage stubborn misfortune hunger
3. **Character Journal:** List the main characters from *Slake's Limbo* and have students choose one. As they read the book, students write regular entries from that character's point of view. Journal entries should reflect on the events of the story. At various points in their reading, have students share their journals with classmates.
4. **Attribute Web:** Create an attribute web (see pages 8-10 of this guide) with students for each of the following ideas: survival, decision, bravery, hunger, and rejection. Ask students to quickly tell what each word brings to mind. Encourage students to elaborate on particular ideas.
5. **Prediction Chart:** Have students set up a prediction chart (see pages 6-7 of this guide) to use as they read the book.
6. **Anticipation Questions:** Have students respond to each of the following statements with a "thumbs up" (I agree) or a "thumbs down" (I disagree) and discuss their responses.
 - Children should never tease each other.
 - Extended family members are always kind.
 - Children need to live in a loving and caring home.
 - Love is shown in different ways.
 - Some people have no hidden talents or abilities.

20. Why do you think people in the subway begin to look like sheep to Willis Joe? (*Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Health/Food: Slake often eats only one meal per day. Have students research nutrition and the minimum daily requirements from the basic food groups. As a class, determine what Slake is lacking in his diet. Discuss the ramifications of not eating a proper diet and the health problems this can cause.
2. Research: Have interested students research labor laws to determine the age a young person can begin working. What are the current age minimums, wage minimums, and hourly stipulations? Determine what types of taxes are deducted from a worker's paycheck. Have the students write a report to share their findings with the class.
3. Critical Thinking/Research: Divide students into groups or pairs. Students should research the problem of homelessness in their community. Instruct students to find statistics from various years, as well as resources available for the needy/homeless. Students should compile their information and, as a class, discuss their findings. Ask them to think critically about the following: How were these numbers determined? How is homelessness/poverty viewed in your community? What help is available for those who find themselves in this situation? What can you do to help? Is there a permanent solution to the problems of homelessness and extreme poverty? Why or why not?

Chapters 11 and 12, pages 88-103

Vocabulary

drowsing (91)	mélange (92)	raucous (92)	abstractions (92)
hearty (92)	explicably (96)	dawdle (96)	barred (98)
blurs (98)	extension (101)	negligence (102)	reinforced (102)
hindrances (104)	prophecy (105)	anxiety (106)	complicated (106)
slough (107)	dank (107)	clammy (107)	nuisance (109)

Discussion Questions

1. Why isn't Slake afraid when there is a power outage in the subway station? (*He is used to the darkness of his world and welcomes it as a shield between himself and the truth.*)
2. Why do you think the cleaning lady holds Slake's hand during the power outage? (*Answers will vary.*)
3. What does the man in the turban mean when he remarks that the power outage is like "De-evolution"? (*Answers will vary.*)
4. Why does Slake think the policeman will not catch the purse-snatcher? (*To Slake, the thief appears to have a technique that suggests he has done this before.*)
5. What do Slake's nightmares reveal about his fears? (*Answers will vary.*)

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6. Why is Slake satisfied by the rat's improved appearance? *(Answers will vary.)*
 7. What does seeing the group of people with the "Save the East Side" signs make Slake realize? *(There is nothing he wants to save from or for anyone the way those people want to save the East Side.)*
 8. Why do you think Slake sprays "Save Aremis Slake" on one of his newspaper-covered walls? *(Answers will vary.)*
 9. Why does Slake spray his sky green? *(Answers will vary.)*
 10. How do the monotony of his job and his inability to fulfill his sheep-herding dream affect Willis Joe? *(He becomes depressed, quarrels with his wife and children, and drives in an angry manner.)*
 11. How does Slake know immediately that something has happened in the station? *(The station is more crowded than it should be at that time, the police are putting up barricades, and people are noisy and talking together.)*
 12. How does Slake feel when he finds he cannot go back to his home due to the accident? *(He is worried and anxious.)*
 13. Why does Slake worry when he learns that the tunnel will be repaired soon? *(He is afraid the workers will discover his home in the wall.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Writing: Have the students write about a dream they have had. What happened in the dream? Was it a good or bad dream? What did the dream mean?
2. Science: Ask interested students to compile research about rats. Have the students chart the benefits and disadvantages of rats.
3. Art: Have students draw what they think Slake's room looks like after he paints the walls.
4. Drama: Have students act out the scene where the boy tries to steal the lady's purse.

Chapters 13, 14, and 15, pages 104-117

Vocabulary

quake (110)	transit (110)	attentively (110)	mission (110)
calling (110)	trundle (111)	pneumonia (111)	astounded (112)
incredible (113)	visualized (113)	vaguely (114)	variously (114)
effortless (114)	retched (115)	liberated (115)	aftertaste (116)
instinct (116)			