

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## The Glory Field

by

### Walter Dean Myers

---

### Book Information

Walter Dean Myers, The Glory Field

Quiz Number: 10943

Scholastic Book Service, 1994

ISBN 0-590-45897-3; LCCN

375 Pages

Book Level: 5.0

Interest Level: UG

This story follows a family's 250-year history from the capture of an African boy in the 1750s through the lives of his descendants.

**Topics:** Family Life, Misc./Other; People, African American

### Main Characters

Abby Lewis Elijah's cousin

Elijah Lewis the brave son of Lizzy

Florenz Deets college student daughter of the family who employed Luvenia

Lem a slave who escaped from Master Lewis's plantation

Lizzy a slave girl who had to make a hurried decision to escape from Master Lewis's plantation

Luvenia Lewis a sixteen-year-old maid whose life was changed by the whim of a bored white girl

Malcolm Lewis a teenager who felt the need to take care of family

Mister Joe Haynes the plantation's overseer

Muhammad a boy taken from Africa and brought to America as a slave

Shep Lewis Malcolm's cousin who wrestled with his own personal demons

Sheriff Glover the white, not unsympathetic sheriff

Tommy Lewis a bright, talented athlete who struggled with the choices presented to him

### Vocabulary

**demonstration** a public display

**grunge** a style of music

**inhospitable** unfriendly, cold

**protest** to object strongly

**uppity** arrogant, haughty or brash

### Synopsis

*The Glory Field* traces the history of the Lewis family, a tightly knit black family whose traditions were passed on from Muhammad, an African-born slave, to Malcolm, a modern teenager who must deal with the problems relevant to his own era. The story begins with Muhammad's torturous journey to America on a slave ship. The story continues almost one hundred years later as his descendants struggle to escape slavery in the Civil War-era South. After Lizzy and her family gain tenuous freedom, we meet her descendants who make their way in the antebellum period. The Lewis family's history of tenacity and strength continues in the story of Lizzy's son, Elijah, who, after finally knowing "what it felt like, being a man," is forced to leave the land he helped save. Next, his daughter, Luvenia, becomes a strong, savvy businesswoman after losing her chance to attend college. The next generation of Lewises produces Tommy, who must make the difficult decision of choosing between what is best for himself, and what is the right thing to do. The family history ends with Malcolm, a boy who also faces difficult choices with strength and wisdom beyond his fifteen years.

### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

#### Initial Understanding

At one point Saran states that every black person had a freedom dream. What freedom dream did Lizzy have? Elijah? Luvenia? Malcolm?

*Lizzy dreamed of dressing up fine and walking the streets of Johnson City. For Elijah, freedom meant keeping the family's land. For Luvenia, it meant staying in Chicago, and Malcolm dreamed of creating music.*

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## The Glory Field

by

### Walter Dean Myers

---

#### Literary Analysis

What choices did each of the main characters have to make?

*Lizzy had to choose whether to run away from the plantation or stay and face the consequences. Elijah's choice involved leaving his beloved land or staying to face the drunken white mob. Luvenia had to decide how she would make it if she chose to remain in Chicago. Tommy's dilemma involved choosing between a college scholarship and participating in the civil rights movement. Malcolm had to decide whether he would give up a comfortable trip to the reunion to be sure his cousin made it.*

#### Inferential Comprehension

What might have happened if each of the characters made different choices?

*Obviously, this question will invoke any number of scenarios. Some possibilities include: Lizzy stayed on the plantation and never owned any land. Elijah remained on Curry and was able to purchase even more land. Luvenia returned to Curry and never became a successful businesswoman. Malcolm left Shep to his own defenses.*

#### Constructing Meaning

How did some of the characters show strength in the face of adversity?

*Lizzy kept running to freedom even as the dogs were on their heels. Elijah pressed on in his attempt to rescue David, even as the danger around him grew. Luvenia never faltered in her desire to stay in the city. Malcolm helped his cousin through a difficult time.*

### Teachable Skills

**Recognizing Setting** The setting of the story covers a long period of time. It begins with an African slave's arrival in America in the mid-1700s and follows his descendents through time up to the present. The family is centered on a plantation on Curry Island, South Carolina. It is

where some of the Lewis family worked as slaves, and later descendents were able to purchase land and make it their own. The land itself is rich in symbolism; the family's roots are there, owning the land is a dream come true for the Lewises, and it is the one constant throughout the book. Some family members leave Curry Island, but it always remains home to them. As a discussion topic, students may consider the impact of the slave trade in the U.S. They can do research to find out what plantation slave quarters were like.

**Understanding Literary Features** The theme of the story deals with the love and support of the family keeping each other strong over the many years of hardship. It also deals with the atrocity of slavery in the U.S., and how one family was able to keep its dignity throughout many difficult periods. As a writing exercise, students could write about a traumatic or difficult incident in their lives that was made easier by the support of their families. Students could pick a character in the Lewis family and describe other family members from that perspective.

**Understanding Characterization** Most of the Lewis family members are sympathetic characters. The cumulative effect of reading about two hundred years of their family's oppression and bondage makes the reader hope that all the characters find happiness and success. Each main character in the Lewis family has to make a difficult decision. Sometimes the choice is inevitable, but each character applies an optimism to the decision that helps in his/her success. As a writing activity, students could write about what might have happened if the characters made different choices.

**Understanding the Author's Craft** The author chronologically traces the life of one family to give a history lesson that is not often taught in textbooks. By illustrating the most intimate details of the lives of one seemingly ordinary family, the day-to-day struggles give the reader thought-provoking insights into the history of blacks in America. Students can be asked to trace their own family's history, or to choose a

**Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for**  
**The Glory Field**  
**by**  
**Walter Dean Myers**

---

relative and describe what his or her life might  
have been like during one of the periods covered  
in the story.