

Other Activities



Oral Storytelling

Wish You Well is an oral history. All of us have our own stories to tell, our own oral histories. Have each student tell a partner a story that is personal to him/her. Once each story is told and heard, have the partners write each other's story and share them with the class.

This activity can be used as a pre-reading strategy to introduce what oral storytelling is and how Baldacci has written his book.

Letter Writing

Have each student choose one character from the novel, and have that character write a letter to another character, discussing some kind of situation or issue connected to what happens in a particular chapter. For example, a student might choose Lou and as Lou, writes a letter to Billy Davis after her fight at school. Remind the students that their main goal in writing these letters is to assume the persona of the character they choose.

Courtroom Drama

This is a forceful activity to do before students reach the end of the book. Re-enact the courtroom scene. Assign the class specific roles — jury, lawyers and other characters in the scene, judge, observers. Have each lawyer (Cotton Longfellow, Thurston Goode) provide opening statements, providing support from what has already happened in the novel. Have the jury then make a decision as to what should happen to Louisa's land and the children. Then have the students finish reading the novel. Discuss with them how the outcome in the novel was similar or different from what their re-enacted trial predicted. Have each member of the jury turn in a written response regarding his or her opinion of the trial.

Creative Writing

Have the students go to the New Deal Network Library: <http://newdeal.feri.org>. Have them click on "Photo Gallery," then scroll down to "Photo Series" (under "Miscellaneous"), then click on "WPA photoessays," then "Haysi, Virginia." Ask each student to examine the photos of Haysi made in the 1930s, choose one that interests him/her, and print it out. Ask the students to study their pictures and use them as the basis for creating a short story, vignette, short dramatic scene, or poem.

Dramatizing

After the students have read the novel, divide the class into groups and have each group rewrite a scene (their own choice or assigned) from the book into play form. Once the scripts are completed, have each group present its dramatization to the class. Below is a rubric to help the teacher and/or class assess the performances:

Group Members:	Rating (Scale 1-10)
The group included the required number of performance elements in the presentation.	
Every member of the group made an oral contribution to the presentation.	
The group worked together to present a cohesive presentation.	
The presentation accurately reflected the scene from the book.	
Group members spoke loudly and clearly enough to be heard by the entire audience.	
Group members often made eye contact with various members of the audience.	
Group members performed in a dramatic and effective style.	
Group members performed with confidence.	
Group members held the attention of the audience throughout the presentation.	
The group's presentation informed and entertained the class.	
TOTAL	

Character Bone Structure

This study helps students understand the physical and psychological background/makeup of the novel's characters. Have the students choose a character and then find and copy passages from the book that illustrate all or some of the following:

- **Physiology** — the character's appearance and outward attitude.
 - sex
 - age
 - height & weight
 - color of eyes, hair, and skin
 - posture
 - appearance (dress)
 - defects
 - heredity
- **Sociology** — the character's home location, type of job, family life, financial status, and how he/she spends free time.
 - class
 - occupation
 - education
 - home life
 - religion
 - place in community

- political ambitions
- amusements, hobbies
- **Psychology** — how a character acts because of attitude, the mental state of the character, and reasons for the character’s actions due to attitude
 - moral standards
 - personal ambitions
 - frustrations (big and small)
 - temperament
 - attitude towards life
 - complexities
 - extrovert, introvert, or ambivert
 - I.Q.

Making a Quilt

Instruct each student to interview a family member about the family’s history. Encourage them to tape the interview and then transcribe it on paper. Once the interviews are completed, the class should do one of two activities :

- Create individual “quilts” that reflect each student’s family’s history by dividing a poster board into even squares and decorating each square with pictures or symbols.
- Create a real quilt that reflects the oral histories of the whole class. This will involve having each student create a quilt block design on a square of paper and then transferring the design to a square of muslin. The muslin blocks are then sewn together with a lattice to create a quilt for the class. Consult local quilters or a quilt shop for ideas that will expedite this project. Ask for help from the school’s Family Living (Home Economics) Department.

Once the poster-board “quilts” or the actual quilt is finished, have each student make an oral presentation to the class about his/her family.

Rewriting: Point of View

Have the students rewrite an incident in *Wish You Well* from another character’s point of view.

Comparing Names

Have the students compare selected passages from *Wish You Well* that reflect the voices of the children in the novel with similar passages from one or more of the following novels: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Member of the Wedding*, *Ellen Foster*, *Catcher in the Rye*.

Looking for Archetypes

Discuss/define character and situation archetypes. Show students how to search for these in *Wish You Well*. Then have the students locate and note several of these in the novel.

Making Signs

In *Wish You Well*, David Baldacci provides vivid images of life in the Appalachian mountains. The signs read by Lou indicated that they traveled through Dickens and Tremont and over the McCloud River before reaching the home of Louisa Mae Cardinal. Have the students draw pictures/maps of the area surrounding the Appalachian mountains. Have them separate their maps into thirds and draw “signs” (symbols) in appropriate places to represent the differences each area possesses. (For example, an automobile dealership is found in Dickens. Thus, one could draw an auto dealer sign there.)

Identifying Figurative Language

When an author uses figurative language, the speech is very vivid. Usually, the author uses similes, metaphors, or personification. Remind students that

- a **simile** is a figure of speech that compares two dissimilar things by using words such as *like*, *as*, or *as if*
- a **metaphor** links two unlike things directly without using words such as *like*, *as*, or *as if*
- **personification** is a technique that gives human attributes to something that is not human.

Have the students find examples of Baldacci’s use of figurative language, copy the phrases exactly as they are written in the novel, and then indicate whether each phrase is a metaphor, a simile, or personification. The simile contained in the sentence, “This curious pairing struck Lou as akin to fine pants over filthy boots.” is an example that can be provided to students.

Looking for Irony

Discuss with the students the two types of irony to be found in literature: **situational irony** and **verbal irony**. Situational irony occurs when something happens in the story other than what the reader is led to expect. Verbal irony occurs when there is difference between what people say and what they intend to say. Write this sentence on the board: “The character of Jimmy ‘Diamond’ Skinner is an example of irony at its best!” Have students validate this statement by finding supporting information from the novel.

Speaking Appalachian

David Baldacci writes several phrases used by people who lived in the Appalachian region at the time of the story of *Wish You Well*. In order to determine the meaning of these words/phrases, careful attention has to be given to the surrounding words (context clues). Have students find at least ten words or phrases from the novel that are unfamiliar to them. Ask them to use context clues to write definitions. An example to provide to students is *milk fever*—a cow that is heavy with milk. (See the vocabulary strategy “Context Clues and Idiomatic Expressions” on page 85.)