

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Pact

by Dr. Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt
with Lisa Frazier Page

written by Rachel Natbony

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The Pact

Note to the Teacher

Drs. Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt, also known as the Three Doctors, all grew up in Newark, NJ, under similar circumstances, facing the same daily dangers, negative influences, and pain involved with living in a low-income, crime-infested area. All three had had absent fathers and exposure to the drug scene, but all three had also craved to make something important of themselves, and in 1990, they made a pact—they would all become doctors someday.

The three men met at University High School. Through perseverance and the support of others, they attended and graduated from Seton Hall University and went on to receive post-graduate degrees, Drs. Davis and Hunt at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Dr. Jenkins at University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey for his dental degree. Dr. Davis fulfilled his residency in emergency medicine at Newark's Beth Israel Medical Center, and Dr. Hunt at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, specializing in internal medicine. *The Pact* traces the doctors' collaborative journey supporting each other's dreams, consoling each other in their disappointments, and remaining connected and giving back to the area they came from.

It is important to note that *The Pact* contains some strong profanity, and incidents of racism, drug abuse, and violence. These topics are important to explore in discussing the poverty the men endured, their lack of educational opportunity, and their amazing resilience; however, the maturity of the class should be considered before teaching this memoir.

Terms and Definitions

Allusion – a reference to a person, place, poem, book, event, etc., which is not part of the story, that the author expects the reader will recognize; **Example:** In *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom speaks of “Chamberlain’s umbrella,” a reference to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain.

Analogy – a comparison between things, people, places, etc., that are similar in order to point out the dissimilarities. **Example:** a tree being compared to a branching river.

Characterization – the methods, incidents, speech, etc., an author uses to reveal the people in the book; characterization is depicted by what the person says, what others say, and by his or her actions.

Cliché – a familiar word or phrase that is used so often that it is no longer fresh or meaningful, but trite; **Example:** “All’s well that ends well.”

Dialogue – conversation between two or more characters

Epilogue – a short section at the end of the book, after the action has concluded; epilogues sometimes refer to events that take place many years after the main ending to the work.

Epiphany – a revelatory, personal experience through which the individual gains an insight, knowledge, or understanding of the self, other people, or the world; the situation itself may be important or trivial, but the understanding that emerges is life changing. **Examples:** When the Three Wise Men realize that the child they see is Divine, they experience an epiphany. Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* has an epiphany when he observes a bird, which becomes the major turning point in his life.

Figurative Language – words and phrases that have meanings different from their usual ones in order to create a poetic and/or literary effect; **Examples:** Love certainly has its own seasons; crumbling cities made of matches

Foil – a character whose qualities or actions usually serve to emphasize the actions or qualities of the main character, the protagonist, by providing a strong contrast; on occasion, the foil is used as a contrast to a character other than the main one. **Examples:** Hotspur contrasts Prince Hal in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part I*; the Roadrunner of cartoon fame uses Wile E. Coyote as his foil.

Foreshadowing – the use of hints or clues in a story to suggest what action is to come; foreshadowing is frequently used to create interest and build suspense. **Example:** Two small and seemingly inconsequential car accidents predict and hint at the upcoming, important wreck in *The Great Gatsby*.

Objectives

By the end of the Unit, the student will be able to:

1. identify and explain the importance of the following motifs:
 - dreams
 - paternal and maternal figures
 - peer pressure
 - being “rescued” (by a person or by divine intervention)
2. discuss the many challenges and temptations that almost thwarted the narrators’ goal and explain how they managed to dodge these obstacles.
3. analyze the role of friendship in the memoir: How does one distinguish between beneficial and toxic friendships? How does the theme that few things are as important as friendship play an important role in the book?
4. compare and contrast the experiences, characteristics, and struggles of the Three Doctors.
5. point out examples of figurative language (similes, analogies, etc.), their meanings, and how those meanings relate to themes presented in the memoir.
6. examine the theme of how a person can demonstrate compassion and explain how compassion has shaped the Doctors’ outcomes.
7. understand the incidents of racism in this memoir, paying particular attention to how society, in many ways, acts as a rival to the Three Doctors.
8. explain how the Doctors’ many not-so-fortunate childhood friends act as foils to the three narrators.
9. expand upon the theme of giving back and returning to one’s roots.
10. speculate on the purposes of the chapters that are not plot-driven and include only personal narratives.
11. consider the effect on the memoir of having three different narrators and, therefore, three different perspectives.
12. reflect upon his or her own ambitions, friendships, and altruism.
13. analyze how maternal and paternal figures influence the three narrators.

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INTRODUCTION

VOCABULARY

entangled – stuck; trapped
impressionable – easily influenced
perpetuating – continuing
ravaged – destroyed
reigned – ruled
riddled with – full of
vulnerable – at-risk

1. How do the Three Doctors perceive the “drug dealers, gang members, [and] small-time criminals” compared to how other colleagues regard these groups?

2. Define “positive peer pressure” based on the information the doctors provide in the introduction.

3. According to the doctors, who most influences young people? What is the difference between the right and wrong kinds of this influence?

4. What theme does this introduction present?

3. MA

VOCABULARY

ambitious – determined
cordial – polite
confided – revealed in secret
enrichment – improvement
escalate – to become worse
furlough – a leave, signifying an absence
instilled – inspired
intermittently – every so often
meticulously – thoroughly
stucco – a fine plaster to cover walls
rehabilitation – recovery
rhetoric – speech
stenographer – a person who puts court hearings into written form
welfare – governmental aid

1. Describe the role that Ma plays in Rameck’s life.

2. Why did Rameck’s mother want to become pregnant?

3. What is Rameck’s “designated” role in the family? What might this role indicate about Rameck’s future interests?

7. HOPE

VOCABULARY

gauge – to judge or determine
halfheartedly – without enthusiasm
pomp and circumstance – the celebration and fuss over something
solidify – to confirm; to set
uncertainty – the feeling of not knowing what is to come

1. Cite an idea that pertains to the concept of “positive peer pressure,” a concept discussed in the introduction.

2. Provide examples of some of the worries the boys have about college.

3. When being interviewed by Carla Dickinson, George describes his heart as “racing like Carl Lewis...” what literary terms are used?

10. A DIFFERENT WORLD

VOCABULARY

arrogant – overconfident, boastful
conferred – discussed
demeanor – behavior; how a person acts
dichotomy – a contrast or a division
dispense – to give out
dispersed – scattered
feigning – faking
grandiose – impressive, larger-than-life
lax – weak, not effective
liability – a legal responsibility
measly – small, usually referring to an amount
naively – foolishly
rational – reasonable; sane
righteous – blameless
sanction – to approve
simultaneously – at the same time
sinister – threatening
spectacle – an interesting or strange sight
stereotypes – oversimplified, usually offensive views of certain groups of people

1. What literary device does Hunt employ to describe his freshman year at college?

2. Why does Rameck invite Michael to visit him at Seton Hall?

13. ACCESS MED

VOCABULARY

- adequately – in a satisfactory way
- cathedral – like a church
- daunting – difficult or frightening
- furiously – in a rapid way
- futile – unsuccessful
- histology – the study of bodily tissues
- intensified – increased
- intimate – close-up
- meticulous – thorough; careful
- probing – examining, searching
- scope – a medical instrument used for viewing
- spliced – joined together
- torrential – heavy
- underlying – core

1. Rameck and Sam receive what important news? How does this development affect the trio?

2. Who steps in to ensure continued support for George?

3. What surprising fact about Rutgers’s Livingston campus do Sam and Rameck discover? How does this fact affect how they feel about the program?

17. GRADUATION

VOCABULARY

doggedly – determinedly
entourage – a group of supporters
foresight – anticipation of the future
irked – annoyed
periodontal – dealing with the gums
prophetic – telling of the future

1. What is now common among all three men’s residencies?

2. Which family member of George’s does he identify as one whose “achievements had inspired [him]”? Why?

3. How does George feel when he sees Sam and Rameck walk across the platform?
