

Nightjohn

Teacher's Booklet

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Introduction

Synopsis

Nightjohn tells the moving story of black slaves on a cotton and corn plantation in the United States of America, and the arrival of a naked young man called Nightjohn who has apparently nothing to offer anyone. However, Nightjohn understands the power of reading and writing and has a mission to subvert the laws of the white slave owners by secretly educating the slaves. The story is narrated by 12-year-old Sarny who, despite the vicious punishments that are promised by the white 'masters', becomes a disciple of the strangely mystical Nightjohn. The novel's themes of freedom, race, sacrifice and heroism can be contrasted with those of ownership, power and corruption. The explicit cruelty and violence described are tempered with compassion.

The first person narrative is in dialect which, although unfamiliar to begin with, is compelling not only in its honesty but also in its simplicity of emotion. Sarny has known no other life, and her descriptions of the hardships and cruelty suffered by the slaves are graphic, yet without sentiment. Nightjohn's teaching is almost Christ-like, bringing hope to Sarny and to his other disciples.

Teaching *Nightjohn* at Key Stage 3

Nightjohn is a short but extraordinarily powerful book that provides an excellent choice of novel for all abilities in Year 9. The novel provides many opportunities for close reading and this resource mainly focuses its teaching on Assessment Focus 5 – the writer's use of language. It is anticipated that Year 9 students may have some difficulty identifying with Sarny. The teaching therefore includes several empathetic activities, both oral and written. Historical and contemporary background information to support the reader is also included.

Structure of this resource

This resource provides suggestions for activities which can be easily slotted into a scheme of work around the novel. It consists of two parts: the **overview of teaching and learning** and the **resources**.

The **overview of teaching and learning** aims to secure progression in learning, rather than just progression through the pages. It has been divided into seven natural sections. The overview for each section indicates:

- the chapters to be read
- the features of the text to be explored
- the learning aims for the section (including Assessment focuses)
- brief descriptions of the approaches to teaching.

The **resources** comprise:

- Pupil worksheets (which can be photocopied)
- Teacher support sheets/OHTs etc
- Assessment criteria, grids etc.

Overview of teaching and learning

Section	Features to explore during reading	Learning targets	Activities
<p>Chapters 1-2 <i>Before Nightjohn's Arrival</i></p> <p>Resources Resource Sheet 1 Resource Sheet 2 Resource Sheet 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lives of the slaves. Prediction: who is Nightjohn? What impression does the writer give us of him? Why? How are our expectations raised? References to freedom, power and money. Discussion of what this tells us about the lives of the slaves and their owners. Study of the dialect and guessing its meaning. 	<p>Learning focuses</p> <p>To be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explore the cultural and historical context of the novel understand how the writer creates a sense of anticipation by exploring the clues given and the mood created in the writing expand note-taking skills. <p>Assessment focuses and Framework objectives</p> <p>Reading AF2: 9R1, 9R3 Reading AF3: 9R18 Listening skills: 9S&L7</p>	<p>Activity 1: Research skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils read Resource Sheet 1 in order to gain insight into how slaves were treated in the eighteenth century. <p>Activity 2: Predicting character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With partners or in groups of three, pupils prepare a presentation illustrating how the writer creates an impression of Nightjohn before his arrival. Using Resource Sheet 2, pupils retrieve information from the text and group it under the headings provided. <p>Extension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the boxes provided on Resource Sheet 3, pupils make notes on the themes of freedom, power and money in the novel, in relation to both slaves and slave owners.

Section	Features to explore during reading	Learning targets	Activities
<p>Chapter 3 <i>Nightjohn Arrives</i></p> <p>Resources Resource Sheet 4 Resource Sheet 5 (OHT) Resource Sheet 6 Resource Sheet 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The question of what life would be like if we could not read or write. Language rhythms which describe Nightjohn's arrival; reversal of black/white symbolism; emphasis on 'beautiful black' (pages 8–9). Theme of learning and 'knowledge as power'. Discussion of why we keep secrets. Actual appearance of Nightjohn compared with pupils' predictions. Why Nightjohn cost so much when he appears so troublesome. Significance of trading tobacco for letters. 	<p>Learning focuses To be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse a writer's choice of language to influence the reader identify and explore themes. <p>Assessment focuses and Framework objectives Reading AF5: 9R1, 9R12, 9S&L7</p>	<p>Activity 1: Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Resource Sheet 4 with the class and use it to elicit responses on the issue of illiteracy. How would the pupils themselves cope on a daily basis without being able to read or write? <p>Extension: Further discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What commodity is most precious to the pupils? What would they be prepared to trade for it? How much do they value education? <p>Activity 2: Use of language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using Resource Sheet 5 (an extract describing Nightjohn's arrival) and Resource Sheet 6 with the class, study the grammatical and literary features the writer employs. Look especially at the rhythms of the language, the suggestion of violence, the effect on the reader and the reversal of black and white. <p>Activity 3: Further use of language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess pupils' understanding of Point / Evidence / Explanation (PEE) using Resource Sheet 7. This will test Assessment Focus 5.

Section	Features to explore during reading	Learning targets	Activities
<p>Chapter 4 (up to page 31) <i>Alice's Despair</i></p> <p>Resources Resource Sheet 8 (OHT)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dehumanisation of the slaves through extreme use of violence. Abuse of power and authority. Explicit descriptions of violence. Language (sparse, unemotional, concise, clear) that portrays violence and degradation of the slaves. The writer's purpose. Where does he stand in relation to this violence (e.g. white, male)? Is he slightly voyeuristic? Voice: Alice has no voice except through the narrator. 	<p>Learning focuses To be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work in a role, changing perspectives and exploring issues analyse language with special reference to authorial perspective and different cultures. <p>Assessment focuses and Framework objectives Reading AF5: 9R6 Drama skills: 9Dr12</p>	<p>Activity 1: Dramatic viewpoints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose three scenes from the novel which depict the cruelty to the slaves. Using a dramatic film 'freeze frame', add captions to the scenes and discuss with the pupils where the writer, director or camera person would stand. <p>Activity 2: Use of language (writer's viewpoint)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The shared reading activity on Resource Sheet 8 looks at the writer's use of language with specific reference to the violence and cruelty described in the extract. Encourage pupils to examine the writer's standpoint and purpose.

Section	Features to explore during reading	Learning targets	Activities
<p>Chapter 4 (page 31 to end) <i>Teaching is Dangerous</i></p> <p>Resources Resource Sheet 9 Resource Sheet 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative voice – when is Sarny writing this? As a 12-year-old or older? Why the owners fear slaves gaining knowledge. Discussion of why we keep secrets. Nightjohn as a godlike hero, with symbolic elements to his character. Nightjohn’s power through creating hope for the future. Link to other influential leaders like Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Gandhi. 	<p>Learning focuses To be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explore different methods of opening, structuring and ending narratives, and experiment with narrative perspective explore themes and discuss implications raised by reading synthesise information from a range of sources and shape it to meet the reader’s needs. <p>Assessment focuses and Framework objectives 9Wr5, 9R2 9S&L7</p>	<p>Activity 1: Narrative perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using Resource Sheet 9, pupils complete a writing task. They write Mammy’s testimony, imagining her giving evidence about life as a slave, describing the conditions, hardships and cruelty. They should aim to use understatement and not graphic detail, yet should still convey the horror. They can choose one of the three narrative techniques explained on the sheet. <p>Activity 2: The nature of heroism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss with pupils their views on the nature of heroism. What are the characteristics of a true hero? <p>Activity 3: Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils fill in the table on Resource Sheet 10 with information found on the Internet about the three statesmen Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Gandhi. They are asked to compare what they have found with their impression of Nightjohn.

Section	Features to explore during reading	Learning targets	Activities
<p>Chapter 5 <i>Words End in Punishment</i></p> <p>Resources Resource Sheet 11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the writer contrasts graphic violence with resignation and bravery. • Feelings and thoughts about the nature of extreme violence: relate to violence in films. • Mammy and Nightjohn's stoicism. 	<p>Learning focuses To be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use standard English to explain, explore or justify an idea • discuss implications raised. <p>Assessment focuses and Framework objectives 9S&L2, 9S&L7</p>	<p>Activity 1: Small group discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Sheet 11 looks carefully at Chapter 5 and requires pupils to discuss their thoughts, feelings and ideas about the graphic violence. • Pupils work in groups of three: two take it in turns to speak, whilst the third notes down their views. How does it relate to violence they have seen in films, for example? • Each group should feed back their views to the rest of the class.

Section	Features to explore during reading	Learning targets	Activities
<p>Chapters 6-7 and Words <i>Got Some Things To Do – Words</i></p> <p>Resources Resource Sheet 12 Resource Sheet 13 Resource Sheet 14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nightjohn’s character: comparison with similar characters, e.g. Aslan, Gandalf. What does his name mean? Why does Nightjohn escape and promise to return? (Important part of narrative – he has disappeared before to teach others.) Nightjohn returning (like Christ from the wilderness). His message is not revolutionary, but a slower process – about language and learning. Irony of reading a catalogue which contains items the slaves could never buy. ‘Words’ – like a poem. 	<p>Learning focuses To be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explore character and retrieve information understand how characters are created through their actions and the language they use. <p>Assessment focuses and Framework objectives Reading AF2: 9R1 Reading AF5: 9R6</p>	<p>Activity 1: Exploration of character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Resource Sheet 12 pupils write as much information as they can find about Nightjohn. They should do this by looking back over the novel and referring to the text for quotations and specific references to Nightjohn. <p>Extension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity 1 could be extended to making comparisons with similar characters such as Aslan and Gandalf. <p>Activity 2: Creating a timeline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource Sheet 13 provides the start of a timeline of events in the novel. Work with pupils to continue the timeline showing the main events in the novel. <p>Activity 3: Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand out Resource Sheet 14. Pupils have 45 minutes to complete the assessment. They are required to explore the character of Sarny, using the techniques they learned looking at Nightjohn’s character on Resource Sheet 12. The sheet helps them to plan their work. <p>Extension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils look at the final chapter entitled ‘Words’. Ask them to focus on the repetition and biblical rhythms (symbolising the hope for change) in comparison with the violence of previous chapters.

Section	Features to explore during reading	Learning targets	Activities
<p>Words and Afterword <i>The Way to Know</i></p> <p>Resources Resource Sheet 15 Recordings of Negro Spirituals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The historical background to the text. • Returning to the foreword makes the reader realise why it is there. • Testimonials by slaves (Harriet Tubman) gives the novel authenticity. • Recordings of Negro Spirituals (Ledbelly, Mahalia Jackson). • The myth of America, e.g. the constitution, segregation, Civil Rights Movement, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King 	<p>Learning focuses To be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider different narrative perspectives and techniques • look at varying ways of collecting relevant information • analyse how different cultural contexts have influenced language and style. <p>Assessment focuses and Framework objectives 9Wr5, 9R1, 9R16</p>	<p>Activity 1: Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Internet, ask pupils to carry out further research into the historical context of slavery by looking at the Civil Rights Movement and testimonials by slaves. <p>Activity 2: Negro Spirituals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If possible, access some recordings of Negro Spirituals to play to pupils. Or read Resource Sheet 15 with them to give them an idea of where blues and gospel music originated. <p>Extension: The next chapter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If pupils have completed the activities, ask them to write the next chapter in the novel. Encourage them to consider where they would take the story next.

Pupil Resource Sheet 1

Who was Thomas Jefferson?

- Lived from 1743–1826.
- Worked as a public official, historian, philosopher and plantation owner and founded the University of Virginia.
- Third president of the United States.
- Author of the Declaration of Independence (first drafted in 1776) which proclaims that all men are equal in rights, regardless of birth, wealth, or status, and that the government is the servant, not the master, of the people.
- Inherited a considerable landed estate, including slaves, from his father.
- Began building Monticello, his home, when he was 26.
- Married Martha Wayles Skelton and had six children.
- Owned about 200 slaves, almost half of them under the age of 16.
- Controversy during his lifetime over whether he fathered children by a slave named Sally Hemmings. This has since been proved to be true.
- Freed two slaves in his lifetime, freed five more in his will and chose not to pursue two others who ran away. All were members of the Hemmings family. The seven he eventually freed were skilled tradesmen.
- Although he wrote the words 'All men are created equal', his words and deeds are contradictory on the issue of slavery – he found no solution.

(From www.monticello.org/jefferson)

A background to North American slavery

- England played a major role in sending slaves to North America.
- A 'triangle of trade' in the eighteenth century brought black slaves from West Africa to the West Indies. This 'triangle' involved three separate journeys across the Atlantic. Ship owners made the most money from Atlantic crossings.
 - *First journey*: started from Liverpool or Bristol, taking goods like firearms, alcohol (especially rum), cotton goods and metal trinkets to West Africa. These were exchanged by traders for slaves captured from the African interior.
 - *Second journey*: slaves were packed into vessels in appalling conditions for an Atlantic crossing – crammed below decks, shackled, badly fed and terrified. An estimated 12 million made the journey, but one in six perished before reaching the West Indies. Slaves were sold in exchange for molasses (extracted from sugar cane), tobacco and cotton.
 - *Third journey*: slaves shipped from the West Indies back to England.
- Triangle of trade starts again.
- The history of life on the North American slave plantations is well documented. See www.diduknow.info/slavery/ for further slave stories and records of slave life.
- Slavery was finally abolished in the United States in 1863.

Pupil Resource Sheet 2

Task

Nightjohn does not appear in the story until Chapter 3. However, the writer anticipates his arrival in various ways.

With a partner or in a group of three, prepare a presentation to the class under the headings below, showing your understanding of the build-up to Nightjohn's arrival. For this activity it is important that you pick up the clues about Nightjohn and explore the mood or tone associated with any references to him.

The actual references made to Nightjohn in Chapters 1 and 2

The language used when referring to Nightjohn

The overall impression given of Nightjohn before his arrival

What Nightjohn seems to mean to Sarny, the narrator

Pupil Resource Sheet 3

Task

In the boxes below, write notes to show what you have discovered about the themes of freedom, power and money in Chapters 1 and 2. The first one has been done for you in each case.

FREEDOM

1. Slaves have no freedom: women used as 'breeders' – can't bring up their own babies.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

POWER

1. Clel Waller wants to be called 'master'.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

MONEY

1. Waller's wife and sister complain – he spends money on slaves ('hands') – none left for dresses.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

In the box below, sum up in one sentence the differences between the slaves and their owners with regard to freedom, power and money.

Pupil Resource Sheet 4

Literacy: international statistics

- 130 million of the world's children aged 6–11 are not in school. Of these, 90 million are girls. One in four of the girls who start primary school drop out within four years.
- More than half of these 130 million children are in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Nigeria.
- A further 150 million children drop out without basic literacy or numeracy skills.
- World Bank research shows that investment in girls is the single most valuable development intervention any country can make.
- The World Education Forum's targets are (a) universal primary education by 2015, and (b) the elimination of gender inequality by 2005. (*Do you think these targets were/can be achieved?*)
- One in four adults in the developing world is illiterate.
- More than half of women in sub-Saharan Africa are illiterate. Over 80% of women are illiterate in Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Nepal, Somalia and Afghanistan.
- The child of a Zambian mother with primary school education has a 25% higher chance of survival than the child of a mother with no education.
- In the Philippines, if mothers are educated to primary level, child mortality is reduced by half.
- The illiteracy rate in Sierra Leone and Liberia is 80%. They rank with Angola at the very bottom of the UN's human development index.

(The Guardian, *March and April 2000*)

Teacher Resource Sheet 5 (OHT)

His back was all over scars from old whippings. The skin across his shoulders and down was raised in ripples, thick as my hand, up and down his back and onto his rear end and down his legs some.

I wondered why he was bought with all the marks. When they be marked that way people don't buy them because it means they hard to work, hard to get to work.

But he did. Waller he brought Nightjohn home and ran him naked till he sweated and the biting flies took at him and I was there and saw him come in.

I'm brown. Same as dark sassafras* tea. But I had seen black people, true black. And Nightjohn was that way. Beautiful. So black he was like the marble stone by the front of the white house; so black it seemed I could see inside, down into him. See almost through him somehow.

**sassafras – a small North American tree with aromatic leaves and bark from which oil is extracted*

Pupil Resource Sheet 6

Task

You will be studying the concept of Point / Evidence / Explanation (PEE) on this sheet. Look at the example given here and then, with a partner, practise using the phrases below to explain points about the novel that you want to make.

- **Point:** The writer turns black into a beautiful thing.
- **Evidence:** (Nightjohn was) 'So black he was like the marble stone by the front of the white house; so black it seemed I could see inside, down into him.'
- **Explanation:** This **makes it sound** like being black is truly a wonderful thing, and not evil, dark or inferior in any way. It **gives the impression** that the white house, where Waller lives, is the evil place, and black has a much deeper meaning as a symbol of beauty and goodness.

makes it sound like

sounds as if

gives the impression

makes the reader think

conveys a sense of

suggests

it's as if

creates a feeling of

makes the reader feel

reminds the reader of

Pupil Resource Sheet 7

Task

- 1 Read the section from 'Two times a day at the wooden trough – that's how we eat' (page 10) to 'They usually go to sleep as soon as they hit the corn-shuck pallets on the floor' (page 11).
- 2 How does the writer describe the way the slaves are treated? What is the effect on the reader?
- 3 Complete your answer in the following PEE grid. Remember the letters PEE are short for **P**oint, **E**vidence, **E**xplanation. (Use the phrases from the list on **Resource Sheet 6.**) The first one has been done for you.

How the writer describes the way the slaves are treated		
POINT	EVIDENCE	EXPLANATION (Effect on the reader)
1. The slaves are treated like animals.	'the wooden trough – that's how we eat' ... 'the little ones ... have to lick the bottom of the trough'	The writer helps us to picture the despicable conditions of the slaves. Like animals, they share a trough for their food and have no cutlery with which to eat. They are dehumanised in the simple act of feeding and have to accept it as they live in fear of punishment.
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Pupil Resource Sheet 8

Task

Read the extract below from pages 17 to 18 in which Alice is punished for wandering up to the white house. How is the violence and cruelty described in this passage? What is the effect on the reader? Use the underlined phrases to comment on the writer's use of language.

The spring house was where we got drinking water. It was made of stone and with heavy walls. They had rings of iron to be made in the walls many years past, big rings of iron with chains and shackles and they put Alice there and tore her clothes off.

Then the master he whipped her his ownself with a rawhide whip cut from an old gin belt used on the cotton gin*. Sometimes he doesn't whip and makes a field hand do it and stands with his pistol in his belt and smiles.

But sometimes he likes to take the whip and this time he whipped her until her back was all ripped and bleeding. We had to watch. Every time there was somebody to be on the wall of the spring house and be whipped or other punishments we all had to watch.

When it was done and she had screamed until she sounded like pigs being cut he made mammy to go to the salt house and get salt and rub it in the cuts to make more pain.

I never heard a sound like that. I'd seen men whipped but never that kind of sound, cutting like that, high and higher until it whistled in my ears.

Then he left her to hang there until the next day. The flies they came and mammy went out and covered her back with a cloth and kept some of them off so they wouldn't make maggots in the cuts.

Next morning they took her down and they was some maggot eggs but not so bad. I helped mammy clean Alice. We took her in the quarters and mammy she rubbed grease on Alice's back and I sat and held her hands because she kept trying to reach around and push mammy's hand away.

All the time she don't say anything.

*** *machine for removing cotton from its seeds***

Pupil Resource Sheet 9

Task

Write Mammy's testimony. You could tell her story in a number of ways. Choose one from the following three suggestions:

First person narrative

Here you write in Mammy's voice, as if you are Mammy. She is more cautious than Sarny and likely to be more controlled in her speech, especially if talking to a white man. You can include her thoughts and feelings, as well as descriptions of her life. You could begin like this:

When we lived on that plantation the work was real hard. Went out before sunrise into the cotton fields and came back late. Sometimes it be dark...

Organise your paragraphs so that you deal separately with work, food, breeding, punishments, reading, money, power, freedom and anything else you wish to include. *Remember:* take care with the punctuation of short or incomplete sentences.

Third person narrative

Here you write as if you are there describing everything that is going on. This gives you the opportunity to vary your style so that Mammy's speech, written in the first person, can be contrasted with your narrative voice. You could begin like this:

Mammy nervously wiped the perspiration from her forehead. Although she shifted uneasily in front of the white man, her voice came out strong and clear. 'When we lived on that plantation the work was real hard,' she began.

Remember: describe Mammy's looks, gestures and feelings in between her dialogue.

Play script

Here you include the interviewer's questions. It may appear the easiest option, but you need to get into the characters of two people. The interviewer will be a legal, educated man. He will listen and interrupt or build on what Mammy says, not simply repeat a list of questions. You could begin like this:

Interviewer: Mammy... I believe that is the name you answer to?
Mammy: Yes sir, that be my name.
Interviewer: Mammy, can you tell the people here present what it was like when you worked on Clel Waller's plantation?
Mammy: The work was real hard sir...

Remember: no speech marks are required, but punctuation must be accurate.

Pupil Resource Sheet 10

Task

- 1 With a partner, use this sheet to record information about Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi.

	Martin Luther King	Nelson Mandela	Mahatma Ghandi
How did these men become famous?			
What did they want to change?			
How controversial or dangerous was their message?			
How did they manage to make people listen to their message?			
Did they suffer for their beliefs? If so, how?			
What effect did they have on the world?			

- 2 Using this information, write a paragraph explaining what Nightjohn has in common with these three statesmen.
- 3 Write a second paragraph explaining how he is different.

Pupil Resource Sheet 11

Task

In Chapter 5, the slaves witness the most horrific violence towards Mammy and Nightjohn, as a punishment for Sarny writing the word 'Bag' in the sand.

In groups of three, elect one person to record your views. The other two should be called A and B. For each discussion prompt below, A and B should take turns to speak first. Each should try to build on the ideas of the other. Before moving on to the next prompt, the person taking notes should summarise the main points made and record them below.

Discussion prompts

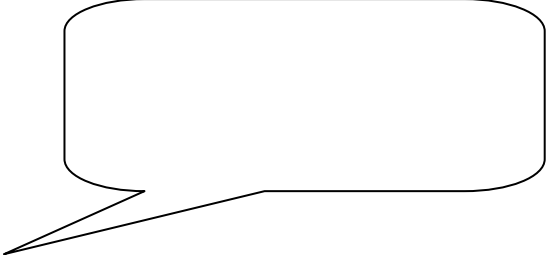
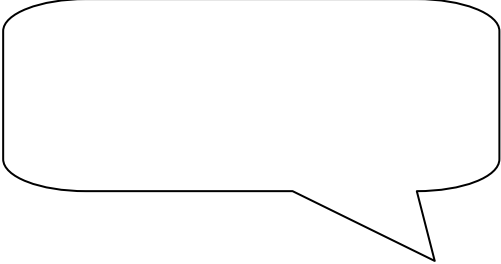
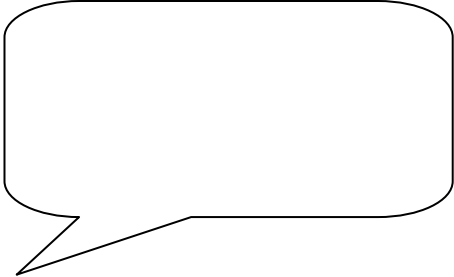
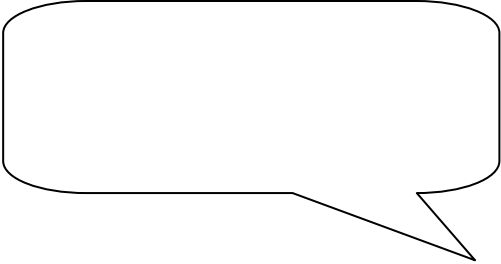
- How did this chapter make you feel? Why?
- Why do you think the writer makes the reader feel like this?
- Why is a slave punished so harshly for trying to read and write?
- What do you think of Mammy and Nightjohn's behaviour when they are being punished?
- If you could speak to Clel Waller, what advice would you give him in order to protect his slaves?
- What are your thoughts about Nightjohn and his efforts to teach Sarny to read?
- Why do you think Nightjohn chose Sarny?
- Do you think the history of slavery is an important topic to know about? Give your reasons.

Pupil Resource Sheet 12

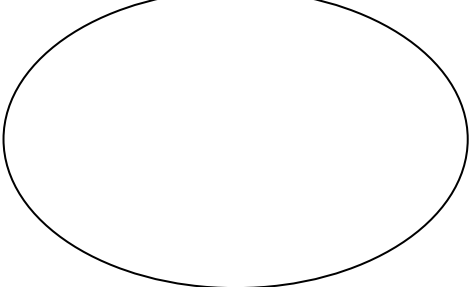
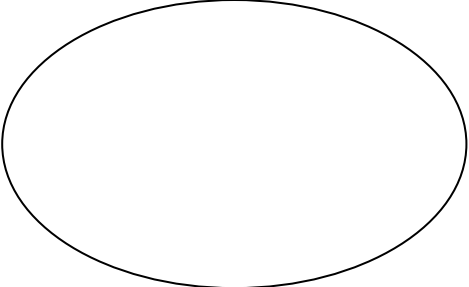
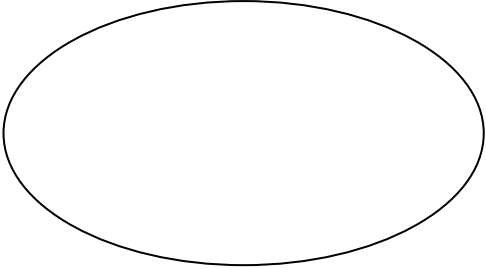
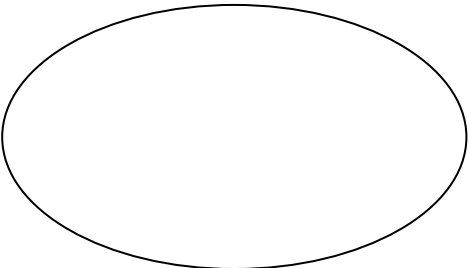
Task

- 1 We don't learn much about Nightjohn. He is presented as a mysterious character. Look at Chapters 6 and 7 and go back in the book to find out what he says and does that tell the reader more about him.

What Nightjohn says:



What Nightjohn does:

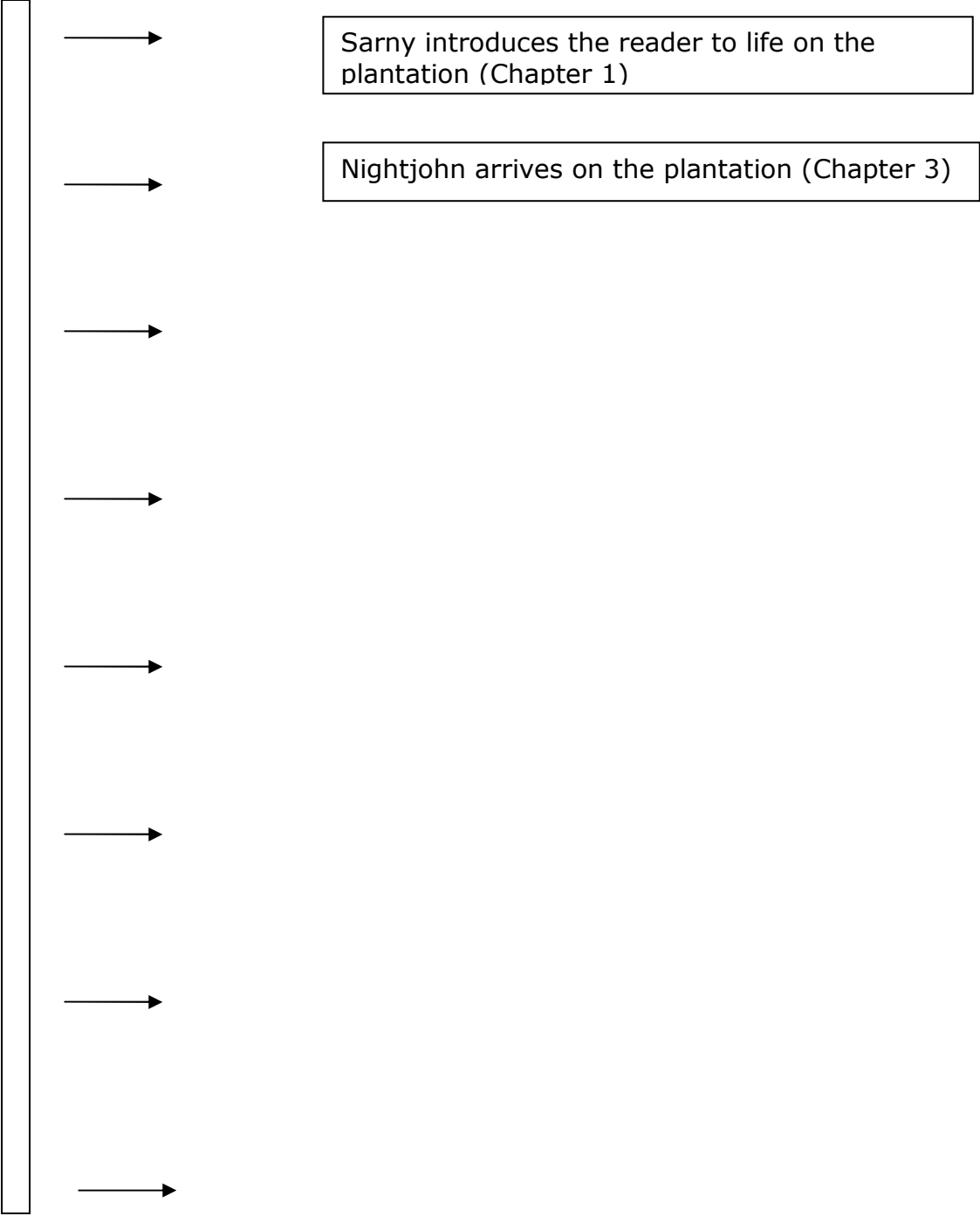


- 2 What do the things he says and does tell us about Nightjohn?

Pupil Resource Sheet 13

Task

Create a timeline of the main events in the novel, starting with the arrival of Nightjohn.



Pupil Resource Sheet 14

Task

You have 45 minutes to complete this task.

Explore the character of Sarny What does the reader learn about her from the things she says and does? (Reading AF5)

Spend five minutes planning your work, using the suggestions below:

Planning

What Sarny says:

What Sarny does:

What this tells us about Sarny:

Pupil Resource Sheet 15

Negro Spirituals

The songs below are considered 'traditional'. Nobody knows who wrote them – they have become part of black culture in America. Spirituals are usually religious and look forward to a better life in heaven. The songs may have originated in the cotton plantations such as the one Sarny works in. Many are now well-known blues and gospel songs.

NOBODY KNOWS DE TROUBLE I SEE

Nobody knows de trouble I see
Nobody knows but Jesus
Nobody knows de trouble I see
Glory, hallelujah!

Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down
Oh, yes, Lord
Sometimes I'm almost to de groun'
Oh, yes, Lord
Although you see me goin' 'long so
Oh, yes, Lord
I have my trials here below
Oh, yes, Lord

OH FREEDOM

Oh freedom
Oh freedom
Oh freedom over me!
And before I'd be a slave
I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

No more moaning
No more moaning
No more moaning over me!
And before...

There'll be singing...
There'll be shouting...
There'll be praying...

HOW LONG?

When the clouds hang heavy and it looks like rain
Oh Lord, how long?
Well, the sun's drawing water from every vein
Oh Lord, how long?

About this time another year
I may be gone
Within some lonely graveyard
Oh Lord, how long?

If I had prayed when I was young
Oh Lord, how long?
Well, I would not've had such a hard race to run
Oh Lord, how long?

Guidelines for assessing reading task

How the writer describes the way the slaves are treated (Reading AF5)

	AF5 – explain and comment on writers’ use of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level.
Level 3	<p>From some parts in the excerpt:</p> <p>A few basic features of writer’s choice of language identified, but with little or no supporting comment e.g. <i>There are lots of descriptions of how badly the slaves are treated.</i></p>
Level 4	<p>Across the whole excerpt:</p> <p>Some basic features of writer’s use of language identified e.g. <i>The writer shows the slaves are treated badly. They don’t get enough food and have to make their own holes to go to the toilet.</i></p> <p>Simple comments on writer’s choices e.g. <i>The men use “whips and clubs” which shows they are cruel.</i></p>
Level 5	<p>Across the whole excerpt:</p> <p>Various features of writer’s use of language identified with some explanation e.g. <i>When it says “They don’t get to sit or rest” you can tell they have to work until they drop.</i></p> <p>Comments show some awareness of the effect of writer’s language choices e.g. <i>You can tell they have to do everything just so or “the whip comes down on them”. It’s a good way to show the cruelty.</i></p>
Level 6	<p>Across the whole excerpt:</p> <p>Some detailed explanation, with appropriate terminology, of how language is used e.g. <i>The humiliation of the slaves is built up in vivid, understated descriptions such as the ways they feed like animals at a trough; the way the breeders “don’t get to sit or rest” and the refusal of the owners to allow a light for the slaves at night.</i></p> <p>Some drawing together of comments on how the writer’s language choices contribute to the overall effect on the reader e.g. <i>All the descriptions seem so matter of fact and without emotion, that it increases the reader’s horror at the way the slaves have to live.</i></p>
Level 7	<p>Across the whole excerpt:</p> <p>Detailed exploration, with appropriate terminology, of how language is used e.g. <i>The writer describes basic human needs such as food, rest and defecation emphasising the intense humiliation for the slaves. Yet, despite their exhaustion and the cruelty suffered, they have a sense of shared community as they eat from the trough and talk “even if there isn’t a moon”.</i></p> <p>Synthesises and summarises comments on how the writer’s language choices contribute to the overall effect on the reader e.g. <i>The extract is recounted in Sarny’s voice, so we have a sense of quiet acceptance and resignation. In her simple language we can see that she knows no other life and does not complain about the humiliation and cruelty</i></p>

Guidelines for assessing reading task

Explore the character of Sarny. What does the reader learn about her from the things she says and does? (Reading AF5)

	AF5 – explain and comment on writers’ use of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level.
Level 3	<p>From some parts of the novel:</p> <p>A few basic features of writer’s choice of language identified, but with little or no supporting comment e.g. <i>You can tell that Sarny wants to learn to read.</i></p>
Level 4	<p>Across the whole novel:</p> <p>Some basic features of writer’s use of language identified e.g. <i>Sarny thinks reading is easy, “it ain’t hard at all.”</i></p> <p>Simple comments on writer’s choices e.g. <i>I like it when Sarny learns the letter A and says “wher’s the bottom to it?”</i></p>
Level 5	<p>Across the whole novel:</p> <p>Various features of writer’s use of language identified with some explanation e.g. <i>Sarny knows it is dangerous to learn to read because she says “Why they be cutting our thumbs off if we learn to read – if that’s all it is?”.</i></p> <p>Comments show some awareness of the effect of writer’s language choices e.g. <i>When Alice runs away Sarny shows she is sensible. She says it’s wrong to run because “Nobody ever gets away.”</i></p>
Level 6	<p>Across the whole novel:</p> <p>Some detailed explanation, with appropriate terminology, of how language is used e.g. <i>The writer shows Sarny to be sharp-witted, curious but naive. Despite the dangers in learning to read, she values Nightjohn’s teaching and comments “Didn’t seem so bad, what he was doing.” However, she does get caught and Mammie suffers for it.</i></p> <p>Some drawing together of comments on how the writer’s language choices contribute to the overall effect on the reader e.g. <i>Sarny’s enthusiasm for reading is touching. It is something we take so much for granted, yet she is hugely excited to be “making a word” – her first word “bag”.</i></p>
Level 7	<p>Across the whole novel:</p> <p>Detailed exploration, with appropriate terminology, of how language is used e.g. <i>Sarny’s appreciation of Nightjohn punctuates the novel, but particularly when she describes him as “Beautiful... So black it seemed I could see inside, down into him.” He is described as almost Christ-like with his subversive but powerful mission to educate the slaves.</i></p> <p>Synthesises and summarises comments on how the writer’s language choices contribute to the overall effect on the reader e.g. <i>Despite being irresponsible and thoughtless when she shows her excitement at being able to write her first word, Sarny’s part in the novel is pivotal, as she allows the writer to show the power and importance of literacy: how it keeps the slaves subservient and why literacy is denied to them.</i></p>