



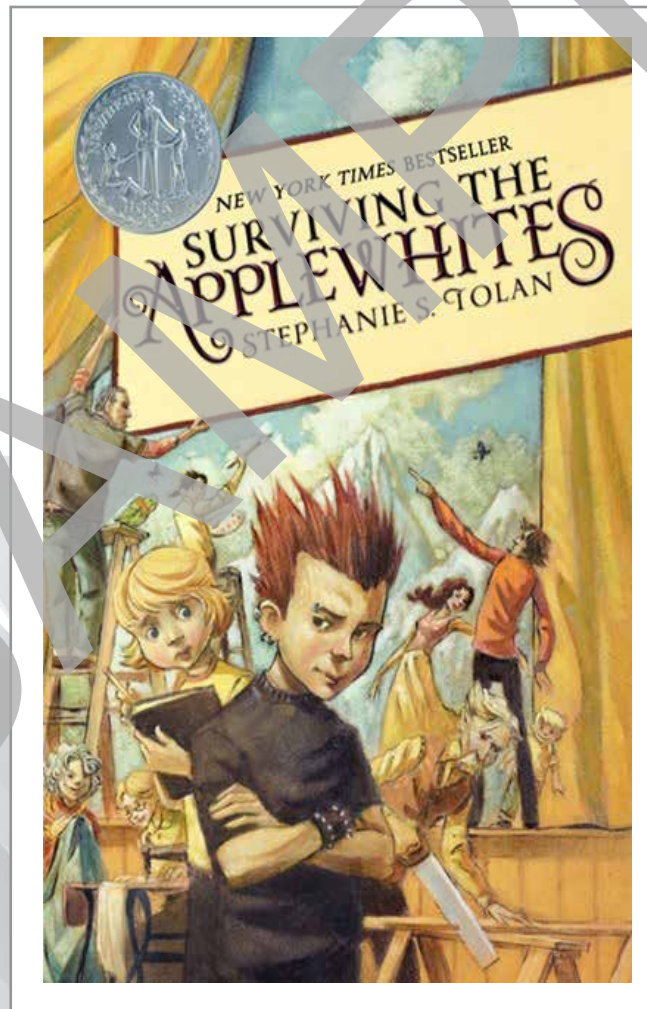
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Surviving the Applewhites

Stephanie S. Tolan



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Surviving the Applewhites

Stephanie S.Tolan

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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Table of Contents

Summary	3
About the Author	3
Major Characters	4
Initiating Activities.....	4
Vocabulary Activities.....	5
Nine Sections	14
Each section contains: Summary, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions	24
Post-reading Extension Activities.....	26
Assessment.....	27
Scoring Rubric.....	28

Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Interpreting evidence, compare/contrast, forming opinions, identifying stereotypes, paradox, pros/cons, research

Comprehension

Cause/effect, classifying, details, generalizing, inferencing, main idea, predicting, summarizing

Writing

Article, description, list, narrative, letter, report, poem

Literary Elements

Analogy, characterization, description, foreshadowing, plot development, setting, point of view, simile, theme, figurative language

Across the Curriculum

Art—set design, drawing;
Science—caterpillars, butterflies; Social Studies—maps, history, culture, laws;
Math—statistics, percentages;
Technology—Internet research; Music—singing, dancing

Genre: young adult fiction

Setting: Traybridge, North Carolina; at the Applewhite family complex

Point of View: third person, with chapters alternating between Jake's point of view and E.D.'s point of view

Themes: fitting in, finding one's own special talent, acceptance, personal responsibility, friendship

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

Style: narrative

Date of First Publication: 2002

Summary

Jake Semple, a 13-year-old boy who comes from a home of negligent parents, is a juvenile delinquent. When his parents are put in jail for drug dealing, he is sent to live with his grandfather. After three weeks in public school, he is expelled and sent to the Applewhite home school at Wit's End. E.D. Applewhite, a girl Jake's age who goes by initials instead of the name Edith, is an oddity among her own creative, artsy family. She wants a traditional education and provides it for herself by creating and following her own lesson plans. A banner in the schoolroom reads, "Education is an adventurous quest for the meaning of life, involving an ability to think things through" (p. 27), which sums up the Applewhite family's view of education.

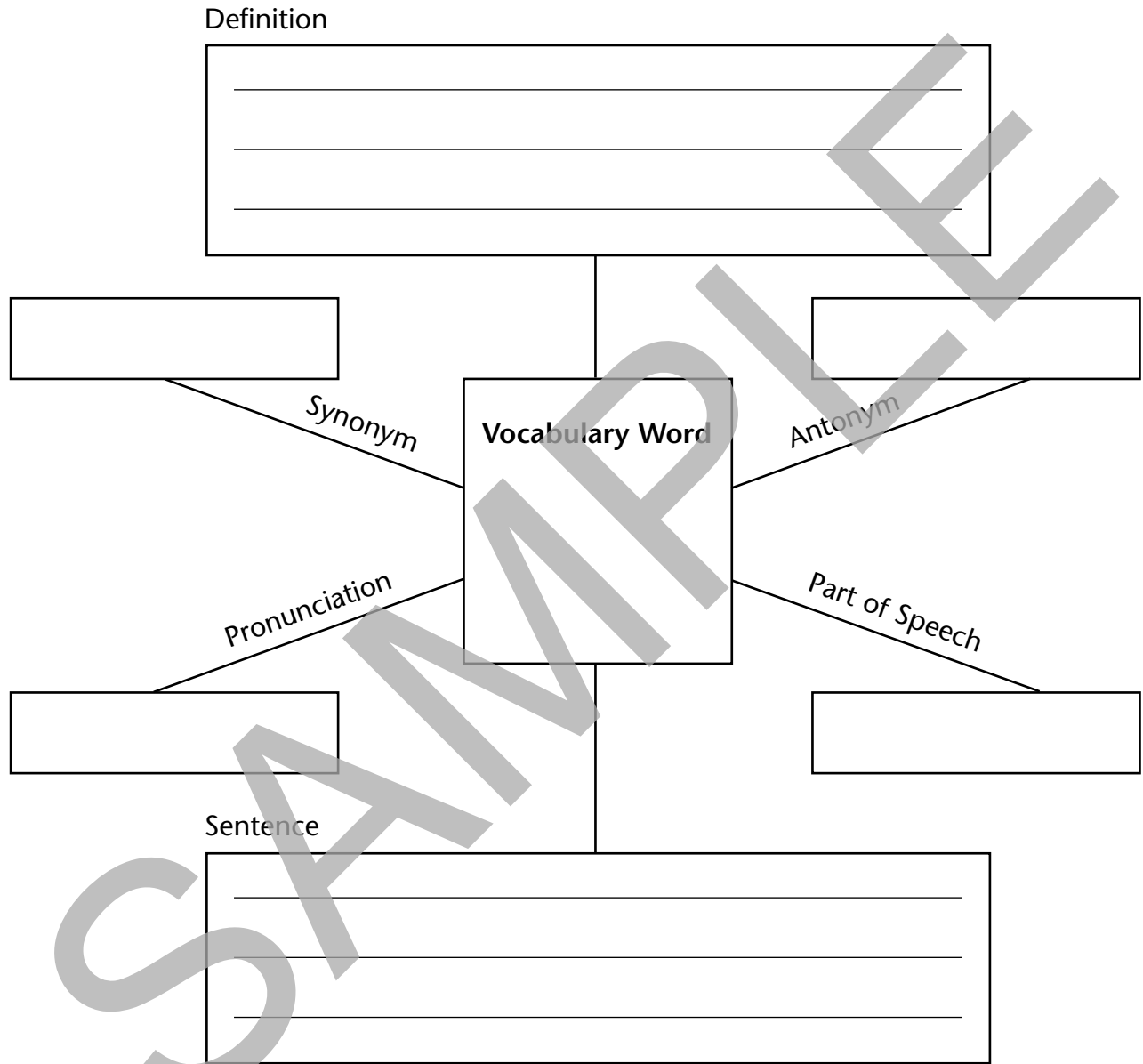
As weeks pass, Jake finds himself assimilated into the family through their unconditional acceptance of him—black clothes, body piercings, and all. When E.D.'s father won't cast a bad child actor in a community theater production, the Applewhites come to the rescue by staging the production at Wit's End, with E.D. leading the way with her organizational skills. Jake plays Rolf in the color-blind production of *The Sound of Music*. With slapstick comedy and plain old fun, the Applewhites earn rave reviews. Jake learns that acting on stage brings him joy, and E.D. learns to be a bit more flexible. She understands that her talent lies in being organized enough to lead others.

About the Author

Stephanie S. Tolan was born October 25, 1942, in Canton, Ohio, and raised in Wisconsin. Because she read everything she could as a youngster, she knew from an early age that she wanted to be a writer. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in creative writing and a master's degree in English from Purdue University. Tolan's books have been nominated for many state awards, and *Surviving the Applewhites* was named a Newbery Honor Book.

Stephanie Tolan has one son and three stepsons. Currently, Tolan and her husband, a theatrical director, live near a lake in Charlotte, North Carolina. Tolan's official Web site is www.stephanietolan.com (active at the printing of this guide).

Word Map



Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how a conflict will be resolved, which details will be important to the plot, which details will help fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses as they read the novel.

As students work on their predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give to help us make predictions? Why are some predictions more likely to be accurate than others?

Create a chart for recording predictions. This could either be an individual or class activity. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, students can review and correct their previous predictions about plot and characters as necessary.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own prior knowledge.

Apply any new information (i.e., from class discussion) that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions

Chapters One–Three, pp. 1–21

E.D. Applewhite is one of four students at the Applewhite Creative Academy. Now juvenile delinquent Jake Semple, who has been kicked out of Rhode Island public schools for burning down one school and was expelled from another, will be joining the academy. Worse, he will be working with E.D. in the course of study she has carefully planned. He doesn't want to be there any more than she wants him. He swears, smokes, and does nothing he doesn't want to do.

Vocabulary

intention (1)
corporate (1)
distinction (2)
environment (4)
rustic (8)
reign (9)
hostility (11)
deflect (11)
creativity (18)
rejected (18)
guarantee (19)
cooperative (20)
loathed (21)
despised (21)

Discussion Questions

1. E.D. distrusts Jake from their first meeting. Why? What does this say about her character? (*His appearance doesn't meet her approval, and she knows he's been thrown out of schools. She has judged him without knowing him, but she feels she has enough facts to warrant her judgment. Answers will vary. pp. 1–2*)
2. Jake has discovered that smoking and cursing bother E.D. Why is he trying to alienate her? What does this say about his character? (*He's smart, can read people's reactions, and wants to control his own life. Answers will vary. pp. 6–7*)
3. There are four Applewhite children. Compare and contrast their personalities using what you know about them so far. (*E.D. likes order. Cordelia is artistic, judging from her dance outfit and her flower arranging. Hal is a reclusive artist. Destiny is curious and a free spirit. pp. 9, 15, 17, 21*)
4. What type of relationship do Randolph and Archie share? What does this say about these adults' maturity levels? (*The brothers are antagonistic, since Randolph criticizes Archie's furniture, and Archie says Randolph is just jealous since he's currently out of work. Answers will vary. pp. 12–13*)
5. Zedediah grabs Jake's cigarette and doesn't react when he swears except to tell him that Cordelia and his parrot can swear in several languages. What does this say about Zedediah's character? (*He is a problem solver and is not easily ruffled. Answers will vary. pp. 10, 14*)
6. Why does E.D. feel she was born into the wrong family? (*Applewhites are creative, talented, spontaneous, and crave freedom. E.D. wants structure in her life. p. 16*)
7. What is the purpose of the Creative Academy? Do you agree with this philosophy of education? (*It avoids "clumping" by allowing a student to pursue individual interests. Answers will vary. pp. 17–19*)
8. The Applewhite students take math instruction online. Why? Is this a good way to learn math? (*They must pass standardized tests on math, and no one wants to teach it. Answers will vary. p. 20*)
9. **Prediction:** Will Jake get kicked out of the Creative Academy?

Supplementary Activities

1. Research: Research Edith Wharton and make a list of books she wrote and their publication dates. The Internet would be a good source for this information.
2. Characterization: Begin Character Webs (see page 8 of this guide) for E.D. and Jake.

3. Plot Development: Begin a Story Map (see page 9 of this guide) to use as you read this novel.
4. Social Studies: Research what qualifications are necessary for home school teachers in your state.
5. Literary Devices: Begin a list of similes and metaphors and add to the list as you read. Use the Metaphors and Similes chart on page 10 of this guide.
6. Writing: Develop a curriculum plan for your education. Compare your plan with your classmates' in an oral report.

Chapters Four–Six, pp. 22–51

Lucille takes Jake to his lavender room in her cottage. He goes to the classroom and works on the butterfly project with E.D., although they don't catch the butterfly missing from her collection. He thinks he won't be staying long with the Applewhites, but if juvenile hall is the alternative, he decides he needs to behave himself at the Creative Academy. He sits on the porch with Destiny and confesses how he burned down a school, although it really was an accident. He watches as Randolph heads for a meeting with the president of the community theater. Randolph speeds down the drive and collides with another vehicle.

Vocabulary
intensified (23)
radiant (23)
unidentifiable (27)
quest (27)
fragile (33)
complicated (36)
juvenile (41)
inedible (42)
exaggeration (47)
collided (47)
sentimental (47)
careened (51)

Discussion Questions

1. Jake meets his grandfather for the first time only a few weeks before the story begins. Does this give information as to the type of person Jake is? Why? (*It denotes a dysfunctional family life. Answers will vary. p. 23*)
2. What does Zedediah mean by the words on his banner in the schoolroom—"Education is an adventurous quest for the meaning of life, involving an ability to think things through" (p. 27)? (*Answers will vary.*)
3. Why does Lucille call Archie a lark and Randolph an owl? Do you think their personalities match these birds in any other ways? (*Larks go to bed early and get up early. Owls stay up at night and sleep late into the day. Answers will vary. p. 28*)
4. E.D. doesn't capture butterflies and pin them to a board as many people do when collecting butterflies. How does she capture her butterflies? What does this say about her character? (*She takes pictures of them. Answers will vary. p. 34*)
5. Zedediah says that Jake will learn who he is and what he's made of at the academy (p. 37). From what you've learned about Jake so far, who do you think he is and what is he made of? (*Answers will vary.*)
6. Jake doesn't want to be locked up with bad kids at Juvenile Hall, yet he wants others to think he's a bad guy. Why? (*He isn't into drugs and isn't a violent person, but he wants others to fear him because he wants control over his life and that's the only way he has found to get it. Answers will vary. p. 43*)
7. **Prediction:** Will Cordelia choreograph the musical?