

4

Lesson 4

FOCUS: Characters

A great writer develops characters who continue to fascinate readers throughout the years. We become enchanted by their personalities, their trials, and their growth. We follow the main figure, the protagonist, through a challenging series of events. The protagonist's journey is made more dramatic by the challenges presented by characters who often embody different beliefs. Another character who brings out an important feature of the protagonist is called an antagonist or a "foil," an important literary device. An antagonist heightens conflict, embodying an opposing force. The antagonist can be a character, nature, a social force, or an internal drive in the protagonist.



Discussion Activities

How do Logan and Joe reveal different sides of Janie? What are their motivations?

To what extent does Janie acquire her own voice and the ability to shape her own life? How are the two attributes related?



Writing Exercise

In Chapter 3, our protagonist, Janie, wanders back and forth to the pear tree, "wondering and thinking" as she tries to adjust to her arranged marriage. She struggles with words, inheriting a "deepness" from her Nanny. Although Janie fails to find any "bloom" in this marriage, she discovers that "she knew things that nobody had ever told her. For instance, the words of the trees and the wind." Like her Nanny, Janie's "basin of mind" finds words in the sights and sounds of nature.

Review the first four chapters, documenting moments when Janie finds meaning in nature. What other natural phenomena guide Janie on her journey? Students will write about the way the sun reflects Janie's emotional state.



Homework

Read Chapters 5-6 (pp. 34-75). Ask students to pay attention to the street lamp in Chapter 5. How does the text suggest that this is more than an ordinary street lamp? How might such references to light be symbolic?