



# TeachersFirst **READING TREKS**

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## A Long Way from Chicago

[TeachersFirst Reading Treks Link](#)

### **Synopsis of Book**

Author Richard Peck, drawing the setting from his own family's hometown and farmhouse, journeys the reader back through a time in America's history of prosperity, the Great Depression, and into World War II. Each summer, over several years, Joey and younger sister, Mary Alice, travel by train from Chicago to spend a week with their feisty Grandma Dowdel. The story is told from Joey's perspective, beginning when he is nine years old. Short stories, vignettes, tell of Grandma Dowdel's antics and adventures that ensue; these include feeding the drifters, gooseberry pie making and competition, aiding a young couple's escape, and a small town centennial celebration. What may have seemed to some as a boring week away from the big city, was anything but. This delightful text provides humor for ages ten and older, including adults.

### **Using a TeachersFirst Reading Trek to Explore This Book**

TeachersFirst Reading Treks are a way of creating a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or text, using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this Instructional Guide and the accompanying Reading Trek as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

### **Grade Level & Content Areas**

Grades 6-8/Middle School/Young Adult, for individual reading or as a read aloud for Grades 4 and 5. Lexile Level: 750L. DRA Level: 50. Guided Reading Level: V. English/language arts, social studies, and social development.

### **Common Core State Standards for Grades 4-8**

## Reading

- **Literature** (key ideas and details; craft and structure; and integration of knowledge and ideas)

## Writing

- **Text Types and Purposes**
- **Research** (to build and present knowledge)

## ISTE: Student Standards

- (1) Empowered Learner: Students leverage technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving, and demonstrating competency in their learning goals, informed by the learning sciences.
- (3) Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts, and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.
- (6) Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats, and digital media appropriate to their goals.

## National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- **Theme: CULTURE**
- **Theme: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE**
- **Theme: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS**
- **Theme: PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION**

## National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- **CREATING**

## Using the Reading Trek in Class

This title has connections to people, places, and environment.

1. Introduce the book to the whole class on an interactive whiteboard using the Reading Trek map, and highlighting Grandma Dowdel's layer. Mr. Peck did not specifically identify Cerro Gordo in the text, but rather in an interview as he wanted readers to connect with their own ideas of small towns.
2. A number of themes underlie the chapters, such as poverty, perseverance, honesty, community, friendship, and family; identify and discuss each of these from the vignettes in the text. Create a [TUZZit](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) for each theme across the chapters to

- record the settings, the acts of kindness, the characters involved, the outcome, and personal reflections.
3. Discuss the difference between the economic boom enjoyed in 1929 as depicted from clues in Chapter 1 and the ensuing Great Depression. Using the activity [Where Did All the Money Go? \(TeachersFirst review\)](#), parts 1 and 2, students can discover clues to what caused the Great Depression.
  4. Discuss inflation over time. Compare the cost of a soda or the young waitress's wages with current prices. Using [The Inflation Calculator \(TeachersFirst review\)](#), calculate the menu prices today from the [1937 Granville Cafe](#), [1938 Key West Restaurant](#), or a [1939 Baltimore Restaurant](#).
  5. Create a virtual timeline of the yearly summer visits using [Timeline \(TeachersFirst review\)](#).

## Additional Activities

1. Use the Reading Trek for stimulating discussion, asking questions, or for writing prompts about living in a small town during a time of want. Students can draw pictures of their favorite scenes from the text including an image of Grandma Dowdel.
2. Students can listen to [A Year Down Yonder](#) and [A Season of Gifts](#), the second and third stories in this series - available on YouTube.
3. Students could create their own [My Map \(TeachersFirst review\)](#) depicting their home and the locations of trips they have taken or would like to take in the future, highlighting stops along the way.
4. Students can race to find the words in the virtual Word Search offered by [Reading is Fundamental \(TeachersFirst review\)](#), available in [Easy](#), [Medium](#), and [Hard](#).
5. To check comprehension, or just for fun, try these [Questions](#) and [Quizzes](#) from [Shmoop \(TeachersFirst review\)](#).
6. Students can research the types of items that would be entered into a competition at a local county fair-livestock, produce, baked and canned goods, crafts, etc. As a class, decide on two or three categories. Have students make mock entries or create a picture of their entry to be judged.

## Helpful Resources

- [The Bement Story](#), the history of a neighboring town in Piatt County.
- [Pete's PowerPoint Station \(TeachersFirst review\)](#), a collection of resources concerning Richard Peck.
- Book trailer examples can be found at [Kid Lit TV's Book Trailer Archives \(TeachersFirst review\)](#) or [Slime Kids \(TeachersFirst review\)](#).
- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review: Google My Maps](#)



- [OK2Ask: Google MANIA - Google Maps: Make Learning a Journey with Reading Treks](#)