



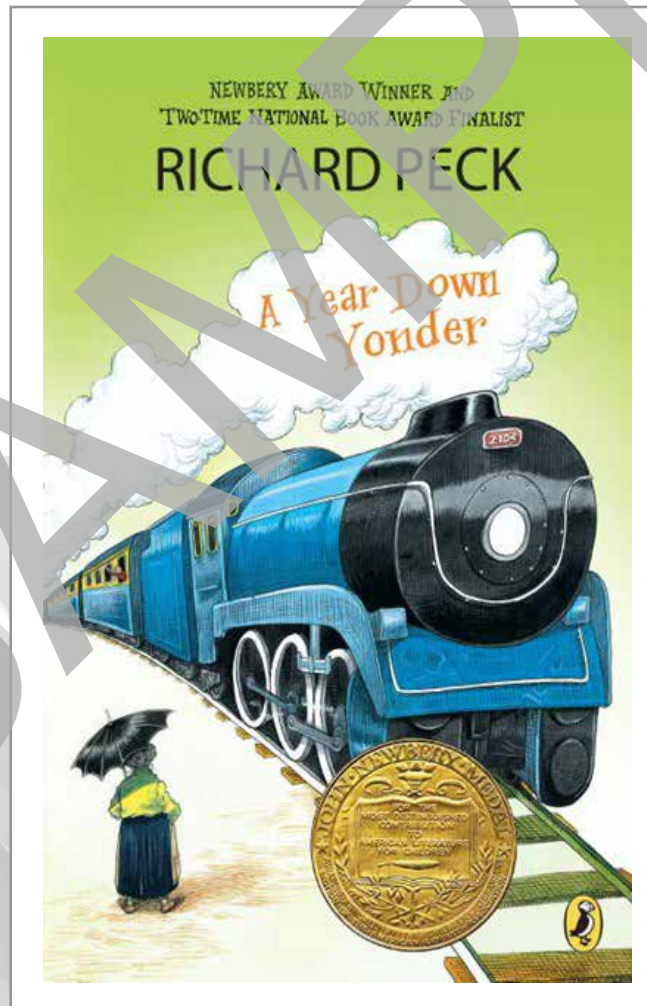
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **A Year Down Yonder**

Richard Peck



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# A Year Down Yonder

Richard Peck

## 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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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Research, compare/contrast,  
pros/cons, brainstorming,  
problem solving, creative  
thinking, critical thinking

### Literary Elements

Literary analysis, plot  
development, setting,  
characterization

### Listening/Speaking

Dramatizing, interviewing,  
storytelling, discussion, oral  
reports, guest speaker, music

### Writing

Character journal, personal  
writing, creative writing,  
poetry

### Vocabulary

Charades, word maps,  
synonyms, antonyms,  
root/base words, context clues

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,  
cause and effect, inference

### Across the Curriculum

Social Studies/History—  
research; Science—weather  
conditions and animal  
research; Math—graphing;  
Art—diorama, collage,  
puppet making, murals,  
advertisements, illustrations;  
Health—food preparation

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## Summary

Because the Great Depression has affected her parents' finances, 15-year-old Mary Alice must leave her home and spend a year in a small town with Grandma Dowdel. Although Mary Alice is not accepted into the school community quickly, she and Grandma Dowdel have many adventures such as trapping animals for fur; collecting pecans and pumpkins from the neighbors at midnight; baking pies and cherry tarts; surviving a tornado; and outwitting the local boys playing practical jokes on Halloween. As the year progresses, Mary Alice grows to love and respect her grandma for her kindness, down-to-earth determination, and resilience.

## About the Author

Richard Peck is the author of more than 25 novels for young readers and has received several awards for his books: Best Science Fiction/Fantasy, and Horror for 1996; ALA Best of the Best Books for Young Adults; the Edgar Allan Poe Award; and the 1997 Empire State Award. *A Year Down Yonder* was awarded the 2001 Newbery Medal, and is the sequel to Peck's Newbery Honor-winning *A Long Way From Chicago*. Mr. Peck lived in Decatur, Illinois for his first 18 years. He now lives in New York City.

## 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.  
family      tornado      friendship      Great Depression      hick-town school
3. **Character Journal:** List the main characters from *A Year Down Yonder* and have each student choose one. As students read the book, they write regular entries from their chosen 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 journal entries with classmates.
4. **Web:** Create a web with students for each of the following ideas: friends, decision, bravery, love, and birthday. 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 statements on the following page with a "thumbs up" (I agree) or a "thumbs down" (I disagree) and discuss their responses.

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## Story Map

Characters \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Time and Place \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Problem \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Goal \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Beginning → Development → Outcome

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

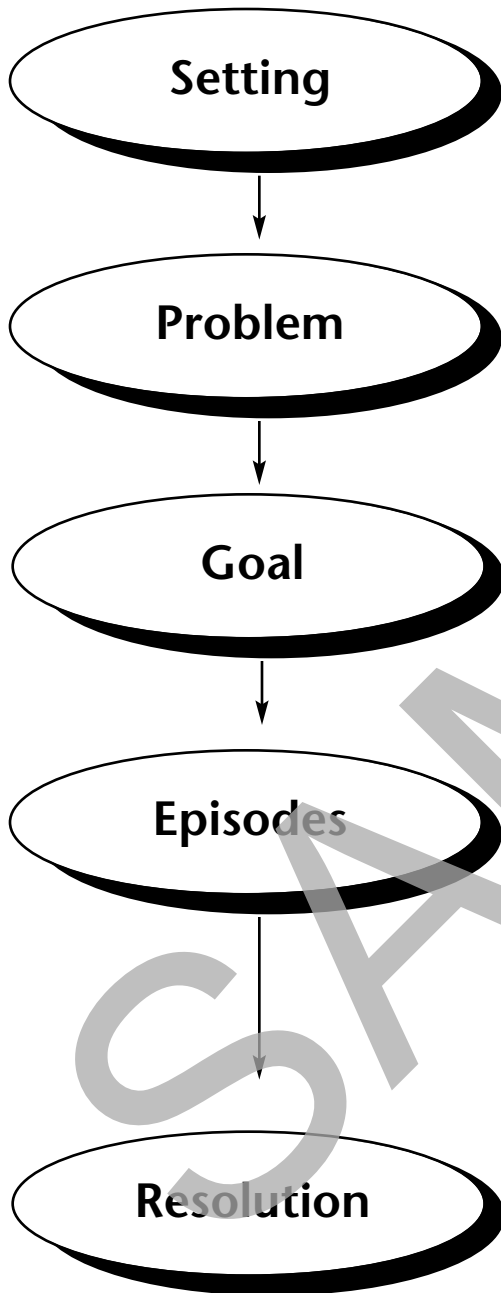
\_\_\_\_\_

Resolution \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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## Prologue & Rich Chicago Girl

### Vocabulary

recession (2)	civilian (2)	conservation (2)	privy (2)
steamed (4)	hamper (4)	portable (5)	leatherette (5)
quivered (5)	footlocker (6)	trudged (6)	cipher (9)
teetered (10)	celluloid (11)	milled (14)	astride (14)
clabber (15)	guzzled (15)	cadavers (17)	glinted (19)

### Discussion Questions

1. Why do Mary Alice and her mother take a taxi to the Dearborn Station instead of the El? *(Mary Alice has a trunk of clothes that would have been too difficult to get on and off the El [elevated train].)*
2. Why is Mary Alice's mother going to ride home on the El instead of taking a taxi home? *(She has little money to spare and the El is cheaper than a taxi.)*
3. Why does Mary Alice's mother tell her not to grow too fast? *(They can't afford to buy her new clothes.)*
4. What is the purpose of the billboard sign that reads, "Wasn't the Depression Awful?" *(It is supposed to make people think that the hard times of the Great Depression are over.)*
5. Why do people refer to the hard times as the "Roosevelt recession"? *(Roosevelt is the President of the United States during this time in the book and they blame him.)*
6. What effect do the "hard times" have on Mary Alice's family? *(Her father has lost his job; they have given up their apartment and moved to a place too small for the whole family; Mary Alice must go live with her grandmother.)*
7. Why does Mary Alice wish she were Joey? *(She wouldn't have to go live with Grandma Dowdel.)*
8. What sacrifices will Mary Alice have to make by living with her grandma? *(She has to leave her family, friends, and school. She has to go to a "hick-town school" and live in a town with no picture show and in a home with no modern conveniences.)*
9. How does Mary Alice feel about going to live with Grandma? *(Answers will vary.)*
10. How would you feel if you had to leave your family to live with a relative? *(Answers will vary.)*
11. Why does Mary Alice's mother murmur, "Better you than me"? *(Answers will vary.)*
12. Why are the sandwich crumbs still stuck in Mary Alice's throat when the train arrives in Grandma's town? *(She didn't have any money to buy a bottle of pop on the train to wash down her sandwich.)*
13. Why doesn't Mary Alice run into Grandma's arms when she arrives? *(Grandma is not a very welcoming woman and doesn't have a hug in her.)*

- 
14. Why is Mary Alice's portable radio so important to her? *(It is her last contact with the world.)*
  15. How does Grandma seem to feel about Bootsie and the portable radio? *(She considers the cat just another mouth to feed and the radio to be more noise.)*
  16. What effect has the recession had on Grandma's town? *(It seems to have been hit harder than Chicago: there are very few people in the cafe; Moore's Store is hurting for business; and the bank seems like it is barely in business.)*
  17. How does Mary Alice feel as she walks to school with Grandma? *(Answers will vary.)*
  18. Why are there so few boys enrolled in school? *(Many of them have dropped out due to the Great Depression.)*
  19. How does Grandma feel about the Burdicks? *(She wants Mary Alice to steer clear of them. She thinks they are trouble.)*
  20. How does Mildred treat Mary Alice on her first day of school? *(Mildred threatens her and claims Mary Alice owes her a dollar for lying about her school and not being rich.)*
  21. How does Mary Alice feel on her first day of school? *(Answers will vary.)*
  22. How does Grandma get back at Mildred Burdick? *(She invites Mildred in the house for buttermilk and corn bread and then sets Mildred's horse loose.)*
  23. Why doesn't Mary Alice have to worry about Mildred getting even with her the next day at school? *(Mildred won't be in school. The horse she was riding was stolen and is on its way back to its owner. Also, the school is too far for Mildred to walk to barefoot.)*
  24. Why do you think Mary Alice misses her brother Joey so much? *(Answers will vary.)*

### Supplementary Activities

1. History/Research: Have students research the Great Depression. When did it begin? How long did it last? Why did it occur? How did it affect people in the United States?
2. Interview: Have students interview a relative or family friend who lived during the Great Depression. How was he/she affected by the Depression? What sacrifices did he/she have to make? What are his/her most vivid memories? What did he/she learn from the experiences?
3. Listening Skills: Invite the interviewees to speak to the class. If they cannot come, offer to videotape responses to the questions students asked in the activity above.