

# ***A Lesson Before Dying* Study Guide**

English II

## **Chapters 1-2**

1. Why didn't the narrator go to the trial?
2. Describe the boy's godmother while she was at the trial.
3. Explain Jefferson's reaction to the murder.
4. How would you have reacted if you were Jefferson?
5. Give the two versions given in the courtroom of the night of the murder.

Jefferson's	The Prosecutor's

6. Who do you believe? Why?



**Chapters 3-4**

1. Why do you believe that the parents made a point of doing nice things for the school?
2. Why do you think Miss Emma's so passive about Grant getting involved in her godson's case?
3. Describe Henri Pichot.
4. Why is Mr. Henri unconcerned with Jefferson's case?
5. How do Tante Lou, Miss Emma and Grant behave around Mr. Henri? Why do they behave this way? What does it reveal about race relations at the time?
6. Do you believe Mr. Henri is going to help? Why/why not?
7. How does Grant upset his aunt?
8. Where does Grant go?



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### **Chapters 5-7**

1. Describe the classroom.
2. Why did Grant treat the children poorly?
3. How does Grant tell the students about Jefferson?
4. Why do you believe Grant decided to tell the students about Jefferson?
5. Why did Ferrell treat Grant with respect?
6. What was the message Ferrell was passing on to Grant?
7. How long did Henri Pichot make Grant wait?
8. Why do you believe Pichot made Grant wait so long?
9. What is the bet the white men have going on?
10. Why won't Grant eat the food that Inez offered him?
11. Why, in your opinion, doesn't Grant act the way the white men expect him to?



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### **Chapters 8-10**

1. Why doesn't Grant punish the boy for looking out the window?
2. What does he punish him for instead?
3. What questions does Grant have as he watches the students chopping wood?
4. What happened to most of the people Grant went to school with?
5. Why do you think Grant is remembering his own life when he looks at his students?
6. What advice did the mulatto teacher have for Grant?
7. Describe the first visit with Jefferson in his jail cell.
8. Why did Jefferson act the way he did?
9. Why won't Miss Emma go with Grant to visit Jefferson?

10. What was Grant's argument when he was told that he has to go see Jefferson by himself?

11. How did Miss Emma react to this?

12. Why do you believe Miss Emma reacted to Grant's words this way?



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### **Chapters 11-13**

1. Describe Grant's fourth visit with Jefferson.
2. How do you know Jefferson has given up?
3. Why didn't Grant tell the Deputy how Jefferson acted?
4. Why doesn't Jefferson go straight home?
5. Why can't Grant and Vivian leave town?
6. What lie does Grant tell about his visit with Jefferson?
7. What does the Reverend want Grant to talk to Jefferson about? Why?

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### **Chapters 14-15**

1. What do you find out about Vivian at the end of chapter fourteen?
2. What is Vivian's story (what is her past)?
3. How do the women react to Vivian's presence?
4. Why did the women react this way?
5. Explain what Tante Lou means when she tells Vivian, "You're a lady of quality."

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### **Chapters 16-19**

1. Who does Grant want the children to remember over the Christmas season?
2. How does Miss Emma know that Grant did not tell the truth about his visit with Jefferson?
3. Why does Miss Emma want Grant to go back to visit Jefferson?
4. How do the other prisoners treat Jefferson? Why?
5. Why is Paul afraid of getting too close to Jefferson?
6. Do you think that it is right for Paul to think that way? Explain.
7. What does Jefferson say to upset Grant?
8. Why does he try to upset Grant?
9. What do the women want from the sheriff?
10. Describe the visit in the dayroom?
11. What things doesn't a hog do according to Jefferson?

**Chapters 20-23**

1. Why did Henri Pichot call Grant up to his house?
2. What date was set for Jefferson' electrocution? Why is the date important?
3. What is wrong with Miss Emma?
4. How do people treat Grant and Vivian when they visit Miss Emma? Why are they treated this way?
5. What do all of the women want from Grant? Why is this important?
6. Why is it up to Jefferson to break the cycle?
7. What does Jefferson want?
8. How does the woman treat Grant when he goes to buy the radio? What does this reveal about the woman and the time period?
9. Why is Tante Lou upset about the radio?
10. What do Reverend and Grant argue about?
11. How has Jefferson changed?

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### **Chapters 24-26**

1. Why, in your opinion, didn't Jefferson say "Amen" at the end of the prayer?
2. What do Grant and Jefferson talk about?
3. What is Grant's definition of a hero?
4. Do you agree with Grant's idea of a hero? Explain why or why not.
5. How can Jefferson become a hero?
6. What do the mulatto bricklayers say about Jefferson?
7. Why would the bricklayers say such things?
8. What happened to Grant?
9. Why is Vivian upset?
10. Do you agree with Vivian? Explain.

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### **Chapters 27-29**

1. What does the Reverend talk to Grant about after church?
2. What does Reverend Ambrose want help with?
3. Who, in your opinion, is the truly educated person, Grant or Reverend Ambrose? Why do you think this?
4. What is Jefferson dreaming about?
5. Is Jefferson scared? How do you know?
6. How does Jefferson want to go?
7. What didn't Jefferson know he was until now? Why is this important?
8. What one passage in Jefferson's journal struck your interest or emotions the most? Why do you think it did?

**Chapters 30-31**

1. Why do you think the author decided to write chapter 30 not from Grant's point of view, but from an unknown narrator's point of view? What does this point of view switch do for the story?
2. How do all of the people of the town, white and black, react to the delivery of the electric chair? What does this reveal about their feelings about the whole thing?
3. Why do you think Jefferson is giving his possessions to people?
4. Why do you think Murphy asked if someone else could shave Jefferson's head?
5. Why doesn't Grant go to the execution? What does he do instead?
6. Why is Reverend Ambrose braver than Grant?
7. Explain this quote from page 251: "No, his peers did not judge him- and I will not believe."

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8. Describe the sight of the butterfly.
  
9. How did Grant know that the execution was over before anyone ever told him?
  
10. Why does Grant say he is not a great teacher of even a teacher at all?
  
11. Who was the strongest person at the execution?
  
12. What is your reaction to the story? Did you like it? Why/why not?