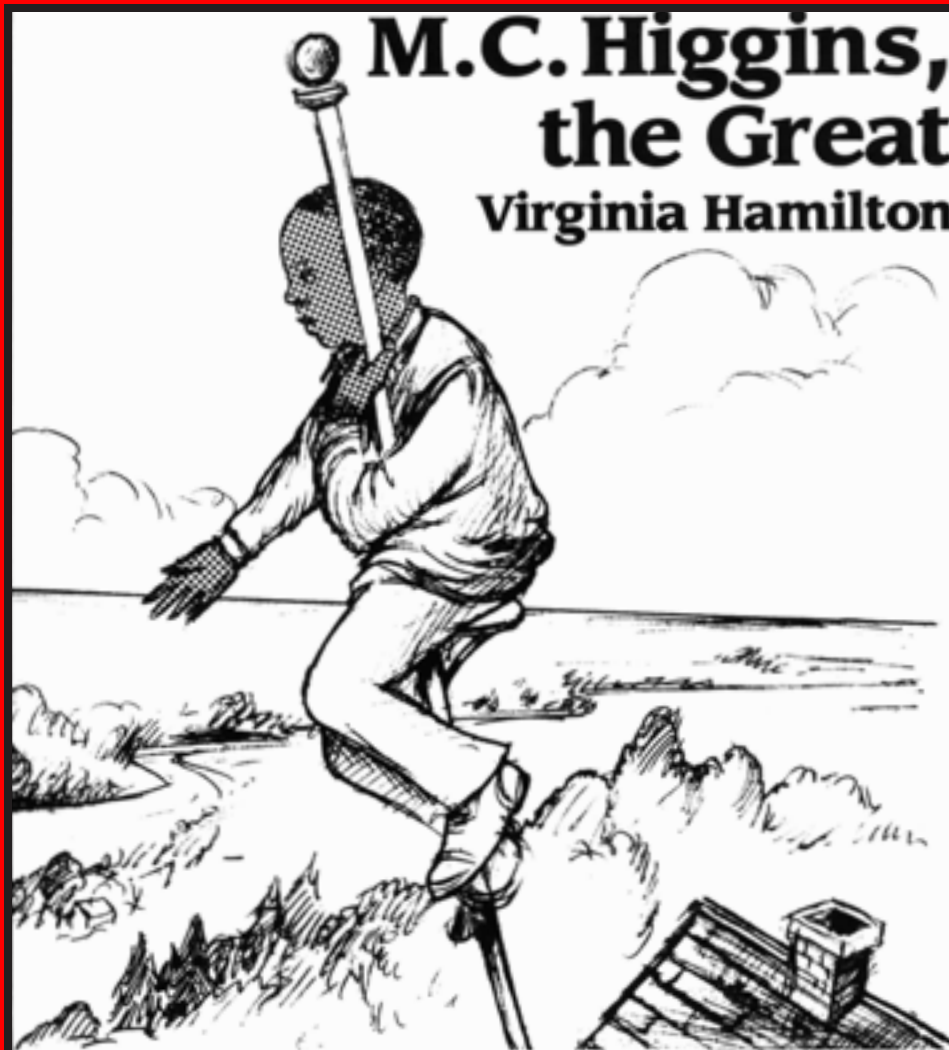


Novel·Ties



A Study Guide

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LEARNING LINKS

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For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide to use in conjunction with the novel *M.C. Higgins, the Great* consists of lessons for guided reading. 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 at its own 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 reading development 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; 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, formed by practice in focusing on interpretive comprehension and literary techniques, will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Preview the book by reading the title and the author's name and by looking at the illustration on the cover. What do you think the book is about? When and where does it take place? Have you read any other books by the same author?
2. Virginia Hamilton was the first black writer to win the Newbery Medal, and *M.C. Higgins, the Great* was the first book to win both the Newbery Medal and the National Book Award. Find out about these prestigious awards. What other awards has this novel received? As you read the book, decide what qualities of this book merited these awards.
3. **Music Connection:** Folk music figures prominently in the novel you are about to read. Locate and listen to recordings of African American folk music. Try to find examples of songs sung by people who settled in the mountains and songs that incorporate call and response. What are the themes of your favorite songs?
4. **Social Studies Connection:** Read the Background Information on page two of this study guide and do some additional research to find out more about strip mining.
5. *M.C. Higgins, the Great* deals with the subject of prejudice based on physical appearance. Have you ever known of a situation where a person or a family was discriminated against because they looked different from their neighbors? Think about the meaning of the word *prejudice*. Then discuss what you can do to assure fair treatment for everyone.
6. Virginia Hamilton, the author of *M.C. Higgins, the Great*, often sets her stories in southern Ohio. In speaking of this, she has said:

. . . since we've been there for generations, I see that locale through my eyes, my mother's eyes, and my grandmother's eyes. . . I'm afraid I'm unable to deal with one time frame when I'm writing: I seem not to be able to create a character in one dimension of time. . . I think that living on the land that supported my ancestors has a lot to do with it.*

The main character in this book has also been raised on the land that supported his ancestors. As you read this novel, notice the importance of ancestors and their continuing influence on their descendants.

* From *Something About the Author*, Vol. 56, p. 62. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1989.)

CHAPTERS 1, 2

Vocabulary: The following words relate to the geography, or physical setting, of the place where the story occurs. Draw a line from each word on the left to its definition on the right.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 1. plateau | a. bowl-shaped, steep-walled mountain basin |
| 2. mound | b. small valley originally worn away by running water |
| 3. ravine | c. flat shelf of rock protruding from a cliff or slope |
| 4. gully | d. elevation of earth either natural or man-made |
| 5. summit | e. fairly level, raised land area usually bounded by steep sides |
| 6. ledge | f. narrow, steep-sided valley commonly eroded by running water |
| 7. cirque | g. highest point, usually of a mountain |

Vocabulary II: Use the context to choose the best meaning for the underlined word in each of the following sentences.

- The farm laborer collapsed after working for hours in the oppressive heat.
 - unfamiliar
 - intense
 - lukewarm
 - mild
- The boy's steps were lithe and natural as he side-stepped rocks and fallen logs
 - clumsy
 - rhythmical
 - flexible
 - difficult
- An abundance of trees blocked a view of the valley.
 - plentiful quantity
 - scarcity
 - harvest
 - wood carving
- The girl moved warily, often glancing behind her to see if anyone was following.
 - slowly
 - dangerously
 - swiftly
 - cautiously
- The man perspired and breathed heavily after the exertion of climbing the steep hill.
 - ease
 - excitement
 - effort
 - competition
- Even from a great distance, the configuration of the mountain stood out sharply from the surrounding landscape.
 - snow caps
 - tree line
 - shape
 - foliage