



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

THE COLOR PURPLE

BY ALICE WALKER



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Item No. 303116

Written by Steve Weed

Name: _____

Date: _____

Letters 1 – 21**Narration**

Objective: Understanding why the novel is written in the form of letters

Activity:

Celie has been through much trauma at a young age. She has been told by her father if she tells what he has done to her, he will kill her. She has no one to turn to, and so, to safely release and unburden the mental turmoil she is going through, she writes her experiences in the form of letters to God. This activity is intended to help the reader understand why Celie might choose to tell her story in the form of letters and what effect this expostulatory technique has.

Individually, write two separate documents about the same event. No one else, not even your teacher, will see what you write. Think about an actual incident where you were made to feel embarrassed, intimidated, or victimized. Write one paragraph as if what you are writing will go into a formal record that you know will be read and witnessed by many people, maybe even the people who made you feel uncomfortable. Write a second paragraph about the exact same incident, only this time, write it in the form of a letter to a higher, comforting power.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Letters 1 – 21**Crossword Puzzle**

Objective: Understanding the dialect and idioms of the novel by completing a crossword puzzle

Activity:

Fill in the crossword puzzle on the next page. All of the answers to the questions are words in the dialect or idioms used by characters in the novel. Most of the words are simple, everyday words, but they are used often throughout the book. Knowing these basic idioms will help you to understand better the rhyme and overall language of the characters of the novel.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Letters 1 – 21**Characterization**

Objective: Interpreting characters through the perspective of a first person narrator

Activity I:

Celie is the sole writer of Letters 1 – 21. She has a limited education and a limited vocabulary, but despite these limitations, she paints a full picture of each of the characters in the novel, including herself. She lets us know in some way how each character looks and acts. These characters include:

- Nettie
- Mr. _____
- Alphonso
- Shug Avery
- Celie
- Harpo
- Sofia

Divide into small groups. You are to take the character your group is assigned and answer the questions on the following page.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Letters 22 – 43**Setting/Historical Context**

Objective: Understanding the historical context of the novel

Activity II:

Much is mentioned in the novel about Shug and Squeak singing in Harpo's juke joint. In fact, many famous African-American musicians played in these types of establishments. As a way of understanding the cultural aspects of the juke joint that Walker presents in this novel further, research and learn about a single, African-American musician who performed in juke joints. If you are unsure of where to begin your research, start by using a search engine on a computer. You can trace many early African-American blues or jazz musicians back to juke joints.

When taking notes about the musician, include biographical information, the musician's discography, and his or her musical career. Once you have completed this step, do a presentation. Tell the class about the musician, explain why you chose this person, and say whether you think musician's personality is more like Shug's or Squeak's and why.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Letters 22 – 43**Indirect Characterization**

Objectives: Interpreting a character's persona based on different points of view
Inferring meaning from what characters say and do

Activity:

At one point or another, the characters in *The Color Purple* verbally mistreat Celie. While characters can often be understood by what they say about themselves, they can also be understood by what others say about them. In addition, how characters treat others reveals information about them, as well.

Read the passages that follow, and for each passage, answer the questions on the following page:

Passages Where Others Mistreat Celie

"The women at church sometime nice to me. Sometime not. They look at me there struggling with Mr. _____ children. Trying to drag 'em to the church, trying to keep 'em quiet after us get there. They some of the same ones used to be here both times I was big. Sometimes they think I don't notice, they stare at me. Puzzle."

"That real good, for a first try [at sewing], I say. That just fine and dandy. [Shug Avery] look at me and snort. Everything I do is fine and dandy to you, Miss Celie, she say. But that's cause you ain't got good sense. She laugh. I duck my head."

"You gon let [Sofia go live with her sisters]? I ast Harpo. He look like only a fool could ast the question. He puff back, She made up her mind to go, he say. How I'm gon stop her? Let her go on, he say, cutting his eyes at her sister wagons."

"Everything nasty here [in prison], [Sofia] say, even the air. Food bad enough to kill you with it. Roaches here, mice, flies, lice and even a snake or two. If you say anything they strip you, make you sleep on a cement floor without a light. How you manage? us ast. Every time they ast me to do something, Miss Celie, I act like I'm you. I jump right up and do just what they say. She look wild when she say that, and her bad eye wander round the room."

Name: _____

Date: _____

Letters 22 – 43**Symbolism**

Objective: Learning how a symbol enhances the understanding of the story

Activity:

Sofia and Celie work together on a quilt as a way to get to know each other and heal their relationship. The quilt, a heavy blanket made of different materials sewn together, is a symbol of Sofia and Celie's union and the warmth that develops between them.

Divide into small groups. Find a single commonality that everyone has a fondness for (i.e., a similar movie, a similar book, a similar celebrity, or a similar hobby). Together, create a small quilt that somehow depicts that commonality. Each member of the group should bring in one piece of cloth for the quilt. For example, if four members are in a group, the quilt should have four sections. Each piece of cloth should reflect the individual's thoughts about or feelings toward the chosen commonality. The piece of cloth could be an old piece of clothing, a piece of an old blanket, or a swatch of fabric. Draw, paint, or paste items onto your individual cloth. The sections of cloth can then be fastened together in whatever way your group prefers. Once your group has completed its quilt, be prepared to explain to the class the commonality your quilt displays and what it was like to work together. Explain whether working on the quilt helped you better understand how this activity could bring Sofia and Celie closer together.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Letters 44 – 69**Research Paper**

Objectives: Researching a historical era
Using historical fact to support an opinion

Activity:

In Letter 56, Nettie writes to Celie and says, “Well, I read and I read until I thought my eyes would fall out. I read where the Africans sold us because they loved money more than their own sisters and brothers. How we came to America in ships. How we were made to work.” Do some research and learn what role African tribes had in the slave trade.

After you have completed your research, pretend you are Celie and answer Nettie’s questions in Letter 58: “How did they sell us? How could they have done it? And why do we still love them?” Using a combination of your own opinions and the research you have done, write your answer in the form of a letter to Nettie. Support your opinions with facts you have found in your research. Try to give the most complete, honest, and sympathetic answer that you can.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Letters 44 – 69**Newspaper**

Objectives: Identifying important moments from *The Color Purple*
Presenting events in the form of a newspaper article

Activity:

In Letter 55, Nettie writes about her trip to Harlem. This is a transformative moment for Nettie, as she sees black people living a quality of life similar to that of white people.

Write a front-page article detailing this scene in Harlem. You do not need to write from Nettie's point of view or include Nettie in the article, but you must include the details Nettie provides about Harlem. Write the story in the factual, unbiased style that is used by newspaper reporters.

Criteria for your article:

- There must be an attention-grabbing headline that sums up the content of the article.
- The first paragraph should concisely describe who, what, when, where, and why, so that a reader may know the basic facts surrounding the event after reading only the first paragraph.
- The subsequent paragraphs should follow in a logical order, offering further details and substance for readers who want more information.
- The last paragraph should have a clear conclusion.
- Include a drawing or photo to accompany the article.