

### *A Lesson before Dying* by Ernest Gaines

This semester we have been studying the art of persuasion. In this novel several of the characters use various persuasive techniques to achieve their goals. Which do you think are most effective? The most ethical?

1. In preparation for writing an in-class essay on the art of persuasion used in *A Lesson Before Dying*, consider the following :
  - *How can we preserve what is good of the past while destroying or transforming all that is evil, unjust, and demeaning?*
  - *Can one effect change in a society in which traditional ways of behavior are firmly entrenched?*
  - *How does one balance conflicting loyalties?*
  - *How does one preserve one's convictions and personal beliefs in the face of constant attack and struggle?*
2. Choose one of the questions above, and then discuss it terms of the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors connected with it in the novel. Which characters are most closely linked to the questions? What are their values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors?
  - values – what is deemed to be desirable, or to have some inherent goodness
  - beliefs – what is accepted as true
  - attitudes – expressions of approval or disapproval
  - behaviors – overt actions
3. In the essay you must identify at least one each: value, belief, attitude, and behavior and using quotations and references to specific incidents, show how two or three characters bring about change. Naturally, you'll need to state the situation before and after to prove that change occurs.
4. Conclude the essay with a reflection of the ethics and effectiveness of the strategies.

