



# Unit 1

## A Lesson Before Dying: Guidebook 2020 Unit

Grade 9  
English I

### Unit Length and Description:

12 Weeks

We will read *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines and a series of related literary and informational texts to explore the question: What makes us human? We will express our understanding through an essay that examines a lesson learned about humanity in the novel, as well as how this lesson is presented in a secondary text.

### Standards:

#### Reading Literature:

##### **Key Ideas and Details**

1. Cite relevant and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

##### **Craft and Structure**

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
6. Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in works of literature drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

#### Reading Informational Texts:

##### **Key Ideas and Details**

1. Cite relevant and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
2. Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

3. Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

### **Craft and Structure**

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

5. Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

### **Writing:**

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

### **Speaking and Listening:**

1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

b. Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and

understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

### **Language:**

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
  - a. Use parallel structure.
  - b. Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
  - a. Use a semicolon (and perhaps a conjunctive adverb) to link two or more closely related independent clauses.
  - b. Use a colon to introduce a list or quotation.
  - c. Spell correctly.

### **Knowledge of Language**

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
  - a. Write and edit work so that it conforms to the guidelines in a style manual (e.g., *MLA Handbook*, Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), *Turabian's Manual for Writers*) appropriate for the discipline and writing type.

### **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 9–10 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
  - a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
  - b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., *analyze, analysis, analytical; advocate, advocacy*).
  - c. Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, or its etymology.
  - d. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
  - a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.
  - b. Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.
6. Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

### **Enduring Understandings:**

- Determine multiple lessons that Grant and Jefferson learn about what it means to be human.
- Use textual evidence from Lesson Before Dying to support the lessons learned.
- Determine how other texts from the unit support the lessons about being human.

### **Essential Questions:**

- What makes us human?
- Though one is in jail and one is not, what similarities exist between Jefferson's and Grant's situations? Where would each character fall on Maslow's hierarchy of needs?
- What theme about isolation is being developed in Lesson Before Dying and one other text in this section? How is the theme developed in Lesson Before Dying and the secondary text?
- How do the connections that both Grant and Jefferson have with other characters teach them lessons about humanity?
- What change in Grant's and Jefferson's views of their role in the world can be seen at the end of the novel? How do changes reflect lessons they have learned about being human?