

Analysis of a lesson before dying, by ernest gaines



**ASSIGN
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When first starting to read the novel, *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines, the reader can predict that the person who is going to be learning a lesson before dying is going to be Jefferson because he is the one convicted for a robbery and murder he did not commit, and is set for the death penalty. Jefferson is referred to as a hog, by his attorney, and really takes this to heart. The reader can see how this has affected Jefferson from the first few visits from Grant, and Jefferson starts eating on all fours like an animal. Also, Jefferson's lawyer's defense is that Jefferson is too dumb and naive to commit a murder like this. Tante Lou and Miss Emma want Grant to start visiting Jefferson to try and help teach that Jefferson that he is a man, and that he must die with dignity, not as a hog. As continuing to read the novel the reader can also infer that it is going to be Jefferson who learns a lesson because of the numerous visits from Grant. These visits from Grant takes a huge role in this novel as the plot and the themes revolve around these visits. Although Grant is the one who is trying to teach Jefferson a valuable lesson, I believe it is Grant who learns lessons about his attitude and emotions.

First of all, Grant is a very self-absorbed person; everyone in his community believes in religion and a god, while Grant does not. He is very disturbed by his surroundings and the white people that make his community the way it is. At the beginning of the novel, Grant is very stubborn and hesitant about visiting Jefferson in jail. When Tante Lou and Miss Emma ask him to start visiting Jefferson, he is not at all amused by the idea, and does not want to be the one who has to go visit Jefferson in jail. Grant didn't even go to the court case because he knew what the result was going to be, and he has a

funky feeling about going to visit Jefferson. I believe that Grant does not want to visit Jefferson because he does not want to have to face his own fears, his fear of guilt and his fear of failure. The reader can see Grant's fear of guilt after his first visit to Jefferson; Grant tells Miss Emma and Tante Lou that he no longer wants to visit Jefferson because Jefferson is trying to make Grant feel guilty.

Grants fear of failure can stem from after his first couple visits to Jefferson as well. When Grants sees the mental state that Jefferson is in, and how hard society hit him, Grant can fear that there is no hope for Jefferson. After reading that Jefferson was on the floor eating food like a hog, I wouldn't think that there is any hope for this man either. As the novel continues, and Grant visits Jefferson more and more, the reader can see how Grant is changed after each visit. Grant finally touches the inner feeling of Jefferson when Grant tells him that it would make his godmother really happy if he ate her food. Jefferson eats a little, and by the time of Grant's next visit, he had seen an improvement in Jefferson. He is touched in how he is impacting Jefferson, but Grant is still struggling to get the feelings out of Jefferson; so Grant buys Jefferson a radio and a notebook, and tells Jefferson to write down whatever he feels.

In one scene of the novel, the reader can see how Grant has been changing, when he starts to cry in front of his students. Earlier in the novel, Grant is seen yelling at his students and mirrors how the white people in his community treat the black people in the community. Also in the beginning of the novel, the reader can see how Grant is an angry man, and does not like to help his students, even though he is a teacher, which is odd. The reader

can see how Grant has changed because he always keeps stuff to himself and does not want to share his emotions. Now, later in the novel when he cries to his students, the reader can see how Grant has changed because he is now expressing his emotions and not keeping his feelings to himself.

From the beginning of the novel, to the end, I believe that Grant had changed the most, and learned something before Jefferson dies. Jefferson did die a man and with dignity, but Grant changed more by helping Jefferson, and Jefferson helped Grant learn about himself. In the beginning of the novel, Grant was hesitant to help Jefferson, but then when Grant has completed what he was set to do, both Jefferson and Grant become men. Also by the end of the novel, Grants has learned to accept the responsibility of his life and his actions and his role as an educated teacher in his black community.