

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

A Lesson Before Dying

by Ernest J. Gaines

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Chapter 1

1. The narrator says that he knows what the verdict of the trial will be. Have you ever had to go through a situation, a difficult one or an easy one, even though you knew how it would turn out? Describe the situation and write briefly about how it made you feel.
2. After the shooting, Jefferson cannot remember anything from his activities that day. Do you find this statement believable? Describe a time when you were so stunned that you were unable to think or move at all.

Chapter 2

3. Grant says that when he gets home from school, he avoids speaking to Miss Emma because he is afraid to face her. Have you ever had a hard time speaking to someone who has just received bad news? What would you say to Grant if you were his aunt?
4. Grant hates his job and the area in which he lives. He wishes his aunt would acknowledge his unhappiness. Have you ever been unhappy with your home or with the work you have to do? Describe a time when you wished you could be somewhere else. How did other people react?

Chapter 3

5. Why is it important that Grant does not go through Henri Pichot's back door anymore? Construct a conversation between Grant and his aunt about what that back door means.

The dialogue could begin as follows:

Grant: I remember how glad I was when I knew I would never have to come through the back door again.

Grant's aunt: If the world were a fair place...

6. To get permission for Grant to visit Jefferson, Miss Emma has to plead with the powerful but unfriendly Henri Pichot. Have you ever had to deal with a very powerful person that you did not especially like? Write about how you approached this person and what you said. How was the situation resolved?

Chapter 4

7. Grant says that after he drops off his aunt and Miss Emma, he needs to be with Vivian. Think of someone you like to be with in times of stress. Describe a situation in which this person was able to help you.
8. Grant feels he is not up to the task that Miss Emma and his aunt have put before him. Describe a time when you were expected to do something, even though you felt unable to do it.

Chapter 5

9. Grant knows all the children so well that he does not even listen to them recite their Bible verses. Think of something you had to do so many times that you no longer even thought about it when you did it. Describe the situation and explain whether you felt good or bad about what you were doing.
10. Grant is frustrated about the situation with Jefferson and takes out his anger on the children. Imagine that you are one of the children Grant hits with the ruler. Make a list of ten emotions to explain how you feel.

Chapter 6

11. Henri Pichot and the other men make Grant wait more than two hours before they come into the kitchen to see him. What does it mean to you when someone makes you wait? Imagine that you are Grant, standing in the kitchen, and jot down some of your feelings. Then write a short letter to Henri explaining your feelings.
12. Sheriff Guidry expects Grant not to be very smart and is aggravated when Grant refuses to hide his education. Imagine that you are Sheriff Guidry, and write down some of your thoughts about Grant. You could begin as follows:

Grant is different from the other people in the quarter. He has been to college...

Chapter 7

13. Grant learns that the superintendent of schools is coming to visit his school, and he tries to prepare the children for inspection. Think of a time when you had to prepare for a visit by someone important. Describe the situation and what you did to prepare for it.

14. Dr. Joseph is supposed to be monitoring the school's progress carefully, but he does not even remember Grant's name. As Dr. Joseph's supervisor, write a letter to him explaining some of the things he is doing wrong.

Chapter 8

15. Grant uses strict discipline in his classroom. Do you think teachers should be as strict as Grant or not as strict? Write down four reasons for your position. Then, take the opposite position and write down four reasons for that viewpoint. Write in complete sentences, properly punctuated.

16. Grant is disturbed by the fact that the boys chopping wood behave just the same as old men did in earlier times. Do you think children grow up to be like their parents and grandparents, or do they become completely new people? Give some examples of how someone you know is like his or her parents and how this person is different from his or her parents. You may use yourself as the example, if you choose.

Chapter 9

17. Grant does not wave to the people gathering pecans because he does not want Emma to think that his mood has changed. He also refuses to look at Miss Emma in the rearview mirror or to say much to her. Think of a time that you tried to show a person you were angry with him or her by not speaking. Write an entry in your diary explaining the situation.

18. When Jefferson does not accept the food Miss Emma brings him, she asks the deputy to give it to the other prisoners. What does this tell us about Miss Emma? What kind of person does she seem to be? Write down five words that you think describe her.

Chapter 10

19. Emma pretends to be sick so that she will not have to go with Grant to the jail. Write a paragraph about a time you or someone you know pretended to be sick to get out of doing something unpleasant. Did other people realize what was going on?

20. When Grant realizes that his aunt and Miss Emma have been planning all along for him to visit Jefferson alone, he becomes angry. Imagine you are Grant's aunt, and try to reason with him. You could use the following to begin your speech:

I know you are angry about not being let in on the plan, but Miss Emma needs you...