

Teaching Unit

Try and Be Somebody

The Story of Dr. Henry Lake Dickason

Second Edition

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Overview

Teaching Unit adaptable for Grades 7-10

Teaching Unit = 10 lessons

7 Reading and Discussion Lessons	Lessons #1 - #4 & Lessons #6 - #8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce vocabulary words. • Read and discuss assigned chapters in book. • Explore suggested extended activities for individual or group projects.
2 Activity Lessons	Lessons #5 & #9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue, complete, and present selected activities.
1 Final Assessment	Lesson #10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary Assessment • Written Quiz or Project Presentation

Vocabulary activities for any section:

1. Read the definition of each vocabulary word.
2. Find the sentence using the vocabulary word in the book, then rewrite it so that the meaning remains the same but using another word or phrase.
3. Promote use of vocabulary words in conversation.

Suggested extended activities in Lessons 1-4 and Lessons 6-8 can be completed as an individual, small group, or entire class during those lessons for presentation during Lesson 5 and Lesson 9. Older students may be able to choose and complete their own project to share.

Lesson 1

Chapters 1-6 Childhood & Family (pages 3-19)

Introduce vocabulary. Read silently or aloud. Discuss story and possible projects.

Vocabulary Words & Page Numbers:

ached – suffered a continuous dull pain; felt intense sadness	16
agonizingly – filled with agony or distress	16
authority – power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience	13
concentrating – focus one’s attention or mental effort on a particular thing	5
consumption – aka Tuberculosis, a disease of the lungs	15
embrace – hold someone closely in one’s arms, hug	17
foxhound – a type of dog often trained to hunt	3
grindstone – a heavy stone revolving on an axle used for grinding	10
hymn – a religious song	4
inseparable – always together, unable to be separated	13
kindling – easily combustible material used for starting a fire	4
laborer – a person who does physical work	17
loping – moving with long, bounding strides	18
peculiar – strange or odd, different, curious	18
recollection – memory	4

Discussion Questions for Lesson 1:

1. Compare today’s family entertainment with that in 1892. (p. 3-4)
2. Explain why this Dickason family was not sure of their last name. (p. 6)
3. How did Raeburn manipulate young Jacob Dickason to get to stay in the mountains? (p. 6)
4. Did Lake and Hattie still have chores to do when school started? (p. 6)
5. Why was Raeburn such an expensive slave? (p.7)
6. When Raeburn said, “It makes a lot of difference when the land you work is your own...” what was he implying about the past? (p. 7)

7. Do you think that Guy Dickason made school harder on Lake than on the other students? Why or why not? (p. 8)
8. How do you think Lake's momma felt about books and reading? What is your opinion based on? (p. 10)
9. Why did Lake love homecomings? (p. 11-13)
10. What helped change the sad mood in the Dickason home in March, 1895? (p. 17-19)
11. Why were Delbert and Lake such good friends? What were some of the things they liked to do? (p. 13 and 17-19)

Suggested Activities for Lesson 1:

1. Sketch opening scene on log cabin porch.
2. Research images of the interior of a one-room school and sketch the way you think Chestnut Grove School looked when Lake attended it.
3. Write a skit using the opening chapter, school scene, cemetery scene, or visit, then act it out.
4. Although the education of slaves was illegal in many states, some slave owners provided an education for their slaves. Discuss the differing opinions that slave owners had on this issue.
5. As shown in the schoolbook pictured on pages 9 and 10, images in school textbooks did not always reflect the cultures of children that used them. Does this continue today?
6. Research the hymns that would have been sung in the 1890s, especially Negro spirituals. Are any lyrics a reminder of the enslaved lives of those who sang them? Was there hidden meaning in these lyrics? Good sources of information:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4ykd-oiMEE>
 - <https://blackthen.com/more-than-cries-for-freedom-negro-spirituals-were-coded-messages-for-escape/#>
 - [Teachers, this PBS site provides a teaching unit specifically on coded Negro spirituals: <http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/shows/list/underground-railroad/classroom/hidden-messages-spirituals/>

Lesson 2

Chapters 7-11

School, Elementary to College

(pages 21-40)

Introduce vocabulary. Read silently or aloud. Discuss story and possible projects.

Vocabulary Words & Page Numbers:

anticipation – looking forward to	27
book-learning – formal education	27
compassionate – feeling or showing sympathy and concern for others	32
depression – a long and severe recession in an economy	27
dignity – quality of being worthy of honor or respect; self-respect	31
ethic – a set of moral principles	37
facilities – a place provided for a particular purpose	35
flustered – a state of agitated confusion	25
formality – rigid observance of rules of convention or etiquette	29
mandatory - required	38
ominous – foreboding, menacing; impression that something bad is going to happen	26
recurring – occurring repeatedly	38
sacrifice – to give up something for the sake of something else	30
terraced – formed into a number of level areas resembling steps	32

Discussion Questions:

1. How had Lake's momma, Fannie, learned the family's history? (p. 21)
2. What happened to Samuel, the slave owner's 14-year-old son? (p. 21-22)
3. The relationship between slave owners Jacob and Betsy and Lake's grandfather, Raeburn, was an unusual role reversal. Explain. (p. 22)
4. When Fannie cried in the graveyard, who was she remembering? (p. 22-23)
5. Why did Lake feel that things were strange, almost ominous when Bernie was born? (p. 25-26)
6. Why were people leaving southern West Virginia around the turn of the century, 1900 or so? (p. 27)
7. Why didn't Lake go to high school near his home? (inference)

8. When Lake was offered the chance to go to high school in Bluefield, who was going to do his work on the farm? (p. 28)
9. List the advice Guy gave Lake as he drove him to Rich Creek to catch the train? (p. 31)
10. What were Lake's conflicting emotions as he rode the wagon with his papa? (p. 30-31)
11. Lake's life changed at the Bluefield Colored Institute. Explain. (p. 35-37)
12. Where was his favorite place on campus? (p. 37) Why do you think he loved it there?

Suggested Activities for Lesson 2:

1. Discuss the history of slavery in America. Indentured servants, slave ships, the auction block, children of slaves, etc. A good resource for teaching elementary and middle school students: <https://civilwar.mrdonn.org/economics-of-slavery.html>. Choose a scene to sketch or write a first-person diary entry as a slave.
2. There are respectful and disrespectful terms used to refer to groups of people. Compile a list of respectful terms and words that refers to a group's race or religion. (It is logical to assume American status for all American citizens.) Individuals may have personal preferences. Respect for the heritage of others and pride in one's own heritage are worthy concepts to promote.
3. Lake left home to stay for several months before he had even seen Bluefield Colored Institute. Tell how it feels to go to a new place or a new school for the first time.
4. Dates on tombstones as well as the decoration and wording can tell a bit of the person's story. For instance, Hattie's marker (p. 16) includes the lines, "Our beloved DAU" and "Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep..." Nancy Jane Pack Dickason's marker (p. 23) reads "Sacred to the memory of my beloved wife." There is much history to be found in family cemeteries. Plan a visit or show photos from internet sites related to markers from the 1800s. Present photos or sketches of those that touch you with clues about their life.

Lesson 3

Chapters 12-15

College and Grace

(pages 41-60)

Introduce vocabulary. Read silently or aloud. Discuss story and possible projects.

Vocabulary Words & Page Numbers:

aloof – not friendly or forthcoming; cool and distant	53
diligence – careful and persistent work or effort	44
equation – mathematical statement asserting equality of two expressions	51
etiquette – customary code of polite behavior in society	50
flabbergasted – greatly surprised or astonished	55
paralyzed – partly or wholly incapable of movement	53
partially – only in part	53
philosophical – relating to the study of fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence	54
prescribed – recommended as beneficial; rule that should be carried out	53
raspy – hoarse or harsh-sounding	49
segregated – separated or divided along racial lines	41
unorthodox – contrary to what is usual, traditional, or accepted	52
unravel – undo, become undone	53
variable – quantity that may change within the context of mathematical problem	52
wrangling – engagement in a long, complicated dispute or argument	54

Discussion Questions:

1. How can you tell that Raeburn's family cared about him? (p. 42-44)
2. What does "Vincit diligentia" mean? Why did Lake admire it? Do you think his papa and grandpa liked the motto, too? (p. 44-45)
3. How did Fannie, Lake's mother, feel about the right to vote? (p. 46)
4. What was a 'Normal School' and why did Bluefield Colored Institute open one? (p. 46)
5. What had changed in Bluefield when Lake returned to school? (p. 49) What had changed in Lake? (p. 49-50)
6. Why did the scene with Miss Robinson upset Lake so much? (p. 53)
7. Describe the courtship of Lake and Miss Robinson. (p. 53-56)
8. Why did Lake choose the Ohio State University? (p. 55)

9. Where did Lake spend his first Christmas away from Monroe County? Who was with him? (p. 57-58)
10. What other interests did Lake pursue at OSU besides his studies? (p. 58-59)
11. What degree did Lake earn in 1913? (p. 59)
12. To what national office was Lake elected? (p. 60)
13. Sidney joined the army but was not allowed into combat. Why not? (p. 60)

Suggested Activities for Lesson 3:

1. Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois were real men with different philosophies of education for Blacks. Have teams research their viewpoints and stage a debate between the two. Members of the teams can take on the roles of Lake and his family members on the appropriate teams.
2. Tuskegee Institute and Oberlin College are both real schools. Report on the history of each.
3. The Men of Niagara meetings influenced the world in which Lake lived. Report on the purpose of these gatherings and what it changed that affected Lake.
4. Discuss the difference between day dreams and true dreams (aspirations). Discuss the dreams that Lake and Bernie express and the uncontrollable events that may influence the likelihood of dreams coming true. Ask students to list their true dreams for the future.
5. Research any black regiment in WWI or WWII like the 802nd Pioneer Infantry regiment and describe their duties.

Lesson 4

Chapters 16-22 Marriage and Tragedy (pages 61-78)

Introduce vocabulary. Read silently or aloud. Discuss story and possible projects.

Vocabulary Words & Page #:

administrative – related to the running of a business, organization, school, etc.	63
awestruck – filled with or revealing awe	62
backslider – someone who has relapsed into bad ways or error	69
dilemma – a difficult situation or problem	71
doted – extremely fond of, devoted to, treasured	61
empathy – ability to understand and share the feelings of another	71
gangrene – localized death and decomposition of body tissue	65
knoll – small hill or mound	68
pastels – a soft and delicate shade of color	62
persistent – continuing to exist or endure over a prolonged period	72
renaissance – revival of or renewed interest in something, specifically black consciousness	75
revered – deeply respected or admired	62
rhubarb – thick reddish or green leaf stalks of a plant, eaten as a fruit after cooking	67
sideboard – flat-topped piece of furniture with cupboards and drawers, placed along a wall	72
tuberculosis – infectious bacterial disease characterized by growth of nodules in lung tissue	73

Discussion Questions:

1. At Thanksgiving, 1914, Lake and Grace were very happy. What reasons did they have for joy? (p. 61)
2. Sadness soon replaced their bliss. What happened? (p. 61)
3. What name did Grace give for the beautiful place they visited on Peters Mountain? (p. 62)
4. Bluefield Colored Institute became family for both Grace and Lake in a variety of ways. Name two ways each were involved in the school. (p. 63-64)
5. What did Bernie do after WWI? (p. 64)
6. What happened in 1919 that caused Lake's world to collapse? (p. 65-66)

7. How did Guy and Fannie try to comfort Lake when he came to visit the next spring? (p. 67-68)
8. When his parents happily showed him the place they planned to build a new house, how did Lake react? Why? (p. 68-69)
9. As vice-principal of the school, Lake thought it was important to connect with rural students. Why did he feel this way? How did he work to reach out to former students? (p. 71-72)
10. Describe the family reunion at Cismont in 1923. (p. 72)
11. Bernie's visit home was marred by health concerns. What was the problem and how did Lake attempt to help him? (p. 73-74)
12. How did the Bluefield Colored Institute celebrate pride in African-American culture during the Harlem Renaissance? (p. 75-6)
13. What happened to Sidney Raeburn? (77)
14. Lake vowed to change a family tradition. What did he vow to do? (p. 78) Was he successful?

Suggested Activities for Lesson 4:

1. Make a family tree of Lake's family, including grandparents, parents, and siblings.
2. Create a timeline of events from Lake's wedding in 1914 to 1926. Include deaths in his family.
3. The pain Lake felt as his parents showed him their new home site brought him to his knees. Pretend you are Lake and write down your feelings. Explain what emotion replaced the pain and why you never told your parents about your visit to the exact spot with Grace.
4. Research the cruise companies on the Great Lakes during the early 1900s (like DC Navigation Company, the one Bernie worked for). What did they offer tourists? What kinds of jobs did they provide?
5. Pretend you are Fannie, Lake's mother. Write a letter to your grown-up son, Henry Lake. Explain why you are proud of him.

Lesson 5

Complete one or more of the suggested activities from Lessons 1-4 as a group or as individuals and share it with the class.

Lesson 6

Chapters 23-28 Flossie and Change (pages 79-98)

Introduce vocabulary. Read silently or aloud. Discuss story and possible projects.

Vocabulary Words & Page Numbers:

adamant – refusing to be persuaded or to change one’s mind	91
advocate – a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause	93
bustled – move in an energetic or noisy manner	81
condolences – an expression of sympathy, especially for a death	87
coupe – a car with a fixed roof, two doors and a sloping rear	83
delirium – disturbed state of mind characterized by restlessness, illusions and incoherence	84
eloped – steal away secretly to get married	88
exemplary – serving as a desirable model; representing the best of its kind	91
interscholastic – existing or carried on between schools	91
Laudanum – an alcoholic solution containing morphine, formerly used as a narcotic pain killer	84
lucid – showing ability to think clearly, especially between periods of confusion	84
obituary – a notice of death including brief biography of the deceased	85
proactive – taking steps to cause something to happen rather than reacting to it afterward	89
proprieties – details or rules of behavior conventionally considered to be correct	88
segregation – enforced separation of different racial groups	89
self-possessed – calm, confident, and in control of one’s feelings; composed	80

Discussion Questions:

1. What was the first impression Flossie made on Lake and Mr. Sims? (p. 80-81)
2. Who “really runs this place” according to Mr. Sims? She called Stella Sims to come quickly? Why? (p. 81)
3. How was Guy Dickason, Lake’s father, injured? (p. 83)
4. Describe the after effects of the injury. (p. 84-85)
5. How did the community feel about Guy? (p. 85)
6. Flossie Mack comforted Lake after his father’s death. Describe the scene. (p. 87)
7. How did Delbert feel about his cousin’s new wife? (p. 89)

8. There were changes at BCI immediately following WWI. List six major ones. (p. 91-93)
9. What continued a huge obstacle for the school? (p. 93)
10. What caused the death of Lake's mother, Fannie? (p. 95-96)
11. What was notable about Fannie's life? (p. 96-97)

Suggested Activities for Lesson 6:

1. Use the scene in which Flossie makes her first appearance in Lake's life as the basis for a skit. Write the script and act it out.
2. When Guy was delirious on his deathbed, he compared Fannie to "a light shining in our cabin" and her working "like a field hand." Find other comparisons in the book, then add your own comparisons to describe the Dickason family members.
3. Research the history of antibiotics, then speculate on the injuries of Guy and Fannie if they had been hurt fifty years later, in the 1970s.
4. Flossie often complained loudly about public segregation practices in the 1930s-40s. Research this public separation of races and detail examples that were in place. How do you think Flossie would react to racism today?
5. Lots of changes took place at BCI from 1918-1939. Write a short summary of the historical events that caused changes in educational practices during the post-WWI years.
6. Sketch Cismont. (Use photograph on page 97 as a model.)

Lesson 7

Chapters 29-35

Bluefield State Teachers College

(pages 99-116)

Introduce vocabulary. Read silently or aloud. Discuss story and possible projects.

Vocabulary Words & Page Numbers:

mentor – an experienced and trusted adviser	99
Great Depression – worldwide economic recession taking place mostly during the 1930s	99
steward – a person responsible for careful management	100
initiated – to cause something to begin	100
calamity – an event causing great damage or distress; a disaster	101
echelon – a level or rank in society	102
recession – a period of economic decline during which trade and industrial activity are reduced	103
colleague – a person with whom one works in a profession or business	107
curriculum – subjects comprising a course of study in a school or college	113
aptly – in a manner that is appropriate or suitable in the circumstances	114

Discussion Questions:

1. Why was Dr. Simms demoted from President to Business Manager of the school? (p. 99)
2. What preparation did Dickason have to be considered qualified to be President of Bluefield Teachers College? (p. 100)
3. How did Flossie make incoming freshmen feel welcome at the school? (p. 100)
4. What was the first calamity of Dickason's administration? (p. 101)
5. After a disastrous fire, what was the first public act of the school's President? (p. 103)
6. How did Dickason get money to replace books, equipment, and buildings? (p.103-105)
7. What did Lake and Flossie Dickason yearn for? How did their dream come true? (p. 108)
8. Why do you think Mr. Ingersoll refused to cut Bobby's hair? What makes you think so? (p. 111-112)
9. The name of Bluefield State Teachers College changed in 1943. What was the new name? (p. 113)
10. World War II impacted the school's curriculum. What trainings were added and why? (p. 114)
11. How did Dickason's life intersect with mathematician John Nash? (p. 116)

12. What celebrities, all acquaintances of Dickason, visited Bluefield State College? (p. 116)

Suggested Activities for Lesson 7:

1. Draw the seal of Bluefield State College, new in 1946. (Sketch is on page 113)
2. Choose one of these visitors to BSC, prominent in the 1940s, and create a 10 slide Power Point presentation of their life: Marian Anderson, Langston Hughes, Thurgood Marshall, or Joe Louis.
3. Research hardships caused to families during the Great Depression and list them.
4. Create a formal invitation to Flossie Dickason's freshman orientation event.
5. Imagine that you have unlimited funds. What programs of study and new buildings would you add to your school? Present your ideas, explain why, and show a diagram of your plan for your new campus.

Lesson 8

Chapters 36-39

William Robertson and Morristown, Tennessee

(pages 117-129)

Introduce vocabulary. Read silently or aloud. Discuss story and possible projects.

Vocabulary Words & Page Numbers:

drastic – likely to have a far-reaching effect; radical and extreme	124
perseverance – persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay	128
seminary – a college that prepares students to be priests, ministers or rabbis	124
uppity – self-important, arrogant; haughty	121

Discussion Questions:

1. How did Dr. Dickason change the life of William Robertson? (p. 117-119)
2. What contributions did Dr. Robertson make to the world? (p. 118-119)
3. Give an example of a time when the ideals of Dr. Dickason were not revered by family members. (p. 121)
4. What does the author mean when she says, “Flossie may have been ahead of the times?” (p. 121)
5. Why did Dr. Dickason come out of retirement? (p. 124)
6. What happened to the Dickason’s son, Bobby? (p. 124-125)
7. List the five accomplishments you feel are the most important of Dr. Dickason’s life. Be prepared to defend your choices. (p.127-129)
8. Was Henry Lake Dickason successful in “becoming somebody?” Why or why not?

Suggested Activities for Lesson 8:

1. There are many important unwritten rules, which Dr. Dickason was aware of and honored. Think about unwritten rules in your home and school and list them.
2. Use the appendixes to find facts of interest that were not in the book. Share with the class.
3. Compare Morristown College with Bluefield State College as to history, size and offerings. What possible reasons would Dr. Dickason have to come out of retirement to lead the school?

Lesson 9

Complete one or more of the suggested activities from Lessons 6-8 as a group or as individuals and share it with the class.

Lesson 10

Assessment

Book Comprehension Assessment Options:

- Select ten discussion questions for students to answer in essay format. (Depending on grade level, allow use of book.)
- Have students construct a timeline from 1892-1957 containing both world events and events in Henry Lake Dickason's life. (with use of book)
- Designate another specific short activity that can be completed in one sitting. (with use of book)
- An essay answering the question, "Was Henry Lake Dickason successful in 'becoming somebody?' Why or why not?"