

Lew Wallace: Boy Writer

Teacher's Guide

Introduction

This Teacher's Guide provides a framework for using *Lew Wallace: Boy Writer* in the classroom as a vehicle to engage students and weave literature into multiple content areas.

The Guide offers many suggestions for interdisciplinary activities that students can do before, during, and after they read the book. These learner-centered activities help students move from solely a comprehension, or knowledge-based way of thinking about historical fiction, to higher levels of critical thought that include analysis and evaluation.

Before Reading

Before starting any unit of study, it's a good idea to assess what students already know, or think they know, about the subject. If students have at least some knowledge of Lew Wallace or his accomplishments, draw a three-column chart on the blackboard with the headings: *What We Know About Lew Wallace*, *What We Want to Know*, and *What We Learned*.

1. Ask students to respond only to the first two columns. After reading the book and doing some or all of the After Reading activities, revisit the chart with the class to complete the third column (*What We Learned*) and to correct any erroneous information in the first column.
2. If students have no knowledge of Wallace or his accomplishments, you can have them begin reading the book without any prior discussion, or you can review the historical timeframe of the book, including such events as the strained relationship between traders and settlers with the Black Hawk Indians, and the eventual Black Hawk War in 1832. Create a simple timeline for students to use as they read.

During Reading

While many teachers prefer that student read a book without interruption, others opt to conduct mini-assessments along the way.

1. Have students keep an ongoing literature journal in which they can write about what they're reading and keep an ongoing vocabulary list of unfamiliar words or phrases. You might also wish to provide writing prompts to help students think about what they're reading and to make connections to their own lives. Example of writing prompts:

- What impact did Lewis' childhood have on his life as an adult? How did they shape his views about life? What kinds of experiences have you had in your life that have shaped your views about things?
 - What are some of Lewis' qualities, or personality traits, that you think helped to shape who he became as an adult? (Students might identify such traits as bravery, having a love for art, reading, and writing, and having a desire to be a leader.) What are some of YOUR best qualities, or traits of which you are most proud?
 - Lew Wallace was a lawyer, state senator, army general, ambassador to Turkey, and a writer, not to mention an inventor! Do you think it's okay to be more than one thing when one grows up? Why or why not?
2. As students read the book, be sure to keep a world map posted so that they can identify each city, state, and country mentioned.
 3. As they read, have students identify figures of speech (e.g., metaphors and similes), phrases of alliteration, analogies, and language of the time period.

After Reading

Historical fiction provides wonderful opportunities to weave and blend literature into many different content areas in meaningful ways. Following are a handful of ways for you to integrate a study of Lew Wallace in your classroom. Although they are organized by content areas, we encourage you to move across content lines to blend them in natural ways AND to encourage your students to conduct further research on any specific topics of interest.

Assessment: All of the activities can be assessed in traditional ways (i.e., with quizzes and letter grading systems) to determine how well students can memorize and can recount facts. However, since these activities are rooted in discovery, discussion, communication, and collaboration, they lend themselves to more holistic types of assessment that measure achievement of academic skills, behaviors, and even social/emotional growth. We encourage you to use one or more of the following alternative assessments as students complete the activities.

- **Portfolios**—Keep one portfolio of work for each student to measure progress over a specific period of time. Portfolios are a great aid for both student/teacher and parent/teacher conferences. Encourage students to participate in selecting samples of writing, artwork, research notes, etc. to be included in their portfolios.

- **Rubrics**— Create a rubric, or chart (with or without grades or a numerical grading scale) to assess whether or not students have met specific standards and learning goals that you have previously identified.
- **Self-Assessment**—Hold regular teacher/student interviews to listen to students evaluate their own progress and skills.
- **Peer-Assessment**—Have students give and receive constructive feedback to assess such things as collaborative group work and to critique writing.
- **Anecdotal Notes**—As students work individually or in teams, make informal observations of how they solve problems, think critically, conduct research, work with others, and synthesize newly learned information. Add your notes to students' portfolios and share them during parent/teacher conferences.

Language Arts Connections

1. In Chapter 11, Lewis' teacher tells him that the secret to writing is: "Everything must be clearly stated--everything." Keeping this in mind, challenge students to write a set of directions for a very common task, such as brushing one's teeth, sharpening a pencil, or making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. When they're done, have students read their directions aloud as you follow them, EXACTLY. This can be a really fun and funny exercise and will surely drive home the point about the value of precision in writing.
2. There are many mentions throughout the book of famous historical figures, including William Henry Harrison, John Paul Jones, Daniel Boone, George Rogers Clark, Davy Crockett, and Jim Bowie. Have teams of students research each person and then present their research to their peers in creative ways (e.g., a play or an original poem or song).
3. Divide students into groups to write a fictional historical newspaper for Covington, which students learn (in Chapter 7) had no newspaper. Have student teams design historically-correct sections of the newspaper that deal with events of the day, classifieds, editorials, and perhaps even an entertainment section. Students might even wish to create the newspaper using calligraphic pen nibs dipped in ink.

Social Studies Connections

1. Have students work individually or in pairs to complete the **WebQuest** by following links to gather information about Wallace's childhood and adult years so that they can illustrate and assemble a (paper) Lew Wallace Life Quilt.

Encourage students to explore all parts of each site, reminding them to take careful notes about important life events. Once they are done, have individuals or pairs select two events in Wallace's life that they want to

illustrate for the Lew Wallace Life Quilt. Each square should represent a different event or accomplishment, so take some time to make sure students are not duplicating. (If you have a large class, you may want each student to illustrate only one square.)

Each quilt piece should be illustrated on a standard sheet of 8.5 x 11 inch paper. When all are completed, assemble the quilt by attaching each piece to the classroom wall (or gluing onto butcher paper). Have students determine the sequence of the pieces by the events that are depicted. The quilt size depends on how many students (squares) are involved. Have students calculate how many rows of squares should go across and how many down. (A class signature square may be made to even out an unequal row.) To help set off the quilt "blocks," the quilt rows can be separated with strips of solid color construction paper. (NOTE: Students can also create their quilt pieces using fabric crayons to draw on fabric squares and assemble by sewing.)

2. Students may be unfamiliar with the Mexican War and Civil War. Ask them to conduct research on both wars and to determine why, in the first part of the 19th century, America was really two separate nations. Students can create maps showing boundaries of northern and southern territories during the Civil War.
3. When he was governor of the New Mexico Territory, Wallace helped to apprehend outlaw Billy the Kid. Encourage students to find out more about this famous outlaw and Wallace's role in his capture.

Science Connections

1. Early in the book, we learn that Lewis' brother died of scarlet fever, which Wallace also contracted. Have students research scarlet fever and other infectious diseases (e.g., typhoid, dysentery, smallpox, measles, pneumonia, plague, malaria, yellow fever) that have been eradicated or controlled through antibiotics and other medicines.
2. Chapter 3 is entitled "Voice of the River." Ask students what they think that means and how Lewis interpreted its meaning. What other descriptions of nature can they find in the book?
3. One of Wallace's accomplishments was as an inventor. Challenge students to learn about other inventors. [The National Inventors Hall of Fame](http://www.invent.org) (<http://www.invent.org>) is a good place to start. Then challenge students to invent something themselves. Illustrate or build a model of the invention. Why is their invention necessary? What will it do or what problem will it fix? How will it work? Will it benefit people in some way or is it just for fun?

Mathematics Connections

1. Challenge students to design math word problems using distance and time. For example, in Chapter 2, Lewis' father tells him that the trip from Brookville, IN to Indianapolis, IN will take 2 days (via stagecoach). Using a map of the state, have students determine the exact distance between the two cities and calculate the speed at which the stagecoach probably traveled. (Formula: Distance/Time = Speed.) Compare it to how long a trip would take today by car.
2. Students can build scale models of stagecoaches, cabins, homes, wigwams, and other historical structures described in the book.
3. While mixing paints (see Arts Connections) have students measure their ingredients with metric units and record paint "formulas" so that others can mix the same colors.

Arts Connections

1. In Chapter 4, Lewis creates portraits of his classmates. Ask students to pick a partner and take turns sketching their partner's faces.
2. A street scene in Indianapolis is described in vivid detail in Chapter 9. Have the class create a mural of the scene, based on the descriptions given in the book.
3. Students can gather and grind plants and berries to create natural dyes, or paints and then use them to paint on paper or fabric.
4. Create skits to reenact a favorite scene from the book.
5. Students can play a game of "shinny," as mentioned in Chapter 10, on the school yard. Shinny was similar to modern ice hockey; a curved stick was used to hit a ball. (Shinny balls were made from hide and stuffed with hair, but any small rubber ball can be substituted!)
6. Further extend the **WebQuest** by having students make their own Life Quilts to illustrate life events and accomplishments.