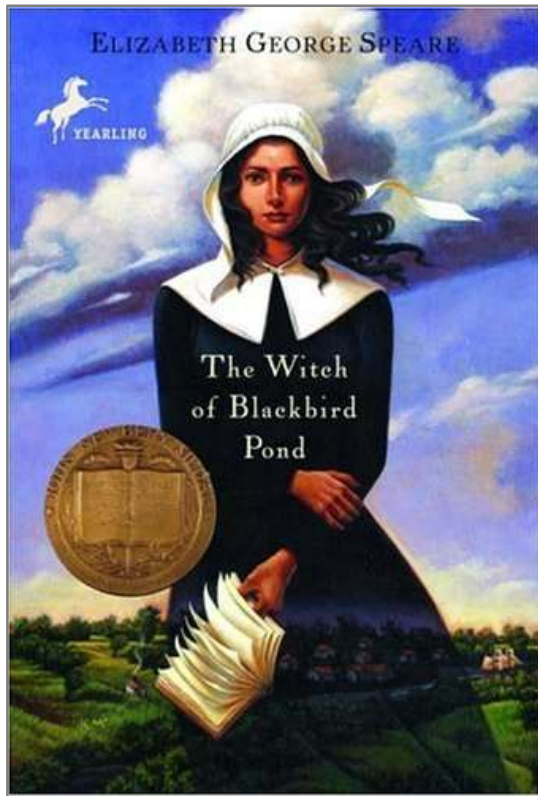


The Artios Home Companion Series Literature and Composition

The Witch of Blackbird Pond

by Elizabeth George Speare
Literature For Units 5 – 9



We will read *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* by Elizabeth George Speare while discussing early colonial life and beliefs. Students will focus on expository writing skills to write newspaper articles related to the literature.

Kit Tyler is a young girl who is forced to leave Barbados, the only home she has ever known, to live with her Puritan family in colonial Connecticut. She has a difficult time adjusting to her new lifestyle, but finds a kindred spirit in Hannah Tupper, whom the townspeople believe is a witch. Kit struggles to follow her heart's calling to love while still honoring her family.

Be Sure to Notice...

As a piece of historical fiction, this book accurately explores both the lifestyle and the beliefs of many early American Puritans. The Author's Note at the back of the book also highlights a few real men who make appearances in the book and held true significance in colonial Connecticut. You will find many opportunities for discussion on religion, beliefs, truth, love, and acceptance as you read this book with your family.

Elizabeth George Speare received a Newbery Award for writing *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*. This prestigious literary award is presented annually by the Association for Library Service to Children. With a parent's supervision, you can explore other Newbery Award winners on the web.

Context Resources

Early colonial life was a fascinating time in the history of the United States of America. Don't forget to explore the resources available within the corresponding section of your **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website to further your knowledge and understanding of this time. Selecting Literature Projects from the list provided with the **Resources** section will also help you to delve deeper into themes and events of the book.

Unit 5 – Assignments

Literature

- Begin by completing an author profile for **Elizabeth George Speare**. You will find an **Author Profile Page** within the **Language Arts Resources** section of the **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website. You can find information about the author through various Internet sources, as well as on the book itself. Make sure you get a parent’s permission before accessing the Internet.
- Read Chapters 1-4 in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*.
- As you discuss these chapters with your family, you might consider focusing your discussions on what Kit’s experience might have been like.
 - Mark both Barbados and Connecticut on a map.

Moving to a brand new country with an entirely different culture, losing the only family she’d ever known, making a trip across the Atlantic Ocean during a time when safety and hygiene were not ensured—all of these things must have been very difficult for a girl of Kit’s age.

- What kinds of character traits might have been necessary for a young girl going through this experience?

Composition

In this unit, we will be exploring expository writing, which is a type of writing that is meant to give information, directions, or opinions, or to persuade an audience. Essays, magazine articles, newspapers, reports, brochures, and instruction manuals are just a few examples of expository writing. We will be writing newspaper articles about colonial Puritan life.

- Begin by obtaining a local newspaper and exploring it with your family. On a sheet of paper, make a list of the different types of articles that you find, and create a list of the parts in your newspaper. As you examine each type of article, write a brief explanation of what kind of information is shared in that section. Some of the parts that might be identified within a newspaper are listed below, but be on the lookout for different parts in yours:

News Article	Feature Article	Letters to the Editor	Obituaries
Editorial	Local News	International News	Business
Sports	Technology	Science	Health
Education	Weather		

- After you have made your list and explanation of each part of a newspaper, cut these out, alphabetize them, and glue them onto another piece of paper to create a “Newspaper Dictionary.”
- Keep your newspaper in case you need to refer back to it in the coming weeks.

Unit 6 – Assignments

Literature

- While you read, focus your discussions on the characters’ assumptions, superstitions, and judgments of other characters.
 - How do these help or complicate their lives?
 - What does the Bible have to say about how we should act and respond toward people whose beliefs are different than ours?
 - Is it our job to judge other people?
- Read Chapters 6-10 in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*.

Composition

- Now that you know what different parts are contained within a newspaper, you should select a type of article that you want to write on Puritan life. For instance, if you select “Sports,” your article might be about recreation that the Puritans enjoyed. If you choose “Technology,” your article might focus on some new type of equipment that this group of people were building to make their lives easier. You get the idea!

If you are using this curriculum as part of a group, each student should select a different type of article to write for the newspaper, so that it can be assembled into a well-rounded volume. If you are using this curriculum on your own, you may locate other students who might wish to work collaboratively with you, or you may choose to write a few articles on your own to make a newspaper “front page.”

- Once you have selected the type of article, you need to begin researching that aspect of Puritan life. You can visit your local library to find books related to your topic, and you can also use the Internet to search for appropriate material. After you have “read up” on your topic, you will need to add your own creativity to help you write an article as if you were living during this time. Pretend that you are a Puritan reporter, writing to share brand new information with the townspeople nearby, and it is your job to keep them up-to-date on the newest information.
- Visit the **Language Arts Resources** section of the **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website to find several different types of graphic organizers, which are a tool to help you organize your ideas before you begin writing, and have a parent or teacher help you select one that is most appropriate for the type of article that you will be writing. Write your ideas and information into the graphic organizer, and share your ideas with your parent, teacher, and other peers to get their feedback on the organization of your article.

Unit 7 – Assignments

Literature and Composition

- Read Chapters 11-15 in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*.
- Your graphic organizer will now become your “road map” as you write the rough draft of your newspaper article. A rough draft should be just that—rough—don’t worry too much about your spelling, punctuation, or grammar during this part of the process; just focus on writing your ideas in complete sentences, using as much detail as you can.
- Now would be a good time to refer back to your newspaper and listen to how the reporter’s “voice” sounds.
- It can be very helpful to break your writing up into short chunks of time, and come back to re-read what you have already written frequently.

Unit 8 – Assignments

Literature

- Finish reading *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*.

Composition

- In this unit you will edit the rough draft of your article, using feedback from your parents, teachers, and peers. You can find editing checklists within the **Language Arts Resources** section of the **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website.
- It can be very helpful to sit down with your writing on several different occasions; every time you read your own writing you are likely to find new areas to which you can add a little extra “sparkle,” and it makes finding any small errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar much more likely.
- You will also want to add the following elements to your article to make it more realistic; refer back to your newspaper if you’d like:
 - **Headline:** A headline is the words printed across the top of a newspaper article, and is similar to a title; it is printed in large type and aims to catch the attention of the reader.
 - **Dateline:** The dateline consists of the words at the very beginning of a news article that tell when and where the story was written.

Unit 9 – Assignments

Literature

Enjoy a break from assigned reading during this unit, and focus all of your attention on our writing project! Of course, if you love reading as much as this writer does, you can find extra suggestions for fantastic time-period literature in the introduction to this curriculum. Now would be a great time to do that!

Composition

- Now that you have your final draft(s) written, you need to make it look like a newspaper. Using 11 x 17 paper, arrange your articles onto both the front and back sides. You will need to:
 - Decide on a name for your newspaper.
 - Decide which story will be your cover story—which is the story that is highlighted on the front page.
 - Include a table of contents, so that your readers know which page to turn to in order to find the information they need.
- Refer to your local newspaper to get some ideas on how the layout of your newspaper might look. There will probably be some extra space between your articles, and you should fill those in with eye-catching items: pictures, comics, crosswords, etc. Make sure that they are appropriate for the Puritan lifestyle!
- When the final copy of your newspaper is complete, take it to a local copy store and make copies for your friends and family.



The elm tree in Wethersfield Connecticut, pictured in 1917, was the largest in New England at 27 ft in circumference.