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Tradebook



Title: *Blackberries in the Dark*

Author's name: Mavis Jukes

Publisher: Yearling

Copyright year: 1994

Reading level: Third Grade

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Synopsis of Story: Nine-year-old Austin visits his grandmother for the first time since his granddad's death. The awkwardness of that first day does not lead to a morose story; instead, it is one of love, shared feelings and family. Grandma and Austin recall the last time all of them were together: Grandpa and Austin had gone fishing; they picked blackberries in the dark and Grandma made a pie that they ate in the middle of the night. After holding each other and crying together, Austin trots off to pick berries followed by Grandma, outfitted in Grandpa's fishing gear. Old memories are cast into new traditions as they pick berries in the dark.

Theme: Family

Activity One: Postcards Home

Source: <http://www.albion.edu/education/mcoatt/balbery/portfolio/>

Standard: English 3.3.3 – Determine what characters are like by what they say or do and by how the author or illustrator portrays them.

English 3.4.1 – Find ideas for writing stories and descriptions in conversations with others; in books, magazines, or school textbooks; or on the Internet.

Objective: The students will write a postcard, as a reader's response, in the persona of Austin, telling about how he feels to be at the ranch.

Description of activity: Students took on the voice of the main character Austin to write postcards to friends or family at home. Writing in the voice of a character in the book helped the students to gain a deeper understanding of Austin's feelings about being at the ranch without Grandpa.

Activity Two: Bedtime Stories

Source: <http://www.albion.edu/education/mcoatt/balbery/portfolio/>

Standard: English 3.4.3 – Create single paragraphs with topic sentences and simple supporting facts and details

English 3.5.1 – Write narratives (stories).

English 3.7.12 – Make brief narrative (story) presentations.

Objective: The students will write bedtime stories of their own, similar to the ones Grandpa used to tell Austin and present them to the class.

Description of activity: In the book, Austin recalls bedtime stories that his Grandpa used to tell him when he was alive. The students should pretend like they were Austin as a grandpa telling a bedtime story to his grand kids about his summers on the ranch. After the students write their stories, they will share their stories during reading group.