



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The White Mountains

John Christopher

READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

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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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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, decision-making,
visualizing

Comprehension

Predicting, comparison/
contrast

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, drama

Writing

Description, journal,
newspaper

Literary Elements

Point-of-view, conflict,
story elements

Chapter 1, Pages 1-19

Summary

Will Parker lives in a fictional village of the future that bears a definite resemblance to the feudal villages of the Middle Ages. Will's father's most treasured possession is the Watch, a relic of "the ancients" stamped with the words "anti-magnetique" and "incabloc." Will and Henry, a cousin Will despises, have a fist fight over the Watch, but an older cousin, Jack, intervenes. Jack is about to undergo the Capping Ceremony, and he is apprehensive about it. In their village, as in all others, young men and women are "Capped" as an initiation into adulthood. Jack has made a den in the ruins of the old city, and he tells Will he often thinks about the wonderful things men made before the Tripods came, a subject whose discussion is strictly forbidden. Will assures him he will be happy and not have such thoughts after the Capping, although it's possible the procedure won't "take" and that Jack will become a wandering Vagrant, cared for but shunned. Will, confident that all will go well, points out that all of the people in the village are very happy to do the daily labor that will become Jack's lot after the Capping. The big day arrives, and during the feasts and games Jack is Capped. There is a deep booming sound, the earth shakes, and then a huge metal robot with three long legs grabs Jack in one of its tentacles and pulls him inside its hemisphere-shaped interior. After a few hours, Jack is placed by the side of Sir Geoffrey, the Lord of the Manor. His head is shaved and a wire cap is imbedded in his skin. When Will sees him a few days later, Jack is distant, and when Will asks him about what happened inside the Tripod, Jack simply tells him he will soon understand. Will suddenly feels very much alone.

Initiating Activity

Have the students look at the cover of the book. Point out that *The White Mountains* is part of The Tripods Trilogy. Discuss the meaning of the prefix "tri-" and how it applies to both "tripod" and "trilogy." Point out the white mountains in the picture. Ask the students to tell where there are mountains that look like these.

Vocabulary

contemptuous-2
enormity-5
instinctively-7
speculation-13

ceremonial-2
contemplate-5
wrenched-7
rapt-15

unthinkable-3
pelted-5
parried-7
consolation-16

detection-4
agility-6
inconsequential-10
burnished-16

Questions for Discussion

1. What is Will's father's most treasured possession? (*the Watch*) How does Will almost get into trouble because of the Watch? (*He takes it to show his cousin Jack, then has a fight with his cousin Henry and almost loses it.*)
2. What does Will's father do for a living? (*He is a miller.*) From the way he does his job, what can you tell about when this story seems to take place? (*before machines were invented to grind grain*)

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3. Where do you think the sign "Danger: 6,600 Volts" came from? *(the old world before the Tripods)* What other things in the story do not fit with the time it seems to take place? *(The Watch is obviously modern. Jack speaks of wonderful things made by men before the Tripods. The Tripods are from a future world.)*
 4. What is the significance of the title of this chapter, "Capping Day"? *(Jack is Capped, meaning that a wire mesh cap is installed over his skull and he will thenceforth be considered a man.)*
 5. Before the Capping, what does Jack think about? *(the things men made before the Tripods came, what it was like to live then)*
 6. What is a Vagrant? *(one on whom the Capping does not work)*
 7. What explanation have the boys been given for the end of the Black Age? *(There were too many people, not enough food, and disease.)*
 8. Describe the Tripod. *(See page 16.)*
 9. How does Jack act when he sees Will after the Capping? *(He tells Will the Capping is for their own good and that he will soon understand.)*
 10. How does Will feel about the Capping? *(He feels he has lost a friend because of it. He doesn't understand why it has to be done and prefers to stay as he is.)*

Question for Writing: Will's Journal

Begin keeping a journal for Will. For today's entry, write about Capping Day. Be sure to describe the Tripod and to include Will's feelings about the practice.

Post-reading Activity

Have the students begin a chart like the one on the following page.

Extension Activities: Class Discussions

1. Have the students look at page 9, and write LECT CITY on the chalkboard. See if they can figure out what the sign said originally, and if they know of any places in your community where they might see similar signs. (The word is ELECTRICITY)

Chapter 6, Pages 111-139

Initiating Activity

Review the final events of Chapters on page 110. Ask the students, "Where do you think Will is?" "Where are Henry and Beanpole?" "Did they leave Will in the shed?" Read the title of Chapter 6, "The Castle of the Red Tower." Ask the students if this gives them any ideas about where the next part of the story will take place and what will happen next. Have the students fill in the left-hand column of their need-to-know charts for Chapter 6.

Summary

Once Will becomes conscious, he realizes that Henry and Beanpole could have simply left him where he collapsed. Instead, they decide to drag him to the shed and stay there with him. They are discovered by some men with a large dog, and could do nothing but surrender. Since Henry and Will have been cautioned not to speak, Beanpole has worked out an emergency plan in which the other two boys are to be his deaf-mute cousins. On the morning the boys are discovered, the very kind and generous Comtesse de la Tour Rouge happens to be going through the district. She has taken pity on the boys, and they are escorted back to the castle, the Château de la Tour Rouge. Henry and Beanpole are quartered with the esquires, sons of knights being trained to knighthood, and Will is put to bed in the castle. During his delirium, Will has talked, but it doesn't matter. Those at the castle do not find it strange for boys to go far from home, and all three are welcome to stay. When the three boys are alone together, they plan to slip away during the Capping Day festivities. In the meantime, they enjoy the pleasures of royal living. Since Henry and Beanpole seem to have developed a kind of exclusive complicity, Will spends his time with Eloise, the daughter of the Comte and Comtesse, learning French and horseback riding. Her parents become exceedingly fond of Will, and the Comtesse assures him that her cousin, the king, can grant him nobility. He seriously considers staying at the castle even if it means being Capped. It is a different lifestyle than the only one he could have hoped to live in Wherton, and he is definitely smitten with Eloise, even though he learns she is Capped when he playfully commits the almost unpardonable sin of pulling off her turban. As the weeks go by, Will is tortured by his own indecision, but he finally tells Henry and Beanpole to leave without him, using the excuse that they will not be missed as quickly as he. He tells them he'll catch up later, although he really has no intentions of doing so. They agree, and Will wishes them good luck.

Vocabulary

allay-112	retinue-113	largesse-113	esquires-114
confluence-114	delirium-115	incoherent-115	jousting-119
tolerance-120	humdrum-121	gallantry-121	docile-122
rankled-123	complicity-123	cossetting-123	flogging-125

Questions for Discussion

1. What choice did Henry and Beanpole have when Will collapsed? (*They could have left him.*) Why do you think they decided to stay with him? (*various answers*)