

A lesson before dying: the theme of education essay



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The theme of education, learning, teaching, being a teacher, who is educated and why, runs throughout the novel *A Lesson Before Dying*. The attainment of knowledge influences Grant, Jefferson, Vivian, and Reverend Ambrose differently throughout the novel. Grant, Vivian, Jefferson, and Reverend Ambrose all struggle to do what they feel is right based on what they each individually know. Knowledge is the familiarity gained by sight, experience, and truth of a particular subject. With knowledge comes education.

Grant is a school teacher that teaches the children in the quarter reading, writing, and rithmetics. In the beggining of the novel Grant is depicted to be educated because he is a black man who took it upon himself to better his life. But Grant has no faith in God. All Grant knows is how to be a teacher, not how to teach someone to be a man because he doesn't know exactly what a man is, and not how to teach someone to have faith when he himself doesn't. Jefferson is someone who is thought the be the stereotypical "nigger" and hog to the white men. Jefferson was wrongly accused of murder.

After Jefferson gets sentenced to death by lectrocution, he acts like the hog the white men said he was because Jefferson thinks being a man is for the living. Jefferson will never be able to go back to what he knows or the life he had. Despite Jefferson's situation, Jefferson became a braver man that any other black man was able to be by walking straight to his death. Reverend Ambrose is the local black preacher for the church. Reverend Ambose has little education but he knows his people.

His, and his people's main motivation is their faith in God. Reverend Ambrose thinks it is best for Jefferson to have his soul saved before he dies. Ambrose thinks that saving Jefferson's soul will make him a man. Reverend Ambrose and Grant have different views on what is best for Jefferson because of their own beliefs.

Vivian is also a school teacher like Grant. Vivian is considered to be more educated than any of the blacks that live in the quarter. Vivian is the only person in the novel that can make Grant happy and can persuade him into not leaving the quarter. Vivian helps make Grant understand what a man is.

Vivian is also the only reason Grant remained committed to making Jefferson a man before he goes. In *A Lesson Before Dying*, Grant, Jefferson, Vivian, and Reverend Ambrose are all influenced differently by what they know and are accustomed to. I think each character in this novel is educated in their own way. Grant was finally able to understand what a man really was, no matter how educated, uneducated, religious, or unreligious he was. Grant was angry what the white men thought all the black men to be.

But Grant learns that one black man cannot fix prejudice. Jefferson was sentenced to death for something he didn't do, and no longer had a reason to live anymore. Jefferson acted like the hog he thought he was until Grant made him realize that he was hurting the ones he loved. Jefferson was taught how to be a man, and in return taught Grant what a man was. Vivian also played a role in teaching Grant what a man was, keep Grant from running away from his responsibilities. Reverend Ambrose tried to do what he thought was best for Jefferson and the people in the quarter.

Each character was educated in their own way because they tried to do what they thought was best despite the situation.