Literature Circle Questions

**Use the questions and activities to get more out of the experience of reading The Teacher’s Funeral: A Comedy in Three Parts by Richard Peck**

1. Where do Russell and his family live? In which year do the events of the story take place?
2. What object does Russell describe as “the only really perfect thing in the world”?
3. What does Tansy do at the funeral that astonishes those around her?
4. Why does Glenn Tarbox move away from his family on Stony Lonesome Road to live with Aunt Fanny Hamline?
5. What is the Case Special and why do the men and boys of Sycamore Township rush to see it every year?
6. Imagine you are a new student at Hominy Ridge School and you have just met your new classmates: Russell, Lloyd, Flopears, Lester, Charlie, Glenn, Little Britches, and Pearl. Based on your first impression, which classmate do you think you would most like to have as a friend?
7. Use evidence from the story to show how Russell’s actions led to the fire at the schoolhouse. Do you think Tansy is right to accuse him of setting the fire on purpose?
8. After Russell realizes that Tansy has been chosen as the new schoolteacher, he says, “All those evil omens had led to this.” Identify one omen that Russell feels has led to Tansy becoming the new schoolteacher. Why do you think Russell believes this omen was a sign of things to come?
9. On page 11, Russell says, “The twentieth century had found us at last, even here.” What do you think he means by this? Hint: Your answer should mention at least one invention that is modern to the characters in the story.
10. As you were reading the story, who did you suspect might be the Sweet Singer? Were you correct? Look back at the poems in the story and choose a passage from one of the poems that you think points to the identity of the Sweet Singer using details from the text. Explain why you feel this passage could be a hint.
11. On page 160, Russell says, “But handing Tansy off to Eugene Hammond didn’t sit right with me.” In your opinion, what does Eugene represent to Russell? Why is Russell unsure about his feelings regarding Eugene?
12. At the beginning of the story, Russell says he dreams of going to the Dakotas to be on a threshing crew. However, in the end, he decides not to leave. Choose one character who influences Russell’s decision to stay on his family farm and explain what this character does to change Russell’s mind.
13. Compare and contrast the Hominy Ridge School to your own school. Describe at least one difference and one similarity. Do you think you would enjoy being a student in Tansy’s classroom? Use details from the story in your answer.
14. On page 143, Russell says about Lloyd, “I never had thought he looked up to me like he should.” In your opinion, should Lloyd have looked up to Russell? Why or why not? Be sure to use examples from the text to support your argument.

15. At the very end of the story, Russell describes what happens to some of the characters later in life. Did you enjoy reading about these characters as adults? Why do you think the author chose to include these updates? Choose one character who turned out differently than you thought he or she might and explain what you thought was going to happen to this person.

*Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom’s Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-11; Synthesis: 12-13; Evaluation: 14-15.*

**Activities**

1. On a blank sheet of paper, make a list of Russell’s spelling words. See how many other words you can make from each spelling word. Give yourself extra points for words that connect to the story.

2. On the day Mr. Whipple and Mr. Owen come to evaluate Tansy, the rest of the class learns that Flopears has been sketching scenes from their school year in his notebook. Choose one event or person from the story and create a sketch like the ones in Flopears’s notebook.

3. Imagine you are Russell or Tansy and several years have passed since the end of the story. Write a letter to your father describing your life in Indianapolis. How is the big city different from Sycamore Township? What do you miss about home? Be sure to mention your new wife Beulah or your new husband Glenn!

**Other Books by This Author**

*A Long Way from Chicago*, Puffin (October 2000)
*A Year Down Yonder*, Puffin Modern Classics (April 2004)
*Fair Weather*, Puffin (March 2003)