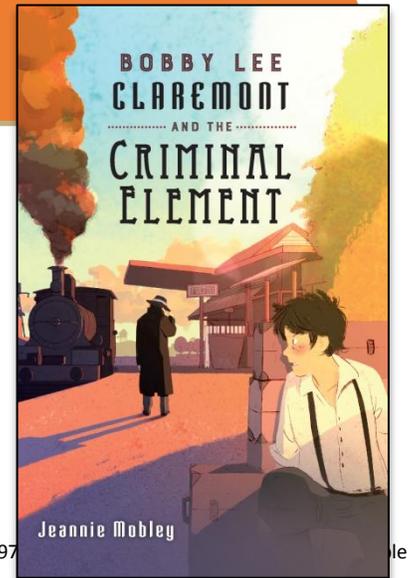


LESSON PLAN

BOBBY LEE CLAREMONT AND THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT

Jeannie Mobley



Guided Reading Level: X

Grade Level Equivalent: 6

Interest Level by Grade: 6–12

Reading Literature: RL.6-8.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10

Writing: W.6-8.4,7,8,9,10

Speaking and Listening: SL.6-8.1,1c,1d,3,4,5,6

Language: L.6-8.3,5,6

1. Do you think *Bobby Lee Claremont and the Criminal Element* is a good title for the book? Explain.
2. Who is “the Criminal Element”? What significance does the word “criminal” have in the story?
3. Choose a different title for the book and create a new cover. Present to the class.
4. How important is the setting to this story? How does the author use language to enhance the setting?
5. How is *Bobby Lee Claremont and the Criminal Element* structured?
6. How does the author make sure the time line moves forward chronologically? How does the map help you?
7. Why do you think the author chose this particular way to structure the story?
8. What was the significance of Bobby Lee’s real name, Robert E. Lee Claremont? How did his name serve him?
9. Describe Bobby Lee, Mrs. O’Halloran, Sergeant Hayworth, Clovis Dupré, and Alphonse Bujreau. How do they behave? Why do they behave this way? Are their actions justified? How has the past shaped their lives? Do you approve or disapprove of them?
10. Describe the dynamics between the characters.
11. How does Bobby Lee change or evolve throughout the course of the story? Describe the events that trigger this change.
12. What other characters change? How did this affect the ending?
13. What do the characters learn about themselves, how the world works, and their role in it?
14. Why does Bobby Lee think that he killed his mother?
15. Is Bobby a believable criminal?
16. How does the author incorporate religion into the story? What religious people, places, or items are mentioned in the book, and what do they symbolize?
17. Find examples of how the themes of jazz, segregation, family, good versus evil, and loss are explored in the book.
18. Describe Bobby Lee’s relationship with Terrance and Leon. Why do you think the author added these characters to the story?
19. What do you think the author wants the reader to get from this book?
20. Did certain parts of this book make you feel uncomfortable? If so, how?
21. What moral or ethical decisions did Bobby Lee need to make? What is your opinion of those choices?
22. What is the irony in the story?



23. How would the story change if it were told from the point of view of a different character, such as Terrance, Leon, Nannette, Sister Mary Magdalene, or Sergeant Hayworth?
24. How would the story have changed if Bobby Lee left Chicago with Sister Mary Magdalene and went back to New Orleans?
25. Discuss the conflicts in *Bobby Lee Claremont and the Criminal Element*: man vs. man, man vs. self, man vs. fate, and man vs. society.
26. What would you have done differently than Bobby Lee?
27. If you could jump in at any point in this book and become a part of the story line, where would it be?
28. What do you think about the ending? Was this ending a surprise to you? Would you change it? How?
29. Did you feel any emotions while you read this?
30. What touched you most about this book?
31. Find passages in the story that you found insightful or profound. Discuss a specific conversation between two characters that you thought was funny or meaningful or that encapsulates a character.
32. If you could ask the author a question, what would you ask?
33. Research the facts the author wrote about in the back of the book. How authentic was the culture and era represented in the story? Was this story realistic for the time period?
34. What about this book was factual?
35. Write an essay explaining how this novel changed you or broadened your perspective about people and the past.

The History Behind the Fiction: Text to World Connections

Research and compare and contrast real events with the story. Use primary and secondary sources as well as multimedia when presenting.

1. Find and listen to Steve Goodman's song "City of New Orleans." Compare and contrast the book to the song.
2. What was the importance of the Illinois Central Railroad?
3. What was happening in the United States of America in 1923?
4. Explain the Jim Crow laws.
5. Who was Homer Plessy? Explain his courageous act of civil disobedience.
6. How did Homer Plessy inspire the author to write this story?
7. How did the late adoption of Jim Crow laws in New Orleans impact society there?

Guide written by Marla Conn, reading/literacy specialist and educational consultant

10.17

