The Witch of Blackbird Pond
By Elizabeth George Speare
New York: Yearling Press, 1986
Concept/Vocabulary Analysis


Summary:
Living in the year 1687, 16-year old Katherine Tyler (known as Kit) is shocked to be living by standards of a society completely different from her own. She has just left her home and family in Barbados after her grandfather’s death, and now she is residing with her aunt and uncle in Wethersfield, Connecticut, a Puritan town run by people she hardly understands. Kit is unaccustomed to having to work for herself along with her two cousins, and in the cold New England weather, life is not as easy as it had been in Barbados. She struggles to enjoy even the day to day activities as she moves along in a frustrated state of mind. She attends church meetings twice every Sunday and finds them dull and boring; soon though, she decides, with her cousin Mercy, to make life a little better by teaching the ‘dame school’ for young students. For doing something “against the rules,” Kit is chased out of the town and into the woods, where she meets another outcast of the town, Hannah Tupper, an older woman who had been thrown out because of her Quaker religion. Hannah and Kit strike up a wonderful friendship, and Kit even begins to teach her how to read and write. By and by, Kit helps another young girl, Prudence (whose parents refuse to let her attend the dame school), learn to read and write, as well. She also meets and falls in love with a young man—the son of a ship captain—named Nat. Amidst all this, Kit and Hannah are being ridiculed by the townspeople and they are slowly being driven out under the pretense that Hannah is a “witch” and Kit is working with her. Kit’s life is put on the line now: will she help Hannah and risk her own life, or will she sit back and save herself?

Organizational Patterns:
This book is organized into chapters, of which there are twenty-one. Each chapter is about ten to fifteen pages long and describes one or two major incidents in the story. The chapters have no titles, which creates a greater sense of suspense for the readers, in that they have no idea what will be taking place in the following chapter as they turn the pages.

Central Questions and Enduring Issues:
RELATIONSHIPS
What makes a good relationship?
Throughout the story, Kit is faced with decisions to make regarding those with whom she chooses to spend her time and energy. Although she has her family around her, she recognizes that the most meaningful relationships she can have are those which include deep and abiding love, where those involved have
common ground (like the situation of being outcasts that she and Hannah share), respect for one another regardless of the pressures surrounding them, and are willing to sacrifice a part of themselves for the good of the other person. Kit clearly demonstrates this in her relationships with Prudence when she teaches her to read and write on her own time; in her relationship with Nat as she lets him grow closer to her and shares more of her deeper side than she ever had before; in her relationship with Mercy as she cares for her in her illness and at other times throughout the story; and in the pivotal ending with Hannah, when Kit risks her own life to get Hannah to safety and away from the townspeople of Wethersfield. She is willing to sacrifice herself over and over again for deep and abiding relationships with those who matter most to her.

What relationship does the individual have in society?

Kit struggles with this idea throughout the novel as she is forced to live in a whole new environment from the very beginning. She tries to understand better why she needs to act in a new manner and do things so differently, but she feels all the time like an outcast. When she is eventually ridiculed and mocked, it seals the deal and causes her to feel like she really is not welcome in her own community. She feels that maybe it is her role to be the different one, to stand up to injustices. As an individual, though alone, Kit makes a huge difference in this society, and she goes so far as to save the life of at least one person, if not even more. This suggests to the reader that each individual, no matter what the society may be, has a responsibility to stand up to the society as a whole and fight the injustices that occur.

SOCIAL INJUSTICE

How far do we go before we stop social injustice? This novel poses several questions:

- How far should we go before we stop prejudice or judgment or mistreatment of someone?
- Is it okay to make fun of someone just a little bit because they answer something incorrectly?
- Is it okay to stop your daughter from going to school because you do not think she is intelligent enough—a “half-wit,” as Prudence’s mother, Goodwife Cruff, thinks?
- Is it okay to put an end to a school learning activity if it seems a little out-of-the-box because it goes against protocol—like the townspeople did to Kit at the dame school?
- Is it okay to send an old, sweet woman into exile simply because she believes in God a little differently that you do, like the townspeople do to Hannah?

These questions and more are posed repeatedly throughout the book, and we are left to determine where that fine line resides: or to determine if there even exists a line at all. How do we stop social injustices now in our world?
How much power should be given to certain governing bodies?

Because there is one dominant religion in New England, that of the Puritans, it seems to run everything from politics to religion to recreational activities, etc. When we step back we can see that the society was very corrupt, in that they persecuted innocent people and got the entire community to join in. The pressure to follow the “norm” here was tremendous! Therefore, this book raises the question: how much power ought we to give our governing bodies and our higher authoritative leaders? We know from history and from this novel that we never want to repeat the time of the Salem Witch Trials.

Issues Related to The Witch of Blackbird Pond:

CENTRAL THEMES:

- The Need for Deep and Abiding Family and Other Relationships—Kit learns throughout the novel that even within families and amongst friends, every individual relationship is different. These differences make for interesting characterization as we watch Kit develop and change to adapt to how each person reacts to her. She finds where she fits in and she learns to treat everyone with as much love and respect as she possibly can.
- The Destructive Nature of Prejudice—Kit now lives in Puritan America, a place rampant with snide remarks and superstitious beliefs. Everyone is on their toes, afraid they might know or run into a witch at the next turn. Kit learns quickly that she is also one of those outcasts in the town, disliked simply because she is different and does not quickly conform to the already-stationary society. She is faced with the decision of whether or not to befriend another outcast; Kit shows maturity in character because of how she deals with the prejudices around her.
- Open Honesty as a Necessity—Kit is trusted by almost no one in town, to the point that she has to keep her visits to Hannah’s house a secret. She does not even tell her aunt and uncle what she is doing because she knows they will forbid her from going. However, this idea raises the question: Is it ever okay to be dishonest? In Kit’s case, she knew Hannah was depending on her for her survival and happiness. Was it right that Kit continued to do what she did? When should we be honest with our families and is there ever a time when that honesty can or should be breached?
SETTING:
In the late-1600s, New England is run by Puritans, a religious group of fanatics who believe in a very organized, God-fearing lifestyle. They follow strictly the commandments laid out in the Bible and they are constantly on their guards, watching their neighbors to ensure that they, too, are keeping all of God’s commandments. In the 1690s, the Salem Witch Trials began: a series of court cases involving men and women in the New England colonies who were persecuted and charged with being “witches” and practicing “black magic.” The peak of these trials was in 1692, but the superstition spread throughout the colonies for many years, before and after this year. At the time this story, The Witch of Blackbird Pond, takes place, superstition is at its height, and some people are looking for any excuse to accuse anyone for being a witch.

POINT OF VIEW/NARRATIVE VOICE:
The story is written entirely in third person, but it follows Kit, as she is present in every scene. The reader is always keenly aware of her thoughts and feelings, but since it is written in third person, we are also able to get a sense of the deeper emotion of the other characters in the book. Because we are so close to Kit, although a little distanced, still, we are better able to watch her change and progress as the novel moves forward. It helps with the character development of this teenage girl.

Literary Terms Taught in 6th-12th Grades:
IMAGERY--the formation of mental images, figures, or likenesses of things, or of such images collectively; the ability to write in such a way that readers can form these mental images with ease
• Elizabeth George Speare does an incredible job painting the picture for her audience: in every scene the reader knows exactly where he is and exactly what is taking place. There is never any question or doubt. The stark contrasts between Barbados and New England, as well as between America and England are fascinating.

*“The bleak line of shore surrounding the gray harbor was a disheartening contrast to the shimmering green and white that fringed the turquoise bay of Barbados which was her
home. The earthen wall of the fortification that faced the river was bare and ugly, and the houses beyond were no more than plain wooden boxes.” (Pg 1-2)

CHARACTERIZATION—the portrayal and descriptions of characters and their development throughout the text
- We, the readers, watch Kit grow and learn as the novel progresses, and we are stunned at the lessons she learns and the great strength of character she shows as time moves on. We begin the story by meeting a spoiled girl who had grown up rich, not knowing work of any kind, and taking every luxury in life for granted. But as she arrives in New England, her life is suddenly thrown upside down and she has to drastically change to accommodate herself. She becomes absolutely fascinating as she learns to judge between right and wrong, takes a stand for herself, breaks the social stigmas and follows the universal truths she knows in order to help others. Elizabeth George Speare paints for us a striking image of a young girl quickly coming of age and adapting to the world of which she never thought she could be a part.

INTERNAL CONFLICT—a struggle which takes place inside the protagonist’s mind and which leads him/her to a dynamic change or to reach new understanding
- As Kit is adjusting to her new life, she quickly realizes that this New England community has a few unusual ideas about people and right vs. wrong. Kit has several decisions to make regarding her own actions: will she follow society’s expectations of her, or will she follow her heart and do what she feels is right and just? As she struggles over these questions, her mind is enlightened and her heart opened to greater love and understanding, such that she sees the world in a different and much more beautiful way.

Affective Issues Related to The Witch of Blackbird Pond:
Students can easily relate to this work because Kit is a teenage girl struggling to find her place in a society whose rules seem just a little different from what she feels they ought to be. She desires more than anything to fit in and to have a true friendship with someone—anyone—yet every day she finds herself struggling just to keep her head above water. Every teenager, at one point in his/her life, has dealt with these same feelings of loneliness and the hopelessness that so often comes with it. We go about our days, but
we feel so lost in the world when a larger group or society has overrun our community with its ideals and judgments.

Kit also feels like the outcast almost immediately upon leaving her home in Barbados; she simply tried to help a little girl by swimming in the water to get the girl’s doll. But the onlookers took her act of service to be a sign that Kit was unlady-like and probably mysteriously connected with some evil work. Unfortunately, teenagers deal with these feelings today as well: they often have desires to do good, but others pass quick, offhanded judgments without understanding the truth, and they tell the teenagers their efforts were only done with ulterior motives in mind.

Kit struggles with feelings of individuality and trying to keep her own personality as she finds that everyone else in the community seems to sink into conformity. Teenagers all over the place are seeking out their own individuality and are trying to “find themselves,” so to speak. They do not want to be stifled by what society tells them to be or by how society tells them to act; rather, they just want to be and do and enjoy every bit of life.

Kit also deals with the issues of true friendship and true love vs. “advantageous relationships” in this story. She knows if she stays home with her aunt and uncle, she can be “safe” and make acquaintances with all the “right people,” and even marry fine young gentlemen. However, she does not feel strong connections to any of these people with whom she feels an obligation to spend her time. Instead she spends her time with the exiled Hannah Tupper in the woods and makes a true friendship with her, Prudence Cruff, and Nat Eaton. Eventually that friendship with Nat develops into love. Teenagers in this day and age are all searching for and craving lasting relationships with people who will care for them deeply. They want security and “safe” relationships, but more importantly, they want true love and true care and concern. Teenagers of today can easily relate to Kit and those other characters in this story.

Vocabulary Issues:
Generally speaking, the vocabulary in this novel is simple and easy to understand. However, there are some religious terms and terms for food that was eaten at those times and only in certain farming areas now. The only reason these are a problem is because typically religious terminology and agricultural/horticultural terminology is not used in the classroom. Any words that would cause problems, teachers should pull from the text before students come to them and explain their meanings together.

Background Knowledge:
Along with discussing the Salem Witch Trials and what the general feeling of the time was during this period, it would be important for students to have a solid grasp on New England lifestyles as well. That refers to the difficult work it took for each member of each family every day just to survive. Harsh weather, isolation from England and other well-established societies, etc. are other issues to be considered and discussed as well. Another issue that may apply is that of slavery: Kit came from Barbados and was used to having slaves do all her work, but in New England at this point, slavery was still not a common practice. This may be an issue to explore with students for a little while before reading.
Implications for Students of Diversity:

Issues that may cause problems in the classroom would of course be religion, discussions of oppressive or restrictive societies, and also government. These are good issues to bring up for class discussion because the students should definitely have opinions and will surely have comments. However, they are touchy topics and must be handled cautiously. For instance, witchcraft, or Wicca could very well be a seriously sensitive subject. Teachers should be aware of what their students believe and feel about “witches” and what makes a person “evil,” and before teaching the novel, teachers must make it clear to all students that they must all be respectful of different views and perspectives.

Gender Issues:

Because this novel takes place in the late seventeenth century, it clearly shows a different type of lifestyle, one in which women were viewed differently than men. However, this opens up another avenue for class discussion. Women in this story, Kit and Hannah in particular, are treated as though they have no right to individual thought or creativity. They are not supposed to stand up for themselves or make their own decisions; that is the role of their “superiors,” or their husbands/fiancés, etc. While not the main theme, gender roles definitely do play a part in the story of The Witch of Blackbird Pond and add to the theme of prejudice and the need for meaningful relationships.
Research Issues/Project Ideas:
JOURNAL OF THE TIME

Write a journal from the point of view of another character in the book, or expand your view and write a journal from the point of view of another character (any fictional or true historical figure) living during this time period in New England. Write about the superstition, the prejudice, the frustration of trying to conform to society’s norms while recording the day-to-day activities in the journal as well. Include pictures and images that would fit with the stories and events in the journal.

GO ON A WITCH HUNT

Search for information in books and on the internet about witches and “witch hunts” and where these ideas originated, dating all the way back to times before the common era (BCE). Create a timeline or a picture collage to explain to the class what patterns and levels of progression (or regression) you have found. Be sure to talk about the types of “witch hunts” we engage in nowadays, including McCarthyism of the 1950s and the prejudices that plague our world now in the 2000s. Write a two-page, double-spaced essay describing your poster and expressing the ideas you researched that were most fascinating. Tell your audience how you think we can prevent these “witch hunts” from ever occurring again.
INTERVIEW TIME

Hold an “interview session” with some of the main characters of this novel; ask them about their motives, their desires for life, and their feelings about some of the major events in the novel. Write out your questions as well as the characters’ responses, using your text to make inferences and deduce what they might say. Video tape these interviews with a group and present them to the class.

FINDING YOURSELF

Kit spends a lot of time in the story helping other people, and in the process, she learns more and more about who she is on the inside. She learns that she does not need to follow the crowd, and she begins to feel confident in her own path of life. As we seek to help others around us, we too have these experiences of discovery that help us see the world more clearly and give us greater insight into our own lives. For this project, choose one particular place where you can offer service for two weeks; spend at least 8 hours serving. Write a two-page, double-spaced reflection about your experience and how it changes your view about the world and about yourself. In your paper, compare this to the experiences Kit has in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* and the discoveries she makes about herself and the world.
**Enrichment Resources:**

Elizabeth George Speare Biography

Salem Witch Trials Information
http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/salem.htm

Colonial American Information

Witches Today

News Articles about Witch Trials
Psb=870&sz=427&hl=en&start=19&tbnid=GwjyiaBVIYeGM:&tbnh=145&tbnw=83&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dsalem%2Bwitch%2Btrials%2Bpictures%3D2%26hl%3Den

The Crucible (Film)

http://www.amazon.com/Crucible-Movie-Poster-11-17/dp/B000JW4NRA

http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/salem/images/noblemartyr1.jpg
The Cloze Procedure

**Purpose of the Strategy**
Originated by Taylor in 1953, a Cloze passage contains systematically deleted words. The Cloze procedure is used to determine what students already know about a given topic and to assess the suitability of a new test for students by testing their prior knowledge and language competence as they attempt to fill in the deletions. The Cloze Procedure is a measure of students’ familiarity with language patterns and sentence structure in prose as well as students’ ability to reason verbally.

**Using the Cloze Procedure**

**ADMINISTRATION**
Duplicate the Cloze passage and distribute one blank copy to each student. Emphasize the following oral directions to your students:

1. Supply only one word for each blank
2. Guessing is encouraged—the goal here is to fill in all the blanks
3. Misspellings will not be counted against you; as long as the word is recognizable, it will be counted as correct
4. The cloze test will not be timed
5. Before beginning, silently read through the entire text. I will then read it aloud to you before you begin.

**SCORING**
Determine each student’s raw score in the following manner:

- Count only exact replacements as correct. Synonyms are not correct.
- Misspellings are the only exception to this rule: do not penalize students for spelling mistakes.
- Inappropriate word endings are incorrect.
- The raw score will be the number of correct answers for each student.

To find a percentage, double the raw score (for example, if the student gets 32 correct answers in his blank spaces, multiply 32 x 2 = 64%). Then use the following chart to interpret the results:

**Interpretation of Cloze Procedure Percentage Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Material</th>
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<tr>
<td>60% and Above</td>
<td>Independent Level</td>
<td>Material is Too Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%-60%</td>
<td>Instructional Level</td>
<td>Material is About Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40% and Below</td>
<td>Frustration Level</td>
<td>Material is Too Difficult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
She turned around to watch the sailors stowing provisions into the longboat. She already regretted this impulsive trip ashore. There was no welcome for her at this chill saybrook landing. She was grateful when at last the captain assembled the return group and she could climb black into the longboat. Four new passengers were embarking for the trip up the river, a shabby, dour-looking man and wide and their scrawny little girl clutching a wooden toy, and a tall, angular young man with a pale narrow face and shoulder-length fair hair under a wide-brimmed black hat. Captain Eaton took his place aft without attempting any introduction. The men readied their oars. Then Nathaniel, coming back down the road on a run, slipped the rope from the mooring and as they pulled away from the wharf leaped nimbly to his place with the crew.

They were halfway across the harbor when a wail of anguish broke from the child. Before anyone could stop her the little girl had flung herself to her knees and teetered dangerously over the edge of the boat. Her mother leaned forward, grasped the woolen jumper and jerked her back, smacking her down with a sharp cuff.

"Ma! The dolly's gone!" the child wailed. "The dolly Grandpa made for me!"

Kit could see the little wooden doll, its arms sticking stiffly into the air, bobbing helplessly in the water a few feet away.

"Shame on you!" the woman scolded. "After the work he went to. All that fuss for a toy, and then the minute you get one you throw it away!"

"I was holding her up to see the ship! Please get her back, Ma! Please! I'll never drop it again!"

The toy was drifting farther and farther from the boat, like a useless twig in the current. No one in the boat made a move, or paid the slightest attention. Kit could not keep silent.
She turned around to watch the sailors stowing provisions into the longboat. She already regretted this impulsive trip ashore. There was no welcome for her at this chill saybrook landing. ________ was grateful when at ________ the captain assembled the ________ group and she could ________ back into the longboat. ________ new passengers were embarking ________ the trip up the ________, a shabby, dour-looking man ________ wife and their scrawny ________ girl clutching a wooden ________, and a tall, angular ________ man with a pale ________ face and shoulder-length ________ hair under a wide-_______ black hat. Captain Eaton ________ his place aft without ________ any introduction. The men ________ their oars. Then Nathaniel, ________ back down the road ________ a run, slipped the ________ from the mooring and ________ they pulled away from ________ wharf leaped nimbly to ________ place with the crew.

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“Ma! The dolly’s ________!” the child wailed. “The ________ Grandpa made for me!”

Kit ________ see the little wooden ________, its arms sticking stiffly ________ the air, bobbing helplessly ________ the water a few ________ away.

“Shame on you!” ________ woman scolded. “After the ________ he went to. All ________ fuss for a toy, ________ then the minute you ________ one you throw it ________!”

“I was holding her ________ to see the ship! ________ get her back, Ma! ________! I’ll never drop it ________!” The toy was drifting farther and farther from the boat, like a useless twig in the current. No one in the boat made a move, or paid the slightest attention. Kit could not keep silent.
THE RAYGOR READABILITY ESTIMATE
For The Witch of Blackbird Pond
By Elizabeth George Speare
New York: Yearling, 1986

Information gathered by Jen Smith

Passage #1 (Page 8)
The shock of cold, totally unexpected, almost knocked her senseless. As her head came to the surface she could not catch her breath at all. But after a dazed second she sighted the bobbing piece of wood and instinctively struck out after it in vigorous strokes that set her blood moving again. She had the doll in her hand before her numbed mind realized that there had been a second splash, and as she turned back she saw that Nathaniel was in the water beside her, thrashing with a clumsy paddling motion. She could not help laughing as she passed him, and with a feeling of triumph she beat him to the boat.

Passage #2 (Page 118)
Watching Prudence scurry off toward home, Kit had a moment’s misgiving. As always, she had acted on impulse, never stopping to weigh the consequences. Now, too late, she began to wonder. Had it been fair to draw Prudence into her secret world? She felt completely justified in deceiving her aunt and uncle; they were narrow-minded and mistaken. But the thought of Goodwife Cruff made her shudder. Yet Prudence had looked so miserable. She needed a friend. For a few hours those wary anxious eyes had been filled with shining trust and happiness. Wasn’t that worth a little risk? Kit shook off her qualms and set her own face towards home and another dull evening.

Passage #3 (Page 243)
She perched on a sun-dried rock and sniffed the air. There was an earthy indefinable scent that stirred her senses. The new shoots of the willows were a sharp yellow-green. The bare twigs of the maples were tipped by swilling red buds. A low bush nearby had blossomed in tiny gray balls. She reached to touch one curiously. It was furry and soft as the kitten that Prudence had held in her arms that summer afternoon. All at once Kit was aware that this New England, which had shown her the miracle of autumn and the white wonder of snow, had a new secret in store.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sentences</th>
<th>Words</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>7.4</td>
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READABILITY: According to the Raygor Model, The Witch of Blackbird Pond has a readability of about seventh grade.
Context: The anticipatory guide needs to be used before the students begin to read, allowing them to formulate some ideas on the major themes of the novel before they read them in the context of the story. Because the themes of human relationships and social injustices are so prominent throughout the novel, teachers need to readdress them throughout the novel. As this particular activity can be repeated up to three times, students can compare their answers each time, recognizing the changes they may have made after reading part or all of the novel. Applying the themes of human relationships to students in seventh grade will be a fairly simple task, in that these adolescents struggle every day to find their place in their families, among friends, in the classroom, in social gatherings, and in several other situations. The questions asked on this anticipatory guide are aimed to prompt students to think about those particular relationships they now have, those they would like to develop, and those in society they see as being either ideal or problematic. This leads directly into the theme of social injustices: as students think about human relationships and begin to answer the questions on this guide dealing with those relationships in society, they should begin to see social injustices which occur all around them. This is a perfect way to introduce the novel and explain to the students that these kinds of prejudices and mistreatments are not new: they have been seen throughout time. With the reading of The Witch of Blackbird Pond, students will be able to catch a glimpse of how some social injustices went too far. As the reading continues and this activity is repeated, students should be able to more easily apply the themes of the novel and their own observations to their personal lives. For these reasons, this anticipatory guide will set a perfect context in which the students can learn.

Purpose: This strategy will allow students to think about the themes of human relationships and social injustices that arise in the novel before reading. But beyond simply recognizing these occurrences, from this activity students should be able to apply what they are reading to their own lives, making the connections necessary to see that time has not changed human behavior and human attitudes very much. In fact, one might say that time has deepened the negative (as well as the positive) emotions of the human soul. Students will be able to gather this information and will then be able to discuss it, apply it, and change their own actions accordingly. Students will most likely have disagreements about the “correct answer” to each of the statements on the Anticipatory Guide, and therefore the class discussion will bring up good questions to ponder during reading. After reading through Chapter 9, there will be ample evidence to help support or refute many of these statements. As reading continues, these questions can be revisited and discussed periodically, or given as questions for students to write about in personal journal entries or exit slips. Students should realize by the end of the novel that
many of their preconceived notions can not be answered with a “yes” or a “no,” but that many issues in life need to be answered as the situation arises. Ideally, this activity should be completed three times total to show the differences in student opinions throughout the reading experience.

Directions:
*Time: This activity will take 10 minutes to complete the worksheets, 2 minutes to report answers, and about 15 minutes for class discussion afterwards.
1. At the beginning of class, before handing out the novel, ask students to pull out a pen and put everything else away. Explain that students are going to begin reading a new novel this week, and it deals with several of the same situations the students face each day in school, at home, and in many other social situations. Tell the students that the class will discuss the book after this activity, but first, they need to think about their own life experiences. Answering the questions on this Anticipatory Guide honestly and how they truly feel will help them better understand The Witch of Blackbird Pond and will help the students consider its major themes right from the beginning.

2. Pass out the Anticipatory Guides and explain that students need to answer each of the following questions with either a “Yes” or “No.” No questions can be left unanswered, so students must decide definitely whether they agree with each statement or not.

3. Allow students 10 minutes to fill out the Anticipatory Guides individually; while students are working, make a list from one to ten and leave room next to each number to make tally marks under “Yes” and “No” for each question. When students have finished their Anticipatory Guides, ask them to come up to the board to put tally marks under their answers for each question.

4. Open up the class with a discussion on the differences found in the answers students gave. Point out, for example, that twelve students agreed with the first statement while fourteen students disagreed. Why was there a difference? Ask students to share some of their reasons for putting “Yes” or “No” for various questions, and ask them specifically to share examples in their lives that have helped them make the conclusions they have made.

5. Explain to the class that the next novel the students will be reading deals with all of these issues. It is one of those stories that may change the students’ perspective on a few of the issues, if not all of them. This is a novel about friendship, family relationships, prejudice, community judgments, social norms, social injustice, and punishment. It asks several questions, and as students read, they may find answers; on the other hand, they may just come up with even more questions themselves.
6. Tell students that they need to keep these Anticipatory Guides in their English Binders under the Novel Notes section; they will need them later (when they have read more of the novel). Remember that this is an activity to produce discussions that can be held again and again every few chapters. Of course it is not logical to do this activity every single time a reading assignment is given, but perhaps three times: before the reading begins, in the middle of the novel, and at the conclusion of the book one last time.

**Assessment:** This guide will be used by the teacher to assess students periodically throughout the reading of the novel. On the first day it is used, for example, students will be graded on a participation basis. Teachers need to walk around the room and ensure that all students are in fact filling out all the questions and giving their opinions. When the class opens up for discussion, the teacher can then assess what topics and themes the students find most important or most controversial. She will know what these issues are based on the differences in the number of tallies on the board under the “Yes” and “No” columns; from the depth of reasoning and processing of ideas in the students’ comments; from the amount of debate over various topics; and from the themes students seem to want to spend more time talking about. At this point, teachers will be able to prepare lesson plans and activities to address these issues. Some days may be spent in writing letters to the editor. Others may be Socratic Seminar discussions addressing the issues of prejudice. Another day, teacher can foster student learning by inviting them to create their own utopian societies: in these societies, the students will be able to choose all the rules (or lack thereof) and will be able to set the standard for living that shows what they value and what human rights are most important to them. After reading Chapter 9, students could re-do their answers to this Anticipatory Guide and then compare their answers to the previous Guide. Were there changes? Have the students been influenced by the story and the struggle of Kit Tyler? Finally, after reading the whole novel, have students answer these questions again: it could be in this format, or it could be through some other multi-genre form. Allow the students to show what they have learned and how they have grown from their experiences with the novel. How has their view on human relationships changed? What social injustices do they notice more often now, and what are they doing about it?
Anticipatory Guide

The Witch of Blackbird Pond
By Elizabeth George Speare
New York: Yearling, 1986

Directions: Take the next ten minutes to think about these questions and the experiences you have had in your life. Do you agree with these statements? Do you disagree? Make a definite answer, and mark it on the lines to the left with an “X.” When you have finished the Anticipation Guide, go to the whiteboard and put a tally mark under “Yes” or “No” next to the corresponding number. If you finish before other students, you may work on late work for this class or you may begin silent reading The Witch of Blackbird Pond.

YES   NO

1. If someone in your community doesn’t follow the community’s social norms (the things that are typically accepted as “normal” by everyone), they should not be included in social events.

2. A group of people is justified in kicking someone out of the group if that person is not following the standard the group has created.

3. It is no one’s responsibility to help someone who has been ousted from a community.

4. You are responsible to help others as long as you are not endangered physically, socially, or mentally.

5. Society functions better when everyone has the same belief system.

6. A “perfect society” is one in which everyone is given equal rights.

7. A true friend puts friends above everything else.

8. Teenagers should always respect their elders and follow their wishes.

9. If someone breaks a rule, he should always be punished.

10. Consistency in a community is always better than change.
Purpose: The purpose of this strategy is to invite students to think more deeply about the problems they see within a text, either from differing perspectives of the text's characters or from differing opinions the students themselves may have from the ideas presented in the book. This strategy allows the students to utilize their problem-solving and decision-making skills, allows them to approach the text from a more outside point of view, creates interest in the story situation and an understanding of the real conflicts, and helps students connect their own values and priorities with the text. Participation in problematic situations also allows students to gather with a group, use prior knowledge, and engage their interests as they support their arguments.

Context: This activity should be done after students have read Chapter 9, where Kit meets Hannah Tupper for the first time. Based on the town’s reactions to Hannah, it seems clear she is an unwanted outcast, a problem to the society. Hannah appears to the reader, though, as someone much different. Kit and the reader are at a point of decision here: should Kit follow what the community believes and professes? Or should she follow her heart and listen to her instincts? Students will have the opportunity to think about what they might have done in similar situations, and they will have to think on a deeper level about the relationships they have with other people, ranking those relationships in importance. This chapter offers a shift in Kit’s way of thinking: the reader sees how she is able to change herself from conforming always to the community’s way of thinking to forming her own opinions that guide her actions. Students can learn from Kit and can also compare their own prejudices, priorities, and values with those of Kit as they read and work through this activity. As students focus on the list of people/items they could keep with them, their attention might be drawn to people/items that seem important in their own lives (for example, a religious leader, mom and dad, old friends, food, etc). However, upon examining the struggles Kit is experiencing, students may see that these people and these items are not always the most helpful. In fact, they could cause even more problematic situations to arise. Therefore, allowing the students to ask themselves these questions at this point in the novel (between Chapter 9 and Chapter 10) will give them the opportunity to really think through the priorities and values they have upheld.

Directions:
- Pass out the worksheets for the students, on which are 16 options. Students are to work individually and then as groups to list these options in order of importance.
They are prompted with the following scenario: If you were trapped on an island by yourself for an unknown, extended period of time, what items or people would you want to have with you? Rank the following options in order of their importance, 1 being the most important and 16 being the least important. You will first work individually. When you are done ranking these options, you will then be put into groups to work. Your group needs to be able to agree on the order of these items. As a group, next to each item or each person, write down your reason for choosing this option above or below others. Why did you rank it where you did? Why is it important/not so important to you?

- Students should have the first 5 minutes to work on this scenario individually. After five minutes, put the students in groups of three or four, making sure to avoid groups where conflict might be too strong and destroy individual thought, and allow the students to work for the next 10 minutes together. As a group students should write down their reasons for ranking these particular items in the order they did. They need to be able to defend their answers.

- As groups are writing, the teacher should be walking around the classroom, checking student progress, helping as needed, joining conversations and throwing in other ideas for students to think about, etc. Points should be given for student participation in the activity.

- After student groups have finished their rankings, ask the class about the importance of various items. Question the students about what they listed as their #1 top priority. Why did they choose this? Did any other group put something different? Why did they choose something different? What was the least important item on the list? Why? What influence does our reading in The Witch of Blackbird Pond have on the way we think about many of these items? What do the students think Kit would have listed for her #1 priority? What about her least important items or people to be with her? What priorities seem to be important in our day that may not have mattered as much in Kit’s lifetime? Is there a better way to look at some of the priorities we have set in our own lives? Does this activity make anyone think differently about his/her personal life?

- Collect the papers with student names on them, and give the students points for participation. Read through the rationales for their choices and use those responses to help plan future lessons, perhaps regarding the importance of abiding friendships, trusting family relationships, the need to take care of ourselves before others or vice versa, etc. This could be done by having students write letters to their best friends or family members, expressing why they value their friendship or familial relationship. They could also create a multi-media presentation about the need to care for others in the society in which one lives: in this presentation, they could show pictures and give historical examples and modern stories of people who give of themselves to help others.
Assessment: This will be done holistically by observation as students are collectively sharing thoughts and ideas about their priorities and rankings. The teacher should be aware of who is participating; should anyone not participate, the teacher ought to use her skills to assist the student and appeal to his needs. When the papers are handed back to the teacher, they should be graded holistically as well, given credit for the ranking as well as for the rationale—if it supports the students’ rankings and makes sense to the reader. Keep in mind, also, that during class discussion, teachers have the opportunity to observe student behavior and monitor for appropriate expression of opinion. As students will be sharing differing opinions and ideas, they need to practice proper manners and professional behavior in doing so. Teachers can explain to the class that points will be awarded or taken away depending on student performance during class discussion.
**Problematic Situation**

*The Witch of Blackbird Pond*

by Elizabeth George Speare

New York: Yearling, 1986

**IMAGINE THIS:**

*If you were trapped on an island by yourself for an unknown, extended period of time, what items or people would you want to have with you? Rank the following options in order of their importance, 1 being the most important and 16 being the least important. You will first work individually. When you are done ranking these options, you will then be put into groups to work. Your group needs to be able to agree on the order of these items. As a group, next to each item or each person, write down your reason for choosing this option above or below others. Why did you rank it where you did? Why is it important/not so important to you?*

- Books
- Clothing
- A brand-new friend
- Your mom
- Food
- Your best friend since childhood
- Your religious leader
- A boyfriend/girlfriend
- A political leader
- Water
- A doctor who uses alternative medicine
- Video games/Game Boy
- Your dad
- Paper and pen
- Tools to work with
- A member of your extended family
The Witch of Blackbird Pond
By Elizabeth George Speare
New York: Yearling, 1986

Questioning Strategy

Purpose: The questioning strategy is used to help students increase their knowledge and climb the ladder of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Though set up much like a Socratic Seminar, it has several differences and will help seventh graders ease into the idea of student-led discussions. While a simple worksheet might help students identify basic events and characters in the novel, an activity like this one helps the students not only comprehend, but apply, analyze, and synthesize the information from the novel while comparing it to their own lives. Questions often bring up ideas that simple statements cannot do. That means that students will be thinking on a much higher level when attempting to answer questions than when only taking notes on the factual statements a teacher may offer. Also, in a classroom setting, students often feel insecure or unable to share all their ideas, but in this questioning activity, every student will need to participate in order to receive credit. Therefore, with everyone’s participation, the questions shared and ideas presented ought to have a greater impact on student analysis (during and after the activity). Teachers will not be creating all the questions in this activity, though they will start out to get the students in the right mode. However, the purpose of this activity is for students to pull themselves up to a higher level of thinking, to a point where they are coming up with questions on their own and begging to know greater details of the story they are all reading. As they ask and answer questions related to the novel, it is hoped that students will be able to then question the practices and ideas in the society of today.

Context: This activity would work best as soon as students have concluded Chapter 19, the climax of the story. This is near the end of the novel, which means several other activities and class discussions have taken place by this point. Even if this is the first novel of the year for students to be reading, they should be able to think critically enough by this point that they can create and answer deeper questions that cause them to really analyze the text. However, by doing the activity near the end of the novel, the students are given much more material to work with. Students have all the events leading up to this section to think about, and fresh in their minds will be the trial scene of Chapter 19. Here, Kit has been taken out of her home by someone she thought was a friend and has been put on trial for what Kit saw as a helpful gesture of love (teaching Prudence to read). By this point, students should be wondering about the social standards of the time, questioning continually their value and what effect these standards have on the lives of individual characters. Why has the whole community gone after one person? What makes everyone think

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that it is okay to charge Kit with such accusations? What standards did she break, and are those standards really that important? Clearly, human relationships have also been challenged in this scene: what is Kit feeling? How has she been betrayed? Are people often betrayed when they think they are being helpful? Since the students have been focusing on these major themes of social injustice and human relationships throughout their reading of the novel, these questions should not be too difficult to generate. Explaining to the students, also, that questions may come from any part of the book up to this point will certainly help to foster creativity and deeper thought.

**Directions:**

*Time: 20-30 minutes total, or as long as students are generating thought-provoking questions*

1. Students will have just concluded reading Chapter 19 in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*. Tell the students to pull out their novels and a pen, and pass out the worksheet. Explain to the students that today’s class is going to be a little different because the students are going to be generating most of the discussion, and therefore they are going to have to be thinking deeply and helping each other process and articulate ideas.

2. Walk the students through the worksheet: they are told that today’s activity will help them question the events and themes in the novel, and then they will also be able to better question what goes on in their own lives. Share the examples with the students and ask them, “Why are these good questions?” (Teachers should be looking for answers like: they don’t have a “yes” or “no” answer, you can think look at the questions in different ways, everyone can have their own opinion, etc.) Explain that today’s activity will be centered around good questions like these, where students will need to help each other learn more about the novel and about their own lives by asking good questions.

3. The next part of the worksheet asks students to come up with their own questions (one or two). Remind them that good questions need to be thought-provoking and lead to more than a “yes” or “no” answer. Give them 2-3 minutes to write down good questions on their worksheet. The teacher should be walking around the room, checking the questions for depth and prompting students in their questioning.

4. Next, have the students move their desks into a circular shape, such that every student is facing inward and can see everyone else. The teacher should also sit in this circle to monitor and start off the questioning activity.

5. Now that students are in a circle, explain that they are going to be leading the discussion today. Each student has now written down at least one good question, and each has been thinking about this novel now for the past few weeks. The teacher will begin by asking the questions in the first part of the worksheet. Just choose one to start with, and as conversation grows, add one or two other questions to the discussion.

- Why does Kit feel so frustrated with her life in New England?
• What are the "rules" (spoken and unspoken) in this colony?
• Who set those "rules" in Kit’s community?
• Are those "rules" correct? Should they be enforced?
• What does Kit do to go along with or fight against the rules?

6. Students will all need to participate in the questioning activity by making comments about a question already asked, or by presenting their own question from their worksheet (or a new one that comes to mind). The teacher should keep a tally chart of who is participating and how many times each person has made a comment; explain that students will not receive points for the day without making at least one thoughtful comment (more than two words, etc.).

7. As the teacher’s questions begin to spark comments and answers, the students should recognize connections to other topics they have thought about and will then be able to ask their own questions. Explain to the students that after the first two questions, you as a teacher will not be participating at all in the discussion. The activity, then, will be entirely run by the students. They will need to politely listen to each other and pay close attention to all that is being asked and questioned so that they can each participate and respond. Remember that since everyone needs to participate, no one should be dominating the conversation.

8. In order to make a comment, students need to raise their hands and hold up the number of fingers that corresponds with the number of comments they have made. The person who has last spoken will call on the next person to speak, based on how many comments that next person has made. Students should be looking for their classmates who have made fewer comments in order to include everyone in the discussion.

9. Read with the students the bottom section of their worksheet, which invites them to write down more questions and thoughts as they are participating in the discussion. Tell them they can write these ideas down during the questioning activity, or they can wait until the end, when they will be given a few minutes to record their thoughts. They will be given credit for doing this portion.

10. If there are questions before students start their discussion, take and answer those questions. Otherwise, it’s time to begin! Start by asking the questions on the worksheet, and then let the students take over. This discussion should last about 20 minutes. If students seem to be generating really great ideas and do not want to stop the discussion, allow more time. Also, be sure to allow time for every student to have the opportunity to participate.

11. When the discussion is over, have students move their desks back to the normal classroom setup, and remind them that these worksheets will be turned in for points today. To get full credit, students need to write down at least three new questions or ideas they have in their minds after the discussion. Give the students 3-5 more minutes to write down these ideas, and then have them pass their papers to the front of the room to be turned in.

12. After collecting the papers, ask the students to raise their hands and share their feelings about the questioning activity. Did they enjoy it? Did it help
them learn? What ideas did it spark in them? How would they have done the activity differently? What are the benefits of sitting in a circle as a class and asking each other questions? How do these questions help with understanding and interpreting the novel? Are there similarities between the questions we have about the events in the novel and the questions we have about things that happen in our own lives? What can we do to question our lives daily?—Do we have to sit in roundtable discussions all the time? Can we ask questions to ourselves? Can we talk about issues that we’ve talked about already with our friends and family?

13. Tonight’s reading is Chapter 20 and 21, the very end of the book, where there is a more resolution made. In these chapters, Kit has to make decisions about following society’s standards, communicating openly with her family, sharing her feelings with her suitor, etc. Pay attention to the reactions Kit has to the world around her, and compare that with your own ideas that you have generated in today’s discussion.

Assessment: By the end of this discussion, students will have learned a myriad of important practices and ideas. First of all, they will have practiced having a professional discussion about sometimes-controversial topics; they will have had to show interest and pay attention to one another in order to participate fully in the discussion. Also, students should have learned to think on a deeper level (or a higher level on Bloom’s Taxonomy) about what they are reading. Not only will they have asked questions about the details of a particular event (i.e. Where was Kit going when she went into the woods?), but they will have asked questions that help to answer the WHYs of the story. For example, Why was Kit’s experience in the woods so important to the story? What influence does her friendship with Hannah have on Kit’s perception of the community and the world? etc. By asking and pondering and answering these questions, students push themselves to a level of application, interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of the world and major themes in the novel and their own lives.

Teachers can assess student learning first by giving credit for participation. Students need to complete their worksheets and need to comment at least once in the discussion circle—if they do accomplish these tasks, it shows the teacher that the students actually are processing and pondering the comments and questions presented in class. However, teachers will also be able to distinguish higher levels of learning and thought-processing based on the new ideas and questions formed by the students, as shown in the bottom section of their worksheets. From these new ideas, perhaps more lessons can be created and centered on student thought. This is beneficial to the students because it shows that their ideas are valid, thoughtful, and deep enough that the teacher wants to come back to them! This gives an incredible sense of ownership and pleasure to the students for having thought analytically, and will encourage them to do so for future activities.

Summary and Segue: Class, as you have participated in this questioning activity, you should have learned to not only pay attention to each other and politely respond and comment about one another’s questions, but you should have learned
much more about the novel and the world around you. We all live in a society much like Kit’s: there are certain standards that just seem to be naturally put in place, we have rules and regulations by which we run our lives, and we see prejudices and social judgments all around us. These often lead to injustice and cruelty. Are all these things ok? As we have discussed today, we can see that just like in Kit’s society, there are often several changes that need to be made. Now that you have had the opportunity to think about those changes, we’re going to read Chapters 20-21 and see what Kit does. Is she fully aware right now of the changes that should be made? Does she recognize how she can change her world? How do you see her resolve many of her frustrations in these final chapters of the novel? What similarities are there between Kit’s life and your own? How does today’s activity help you read Kit’s story more carefully?
Questioning Activity

The world is full of people who like to tell us what the “right answers” are and how we should think about ourselves, others, and the world. But when we don’t question these ideas, we might fall into incorrect or even harmful thinking. We have seen many of examples of people falling into a particular way of thought as we have been reading The Witch of Blackbird Pond. Our goal for today is to question the practices we have seen in the novel. Let’s start by looking at a few questions others have asked.

- Why does Kit feel so frustrated with her life in New England?
- What are the “rules” (spoken and unspoken) in this colony?
- Who set those “rules” in Kit’s community?
- Are those “rules” correct? Should they be enforced?
- What does Kit do to go along with or fight against the rules?

What answers would you give for each of these questions? These are just a few examples, but they can help you see a pattern of thought. Each question can be generated from the one before it. We are going to do an activity today that helps us come up with questions and answers together as a class. On the lines below, you need to write one or two questions you have about what we have read in the novel so far. It can come from any section and be about any topic, but this question must have more than a “yes” or “no” answer—it needs to be something that others need to think about to answer appropriately.

As we question each other and try to come to different conclusions, write down a few notes on the bottom of this paper—these can be more questions you have, answers you come up with but are not able to share at the right time, or any other thoughts that come to your mind. There is no right or wrong answer—we are just learning together today!
The Witch of Blackbird Pond
By Elizabeth George Speare
New York: Yearling, 1986

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

Context: Because students will most likely not struggle extensively with the vocabulary in The Witch of Blackbird Pond, the Semantic Feature Analysis allows them to practice more difficult vocabulary words and apply them to the characters in the novel. This activity, then, allows students to respond to their reading and apply specific, previous knowledge to new knowledge. This is great for scaffolding student learning. Since background knowledge of several characters is necessary, students should complete the Semantic Feature Analysis after having finished the novel. The class discussion afterwards will help students to solidify their ideas and prepare them for a final character analysis essay they may do as a final assessment. Also, having the activity take place after reading the novel completely will help students to feel confident in their responses and in the vocabulary being used. They may not feel there is enough evidence to support one character’s attribute or another if they have not read much of the book.

Purpose: This activity is designed to help students increase in vocabulary usage and associate a more descriptive term with various characters. While students often read stories and naturally lean toward certain characters, this activity will help students to recognize both positive and negative qualities in every character. This vocabulary gives students a greater variety in their language and will help them prepare for their character analysis essay as a later assessment. Students need to be able to learn vocabulary in seventh grade, but so often their vocabulary is taught out of context, with no way for students to remember and apply the new words. In this activity, students immediately have a character to which they can apply the vocabulary. This factor alone makes the vocabulary words much more useful and applicable to real life. Students will have fun and be able to remember what they have learned!

Directions:

Time: The Semantic Feature Analysis should take 15 minutes to complete, with an added 5-10 minute discussion afterwards
1. Students have just finished reading all of The Witch of Blackbird Pond, and now their minds should be full of ideas. Begin the activity by mentioning several characters in the book and how they played a part in the story. For example, ask the students, “What part did Prudence play in helping Kit determine who and how she wanted to help in the story?” or “Why is Hannah Tupper so important in the story and how does she help Kit to grow?” or “Why doesn’t Kit break off all her ties with her aunt and uncle and their

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family, even though she is frustrated with them at the beginning? What does this tell us about Kit's personality? What does this tell us about her family and their personalities?"

2. Next, pass out the worksheets so that every student has one. Explain the directions:
   a. On the top of the chart on the paper, there are ten words, many of them unfamiliar to seventh graders. These words are listed to describe various characters in the book.
   b. On the left side of the chart, students need to come up with ten different characters from the story and list them, one on each line.
   c. Then students will need to look at the vocabulary words on top—all of which are personality traits—and decide whether each of the ten characters fits that description.
   d. If the attribute/semantic feature fits the character listed, students need to put a “+” in the corresponding box. If not, students should put a “-“ in the box.
   e. If a vocabulary word is unknown, students need to look that word up in the dictionary to learn its meaning. They can also share with each other what they have found out about each word.

3. After explaining the directions, ask students if there are any questions about what they are to do. Try to re-explain in a different way so that every student understands clearly the directions and the point of the activity.

4. Students will have 15 minutes to work on their charts, during which time the teacher should be walking around and checking student work, prompting them with examples from the novel.

5. After this work time, the teacher may begin a class review discussion on the charts and students’ responses to the vocabulary words in association with their chosen characters. Discussion questions could be as follows:
   a. What were some of the positive qualities you were able to see in Mercy? In Kit? In the Cruffs? In others? What about the negative qualities in these characters?
   b. What examples from the novel tell you these characters do or do not match up with certain characteristics?
   c. Why did you write down the answers you did? Are you influenced by any particular person or event in the story?
   d. Which vocabulary words stuck out to you? Were there many you did not know before? What benefit do these vocabulary words have? How can it help you to know more complicated words when describing people or things?

6. Explain that in being able to describe characters with a wider vocabulary allows more precision and greater visual images of the character being described. When we speak, it is often difficult to explain exactly what we mean with a smaller range of vocabulary words. However, this activity helps put the vocabulary in context.

7. Students need to practice the vocabulary continuously for the various word meanings to stick in their minds. Explain that this week, students will need
to express themselves using these vocabulary words: they can do so in daily journals, class comments, think-pair-shares, and any other circumstance where it seems appropriate. The point is to help the students learn these words and remember them permanently.

**Assessment:** While students are working on their worksheets, participation points should be given for those who complete the charts, who work efficiently, and who help other students understand the meanings of difficult and unknown words. During the class discussion, teachers may also allow students to receive participation points for contributing to the classroom inquiry. Students will need to turn the assignment in for the teacher to be sure that everyone fully understands all the words and connections with the novel's characters. If there are still misunderstandings, the teacher will need to have time to allow students to really comprehend all the vocabulary. This may take only a few minutes, or it may take another class period; teachers must be sensitive to the needs of the students.

**Summary and Segue:** Students will be asked to write a character analysis for their final project with this unit. In order to make this possible, teachers may use the Semantic Feature Analysis to segue into the assignment. Now that they have read the entire book and are very familiar with the characters and their dynamic changes and prominent attributes, students have the opportunity to show their knowledge with an essay examining one character. Teachers may introduce this assignment in class the very day students have completed their Semantic Feature Analyses; doing so will help the students feel a connection between the assignments. Explain that students will need to use the vocabulary learned in this activity as they write their essays. The focus for these character analyses is the change the character did or did not make during the story; students should answer the question, “How did this character's personality traits help or hinder him/her in his/her progress?” Take the class back to a discussion of story events if needed, and allow a few students to share some major points from the story that tie into this idea of character change, etc.
**The Witch of Blackbird Pond**  
*By Elizabeth George Speare*  
*New York: Yearling, 1986*

**SEMANTIC FEATURE ANALYSIS**

For this activity, you will need to think of the ten most important characters in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* and list them on the left side of the grid. In the top row are ten words describing one or more of these characters. You will need to put a + or a – in each box connecting characters with the vocabulary words listed. For example: is Kit honorable? Is Hannah virtuous? Is Mercy capricious? For any words you do not know, you will need to look up the definition in the dictionary. Using this chart, you will be able to show your understanding of the novel and its characters as you analyze their individual attributes. When you have finished working on your own, we will share these ideas together as a class, so be prepared to talk about your answers.

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<tr>
<th>CHARACTERS</th>
<th>VOCABULARY WORDS</th>
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Smith, BYU, 2010
# Bloom's Taxonomy Unit Overview

**The Witch of Blackbird Pond**  
by Elizabeth George Speare  
New York: Yearling, 1986

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<tr>
<th>UNITS WITHIN The Witch of Blackbird Pond</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Creative Thinking</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
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<td>Chapters 1-5</td>
<td>How well do you already know the language of Puritan America? Cloze Procedure</td>
<td>Describe Kit’s reaction to her new home. What predictions can you make about Kit’s upcoming adventures? Journal Response</td>
<td>Use your own experiences to identify the characteristics you have in common with Kit. What is different about the two of you? Venn Diagram</td>
<td>Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of Kit’s community to your own. Why might some of the social problems in the society cause trouble for Kit? Silent Discussion</td>
<td>Can you imagine Kit’s new home? What would you be doing there if you lived in the same community? Guided Imagery</td>
<td>What do you think and how do you feel about these statements? Anticipation Guide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapters 6-10</td>
<td>What do you already know about Puritan America and the history of the Salem Witch Trials? KWHL Activity</td>
<td>Show your understanding of some of the traditions of Puritan New England. Graphic Organizer</td>
<td>When have you ever been treated poorly or looked down upon by others? Describe the experience. Using your own circumstances, explain why you think this happens. Writing to Learn</td>
<td>Analyze in your group the rules and regulations of Kit’s society. What rules seem superfluous, and which traditions seem to improve the community? Group Presentations</td>
<td>How do you imagine yourself reacting to some of the circumstances with which Kit is faced? Create a comic strip showing Kit’s reactions and the way you might react to the same circumstances. Artwork/Creative Writing</td>
<td>Which of these items would be most important to you if you were stranded on an island? Problematic Situation</td>
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<td>Chapters 11-15</td>
<td>Identify some things Kit has done to cause trouble for herself and others. Where does she turn for help? Reading Quiz</td>
<td>What can you infer about the relationship between Kit and Nat? Between Kit and Hannah? Between Kit and the rest of her family? QAR</td>
<td>Apply what you’re reading to your own life: write a letter from Kit (using your point of view) to a member of her family explaining her views on friendship and why she is going against the grain in her society. Letter-Writing Activity</td>
<td>Create and design your own poster of what you think Hannah and Hannah’s house look like: where does she live, what is on her walls, what is she dressed like? Etc. Artwork and Posters</td>
<td>Describe and express Hannah Tupper’s desires and characteristics through a work of poetry. BioPoem</td>
<td>Respond to the following: Those who do not follow society’s norms should not be included in the society. Four Corners Activity and Class Debate</td>
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<td>Chapters 16-21</td>
<td>Identify how Nat becomes more involved in Kit’s life in this section. Is Kit excited about this? Journal Response</td>
<td>Predict what you think might happen to Kit and Prudence and Hannah Tupper in these last few chapters. Reading Quiz</td>
<td>How do these new words apply to each of the characters in the novel? Where do we see that exemplified? Semantic Features Vocabulary Work</td>
<td>Show and organize your thoughts on how Kit has changed over the course of the novel. Graphic Organizer</td>
<td>Compose a segment of Kit’s journal, expressing her thoughts and feelings on what has just taken place. Narrative Writing</td>
<td>What are some questions you have now? How does questioning the practices in the novel help us in being better citizens? Teach Each Other Discussion</td>
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Context: This picture book activity is used at the beginning of teaching *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* as a way to spark the students' interest and give them a picture of the time period. Because this story is based on historical fact, students may better appreciate the struggles that many women experienced during the mid-1600s. With a true story to set the background, students are better prepared to understand and enjoy the novel following the picture book. This picture book also has a great deal of intricate and abstract artwork, and this allows for deeper discussion of symbols in the classroom.

Purpose: To help students picture the time period being discussed, this book, “Tituba,” should be read before any of *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* is read. The text is simplistic enough that it allows students to picture the story, to practice visual imagery, and to comprehend the trials of the time. The artwork in the story allows the students to see a different side of the story, and teachers can use these images to teach symbolic representation. After having read this story book, students should be able to articulate some of their opinions regarding unfair and unjust treatment of the innocent, social judgments, stereotypes, and prejudice. The classroom can become a place of deep discussion in preparation for the themes in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*.

Directions:

**Time:** Reading—about 10 minutes; Discussion—about 30 minutes

1. Begin by introducing the story of Tituba as a slave sold into the American colonies. Give more background knowledge as it applies: you could share facts about the Reverend Parris, the young girls who accused other “witches,” or the Salem Witch Trials in general.

2. Next, read the story, showing the pictures and allowing the students to simply listen.

3. After reading the story, go back through and point out important passage that show dynamic changes in the characters: Abbie and Elizabeth, Tituba, the Reverend, or others that seem important. Also point out the artwork, asking students what they think each picture represents and what symbols the pages are trying to use.

4. Ask the students what they would have done had they been in a situation like Tituba’s at that time period. Have them share
in partners or groups what their final thoughts and feelings are, having read the book.

5. Hold a class discussion regarding prejudice, social injustice, judging before understanding, etc. Relate these experiences and examples from the story to students’ lives. Have there been times in the students’ lives that they have experienced such injustice? Have they ever felt like the outcasts? Have they conformed to the group because of the pressures they felt around them? Why do we do that as humans, and how can we avoid situations like that?

6. Following these questions and discussion, have the students write their own “ending to the story.” They can pretend to be Tituba, or they can be another character in the story; their goal is to write a one-page ending that ties up all the loose ends. Was Tituba charged correctly? Is she ever happy with her life? Does she continue to practice her natural and magical charms from her home? What does the Reverend end up doing? Are there other girls who fall under the “spell” that has capture Elizabeth and Abbie? Have the students share their responses with a partner or in a group.

**Assessment:** Students will be writing an “ending” to the story, relating the events read to their own lives and what they have seen happen already to them. This writing assignment will help the students articulate their feelings of social prejudice and injustice, and they will perhaps even discover new ways of thinking about such topics. Teachers can also make pre-assessments during the student discussion as they watch for participation and pay attention to the depth of the comments shared. From their observations, teachers will know what issues to emphasize when teaching the novel.

**Summary and Segue:** This picture book teaches a great deal about the time period during which *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* takes place. By incorporating it into the pre-reading assessments and frontloading lesson plans, teachers can ensure that students have a clear view of the themes they will be exploring in the novel. It also allows for deeper discussion of literary issues, including symbolism and reading beyond the lines.
Overview:
This is a story about Tituba, the black slave brought to New England from her home in the Caribbean islands. She works in the home of Reverend Parris, and she helps care for his two daughters. At the height of the era of witchcraft scares, Tituba was one of the accused, due to her folk wisdom and her fortune-telling with natural objects. She eventually confesses to practicing witchcraft, probably to avoid further punishment after having suffered many months in jail. Tituba's story is one of prejudice, fear, social injustice, and moral values.

Response to the Text:
This book is so creatively written and illustrated, that it causes the reader to look a little more deeply at the story. Tituba was so interesting to the New Englanders—her physical movement, her speech, and her traditions were new and different from anything the colonists had seen before. At first they enjoyed being with her. But as time grew and their misunderstandings also increased, they put blame on a woman that had once been their friend. This is a theme pulsing through the lives of our students (from seventh to twelfth grades), and the story sends a poignant message to stop the mistreatment and unfair judgment to those undeserving, innocent people all around us. Students will react to Tituba's tragic fate; likewise, this can be compared to individuals in their own lives who feel the same types of judgments and injustice.

Other Mini Lesson Ideas:
* After reading the book, ask students to put together a piece of art expressing something they know little about—for example, if they don’t know much about Chinese history, they can create a collage with red colors (the color on the Chinese flag) and other symbols that currently make them think of China or its history. That night, after working a little on the art projects, have students research enough to understand better their subject, and have them present to the class the next day some things they had assumed incorrectly or interesting facts they didn’t know before.
* Have the students create a BioPoem for someone they know little about—it can be anyone in their lives, but it must be someone they have not had long conversations with previously. If this is a project done at the beginning of the school year, maybe try pairing up students in your classroom so they can get to know each other. Discuss afterwards the importance of coming to understand one another to create harmony in a classroom and in a community.
* Invite students to write a narrative or a poem describing a time they personally had been mistreated. They will need to express their actions before, during, and after the misjudgment/mistreatment was placed upon them. Also, have them include reasons they feel they were innocent in the situation, and to express how they react to others in the same situation now.
* Have the students create a Found Poem with the words in this book, emphasizing its main points of prejudice, social injustice, and mistreatment of the innocent, etc. The poems should include one word from every page, and they can also include an illustration.
* Have students research historical events (including, but not limited to, the Salem Witch Trials) that addressed issues of prejudice and misjudgments. Ideas: McCarthyism and the Red Scare, the Civil Rights movement, Japanese encampment during WWII, scares and judgments of Middle Easterners after the 9/11 Attacks, etc.

Other Titles to be Paired with Book:
The Crucible by Arthur Miller
The Witch of Blackbird Pond by Elizabeth George Speare
The Raging Quiet by Sheryl Jordan

* Anything having to do with the Salem Witch Trials or about prejudice in any time period (i.e. McCarthyism and the Red Scare, the Civil Rights movement, Japanese encampment during WWII, scares and judgments of Middle Easterners after the 9/11 Attacks, etc.)
Artwork Activity

Context: This artistic activity can be taught at various points of the novel, as it allows the students to choose major themes and ideas they want to symbolize through art. The activity would work best, however, after the students have read Chapter 9. Here is where Hannah Tupper is introduced, and by this point, the students should have great ideas about her character and those aspects of her home and life that are most interesting. Creating artwork in the middle of a novel helps the students visually put together information they have gather up to this point, and it allows them a new venue for making predictions for later in the novel. Reminding students that they can always create art for a character in the book by including images and important symbols they see in their own lives will also help the students to put this activity into a context more applicable to their circumstances.

Purpose: This activity allows students to gather ideas from previous chapters, use the story’s clues, and formulate it all in an artistic way. This activity appeals a great deal to those students whose artistic intelligence is much higher than their verbal intelligence. The activity also allows the students to express themselves in new and uncommon ways. Teachers can teach the need for reading deeply into the text to make inferences. Similarly, this activity should be pre-set with a mini-lesson on symbols and how visual art triggers different parts of our brain with these symbols. The artwork once finished, can be hung in the classroom to allow students to constantly reflect on the images various characters put out for the audience. As they look at their artwork, students will be able to revisit the themes discussed throughout the novel, and they will be able to see how one person’s perspective could be drastically different from another’s. This alone will emphasize the message of injustice, quick judgments, and prejudice, and the teacher will be able to reconnect these ideas with the reading as well as with real life.

Directions:

Time: 10 minutes to lead-in, 30 minutes to create, 10 minutes to share

1. Begin by reviewing the previous day’s reading (which should have been Chapter 9). Ask the students what the main points of the reading were, and make sure that the encounter with Hannah Tupper is discussed.

2. Have the students write down on a piece of paper a few ideas regarding Hannah Tupper—these ideas can be as little as one word each or as large as a paragraph. Allow the students to free-write for about 3-5 minutes, unless more time is needed.
3. From their free-writes, students will now be making pieces of art. Tell the students that they will need to represent Hannah Tupper, her home, her ideas, and her whole personality in a visual manner. It can be simplistic, it can be complicated, it can be modern, it can be abstract, it can be traditional...it can be whatever the students feel would fit her best.

4. The materials students can use (scissors, paper of all colors, tissue paper, glitter, beads, shells, noodles, glue, etc.) should be in the front of the room. Tell the students they may come up and gather some of the materials they think they will need, and then they can get to work at their desks. They will be working alone, but each will have the opportunity to present their artwork to a classmate at the end of the day. Ask the students to clean up their mess when they are done.

5. When students have finished, after about 30 minutes of working, make sure the room is cleaned up. Allow the students 8-10 minutes to sit in groups of four to present their work. Each student should explain each part of his/her art and show why he/she incorporated such materials and colors and ideas.

Assessment: Students will not only be able to show their understanding of the chapter they have just finished, but with this artwork it will be clear what kind of depth they are putting into their thinking as they read the novel. Teachers will be able to determine how much more Hannah needs to be discussed, and she will be able to see what some of the students’ opinions are regarding this mysterious woman. The artwork lends itself to discussions and assessments of student attitudes and critical thinking. Remember, however, that not all students are talented artists. The main assessment should come from ideas rather than perfect presentation.

Summary and Segue: This art project allows the students to connect ideas from what they have previously read to some new ideas they may be forming as they do the project. This assignment should take a 50 minute class period, but the next day, when students come into the room and the artwork is hung on the walls, a great discussion can take place, relating themes in the novel and ideas about Hannah Tupper to real life situations. Students will be able to see for themselves what kinds of snap judgments they make of different people as they look at their artwork and see how each classmate looked at the same person so differently. Again, this leads into a great discussion of the importance of getting to know people before judging them, how to avoid prejudice, and what kinds of preconceived notions we all have about the world and people around us. This project fits perfectly into the novel unit.
The Witch of Blackbird Pond
By Elizabeth George Speare
New York: Yearling Press, 1986

Letter Writing Activity

Context: This assignment should be completed after reading Chapter 15 in the novel. By this time, Kit has had plenty of different types of experiences in her community, and she has interacted with countless people. Her opinions are deeply formed, and she is learning more and more every day. By this point in the novel, students should have a firm grasp on Kit and her society. They should be aware of Kit’s thoughts and feelings as they relate to her surroundings, and they should be able to articulate through this letter the important issues on Kit’s mind at this point. The letter-write also serves as a writing-to-learn activity in which the students will become more aware of their own ideas and opinions regarding the same issues with which Kit is struggling.

Purpose: This letter allows the students to show what they have learned thus far in the reading as it relates to Kit and her changing character. They are also more able to make connections between Kit’s actions, words, and thoughts. Students should be able to articulate these ideas thoroughly, and as they do so, the teacher will discover those areas she needs to address again. In writing letters, students are able to think more about the content than the proper, formal form that would accompany a research paper or one like it. Instead, students doing this assignment will be asked to produce a piece of writing that expresses in layman’s terms the major ideas and themes running through the novel. As they pretend to be Kit and write from her perspective, students’ own opinions of various subjects will also be tested, and the students will have the opportunity to re-evaluate their own ways of thinking.

Directions:

Time: 10 minutes preparation, 20 minutes writing, 10 minutes sharing
1. Begin the lesson by reviewing some of the major events that have taken place in Kit’s life up to this point in the reading. Have the students create a list that can be put on the white board for all to see. Included with this list can also be some of the major emotions Kit has felt and how the students see her character changing.
2. Tell the students to take out a piece of paper. Meanwhile, pass out the worksheet. Read the directions with the students, and explain that they will be pretending to be Kit as they write these letters. The main goal is to share at least four of the major events in her life and the emotions and ideas about the world that Kit experiences as they relate to these events.

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3. Review the format of a letter with the students, and ask if there are any questions. Tell the students they will be graded on their formatting as well as the content of their letters.

4. On the bottom of the worksheet is a section with some questions to take into consideration. Have the students jot down a few of their answers next to some of the questions (probably not all, but as much as possible) for a pre-writing activity.

5. When they have written enough next to the questions to feel confident in writing a page-long letter, have the students write their letter on their blank pieces of paper.

6. After working for about 30 minutes, have the students share their letters with a partner. Each partner should double check the format of the letter and should give positive feedback as well as hints for improvement.

**Assessment:** This activity allows the students to assess their own understanding of the novel as they work to explore the ways Kit has changed. Her character is very dynamic, and in this writing process, students will be able to articulate their understanding of what her character is experiencing. Teachers also will be able to determine with what depth they need to discuss Kit’s character in future class discussions. The letters will also show the teacher how much the student understands about the themes in the novel and Kit’s perspective on a variety of social issues.

**Summary and Segue:** This activity is used to incorporate all the information students have learned thus far in their reading. They will be able to write their observations in a creative way, and in the writing, they will be able to explore their own thoughts and feelings about the same issues. In preparation for the next day’s teaching, the teacher should read the letters and observe student ideas about Kit’s perspective. If there is more to be discussed, take a day to do so. If students seem to grasp the major concepts of the novel, further reading and discussion of class predictions may take precedence.
The Witch of Blackbird Pond
By Elizabeth George Spear
New York: Yearling Press, 1986

Letter-Writing Activity

We have read a great deal about Kit and her experiences in New England. She has changed and developed as a character through each experience and each encounter with another person. **What do you think are some of Kit's major thoughts at this point? Is she happy where she is?** There is not necessarily a right or wrong answer—as long as you back up your ideas in your letter, you can defend whichever position you choose. **Pretend that YOU are KIT, and write a letter to your best friend expressing your thoughts and feelings.** Tell your friend all about the adventures you've had in New England, the hard work you've done, and the people you've associated with. Tell your friend why you do or do not like New England life, and express your thoughts in a way that shows your knowledge of Kit's changing character. **What do you think about friendship? What is a real friend? How do you (Kit) know these things? Share all you (Kit) are thinking right now, and express your ideas as clearly as possible. Make sure you include at least four major ideas or thoughts about Kit's home (from her perspective). This letter should take up at least one written page.** Remember that when you are finished you will be sharing your letters with a partner.

Prewriting Ideas:
- What are Kit's thoughts on family?
- How does Kit feel about friendship?
- What makes a true friend?
- What is Kit thinking about religion and its place in society?
- What kind of labor has Kit had to participate in, and how does she feel about it?
- Who are the most important people to her in New England?
- Does she ever want to leave to go back to Barbados?
- Is Kit happy where she is?

Important Letter Features:
- Dear ________,
- Sincerely, Love, Yours, (etc)
- Date in top right corner
- Letter includes introduction (Hello!, Greetings!, How are things for you?, etc.)
- Letter includes at least four of Kit's major ideas or thoughts about her home

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