

# Welty's *The Robber Bridegroom*

## You too can steal Gold and fall in Love!

**Focuses for the Text** (while supporting the multiple state benchmarks we're all responsible for )

### **For younger students**

- Introduce the Natchez Trace as **place and history**
  - Movement from a wilderness to tamed land
  - Population shifts--from Indians, outlaws, and wanderers to settlers, plantation owners, and river city dwellers
- Examine **characterization and imagery** through patterns
  - Obvious stereotypes (figures of fairy tale such as the wicked step mother...)
  - Direct "labeling" of character through consistent types of similes and animal imagery as well as repeated action and gestures
- Learn about and identify **allusions** (as well as direct reference)
  - Transformation of familiar fairy tale elements into another time and place
  - Inclusion of local tall tale (frontier legends)
  - For Suzanne – Yep, *Moby Dick* is here too, but very obviously: Clement Musgrove visits the Spouter Inn!

**For older students** (the above in greater detail) as well as topics such as

- Identify elements of humor and satire
- Explore Welty's presentation of duality
- Compare and contrast "the violent" and "the heroic"
- Identify the "costs" of transforming a wilderness and associated issues of morality

### **Samples of supporting activities:**

- Of course, introduce Eudora Welty, the person and the writer and the photographer.
  - Read portions of *One Writer's Beginnings*
  - Illustrate Welty's play-filled nature with Patti Carr Black's *Early Escapades*
- Emphasize dramatic oral reading (as if for a radio show). (Give students costumes or props to get them into character.) Once students can do the reading well, record them reading brief passages that accompany their own illustrations. Guide them in using technology appropriately to create and edit short video clips
- Have students create a plot outline and then illustrate important (and favorite scenes) as if for a book.
- Have students draw a portrait (or cartoon) of one of the major characters *before* deliberately identifying similes and animal imagery associated with specific characters. Then focus on the figurative language by collecting and classifying examples for each character. Have students re-draw the same character and then compare/contrast their interpretations as "before" and "after."

*OR* Have students draw life-size (student-size) outlines for the characters and fill the outlines in with Welty's exact images. (Talk about how to treat an author's exact words.) You could copy lots of the images and similes on a slips of paper and have students sort the images and "pin" them on the appropriate outline.

- Have students draw a map of the Trace. Students do basic research and then locate Indian tribes, early settlements, and landmarks on the Trace. Then they illustrate the map with "frontier critters" and the "trappings" of the pioneer. Research can also prepare students to discuss various methods of travel, typical hardships, and river towns.
- Find appropriate artifacts, reproductions, photographs of objects, etc.
- Illustrate the "mystic" of the Trace with photographs such as "sunken" Trace and lead students to think about how places and times can capture imagination – and connect to Welty and text.
- Read from Jan Mitford's *Home to Holly Springs* (this may not be the exact title) the passage where Father Kavanagh (spelling?) recalls his grandfather's story of their family's traveling down the Trace and settling in Holly Springs.
- Travel to a heavily wooded area with a unpaved path and imagine making a journey.

*Fellow Landmarkers,*

*You have been an inspiration this week, and I cherish this wonderful experience we've been privileged to share. I know you are brimming over with your own ideas, intentions, and strengths, and you can be sure I'll be "borrying" some of your fire! Perhaps I can encourage you to give the "fairy tale of the Natchez Trace" some consideration. It's great fun!*

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