

Lu and the Swamp Ghost by James Carville
Children's Literature and the Great Depression

Mississippi Economics Best Practices
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Name: Connie H. Lambert

Title of Entry: *Lu and the Swamp Ghost* by James Carville
Children's Literature and the Great Depression

Teaching Position: Special Populations Teacher
Alcorn Central High School

Subjects Taught: Mississippi Occupational Diploma components:
(Career Prep, Employment English and Math,
Financial Literacy, Life Skills)

Grade Level/Course Involved:

Seventeen students (9 female, 8 male) enrolled in an 11th-12th grade Career Prep Class and pursuing an occupational diploma were involved in this unit of study which lasted approximately six weeks. Most of the students have a learning disability in math and/or reading. Two of the female students have visual impairments. This particular lesson served as a culminating activity for the Great Depression and the New Deal Programs.

Description of class, school, school district, and student demographics:

My Career Prep Class consisted of seventeen students pursuing an occupational diploma. This curriculum, which emphasizes both academic and work experiences, provides a viable option for students with disabilities. Our goals are to enhance basic academic skills, to prepare students to develop healthy relationships with others, to secure and maintain employment and to manage their earned money. Six out of the seventeen students maintained part-time jobs during the 2007-2008 school year.

Alcorn Central High School serves grades nine through twelve and is located in Glen, Mississippi, a rural area in the northeast corner of the state. Our school's enrollment is approximately 480 students of which an estimated 2% are minority students. 12% of our students are eligible for reduced lunches and 36% are eligible for free lunches. Our school is one of three high schools in the Alcorn School District.

ABSTRACT

Lu and the Swamp Ghost by James Carville

This children's story was used to culminate the unit of study about the Great Depression and to present the time period through the eyes of children. Lu lives with her family on a farm and is unaware of the effects of the Depression in other areas. She meets the Swamp Ghost, a young boy who is "riding the rails" looking for a home and a way to make a living. Lu finds a solution to his problems. The story is set in rural Louisiana during the Great Depression. It is loosely based on stories James Carville was told by his mother, who lived during this time period.

This activity allowed students with limited reading skills to be successful in a reading assignment. Students were encouraged to see the Great Depression from the viewpoint of young children and teenagers during this time period. We also researched the New Deal programs as they would relate to families and young children. The students were able to related some of the occurrences of the Great Depression to their own lives today.

We began our study of the Great Depression by participating in a simulation of six different families' budgets as they were affected by the Great Depression. This activity captured the students' interests in this time period. We researched and discussed the causes of the Great Depression, life during this time period and the programs of the New Deal. We ended our unit by reading the children's book *Lu and the Swamp Ghost* by James Carville and by completing activities associated with this book.

After reading this story, many aspects of the Great Depression finally made an impression on the students. They understood that hard economic times caused families to be separated and young children had to fend for themselves. The students also realized that high unemployment rates and hard economic times could affect them even though they are not really old enough to work. Adults being out of work could possibly change children's lifestyles.

The scores on the pre-test and the post-test reflect gains in knowledge after reading this book and completing the activities. The NCEE Standards and Benchmarks, MS Social Studies Competencies, and Student Objectives are listed in the Lesson Plans. The competencies from the Mississippi Occupational Diploma Program are listed below:

- 11C4: Demonstrate an awareness of the impact of federal and state laws and social groups.
- 11C6: Recognize the role of the citizen as related to policies, economics, and society.
- 11C9: Demonstrate an awareness of the impact of government regulations on business and labor relations.
- 11C19: Analyze effects of one's behavior on others.
- 9C7: Recognize the role of consumers, citizens, and workers in the market place.
- 11E5: Apply critical reading skills.

CHRONOLOGY, INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS AND LESSONS

