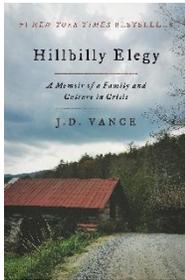




## Guide to Teaching a Memoir



The 2017-2018 Go Big Read selection, *Hillbilly Elegy* by J. D. Vance, is a personal reflection on upward mobility in America seen through the lens of a white, working-class family in the Midwest. Since this book is a memoir, it can be more challenging than research-focused texts to incorporate into the higher education classroom. With this in mind, the Go Big Read program has assembled suggestions and a list of resources to assist instructors in teaching a memoir, regardless of discipline.

### Things to consider when teaching a memoir:

- Memoirs enable students to understand and learn about a perspective outside their own, whether through gender, race, ethnicity, ability, religion, social class, experience, etc.
- The reading style of a memoir can often be a more engaging way to learn about a topic.
- Writers are able to tell their stories openly, with an opportunity that allows others to learn from their experiences.

### Suggestions for incorporating a memoir like *Hillbilly Elegy* into your course:

- Assign students a theme or themes from the book (see [Go Big Read 2017-2018 Hillbilly Elegy Themes](#)). Have each student bring a current event article related to their theme to share and engage conversation about the topic and the way it is addressed in the book. Try using the pair and share technique (see [www.teachervision.com/think-pair-share-cooperative-learning-strategy](http://www.teachervision.com/think-pair-share-cooperative-learning-strategy)).
- Assign students to write a response to one of the suggested discussion questions developed by Go Big Read (see [Hillbilly Elegy Book Discussion Questions](#)), and respond to at least one classmate's post using a course management system (e.g. Canvas). Try creating a jigsaw discussion (see [www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/strategy/strategy036.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/strategy/strategy036.shtml)).
- Assign students to read a review of *Hillbilly Elegy* and evaluate the critiques and praise. Invite students to write a response addressing whether or not they agree with the review, and why.
- Assign students to write a personal reflection on the book: "Did Vance's story resonate with your own life or experiences? Why or why not?"
- Supplement the book with secondary readings related to the themes of the book, such as the relationship between social class, race, and mobility, the welfare system, access to education, or the effects of childhood trauma (see Additional Resources below).

## Works Cited

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