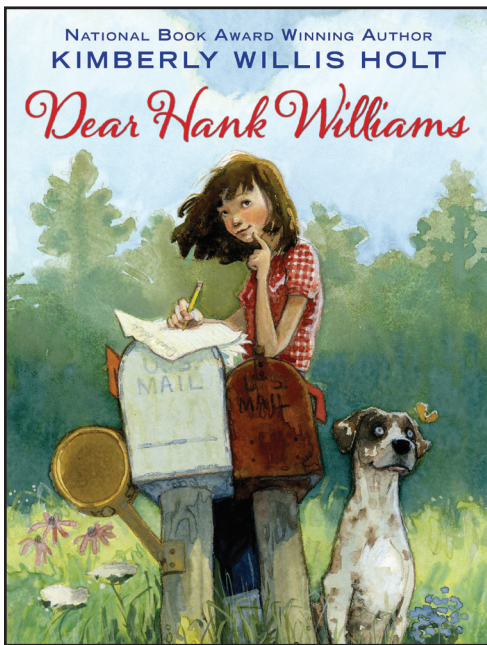


TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

Dear Hank Williams

FOR
USE WITH
COMMON CORE
STATE
STANDARDS



Ages 9–12 • Grades 4–7 • 9780805080223

ABOUT THE BOOK

It's 1948 in Rippling Creek, Louisiana, and Tate P. Ellerbee's new teacher has just given her class an assignment—learning the art of letter-writing. Luckily, Tate has the perfect pen pal in mind: Hank Williams, a country music singer whose star has just begun to rise. Tate, along with her great-aunt and great-uncle, listens to him on the radio every Saturday night, and Tate just knows that she and Hank are kindred spirits.

Told entirely through Tate's hopeful letters, this beautifully drawn novel gradually unfolds a story of family love, overcoming tragedy, and an insightful girl learning to find her voice.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KIMBERLY WILLIS HOLT is the author of many acclaimed novels, including *My Louisiana Sky* and *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town*, winner of the National Book Award for Young People's Literature. She is also the author of the popular Piper Reed chapter books series and several picture books. Seven generations of Holt's family are from central Louisiana, where *Dear Hank Williams* is set.



To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!



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PRE-READING STRATEGY: BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Dear Hank Williams references people and events from the past. In order to assist students in having a context for the story, ask them to brainstorm anything and everything that comes to mind about a topic relating to the book. For example, determine what students know about Hank Williams and country music. Next, have them write words or phrases associated with this topic in the box that matches the first letter. They might write “singer” in the box with an “S,” “guitar” in the “GHI” box, and so on until they fill in as many boxes as possible. Then students share their words and phrases in a small group or with the whole class. This will assist students in generating background knowledge for the novel. Other topics to brainstorm might be pen pals or World War II. Following this activity, read what Kimberly Willis Holt has written about the topics in her Author’s Note at the conclusion of *Dear Hank Williams*.

ABC	DEF	GHI
JKL	TOPIC	MNO
PQR	STUV	WXYZ

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Dear Hank Williams begins in September when the school year starts and concludes in June. The discussion questions are based on the months of the school year and the characters and events that are introduced during that time frame.

1. (September) Describe Tate Ellerbee’s home life. What do you know about her mother, father, brother, aunt, and uncle? What other characters impact Tate’s life and in what way?
2. (September) What connections has Tate made to Hank Williams?
3. (September) Tate always signs her letters in a unique way. Why does she do this and how does it add to the story?
4. (October) Do you think Hank Williams is reading Tate’s letters? Why would he send a second autographed photograph of himself?
5. (November) Tate explains that she’s “not like most folks” (p. 72). What evidence has been given so far that she isn’t like the other characters in what she says and what she does?



6. (November) Why do you think Tate lied about her father being a photographer?
7. (November) Was there foreshadowing that might have given clues that Tate's mother wasn't an actress? Did Tate lie about her mother or tell half-truths about her as a singer?
8. (November) Tate has revealed a lot about her life. What difficulties has she faced? What is her attitude about her life? What is your opinion about Tate at this point in the book?
9. (December) Why does Wallace "mouth off" whenever the letter and gifts from the Japanese pen pals are shared?
10. (December) Aunt Patty Cake wants Tate to write a letter so the judge might release her mother from prison sooner, but Tate refuses to do so. What are the reasons she gives? Could there be other reasons as well?
11. (December) What do you know about a Louisiana Catahoula cur dog? Why do you think Tate named her "Lovie"?
12. (January) Tate writes that "a dog pours a pitcher of love into the lonesome spots of your life. Not that I have many of those. I'm a busy person" (p.141). Do you think Tate really feels this way? Does keeping busy make a person less lonely?
13. (February) Do you think Tate should sing in the Rippling Creek May Festival Talent Contest? Why or why not?
14. (March) When Zion returns to Tate's house with her mother, she is acting scared. Why do you think she is feeling that way? Does it have anything to do with the previous visit and what happened then?
15. (March) Why does Aunt Patty Cake tell Tate that she is "never sewing another thing for the rest of my life" after she makes Tate such a beautiful dress (p. 170)?
16. (April) Who do you think Momma is referring to in her letter to Tate when she talks about losing someone they have loved?
17. (April) How did you feel when you learned about Frog? Do you think Tate lied about him?
18. (April) Discuss the events that happened on April 30, 1949. What did Tate learn about herself and about life?
19. (May) There are many symbolic events that occur, such as Aunt Patty Cake driving to Constance Washington's house in Pine Bend and Tate receiving the carp streamer from Keiko. Why were these events important in the story and to the characters?
20. (June) Predict ten years into the future when Tate is an adult. What do you think she will be doing? What will the other members of her family be doing ten years later?

CCSS: SL.4.1.A, SL.4.1.C, SL.5.1.A, SL.5.1.C



READING RESPONSE TRIFOLD

Before, during, and after reading *Dear Hank Williams*, have students create a reading response trifold by folding a piece of paper into three sections and labeling each section with the headings listed below: three on the front and three on the back. The first section should be used to draw a picture of a character or a scene from the story. The other five sections will provide students with the opportunity to use the strategies of predicting, questioning, using context clues, visualizing, and evaluating. They should “focus” their reading by using sticky notes or answering the prompt. Then students “respond” by referring back to the text and scanning for relevant information as they apply each reading strategy. Refer to the grid below for further instructions for each section.

DEAR HANK WILLIAMS	PREDICT	QUESTION	CONTEXT CLUES	VISUALIZE	EVALUATE
<p>by Kimberly Willis Holt</p> <p>Draw a picture of a character or a scene from the story</p>	<p>Strategy: Make predictions while reading the story.</p> <p>Focus: Use a sticky note to mark the page where you make a prediction.</p> <p>Respond: Why did you make that prediction? Cite evidence from the text.</p>	<p>Strategy: As you read, try to think of questions about the characters, the plot, and the events.</p> <p>Focus: Read the first letter in the book. What questions bubble up for you?</p> <p>Respond: Reread p. 2. Why did Tate select Hank Williams as her pen pal?</p>	<p>Strategy: Use clues in sentences to help you understand unknown words and phrases.</p> <p>Focus: Use a sticky note to mark pages where you were able to determine an unknown word or phrase using context clues.</p> <p>Respond: What does Tate mean on p. 6 that she is an optimist and looks at a “glass half-full”?</p>	<p>Strategy: As you read, try to form pictures in your mind of the characters and the action.</p> <p>Focus: Create visual clues to assist you in comprehending and remembering the story.</p> <p>Respond: Draw a picture of each character as you read about them.</p>	<p>Strategy: As you read, evaluate the author’s ability to help you understand the characters and the story.</p> <p>Focus: Mark the pages with a sticky note when you connect with something in the story.</p> <p>Respond: What is your opinion of <i>Dear Hank Williams</i>? Use examples from the book to support your opinion.</p>

CCSS: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; SL.4.1D, SL.5.1D



TABLETOP TWEETS

Discuss with students what Twitter is and tell them that people use it to Tweet their thoughts and ideas. Select a short passage from *Dear Hank Williams* and glue it onto a large piece of paper. Choose a selection (or letter) that will generate interaction between students and evokes emotions or promotes thinking. Set a timer and have students walk around and write down their thoughts in short responses to the passage. Explain that there is no talking during this time. Students can also read and respond to others' "tweets" as well as to pose a question. When the timer rings, Twitter time is up. This is a great strategy to use throughout the reading of the book by responding to past passages and "tweets" as well as to new ones.

A few examples to consider might be: "I'm going to squeeze all that lonesomeness out of you," I said. When his face turned red as ripe tomatoes, I let go of him." (p. 52).

"I had a big hole inside me. Nothing could fill it. And here's the thing of it all—Uncle Jolly is not my daddy, and Big Pete might as well not be too." (p. 80)

CCSS: RL.4.3; RL.5.3

CONTENT COMPREHENSION

Write each question listed below on a card and turn the cards facedown. In small groups or in pairs, have students select a card and answer the question. The other student(s) discuss whether they agree or disagree with the response and why. Once that question has been answered, the card is put to the side and the next student selects a card to be answered. Expand this activity by creating other questions for students to ask each other.

What do the other characters think about the main character?	Does the main character change in some way during the story? How?
Name another story that has a similar plot or theme.	Name an event in the book and tell how two characters reacted to it.
What is the climax or turning point in the story?	Who was involved in the conflict?
Did the character learn a lesson? If so, what was it?	If the story were to continue, what might happen next?

CCSS: RL.4.1; RL.4.3; RL.5.2; RL.5.3; SL.4.1; SL.5.1



FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figurative language can be found throughout *Dear Hank Williams* particularly when the writing appeals to the senses. Kimberly Willis Holt does this by comparing two things or using unique words and phrases. There is language the characters use that might not be familiar to students because they were either used during the time frame the story was set, or they are regional colloquialisms or dialect. Have students identify the words and phrases that are unique and figurative, and write the example and page number in the appropriate box as in the example below. Expand this activity by selecting other examples of figurative language for the class to examine.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
IDIOM	An expression, word or phrase that has a figurative meaning, separate from the meaning of the individual words used in the phrase.	“I do the best with what I’ve got,” Ebby says.” (p. 73)
HYPERBOLE	An exaggeration of the truth for emphasis or humorous effect.	“You may not think you live in a fascinating place, but to other people, especially those living across the world, Rippling Creed is exotic.” Exotic? I’m an optimist. I look at a glass half-full, but Mrs. Kipler must see it all fogged up.” (p. 6)
IMAGERY	Words or phrases that appeal to the reader’s five senses.	“My new teacher, Mrs. Kipler’s, glasses are as thick as Coca-Cola bottles.” (p. 1)
COLLOQUIALISM	A local or regional informal dialect or expression.	“Swear to sweet Sally.” (p. 1)

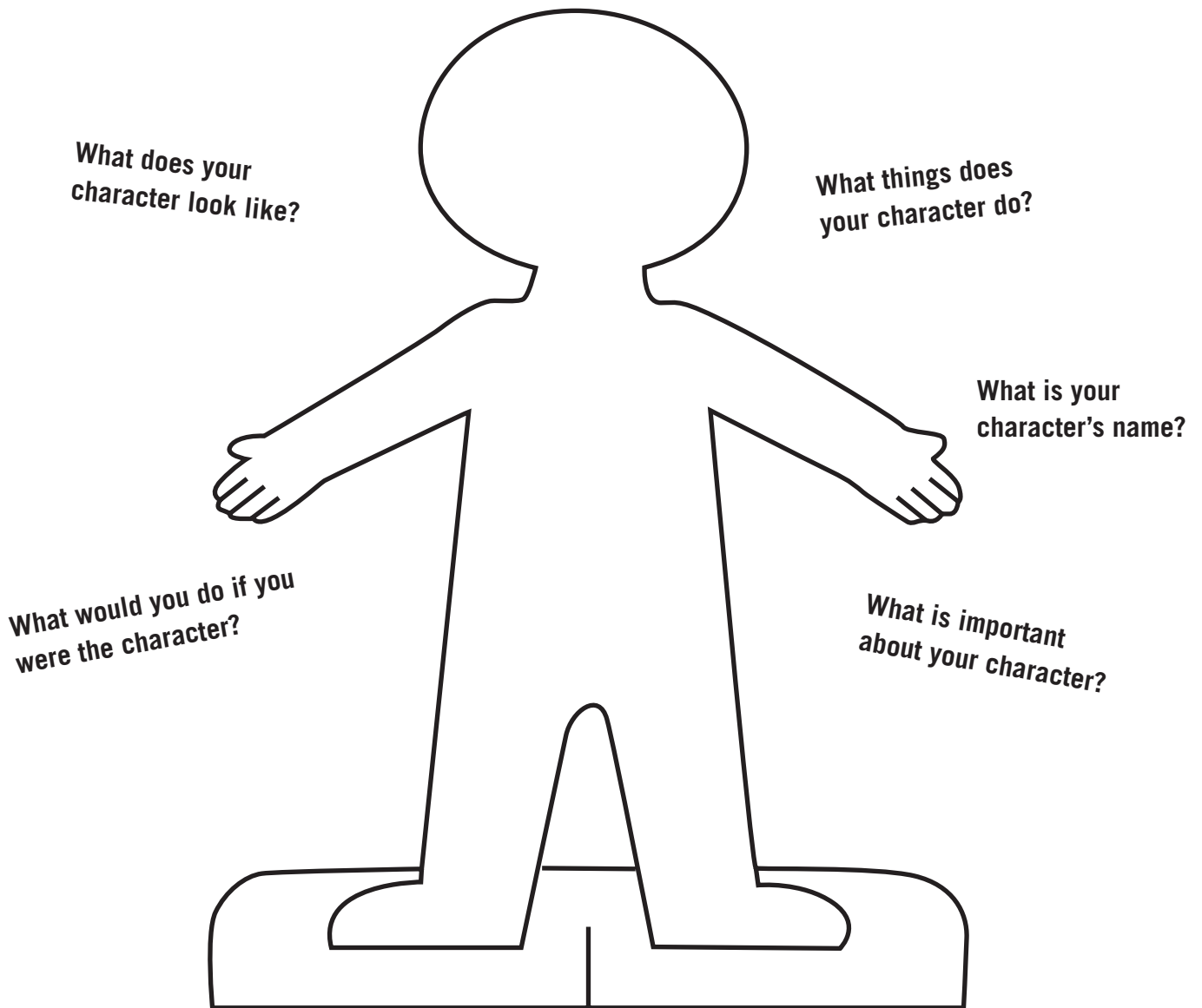
CCSS: RL.4.4; RL.5.4



CHARACTER CONTEMPLATION

Readers can contemplate what a character might say or do that goes beyond what is stated directly in the text. This enables the student to think more deeply about the character, to create a visual image, and to make personal connections. Have students select a character from the book and, either using the diagram below or creating their own body outline, illustrate the character's physical appearance. Once their illustrations are complete, ask students to respond to the questions provided below either directly on their character's body or around the outline of the illustration. This will provide further insight into the character. Students can also compare their characters with others'. Expand this activity by creating additional questions for students to answer about their selected character.

CCSS: RL.4.3; SL.4.1; SL.5.1



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