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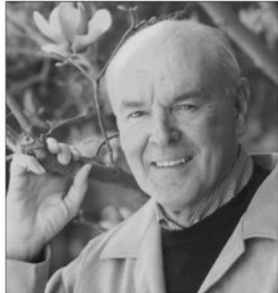


Spotlight On...

## Richard Peck

**I**ronically, it was my students who taught me to be a writer, though I had been hired to teach them. They taught me that a novel must entertain first before it can be anything else. I learned that there is no such thing as a 'grade reading level'; a young person's 'reading level' and attention span will rise and fall according to his degree of interest. I learned that if you do not have a happy ending for the young, you had better do some fast talking."

— Richard Peck



Richard Peck was born in 1934 in Decatur, Illinois, where he also attended elementary and high school. His father owned a service station in the city.

Richard began his career as a high school teacher, and as mentioned in the above quote, it was his students who inspired him to become a writer. Peck studied at DePauw University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in English in 1956. After college, he was drafted into the U.S. Army as a Chaplain's Assistant and spent two years serving in Stuttgart, Germany.

Following his military service, Richard completed a master's degree at Southern Illinois University, after which he again taught Junior high and high school English. He left teaching in 1971 to write his first novel, *Don't Look and It Won't Hurt*. He has written a book each year since then, totaling 39 books in 39 years.

### Did You Know?

- Peck believes each book should be a question, not an answer.
- Peck has won the prestigious Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in young adult literature.
- His book, *A Year Down Yonder* won the prestigious John Newbery Honor Medal. It was the sequel to *A Long Way from Chicago*.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Before You Read

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part Five-A: Hearts and Flour

(To the paragraph beginning: "Mrs. Weidenbach crumbled.")

Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. To this point in the story, how would you describe Mary Alice's character? What do you think are her best qualities?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Every story needs a good **antagonist** (*bad guy or girl*). Who do you think is this novel's antagonist? Defend your response.  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Vocabulary

Complete each sentence with a word from the list.

lurch	sacred	aware	revolution	capitulate
descend	optimistic	benediction	aristocracy	commitment

1. From her haughty attitude, you would think she descended from \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Everyone in the church regarded the artifacts found at the graveside to be most \_\_\_\_\_.
3. "Were you \_\_\_\_\_ that there was only five minutes remaining in the game?" she asked.
4. No one expected the fortress to \_\_\_\_\_ after so short a siege.
5. All the party-goers saw Susan \_\_\_\_\_ across the dance floor after injuring her toe.
6. The minister will pronounce a \_\_\_\_\_ as soon as the choir finishes singing.
7. The people held a \_\_\_\_\_ against their corrupt government.
8. It is difficult to remain \_\_\_\_\_ when she has been missing for so long.
9. It seems that no one holds a \_\_\_\_\_ as being very important any more.
10. I'm sure that when the crowd least expects it, the princess will \_\_\_\_\_ the staircase in her lovely evening gown.

## PREASSESSMENT

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

After You Read



## Part Five-A: Hearts and Flour

(To the paragraph beginning: "Mrs. Weidenbach crumbled.")

1. Circle **T** if the statement is TRUE or **F** if it is FALSE.

- T F a) Mrs. Weidenbach claimed never to gossip.
- T F b) Mrs. Vottsmeier's claim to fame was her raspberry tarts.
- T F c) D.A.R. stands for The Daughters of the American Republic.
- T F d) Carleen Lovejoy was the one who initiated the Valentine card exchange.
- T F e) Mr. Fluke was excited to have Royce join their school because he would have a center for the school's football team.
- T F f) Royce McNabb's presence caused the back of Carleen's head to vibrate.

2. Number the events from **1** to **6** in the order they occurred in the chapter.

- a) Royce McNabb joins Mary Alice's class.
- b) Mrs. Weidenbach asks Grandma to bake tarts for Washington's Birthday tea.
- c) Mrs. L.J. Weidenbach pays a call on Saturday morning.
- d) Mrs. Weidenbach pays Grandma a visit after school one day.
- e) Grandma and Mary Alice learn of Mrs. Vottsmeier experiencing *The Change*.
- f) "Newsy Notes..." announces an exchange of Valentine cards at the high school.

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS



After You Read

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part Five-A: Hearts and Flour

(To the paragraph beginning: "Mrs. Weidenbach crumbled.")

Answer each question with a complete sentence.

1. How would you describe the personality of Mrs. Weidenbach?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Put the following expressions from this chapter into your own words:  
a) *And so we are up a gum stump.*  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b) *The town's filling up with people you wouldn't know from Adam's off ox.*  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c) *... there is poetry in her pastry.*  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. After Mrs. Weidenbach is finished bragging about her ancestry, Grandma says "Ah, that explains it." Check out their dialogue and explain how Grandma was poking fun at Mrs. Weidenbach by saying this.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What do you think Grandma meant by: "There's them who'll invite you to join their brunch. Then there's them who'll pay you for your work. Then there's Wilhelmina Weidenbach?"  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What do you think caused Grandma to agree to bake the tarts for the D.A.R.?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What surprising condition did Grandma make when she agreed to bake the tarts for the tea?  
\_\_\_\_\_



For your journal entry, interview another student to elicit their impression of Grandma to this point in the story. Is he or she impressed with Grandma? Repulsed? Puzzled? Record your classmate's comments and then explain whether or not you agree with him or her — and why you feel this way.

## SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS



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## year down yonder chapter 4

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