

# Individual Learning Packet

## Teaching Unit

# *Jubilee*

by Margaret Walker

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ISBN 13: 978-1-60389-822-5  
Reorder No. 201453

# Jubilee

## Objectives

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. understand the importance of old spiritual songs as a means of self and cultural expression for blacks during slavery.
2. discuss the use of black minstrel songs as a way to demonstrate the white perception of the experience of being a slave.
3. recognize dialect as an effective tool for building authentic characters of a certain time and place.
4. infer character's emotions and intent from their actions and words.
5. analyze Walker's choice for point of view.
6. define vocabulary and important historical terms from the story.
7. discuss the conflicting views of Christianity presented in the story.
8. explain the affects of slavery on the both the black and white families in the story.
9. understand the positive and negative affects of the Civil War on individuals, communities, and American society as a whole.
10. comprehend the importance of education as a means of ensuring one's civil rights are being upheld.
11. analyze the different philosophies of racial relationships: prejudice and violence against a race, tolerance of racial differences, and active charity and love towards all, regardless of race.
12. compare the effects of bitterness and hatred in the character of Randall Ware to forgiveness and love in the character of Vyry.

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## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. From what point of view is this story told? Why do you believe Margaret Walker chose this point of view? Do you believe it is the best point of view for telling this particular story? Explain your answer.
2. What is the purpose of the excerpts of song lyrics on the first page of each chapter? Do you think they worked well in helping to tell the story? Explain.
3. What difference, if any, does it make to you, the reader, to know that this story is based on the author's great-grandmother's real life?
4. Brother Zeke is always moving around and has secretly learned how to forge signatures. Though the book does not come right out and say it, what are we led to believe he is involved in? Why do you suppose he takes such a huge risk with his life?
5. This story ends with a great deal of controversy over the education of the children of former black slaves. Many of the former slaves believe learning is the key to maintaining their freedom and having a better life. What are their reasons for believing this? Why are many of the whites opposed to educating the blacks?
6. At the end of the story, Walker says that Vyry is "the best true example of the motherhood of her race." (Pg. 486) Describe Vyry's mothering style and techniques. What values does she try to pass on to her children? Who were her role models as mothers? What keeps her going when she wants to give up? What are her hopes for her children?
7. In order for the owners to justify their keeping of slaves, the Southerners consider them as property, like cattle or horses, rather than people. Explain, using examples from the book, actions and words which demonstrate, and reinforce, this belief that the black slaves are not humans like slave owners.
8. Even though the slaves resent and are hurt by the extreme prejudice against them, due to their color, they themselves show prejudice against each other on the basis of jobs (e.g. being a field hand or a house servant). How do you explain this? Why would they do this to each other if they know how much it hurts to have people treat them a certain way based on a label or stereotype.

# Jubilee

## Study Guide Student Copy

### Part I Sis Hetta's Child—The Ante-Bellum Years

#### Chapter 1. Death is a mystery that only the squinch owl knows

##### Vocabulary

akimbo—hands on hips and elbows bent outward

ante-bellum—before the American Civil War

chagrin—embarrassment

cloying—too much of something; too rich, too sweet

crone—old woman

fetid—stinking

laudanum—a drug made from opium

miscegenation—interbreeding between people of different races

pickaninny—term for a young slave

pious—religiously devout

procreation—the act of producing young

saltpeter—potassium or sodium nitrate

stupor—dazed or drunken state

tallow—candle

titillated—excited pleurably or sexually

tribulation—great distress

verity—truth

wench—young woman with questionable morals

wizened—withered

1. Why does the sound of the squinch owl make May Liza nervous?
2. Who is on her deathbed as the chapter opens, and why?
3. Why does Caline, the woman tending to Sis Hetta, believe it is better for slaves not to have children?

## Chapter 10. Wedding in the Big House

### Vocabulary

accosted—attacked  
beaux—boyfriends  
cynical—antisocial  
dandies—men of extreme elegance  
demurred—objected  
docile—submissive  
ergot—a medicinal fungus  
haughty—overly proud  
impudent—disrespectful  
inarticulate—unable to express in words  
parson—preacher  
patently—plainly  
proverbial—as in a short, popular saying  
provocation—intentional irritation  
sullen—gloomy mood  
tenacity—persistence  
trousseau—wardrobe  
unfathomable—hard to understand  
veranda—porch  
wrath—anger

1. Describe Johnny Dutton and Kevin MacDougall and their love interests.
2. What is ironic about Kevin's statement regarding his pursuit of Lillian when he says, "I'm dedicated to be her slave until she approves of me"? (Pg. 104)
3. Where is Johnny planning to go to school?
4. What do Miss Salina and Marster John think of Kevin MacDougall?
5. While courting is going on among the white people in the big house, what is happening with the slaves and Vyry, in particular?

## Chapter 20. This pot is boiling over and the fat is in the fire

### Vocabulary

chafing—becoming irritated

coherent—understandable

cohorts—associates

flippant—light, kidding

gangrenous—affected by gangrene

subordination—being in an inferior position to someone

tentatively—nervously; with hesitation

vociferous—noisy

whit—bit

1. What major political events happen on March 4, 1861?
2. How long does the doctor tell Marse John he must rest his leg and body?
3. Rather than getting better, what happens to Marse John's leg?
4. How does Marse John react to this idea and his ongoing pain?
5. What is ironic or symbolic about the metaphor Marse John uses when discussing the North's moral position regarding slavery?
6. What does Miss Salina read in the paper that she finds inspiring?

## Chapter 30. Action at Olustee

### Vocabulary

bleak—dreary

callow—untrained

correlation—connection

depleted—emptied

deprivation—doing without

despondency—sadness

hamlet—community

implicit—unspoken

mortal—deadly

mustered—summoned

projectiles—missiles

prostrate—lying face down, flat on the ground

protestations—complaints

rampant—uncontrolled

relented—gave in

repugnant—disagreeable

subsequent—later

turrets—armored turning guns

unvexed—undisturbed

wavered—bent; hesitated

1. What events have occurred by the end of 1863, which have given the North the advantage in the war?
2. Describe the ongoing debate about slavery as a war issue between North and South.
3. What is happening with the slaves at this time?
4. What are some of the important technological advances in weaponry which the North is making use of in the war?

## Chapter 40. One more Christmas on the old home place

### Vocabulary

balky—stubborn

consternation—alarm

contended—insisted

dray—cart

lucid—clear thinking

oppressed—weighed heavily upon

1. How is Miss Lillian by Christmas time?
2. What things are weighing heavily on Vyry's mind?
3. Why does Vyry take everyone into town just before Christmas? What does she find there?
4. Who shows up just before Christmas? Why has she come?
5. What are Innis and Vyry's feelings about being married?
6. What happens to Vyry's boy Jim on Christmas evening?
7. Why does Vyry tell Miss Lucy where Big Missy hid all the family's valuables?
8. What does Miss Lucy urge Vyry to do before she and Innis leave?



## Chapter 50. Burned out and running for our lives twice in a row

### Vocabulary

buoy—keep afloat

dour—grim

enervating—exhausting

gig—a one-horse carriage

mollified—calmed

persevered—maintained; continued

pungent—strong smelling

respite—relief

1. What town does the Brown family go to next? What has happened to this town?
2. Where do the soldiers tell Innis and Vvry they may get a farm if they want to homestead on one?
3. Why is Vvry excited when she hears Butler County?
4. What is their temporary home in Luverne like?
5. What happens to Vvry's unborn child a few weeks after arriving in Luverne?
6. What kind of work does Innis do in Luverne?