



PRESTWICK HOUSE

Activity Pack

THE BEAN TREES

BY BARBARA KINGSOLVER



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Item No. 200521

Written by Francis LeFevre

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Research**

Objectives: Researching the author
 Developing a sense of the novel's geographical and sociological background

Activity

The Bean Trees is author Barbara Kingsolver's first published work. She has subsequently published a number of novels, the best known of which is probably *The Poisonwood Bible*. Research the life of Ms. Kingsolver to explore her background and develop a sense of how that background has impacted her writing, especially *The Bean Trees*. On March 27, 2000, *The New York Times* published an extensive reflection by the author on her writing. You might want to consult that article to develop a sense of Kingsolver's personality and thoughts.

On the following page write a short biography of the author. Include any facts in her background that you think might have impacted her writing of *The Bean Trees*.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter One**Setting**

Objective: Reading for detail

Activity

In small groups, discuss what you notice about Pittman County and Missy's life there, specifically what you notice about the social structure of the county, her home life, and her high school experience, making specific references to the text. Next, discuss how each item on your list influences Missy and gives a real sense of the locale. Write your comments beside each item. Be prepared to present your list and commentary to the class.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter Five

Writing a Play

Objective: Re-writing a scene from *The Bean Trees* as a play

Activity

There is much interaction and dialogue between characters in Chapter 5, beginning on page 92 and continuing until page 96. Re-read it, imagining the characters on a stage, then rewrite it as a scene in a play. Below is an example that you may use to start your scene. Make sure you include appropriate stage directions as needed.

We have begun the scene for you.

As the scene opens, Taylor carrying Turtle walks up the steps to the front door while observing the wind chime of silver keys hanging from the porch roof. Taylor goes to knock on the door, which is opened before she knocks.

Fay: *(calls back into the house)* "The prospective's here."

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters One – Eight**Character Traits****Objective:** Recognizing character traits**Activity**

Reading a novel like *The Bean Trees* is interesting and involving. As the story progresses, we form a mental image of each of the significant characters in the story. To mentally complete the character details, close attention must be paid to physical description as well as the character's actions.

Complete the following **Character Chart** to help reveal your assessment of the characters in *The Bean Trees*. When you are finished with the chart, review the characters that you designated as “major characters.” Select the two most similar characters and write one paragraph comparing them. Next, select the two least similar characters and write another paragraph, this time contrasting them.

You may not have enough information to fill in some of the blocks. When this occurs, write “NI,” Not Indicated, in the appropriate space.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter Ten

Symbolism

Objectives: Identifying symbols in a novel's title
 Inferring possible thematic significance of symbols

Activity

The title of a novel is frequently an allusion. If we understand the reference the allusion makes, it can tell us much about the thematic thrust of the book. For example, the title of William Faulkner's novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, is an allusion to the following lines in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

[Life] is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Knowing this context, what would you suppose the theme of Faulkner's novel might be?

On the other hand, a title might be a symbol within an allusion, as in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

A title may, however, be a symbol that appears within the work, as in the novel *The Bean Trees*. Complete the following chart for the three novels listed. Even if you have not read all three books, you may be able to make a good guess at the answers.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter Twelve**Letter Writing****Objective:** Understanding character motivation**Activity**

Chapter twelve describes an event that is traumatic for Turtle. It is also traumatic for Taylor, who experiences difficulty in coming to terms with her emotions over the event. Pretend you are Taylor and write a letter to your mother explaining what happened to Turtle and how it has affected her and you. Try to use Taylor's own style of speaking as much as possible.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters Eleven – Thirteen**Trying Times**

Objective: Exploring a character's personality through his or her reactions and decisions

Activity

Chapters Eleven through Thirteen mark a time of trial in Taylor's life. Up to this point, things have been manageable if not entirely easy; Taylor has found a decent job that she can enjoy, she is beginning to feel more confident in her care of Turtle, she has found a friend in Lou Ann, and she is making other friends as well. In Chapters Eleven through Thirteen, however, Taylor's mettle is tested when events appear to be unraveling, one right after another; they have the potential to tear down everything Taylor has worked so hard to achieve—her independence, Turtle's sense of well-being, and even Taylor's sense of self.

Listed in the following chart are several adverse things that happen to Taylor and those around her during this time. For each event, explain what Taylor truly feels and fears and how reacts and/or eventually copes with each situation.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters Six – Fourteen**Theme**

Objectives: Relating literature to life
 Recognizing possible thematic ideas

Activity

In Chapter Six, Taylor first becomes aware of Mattie's involvement in the Sanctuary Movement, which helps persecuted Central Americans find a safe haven in the United States.

Use the Internet or appropriate reference sources to find information about the Sanctuary Movement.

List at least four main arguments for and against the stand that this movement takes.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter Seventeen**A Defining Poem**

Objective: Exploring the emotional state of a principal character

Activity

A defining poem is one that begins with an abstract word, then give examples of what the word means to the author. Write a defining poem from Turtle's perspective about love and also a poem about perseverance. Keep in mind Taylor's actions on behalf of Turtle as examples of both love and perseverance. The sample below will give you the form of a defining poem.

Joy is
The first day of summer vacation,
Going to the beach with your friends,
Knocking in the game winning run,
Being with the one you love.