The River Between Us

By

Richard Peck

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

The River Between Us
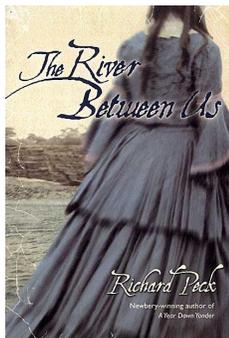## *By Richard Peck*

## Table of Contents

About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine of these years. He is the author of the novel for Young Readers, ***Mystery at Red Marsh Lake*** (Marshall-Cavendish Publishers, 2020), available on www.amazon.com. For more information on his work and literature, please visit the websites www.reedpublications.org and www.novelstudies.org.

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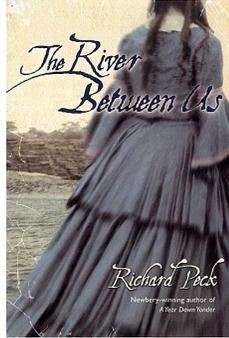
Suggestions and Expectations

Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one or two chapters of *The River Between Us* and is comprised of four distinct sections:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (page 7) as well as a **Checklist** (page 6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to the following:

a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
c) compare and contrast two characters;
d) determine how characters … respond to challenges;
e) drawing inferences from the text;
f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes and **topics** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include the American Civil War, the horrors of war, racial prejudice, importance of friends and family, sacrifice, perseverance and personal growth, courage.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying / creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Identify *personification*
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identification of a *cliffhanger*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists/antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card

The River Between Us
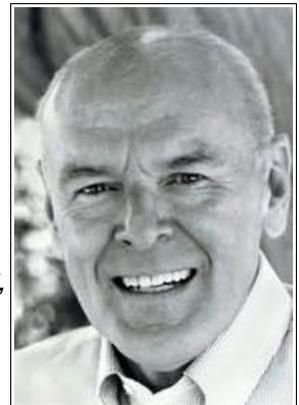## *By Richard Peck*
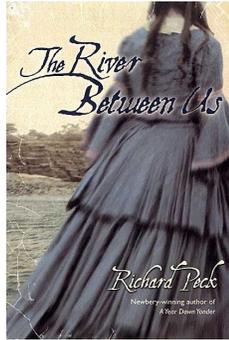
Synopsis

Tilly Pruitt is 15 years old when a steamboat docks at her small Illinois town on the banks of the Mississippi River. The boat carries two mysterious female passengers who will change Tilly's life -- and that of her family -- forever. When Tilly's twin brother Noah runs away to fight in the Civil War, Tilly and one of the women follow in an action-packed adventure that captures the drama of this momentous battle.
[Summary courtesy of the publisher]

Author Biography
Richard Peck

Richard Peck was born and brought up in Decatur, Illinois, about a three-hour car ride from Chicago. His first writing job was in the United States army in Germany where he was assigned the job of ghost-writing sermons for chaplains. His four most recent novels are set in the part of the world that the author most likes to celebrate. In Mr. Peck's own words: "*Strays Like Us* is a story about a girl being fostered in one of those small, old-fashioned towns where it's hard to be a stranger. *A Long Way From Chicago and A Year Down Yonder, two books that have changed my life, are set in the farm town where my father grew up. Grandma Dowdel's house is the house where my grandmother lived: a tall jigsaw gothic with lighting rods. My newest novel is Fair Weather in which three farm kids see the future unfolding before them at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.*

Ricard Peck passed away in 2018 in New York City after a long battle with cancer. .

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Student Checklist

Student Name: _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

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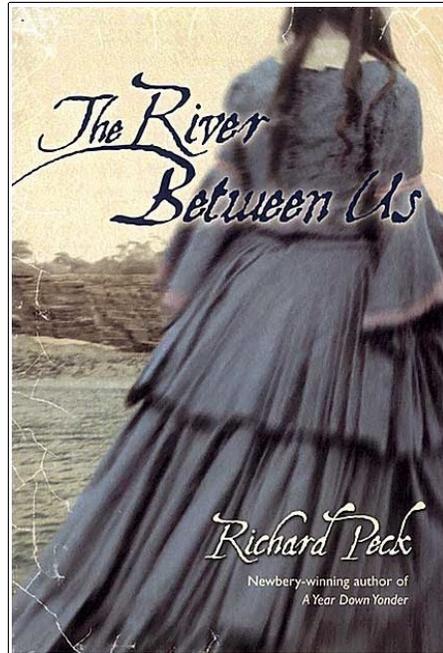
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Name: _____

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Chapter 1

Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or "good guy". The protagonist <u>in Chapter One</u> of *The River Between Us* is fifteen-year old, Howard Leland Hutchings, who grew up in the city of St. Louis in the early years of the 20th Century. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels or movies. Who would be your favorite protagonist of al time? Why did you select this character?

Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

restriction	celluloid	vicinity	maul
expedition	gauge	alpaca	radiator

1. It is important that we _____ the proper distance between stops.

2. My best friend lives in the _____ of the Gettysburg battlefield.

3. Our car's _____ sprung a leak on the way home.

4. They were forced to put a _____ on the number of cars one might own.

5. He wore high _____ collars, and was never without a necktie.

6. The vicious dog attempted to _____ the two little boys.

7. The wool from an _____ is highly valued.

8. Livingstone's _____ into the heart of Africa was fraught with peril.

Questions 🖊️

1. What is the **setting** of the novel at the beginning of Chapter 1 (time and place)?

2. Match each name with the proper description:

1	William Hutchings	A	Protagonist in Chapter One.
2	Enos Walker	B	Got carsick.
3	Earl Hutchings	C	Resided in a four-poster bed.
4	Raymond Hutchings	D	Worked in a sawmill for three years.
5	Noah Pruitt	E	Young Bill.
6	Howard Hutchings	F	Started a sawmill
7	Delphine Duval	G	Noah's sister
8	Tilly Pruitt	H	Got homesick.

3. What do you think the author means when he writes, I *knew but little about who he was and where he'd come from. And so I knew but little about myself*?

4. As the story begins, what was the only thing that Howard knew about his dad's people?

5. What does it mean to be a ***self-made man*** (or woman)?

6. How did Howard's dad prevent the radiator from leaking?

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7. By nightfall of the first day of the expedition, they hoped to be in the vicinity of
   _____, Illinois. During the first day they only got _____ flat tires.

8. Describe how they checked to make sure they had enough gas in the tank.

| |
| |

9. Why didn't they stay in a hotel? Where did they stay instead?

| |
| |
| |

10. What does the following expression mean, *the road nearly played out past Fountain Bluff*?

| |
| |

11. Describe your first impressions of the family Howard met.

| |
| |
| |

12. What kind of mood is the author trying to create with the following statement:
    But just for the moment they were caught in the grip of this place. They felt the weight of its history, and mystery.

| |
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| |

🖊 Language Activities

A. *A* **simile** is a comparison using the words "like" or "as". We find an example of this in Chapter One: . . . *a tiny face wrinkled like a walnut . . .*

In this example what two things are being compared?

Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your imagination:

a) The sound of a Model T touring car backfiring

b) your own example

B. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. In this section of the novel the author writes, *… they were caught in the grip of this place. They felt the weight of its history, and mystery.* In this example the place takes on human characteristics by possessing a grip and it actually feels that the place is actually bearing its weight down on them.

a) Why do you think personification is a literary device used by many authors?

b) Create your own example of personification.

C. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **PAN** can also form the word **NAP**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:

a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters.

Each of the words in the left-hand column are found in this section of our novel.

Word	Anagram	Clue
reason		A married Spanish woman.
sharp		Musical instruments.
strap		Leaves.
tower		Inscribed.
silent		Join up.
parted		Leave

D. What Do You Know About the Model-T Touring Car?

Howard takes a rather long trip in a car which we would consider very primitive – a Ford Model-T touring car. At the time of the events described in this novel, the car had only been around for less than a generation, so very few people could afford one. The first Model A, for instance, was manufactured in 1903. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three fascinating facts about Ford Model-T and record this information below.

1	
2	
3	

Extension Activity 🖌️

Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.

Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	**4**
5	**6**