

WHS Book Rationale

Title: *A Lesson Before Dying*

Author: Ernest J. Gaines

- **Intended Audience**
 - English 11 Honors / English 11

- **Brief summary and educational significance**
 - A black schoolteacher in 1940s Louisiana must try to teach a young black man on death row what it means to be “a man” before he is executed.
 - Chosen as a best book for Young Adults by the YALSA.

- **Purpose of teaching the work and how it will be used**
 - Required summer reading book. Writer’s style, identity, human psyche, friendship, struggle, perseverance, exploration of the change in character’s attitude towards himself and his community.
 - Connects to *Animal Dreams* and both books share themes of community and self-understanding and responsibility.

- **Potential problems**
 - Race relations, sex, capital punishment, language, stereotypes, spiritual conflict.

- **Addressing potential problems**
 - Addressed in class discussions related to themes of English 11 texts; echoes earlier Freshman reading experience (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, etc.).