

The Bean Trees

By Barbara Kingsolver

Summer Reading Packet for Incoming Juniors

Pre-reading Activity #1 for Sophomore Teachers and Students: Pictograph

- Read the Cheyenne story, “Earth Making” located at the back of the packet.
- Now, recreate a significant portion of the story in pictograph form on this page.

A pictograph is a story told only in pictures, no words allowed.

What cultural values are evident in the Cheyenne tribe?

Pre-reading Activity #2
for Sophomore Teachers and Students:

Family Connections

- Write down what you believe to be a good denotation (dictionary definition) of “family.”

- Now, think of all the words that come to mind when you hear the word “family.” Complete the following chart on family:

Things you see	
Things you feel	
Things you hear	
Things you smell	

Pre-reading Activity #2 (cont.)

Thinking about your “FAMILY”: Only you can determine which people in your world are members of your family, and only you can decide what information you would like about those family members to better understand who you are and from where you come.

Step #1: Pick one member of your family that you think will have some knowledge about your family and want to share it.

Step #2: Write down five questions you would like to know about your family.

Step #3: Interview that person you have chosen and write down his/her responses to your questions.

Question	Response

Pre-Reading Activity #3

Vocabulary

Read the following sentences from the novel. Use context clues to determine a definition for each underlined word. Write your definition on the space below each passage. Use a dictionary to confirm the meaning and function (noun, verb, adjective) of the word.

1. “On the side of the pleated tin building there was a large picture of Jesus with outstretched hands and yellow streamers of light emanating from his head” (31).

2. “Mrs. Hoge’s ulterior motive, I believe, was the child, which she looked after a great deal of the time” (37).

3. “I did inquire there about work, but the head man in a white coat and puckery white loafers looked me over and said, ‘Are you a licensed phlebotomist in the state of Arizona?’ in this tone of voice like who was I to think I could be on the end of the needle that doesn’t hurt, and that was the end of that” (51).

4. “I felt a little badly about foisting her off on Lou Ann at all, but she insisted that Turtle was so little trouble she often forgot she was there” (81).

5. “ ‘I tell you my most personal darkest secret and you laugh,’ I said, playing vexed” (92).

6. “Before, it had seemed picayune to get all bent out of shape organizing the household chores” (104).

7. “ ‘I guess the ideal thing,’ I conjectured, half dreaming, ‘would have been to get clothes with good, deep pockets’” (146).

8. “ ‘It certainly wasn’t sour, but it wasn’t sweet either, not like a flower. ‘Pungent’ is the word Estevan used” (171).

9. “ ‘I’m asking you, where else would somebody get the idea to hurt a child?’ I couldn’t say. I sat on my bed for hours looking up words. Pedophilia. Perpetrator. Deviant. Maleficent” (178).

10. “ ‘A catharsis,’ I said. ‘And she seems happy, honest to God, as happy as if she’d found a safe place to leave Ismene behind’” (233).

Required Activity #1 Web Scavenger Hunt

After reading chapters 1-3, go to your computer or the friendly Oak Park or River Forest library and complete this internet activity.

Death Squads

- What is a death squad?
- What is the difference between a death squad and a terrorist group?
- Name five countries that have faced the terror of death squads.
- Describe the “reign of terror” in Guatemala when death squads were running rampant.

Required Activity #2 Untraditional Family Structures

How does this novel ask you to rethink your definition of “family” and parenthood?

How does this novel suggest alternative role models in place of, or in addition to, the biological parent?

Name of Character	Give one example of each characters' role as “parent”
Taylor Greer	
Lou Ann	
Mattie	
Estevan	

Required Activity #3 Body Portrait/Biography

On the back of the page, draw a picture of one of the characters.

It should be an accurate representation of the character with key physical characteristics.

On each part of the body, explain the following:

- HEAD-** What is on the character's mind?
- EYES-** How does the character see the world?
- MOUTH-** How does the character communicate?
- HEART-** What does the character love most?
- STOMACH-** What satisfies the character or fills him/her up?
- SPINE-** What does the character want the most?

Also include:

- **Symbol/object** associated with the character
- 2 important **relationships** with other characters
- 3 **quotations** from the character (most important, significant)
- one sentence that sums up the character's **personality**

Body Portrait/Biography sheet

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #2
Car Motif

From the 1955 Volkswagen Bug to the Lincoln that Taylor uses at the climax of the book, the car is a major **motif** (recurring image throughout the novel).

As you read, write down any references to cars and note the page numbers.

Why does the author use this motif?

How does it help to enhance your understanding of the characters and the setting?

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #1

Read the following quote. Do you agree or disagree with this quote? Explain why.

“It’s not a bad thing that children should occasionally, and politely, put parents in their place” (Anonymous).

Explain how this quote relates to the concepts discussed in chapter one of the novel.

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #3

Hollywood has decided to make a movie of the book, *The Bean Trees*. In developing the trailer, they need to have the following:

1. Two major scenes that would get audiences' interest

Scene 1:
Scene 2:

2. Actors to play these characters:

Character	Actor
Taylor Greer	
Lou Ann	
Esperanza	
Estevan	
Angel	

3. What song best depicts this movie? Explain why.

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #4

Retell *The Bean Trees* story using the lyrics to a familiar song.

For example, take the lyrics to “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” and rewrite them to suit the novel:

Somewhere over in Arizona
Way out west...

You may use lyrics to any song you want.

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #5

What were the two things that Taylor tried to avoid in her life?

1)

2)

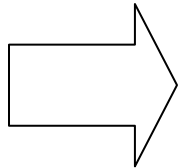
Explain the **irony** in trying to avoid these situations.

Write about an ironic situation in your own life.

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #6

In Chapter 10 of the novel, there was a very detailed description of Mattie's house.
Complete the following chart:

Details on Mattie's house:



What does the description of Mattie's house say about Mattie?

Describe your own bedroom. Then, explain how your bedroom reflects your personality.

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #7

Copy five striking lines from the novel.

Write a fifteen-line poem using one of the striking lines. Be sure to title your poem.

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #8

How does Child Protection Services become involved in Taylor's life?

Hephzibah Children's Association in Oak Park has a close connection to the Department of Children and Family Services (Illinois' Child Protective Services). Do a web search on Hephzibah and answer the following questions:

1. Address:
2. Director:
3. Mission:
4. List five services they provide:
5. Number of children served:

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #9

Suggest three alternative titles for this book and explain how each title illuminates the theme of this novel.

1.

2.

3.

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #10

Imagine that you are a social worker investigating Turtle's living environment. Identify the positive influences in the home.

Identify what you would see as negative influences.

What recommendation would you make concerning Turtle's future? WHY?

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #11

- Read each scenario/question
- Based on your knowledge of the character, decide how the character would react
- Explain why you selected this reaction

Scenario 1: The character has an opportunity to go on vacation. What destination would he/she choose?

Taylor's destination:
Explain why:

Estevan's destination:
Explain why:

Scenario 2: What type of person would each character choose to marry?

Mattie's marital choice:
Explain why:

Angel's marital choice (even though he is technically married to Lou Ann):
Explain why:

Scenario 3: What kind of music would each character listen to?

Lou Ann's music choice:
Explain why:

Edna Poppy's music choice:
Explain why:

Response Journals and Activities: Choice #12

In *The Bean Trees*, none of the male characters are very well developed. So, we are left with questions about the role men play in the book.

Pick one male character (Estevan or Angel) and make up a story about his life before we meet him in *The Bean Trees*.

Include the following in your story:

- Where the character came from
- What family structure he grew up in
- What major event developed his personality
- How did this event influence his relationships with people

Post Reading Activities
Activities for junior students and teachers in the fall

1. Have students share one of their responses or activities with the class.
2. The **RAFT** is a creative writing assignment using personification:
 - a. Students will take on the **Role** of the Lincoln that Taylor drives to Oklahoma.
 - b. The **Audience** for the writing will be the auto mechanic that sees the Lincoln once a month for repairs
 - c. The **Format** will be a speech
 - d. The **Topic** will advocate or refute Taylor's decision to drive Esperanza and Estevan to the new safe house
3. Discuss with the class the value of family and the changing role of parenting found in this novel. Refer back to pre-reading activities.
4. Review and give a test on vocabulary words.
5. Discuss the significance of the title *The Bean Trees*.
6. Taylor indicates that she calls her daughter "Turtle" because Turtle has a strong grip. However, this name is appropriate for other reasons as well. What are they?
7. Based on your knowledge of the characters in this story, pick an animal to represent a character and explain your choice. Good character selections may be Lou Ann, Edna, Angel, and Esperanza.
8. Make a list of other books you have read that favors one gender over the other. For example, Ernest Hemingway favors male characters, while Amy Tan favors female characters.

Pre-Reading Activities
For Sophomore Teachers and Students

Part I

Required Response Activities For Students

Part II

Elective Response Activities For Students

**Following are twelve Response Journals and Activities.
Complete any six.**

Post-Reading Activities

**For Junior Teachers and Students
in the Fall**

Welcome to the Summer Reading

Congratulations! You are no longer the novices in the Summer Reading Program since you participated as freshmen by reading *Tuesdays with Morrie* and completing the supplemental packet. Your previous experience with summer reading will help you better maneuver through this year's book and packet.

The sophomore-to-junior year reading is *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver. It can be purchased in your school bookstore for a reduced price. Your current English teacher will distribute the packet.

The packet of journal questions and activities are designed to give you the opportunity to react on both universal and personal levels. Your new junior teacher will know you even better from the early writing samples and the talents and personal philosophies revealed as you complete the packet.

- Be sure to have the book read and the packet completed **before the first day of school in August.**
- Your junior teacher will collect it during that first week.
- There will be lively discussions pertaining to the characters in the novel and the activities in this packet.

You will review the Pre-Reading Activities with your sophomore teacher. To proceed through the packet, **complete the Required Activities** and choose **six** of the twelve activities.

The Post-Reading Activities will take place in the classroom once school has begun.

Enjoy the summer and enjoy the reading of *The Bean Trees*.