

A Lesson Before Dying
By Ernest J. Gaines

Chapters 1-2, pp. 3-15

1. Identify Jefferson, Grant, Brother, Bear, Alcee Grope, Miss Emma, Reverend Ambrose and Tante Lou.
2. Why is the defendant on trial? What is the defendant's story? What is the prosecutor's version of the events? What do you think is the most damaging evidence? What is the verdict? What is the sentence?
3. Explain how you would vote if you were on the jury and why you would do so.
4. What do you learn about the narrator? What does Miss Emma ask him to do? Why? How does he feel about his ability to help?
5. Why is Henri Pichot important to Miss Emma?
6. Predict: What will happen at the Pichot Plantation?

Chapters 3-4, pp 16-32

1. Who goes to Henri Pichot's? Explain what happens there. Why do you think Miss Emma reminds Pichot of what she's done for the family?
2. How does Grant feel about entering the Pichot house through the back door? What does that symbolize for him?
3. Name Miss Emma's two primary concerns for Jefferson. Which do you think is the most important to her?
4. Describe Vivian and explain her significance to the story. What does Grant want the two of them to do? Why?
5. Describe Bayonne and identify signs of segregation.
6. What are the Jim Crow laws? (research)

Chapters 5-6, pp. 33-50

1. Describe life for the black children in the quarter.
2. Describe Grant's classroom and his role as a teacher. What do you think the Westcott ruler symbolizes for him.