

The Eudora Welty Ephemera Prize

“A Worn Path” Lesson Plan

Preparation:

Read Eudora Welty’s story “A Worn Path” from *A Circle of Green and Other Stories*
Have students write a one-paragraph free response to “A Worn Path” before discussing.

Some Questions for Discussion:

Why does Pheonix Jackson go to town on this cold, December day?
What obstacles does she face on her journey, and how does she overcome them?
How do you view the hunter that Pheonix encounters? Is he a help or a threat?
How much help do the doctor and his staff actually give to Pheonix?
Why does Eudora Welty give her character a sick grandchild?
Do you think the child is still alive? Do you think the medicine will cure him?
Why do you think Pheonix wants to buy a pinwheel? What does that tell you about her?
Why do you think Eudora Welty decided to name her character Pheonix Jackson?
What forces does Pheonix Jackson resist, and in what ways is she resilient?
What is the difference between resilience and resistance or are they the same?
How does the world in this story reflect on and comment on society in Mississippi?

Assignment:

Write a 1-3 page personal essay, poem, or story about a time you, someone you know, or a fictional character exhibited resilience and/or resistance. The ‘character’ doesn’t have to be a person, but could be an animal or even a house or other image that represents resilience and resistance to you. Perhaps that resilience or resistance is subtle and often goes unnoticed. Or perhaps it is overt and even risky at times. What forces does the character in your essay, story, or poem need to be resilient against? What forms of power do they resist?

Alternate assignment:

Write a 1-3 page personal essay, poem, or story in response to “A Worn Path.” You might take on one of the other characters and tell the story from their perspective or tell what you think happens to a character after the ending of the story. Or you might rewrite the story in a modern setting allowing for different characters, different choices, or a different ending.

Activity:

Hold a class contest: Let all the students read each other’s work and decide together which pieces are the most compelling or give each other suggestions. Encourage students to revise their work and submit it to the contest. All students are welcome to submit, even if the class didn’t pick their work. Our judges might find value that your class overlooked, so encourage everyone to revise and submit! Holding a class contest might help some students get past the hurdle of submitting to the main contest.

Have your students submit their poems, stories, or essays to ephemera@muw.edu by Sept. 15, 2024. See the prize announcement for full details.