

Novel•Ties

FORTY ACRES AND MAYBE A MULE

HARRIETTE GILLEM ROBINET



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 *Forty Acres and Maybe a Mule* 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 QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Preview the book by reading the title and author's name and by looking at the illustration on the cover. What can you predict about this novel? When and where do you think it takes place? Have you read any other books by the same author?
2. Read the "Author's Note" at the end of the book and the Background Information about Reconstruction on page two of this study guide. Then brainstorm with a small group of classmates to fill in the first two columns of a K-W-L chart, such as the one below. When you finish the book, return to the chart to fill in the third column.

Reconstruction		
What I Know -K-	What I Want to Learn -W-	What I Learned -L-

3. **Geography Connection:** Locate a detailed map of South Carolina and Georgia in 1865. As you read the novel, use the map to find locations mentioned in the book.
4. *Forty Acres and Maybe a Mule* is a work of historical fiction—one that uses history as a background for imagined events. The characters in such a work may be fictional or historical or both. Discuss with your classmates other works of historical fiction they have read and what periods of history they covered. What do they enjoy about this type of book? What challenges does an author face when writing such a work?
5. **Cooperative Learning Activity:** Work with a small cooperative learning group to discuss the meaning of "freedom." What does the word mean to you? In what ways do you feel free? How would your life differ if your freedom were taken from you? To what lengths would you go to preserve your freedom?
6. Have you read any other books set in the United States right after the Civil War? If so, when and where were these stories set? What problems did people in these books have to face?
7. With your classmates, read the first four paragraphs of the book and answer the following questions:
 - What do you learn about Pascal?
 - Where and when does the story take place?
 - How does the author grab the reader's attention?
 - What do you want to find out as you continue reading the book?

CHAPTERS 1 – 3

Vocabulary: Draw a line from each word on the left to its meaning on the right. Then use the numbered words to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1. flinched | a. soothed |
| 2. comforted | b. looked at quickly |
| 3. embarrassment | c. having a sudden, uncontrollable tightening of muscles |
| 4. glanced | d. drew back from difficulty or pain |
| 5. spastic | e. rarely; not often |
| 6. seldom | f. something that makes one feel uncomfortable |

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- The girl's foolish behavior was a(n) _____ to her family.
- I left my umbrella home because it _____ rains here in September.
- John _____ when the dentist touched his aching tooth.
- Soft music _____ me as I waited for the test to begin.
- The boy could not control the movement of his _____ arm.
- I didn't notice that the window was open when I _____ around the room.

Read to find out about Gideon's plans for himself and his brother.

Questions:

- How did Jerusalem City die? How did her death affect Pascal?
- Why does Gideon return to the plantation?
- In what ways had Pascal helped his fellow slaves in the past? What does this suggest about him?
- What happens when Gideon tries to claim his land at the Freedman's Bureau in South Carolina?
- How is the journey to find the Freedom's Bureau both frightening and joyful for Pascal and Nelly?
- Why are so many soldiers and ex-slaves traveling on the same roads as Pascal?
- Why does a white man shoot at Mr. Freedman?