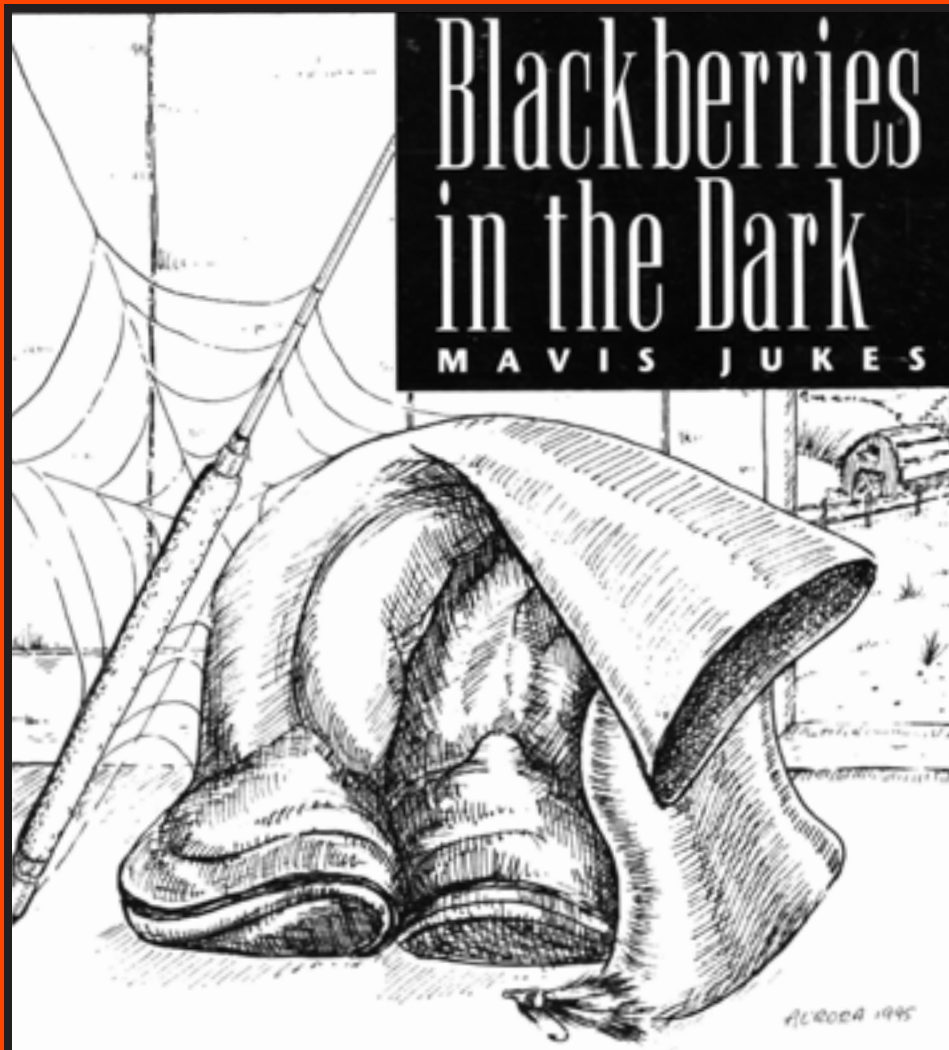


Novel·Ties



A Study Guide

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LEARNING LINKS

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For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide consists of lessons to use in conjunction with *Blackberries in the Dark*. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different novel on its reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for guided reading by distributing the novel and a folder to each child. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading a chapter or group of chapters; all other work should be done after the chapter has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging students' love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

Pre-Reading Activities (cont.)

5. Before he leaves the ranch, Austin receives some family keepsakes that will remind him of both of his grandparents. Does your family have any keepsakes that have been handed down from past generations? What memories do you or other family members have when looking at these objects? Why do you think families often pass things down from generation to generation?
6. In this story, Austin and his grandmother learn a new skill that neither one of them has ever tried before. Think of a time you learned to do something new with the help of someone else. What mistakes did you make? Did you have fun learning together? Were you successful?
7. If possible, obtain a fresh blackberry. When you taste it, notice its combination of sweet and sour flavors. Is there any other food that tastes both sweet and sour? Have you ever had any experiences in your life that were both sweet and sour?
8. Have you or anyone you know ever experienced the death of a beloved person or animal? What are all the different feelings that someone feels after such a death? Is it all right to be angry? Is it all right to be happy? How long should someone be sad?

Chapter 1 (cont.)

Questions:

1. Where does Austin's grandmother meet him?
2. How does Grandmother get to the airport? Why doesn't she drive herself?
3. What important change has taken place since Austin's last visit?
4. What does Wayne invite Austin to do?
5. Why does Austin turn down Wayne's invitation?

Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you think Wayne is a good neighbor? Use examples from the story to tell why you think as you do.
2. What important issue *don't* Grandmother and Austin discuss? Why do you think this is so?
3. How do you think Austin is feeling about this summer's visit?

Literary Element: Characterization

In this chapter, the author helps us picture how Austin's grandmother and Wayne look by describing their clothing. Make a list of these details for each character. Then look at the picture on page ten. Which of these details did the artist use in drawing the picture of Austin's grandmother? What additional details did he include?

Writing Activity:

Since Austin was traveling alone, his parents probably asked him to call home when he reached the ranch. What questions do you think they might ask him about his trip? What do you think Austin would say? Write a script for the phone call. Then act it out with a partner. You may wish to use the following lines to help you get started.

Austin's Mom: Hello

Austin: Hi, Mom. I made it. I just arrived at Grandmother's.