

# Viewing Guide for **The Ponder Heart**

By Susan Thurman

Whether presented as film, stage production or in its original prose, Eudora Welty's **The Ponder Heart** is rich in entertainment value and meaning. Below are assignment ideas, discussion topics and resources that will help you teach this work. This guide has been constructed to encourage students to (1) conduct research through library and Internet resources, (2) think in a multidisciplinary fashion, and (3) make creative leaps in their analysis and interpretation of the novella.

Geared for students of all grade levels and abilities, you may access the information according to the following sections:

## **I. Preparation, Comprehension and Analysis**

Pre-Viewing/Reading Discussion Questions  
Post-Viewing/Reading Discussion Questions  
Research/Reading Assignments

## **II. Supplemental Information**

Literary Devices  
Vocabulary List

## **I. Preparation, Comprehension and Analysis**

### **Pre-Viewing/Reading Discussion Questions**

Below is a list of questions to discuss with your class before viewing or reading **The Ponder Heart**. These questions are designed to direct students' thinking about various ideas and themes presented in the novella or film.

- 1) Think of a time that you were in the company of someone who loved to talk—who really, really loved to talk. How did you handle the situation? Did you try to get away as soon as possible? Did you try to interrupt? Did you sit back and enjoy the story that the person was relating?
- 2) Edna Earle (the narrator of **The Ponder Heart**) says that it is better to have company than to have love. Do you agree or disagree with her? Give reasons for your opinion.
- 3) One of the characters in **The Ponder Heart** is criticized for the way she maintains the outside of her house (in her case, she keeps a washing machine on the front porch). How would you feel about a washing machine being left on the front porch of a house that was near yours? Would you think that the house was well maintained? Why or why not? What opinions might you form about the people who lived in the house?
- 4) The telephone will play a part in **The Ponder Heart**. In the time that novella/film was set, the telephone was not an everyday part of the household; today, however, a telephone is considered almost a necessity. What conveniences today would be considered the height of consumerism? In other words, what equipment do some people have that others consider a waste of money?
- 5) Do you think love can be measured? Can you love one person more than you love someone else? What determines the measure of love?

- 6) If you are female, how would you react if a man pinched you (on the posterior)? If you are male, how would you react if you saw a man pinch your sister or another female relative?
- 7) Think back to times when you have lent money to or received money from a friend. Did the situation cause any hard feelings? Would you agree or disagree that the worst thing you can give away is money? Cite reasons for your opinion. Do you agree or disagree that money will come between you and the person you give it to? Cite reasons for your opinion.
- 8) In **The Ponder Heart**, you will read about or view examples of prejudice against people of a different race and different religions. Think about times when you have viewed prejudice against someone of another race. What were the circumstances? How did you react? Have you ever heard negative comments about people of other religions? What were the circumstances? How did you react in that situation?
- 9) Does a parent have a responsibility to give an allowance to his or her children? If so, how much should the allowance be? (Be reasonable!) If you think that a parent does not have this responsibility, what arguments do you have to support your opinion?
- 10) What are the most common first names for girls your age? for boys your age? Think about first names of people of your parents' generation. What are some first names of that generation that are not common for people of your age?
- 11) Do you think that, if a husband and wife are separated (and there are no children), the husband should give the wife money every week? Why or why not?
- 12) Think about any time(s) you have been to a carnival or country fair. What kind of sideshows have been the most interesting to you?
- 13) What kinds of games do you like to play with your friends? Are there any board games (that is, any games that are not electronic) that you like?
- 14) What song(s) would you like to be sung at your wedding? At this point in your life, whom would you like to be the singer?
- 15) Various kinds of food are mentioned in **The Ponder Heart**. Some of these foods are more popular in the South than in other areas of the country (and this would have been even more the case in the time that **The Ponder Heart** was set). What types of foods are popular in your part of the country? Can you give reasons why these foods in particular are popular in your area?
- 16) How do you react in violent thunderstorms? Are you frightened of them? intrigued by them? Do you try to hide or do you watch from the window? How do others in your family react?
- 17) **The Ponder Heart** is full of unusual first and last names. What are some unusual names of people you know? In the case of first names, do you know why the people were given those names? Do you know any stories behind unusual last names?
- 18) The narrator of **The Ponder Heart** says that her family made its money from pine trees. How did some of the wealthy families in your area make their money? Is that way of business still profitable?
- 19) Think about recent stories you have read. From what point of view were they written? How would the story have been different if the author had chosen a different point of view?

20) Is it ever good for a husband and wife to leave the other at home and go out for the evening on his/her own? If not, why not? If so, how often would this be permissible, and under what circumstances?

### **Post-Viewing/Reading Discussion Questions**

Below is a list of questions to assist you in guiding student through and beyond **The Ponder Heart**. Included are quotations for students to investigate and consider. Additionally, questions 9-14 focus on the use of literary terms in the novella.

1) Speaking of Judge Tip Clanahan, Edna Earle says, "He gives me a little pinch. The day I don't rate a pinch of some kind from a Clanahan, I'll know I'm past redemption—an old maid." Do you think that being unmarried ("an old maid") means that a woman's life is over (that she's "past redemption")? Cite reasons for your opinion.

2) Speaking of Uncle Daniel and his marriage and her role in it, Edna Earle says, "...in plenty of marriages there's three—three all your life. Because nearly everybody's got somebody." Thinking of the marriages with which you're familiar, do you agree or disagree that many marriages have "three"? Why do you have that opinion?

3) Edna Earle says, "People get married beneath them every day...." This implies that there is a social hierarchy in America. Do you think that is so? Do you agree or disagree with Edna Earle's statement? What are the reasons for your opinion?

4) Speaking about Uncle Daniel and his relation to Bonnie Dee, Edna Earle says, "He wanted her there, all right, waiting when he got back. But he made Narciss bring him in town every night so he could have a little better audience. He wanted to tell about how happy he was." What does that tell you about Uncle Daniel? about his marriage? about Bonnie Dee?

5) About the break-up of the marriage between Uncle Daniel and Bonnie Dee, Edna Earle says, "I don't blame Bonnie Dee, don't blame her for a minute. I could just beat her on the head, that's all." Do you agree or disagree that Bonnie Dee should not have any blame in the marriage going sour? Why?

6) Of Uncle Daniel, Edna Earle says, "He's smart in a way you aren't, child." In what unconventional ways is Uncle Daniel smart?

7) Do you agree or disagree that Uncle Daniel should have continued to give Bonnie Dee money after they separated? Cite reasons for your opinion.

8) **The Ponder Heart** is set in a time of obvious prejudice. Cite examples of prejudice shown against African Americans and against people of religions different from that of Edna Earle. Do you think that these same prejudices exist today? Cite reasons for your opinion.

9) Who is the protagonist of this story—Edna Earle or Uncle Daniel? Cite reasons for your opinion.

10) The antagonist of a story is the character pitted against the central character (the protagonist). Who, in your opinion, is the antagonist of **The Ponder Heart**? Cite reasons for your opinion.

11) The climax is the high point or turning point of a story. What is the climax of **The Ponder Heart**?

12) A dialect is a type of language spoken by one particular group of people. What are some examples of dialect used in **The Ponder Heart**?

13) Stereotyping refers to thinking that all people in a certain groups have the same characteristics. What are some examples of stereotyping in **The Ponder Heart**?

14) Hyperbole is conscious exaggeration, for emphasis or humor. What are examples of hyperbole in **The Ponder Heart**?

### Research/Reading Assignments

When reading a novella or viewing a film, students will often find a tangential topic which interests them and which serves to heighten the reading or viewing experience for them. Below are a number of thought-provoking ideas for writing and/or research that springboard off of **The Ponder Heart**. These assignments are designed to give **students with various interests a way to supplement what they have read or viewed**.

1) For students interested in **automobiles**: We are introduced to Grandpa Ponder's Studebaker in the first few paragraphs of the story. See pictures of this brand of car at the Studebaker National Museum homepage at <http://www.classicar.com/museums/stude/stude.htm> or at the homepage for the Official Studebaker Reference Guide (listen for the car to start!) at <http://www.mt.net/~ebenasky/>.

2) For **travel** buffs: Uncle Daniel gave the girl at the bank a trip to Lookout Mountain and Rock City Cave. Take your own trip to Lookout Mountain by visiting <http://www.lookoutmntnaattractions.com/> and to Rock City at <http://www.seerockcity.com/>.

3) For students interested in **economics or banking**: Make the connection between the current value of money and the value in the late 1940s. Here are some questions for you to answer:

a) Uncle Daniel had a Coca-Cola that cost a nickel. What would that be worth today?

b) We learn that Edna Earle took \$25 to Bonnie Dee every Saturday. How much would that be worth today?

c) Before his first marriage, Uncle Daniel's allowance was \$3 a month. What would that be worth today?

d) Big John Beech said that Mr. Daniel had paid him a dime to deliver the message to Bonnie Dee. What would ten cents be worth today?

Use the form at <http://woodrow.mpls.frb.fed.us/economy/calc/cpihome.html> to help you calculate the answers.

4) For students interested in **botany**: Many southern plants and flowers are mentioned in **The Ponder Heart**. Find pictures of some of them, such as the crape myrtle tree, portulaca, verbena, chinaberries, sweetheart rose, Else Polson rose, magnolia, Jacob's-Ladder, salvia, and Etoile rose.

5) For **motorcycle** enthusiasts: Uncle Daniel was quite taken by the motorcycle-riding **Intrepid Elsie Fleming**. Find pictures of various models of motorcycles from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and share these with the class.

6) For students interested in **clothing styles** : Edna Earle was somewhat disgusted with **Intrepid Elsie Fleming** for all the noise that she made and because Intrepid Elsie "dressed up in pants."

Research the clothing styles of the day (late 1940s), and/or research when pants became acceptable apparel for women.

7) For enthusiasts of **games**: Grandpa and Judge Tip played **dominoes**. You can learn the rules of the game at <http://www.gamecabinet.com/rules/DominoGames.html> or you can play dominoes online at <http://dominoes.airweb.net/>.

8) For students interested in **music**: Miss Teacake Magee was very fond of singing (she sang "louder than the rest of them [in the Baptist choir] put together").

During the Sunday collection, Miss Teacake was singing "Work, for the Night Is Coming." You can read the song's lyrics and listen to the tune by visiting the site at [http://junior.apk.net/~bmames/ht0110\\_.htm](http://junior.apk.net/~bmames/ht0110_.htm) (extra points if you sing along!).

b) At her wedding, Miss Teacake sang "The Sweetest Story Ever Told." Find a copy of this song and bring it in to share with the class.

c) At the funeral, Miss Teacake sang "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere." View the lyrics and hear the melody of this song at [http://junior.apk.net/~bmames/ht0126\\_.htm](http://junior.apk.net/~bmames/ht0126_.htm).

9) For students interested in **culinary arts**: A number of southern dishes are mentioned in **The Ponder Heart**. URLs are below for recipes for some of these dishes, so try your hand at one or more of the following:

a) **banana pie** (which Uncle Daniel often ate)  
104 Things To Do with a Banana - <http://www.dmgi.com/pie.html>

b) **banana cake** (Uncle Daniel's favorite!)  
Searchable Online Archive of Recipes - <http://soar.berkeley.edu:80/recipes/>

c) **cheese straws** (all the recipes seem to use a food processor these days instead of beating the three hundred strokes that Edna Earle says is the secret)  
RecipeXchange -  
[http://www.recipeexchange.com/recipeexchange\\_cfmfiles/recipes.cfm/1097](http://www.recipeexchange.com/recipeexchange_cfmfiles/recipes.cfm/1097)

Mr. Food - <http://wfla.com/mrfood/140.htm>

About.com/MiningCo.com -  
<http://southernfood.miningco.com/library/rec97/bl1221d.htm>

d) **cornbread** (which was usually on Uncle Daniel's plate)

Genuine Sand Mountain Corn Bread - <http://www.daveraley.com/CORNBRD1.htm>

Southern Recipes: Southern Cooking -  
[http://www.cbt.net/dedwards/hot\\_water\\_cornbread.htm](http://www.cbt.net/dedwards/hot_water_cornbread.htm)

e) **Devil's food cake** (which the Clanahans sent to the Ponders)  
Southern Recipes: Southern Cooking -  
[http://www.cbt.net/dedwards/devils\\_food\\_cake.htm](http://www.cbt.net/dedwards/devils_food_cake.htm)

f) **divinity** (which Edna Earle tells us travels perfectly)

Miss Grier's Divinity Candy -  
<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Acres/5738/dessert.html#divinity>

g) **fried grits** (which Uncle Daniel had for breakfast every morning)

**CWI Civil War Cook Book** - <http://www.almshouse.com/maindishesnonmeat.htm>

Southern Recipes: Southern Cooking - [http://www.cbt.net/dedwards/fried\\_grits.htm](http://www.cbt.net/dedwards/fried_grits.htm)

h) **fried okra** (also usually on Uncle Daniel's plate)

Southern Recipes: Southern Cooking - [http://www.cbt.net/dedwards/fried\\_okra.htm](http://www.cbt.net/dedwards/fried_okra.htm)

Tales from the Homeplace - <http://taleshomeplace.com/friedokr.htm>

i) **potato cakes** (another staple at Uncle Daniel's morning breakfast)

Mega-zine - <http://www.mega-zine.com/kitchen/bread/recipe570.html>

j) **Prince of Wales cake** (which Miss Teacake Magee sent to the Ponders)

The Internet Chef - <http://www.ichef.com/ichef-recipes/Cakes/41969.html>

10) For those interested in **journalism**: Pretend you are a reporter for the Memphis **Commercial Appeal**. Then write a news story covering the trial of Uncle Daniel or the death of Bonnie Dee.

11) For those interested in **art**: Using your skills, design a billboard to advertise the Beulah Hotel.

12) For those interested in **writing** or **advertising**: Create a travel brochure to advertise either the city of Clay or the Beulah Hotel.

13) For **history** buffs or those interested in **electricity**: Edna Earle says, "I guess electricity was about the bane of Grandpa's life...." Grandpa Ponder was of the generation for whom home electricity was first available. Interview someone who was living when electricity was first brought into his/her home and find out how this changed the person's life. Prepare a written report, an audiotape or a videotape of the interview; then share this with the rest of the class.

14) For students interested in **literature**: Edna Earle says that she read ("for the thousandth time") the book **The House of a Thousand Candles**. First published in 1905, this romantic thriller was written by Meredith Nicholson and was set in northern Indiana. Read this book and then write a short book report or summary of it. (The book has been reprinted and is currently in print.) Or, research the author **Meredith Nicholson**. One site is titled "Meredith Nicholson: The Dean of Hoosier Writers" and can be found at <http://www.indianahistory.org/nichol.htm>.

15) For those interested in **journalism**: Judge Tip and Edna Earle took an ad in the Memphis **Commercial Appeal**. (Note that the author of **The Ponder Heart**, Eudora Welty, once wrote society news for this publication.) Read from this newspaper online at <http://www.gomemphis.com/> and report what is in today's news.

16) For those interested in **agribusiness**: Edna Earle insists that the Ponders had made their money from pine trees. Research the agribusiness of lumber, especially of pine.

17) For students interested in **literature**:

- a) Eudora Welty has said in interviews that she took the name Edna Earle from the heroine of a popular 19<sup>th</sup> century novel called **Saint Elmo**. The Edna Earle of that novel was supposed to be very virtuous, and many female babies were named Edna Earle because of the character in the book. Find a copy of **Saint Elmo** and write a short book report on it.
- b) Twice, **The Ponder Heart** has been made into a play. Read a copy of either play; then write a paper comparing and contrasting the play with either the novella or the film.
- c) **The Ponder Heart** is written in a first-person (Edna Earle's) point of view. Rewrite a part of this story from a different point of view. For instance, write from Uncle Daniel's point of view, or Grandpa Ponder's, or Narciss', or even Mr. Springer's.

18) For **history** buffs:

- a) We learn that a passenger train had killed Professor Magee. Edna Earle says, "That tells you how long ago his time was" (implying that **passenger trains** don't pass through Clay very much any longer). Research passenger trains and report to the class about their heyday.
- b) We learn that dial **telephones** are just being installed in Clay at the time that **The Ponder Heart** is set. The history of telephones is an interesting one. Research some history of the telephone at the website for the Telephone Historical Centre at <http://www.discoveredmonton.com/telephonemuseum/homepage.html> (click on "The Collection" to see various telephone models from bygone days).  
  
Or, start at the homepage for "Tribute to the Telephone" (<http://hyperarchive.lcs.mit.edu/telecom-archives/tribute/index.htm>) and click "Historical Information" for lots of facts at this site; then click "Links," then "Telephone History Links" for connections to other fine sites.
- c) Notice that the Ponder **telephone number** is Clay 123. Interview some older people from your town to find out how telephone numbers were designated in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; then share your findings with the class.
- d) Uncle Daniel makes mention of the ice man, and he tells Edna Earle that Bonnie Dee had requested that he "go by the ice house on the way and put fifty pounds on [my] bumper for her." Soon after that, Edna Earle implies that Bonnie Dee was silly for thinking about getting ice. "That there should be a smidgen of ice left in Clay at that hour is one of the most unlikely things I ever hear of. What was left of the public cake on the courthouse steps had run down in a trickle by noon." Note that this was in the days before refrigerators became common household appliances. Interview someone who lived in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and find out how ice was stored, harvested and delivered. You can find some information about iceboxes (the precursors of refrigerators) at "Icebox Memories," <http://www.tiac.net/users/icebox/>.
- e) Miss Missionary Sistrunk says, "...[The Ponders]...did not burn their cotton when Sherman came...." This is a reference to Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman. Research Sherman and the destruction his forces caused during the Civil War.

f) When he was young, Uncle Daniel had been the groom in a Tom Thumb wedding. Tom Thumb weddings have been popular for over a hundred years and are still performed in some parts of the country today. Research some history behind some of these events. Pictures of actual Tom Thumb weddings can be found at <http://members.tripod.com/~vanlear/index.html> (then click on "A Tom Thumb Wedding in Recreational Building Theater"); <http://www.cc.ukans.edu/carrie/kancoll/graphics/wedding.htm> ; and <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Hills/4200/phillips/phillipssb.html>.

## II. Supplemental Information

### Literary Devices—Definitions

Below are examples of literary devices that Eudora Welty uses in **The Ponder Heart**. You may wish to use only the definitions and then have the students determine where the elements can be found in the novella or film. Alternately, you may wish to refer to the next section, which points out how these elements are used in the novella or film.

**Allusion:** An allusion is a reference to a historical or literary person, place or thing.

**Climax:** The climax is the high point or turning point of a story.

**Dialect:** A dialect is a type of language spoken by one particular group of people.

**Idiom:** Idioms are words or expressions that are common to a particular part of the country.

**Metaphor:** A metaphor is a comparison without using **like** or **as**.

**Narrator:** The narrator is the person telling the story. Readers/viewers should remember that they are only hearing or seeing one side of the story. They should keep an open mind as to whether the side they are hearing/seeing is colored by the narrator's descriptions or opinions.

**Protagonist:** The protagonist of a story is its central character.

**Setting:** The time and place of a story.

**Simile:** A simile is a comparison of two things, using the word **like** or **as**.

**Stereotyping:** Stereotyping refers to thinking that all people in a certain groups have the same characteristics.

**Symbolism:** Symbolism occurs when one thing represents something else.

### Literary Devices—Definitions and Examples

**Allusion:** An allusion is a reference to a historical or literary person, place or thing.

In the sentence "The reason every eye was on [Uncle Daniel] was not just because he was **rich as Croesus** now..." the allusion is to Croesus, the last king of Lydia (circa 560-546 B.C.), who supposedly obtained a great deal of money and loot in his various conquests.

"There was **Bedlam**" alludes to the nickname for London's Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, an insane asylum.

**Climax:** The climax is the high point or turning point of a story. While most critics say that the climax of **The Ponder Heart** comes at the end of the trial, students may wish to debate this point.

**Dialect:** A dialect is a type of language spoken by one particular group of people. The Mississippi or southern dialect is evident throughout **The Ponder Heart**.

**Idioms:** Idioms are words or expressions that are common to a particular part of the country. The use of southern idioms is one of the charms of **The Ponder Heart**. Below is a list of some of the idioms used in the novella or film. See if you can identify what is meant by these idioms, and then put a check beside the ones that are used in your part of the country. As you read or watch **The Ponder Heart**, make note of other idioms that are used.

- 1) Grandpa Ponder...might have...waked up to find himself in **too pretty a fix** to get out of
- 2) **Clear out**, you all
- 3) ... we **liked-to** caught up with each other
- 4) I was **liable** to have passed anybody
- 5) I'm **sizing you up** right now
- 6) the wrong element going **spang** through the middle of it at ninety miles an hour....
- 7) from the **word go**
- 8) He **commenced** slacking up on giving away....
- 9) whatever Uncle Daniel might **take it in his head** to tell you
- 10) oh, **foot**
- 11) we were all having a **conniption fit**
- 12) if you **light out**
- 13) stay **til the cows come home**
- 14) I'm **fixing** to be strict
- 15) What Uncle Daniel told me he didn't **take** to
- 16) Uncle Daniel **moseyed** down the street
- 17) **batting her eyes**
- 18) Narciss **lightfooted** it out to the barn
- 19) ...he **ate me out of house and home**

20) He appeared every night, ...**sure as shooting**

21) He appeared every morning **to boot**

22) I'd been **about to** forget it

23) He came...**lickety-split** to tell me

24) the town was **jam-packed**

25) **everybody and his brother** was on hand

26) I wore this dress—I wear it for **everyday**, now

27) You don't mean she's **flew the coop**?

28) You and them are both **done for**

Idioms: the "translations"

1) **too pretty a fix** = too much of a predicament or dilemma

2) **clear out** = leave

3) **liked-to** = almost

4) **liable** = likely

5) **sizing you up** = evaluating you

6) **spang** = directly

7) **word go** = start

8) **commenced** = began

9) **take it in his head** = decide

10) **foot** = darn

11) **conniption fit** = tantrum

12) **light out** = leave quickly

13) **til the cows come home** = for a long time

14) **fixing** = going

15) **take to** = adjust

- 16) **moseyed** = sauntered, strolled
- 17) **batting her eyes** = flirting
- 18) **lightfooted** = ran quickly
- 19) **ate me out of house and home** = consumed much more than was normal
- 20) **sure as shooting** = without fail
- 21) **to boot** = also
- 22) **about to** = ready, likely to
- 23) **lickety-split** = quickly
- 24) **jam-packed** = crowded, congested
- 25) **everybody and his brother** = one and all
- 26) **everyday** = informal wear
- 27) **flew the coop** = ran away ("flown the coop" and "run away" would be more grammatically correct in the usage from the novella)
- 28) **done for** = ruined, defeated

**Metaphor:** A metaphor is a comparison without using **like** or **as**. Two metaphors in **The Ponder Heart** are the following:

"...Johnnie Ree, in her little mosquito voice..."

Speaking of DeYancey Clanahan, Edna Earle notes, "He was [Uncle Daniel's] shadow!"

**Narrator:** The narrator is the person telling the story. In **The Ponder Heart**, the narrator is Edna Earle Ponder. Readers/viewers should remember that they are only hearing or seeing one side of the story. Because of this, they should keep an open mind as to whether the side they are hearing/seeing is biased by the narrator's descriptions or opinions.

**Protagonist:** The protagonist of a story is its central character. Most students would agree that Edna Earle is the protagonist of this story, although a case can be made that the protagonist is actually Uncle Daniel.

**Setting:** The time and place of a story. **The Ponder Heart** is set in the fictional town of Clay, Mississippi in the 1940s.

**Similes:** Similes are comparisons using **like** or **as**. Note that **The Ponder Heart** is also rich in similes. Some similes are heard so often, however, that they are also **clichés** (expressions that are overused). These clichés include "good as gold," "white as a ghost," "red as beets" and "dead as a doornail." Below is a partial list of similes that are not clichés. Note that the sentences are paraphrased to avoid stilted punctuation.

- 1) Edna Earle describes Bonnie Dee's hair as being like one of those dandelion puff balls you can blow and tell the time by.
- 2) DeYancey says Bonnie Dee had a nasturtium in her mouth like a pipe.
- 3) Uncle Daniel used to look like a Senator.
- 4) Bonnie Dee just sat and picked at the Beulah food like a canary bird.
- 5) Bonnie Dee's tiny as a fairy and pretty as a doll.
- 6) Mrs. Peacock was big and fat as a row of pigs.
- 7) Old Man Peacock had a face as red as a tom turkey.
- 8) She'd gone to cover like a chicken in the daytime when something comes over the sun.
- 9) If you've never seen a ball of fire go out through bead curtains, it goes as light as a butterfly with wings.

**Stereotyping:** Stereotyping refers to thinking that all people in a certain groups have the same characteristics. There are numerous examples of both racial stereotyping and religious stereotyping in **The Ponder Heart**.

**Symbolism:** Symbolism occurs when one thing represents something else. It should be noted that Eudora Welty seems to think that study of symbolism in her works is often taken too far. For instance, she notes in **Conversations with Eudora Welty** that the name Narciss is not symbolic, and she further says that she feels "rather helpless" when she sees articles like "The Symbols in Eudora Welty's Works" (p. 52).

### Vocabulary List

Taken from dialogue in the novella, here is a list of words and phrases that students may find difficult to understand as they read the novella.

#### A – L

**abhor** = hate, detest

**antimacassar** = a cover protecting the back or arms of furniture

**ascribe** = credit, attribute, assign

**bane** = curse, plague

**beamed** = smiled

**Bedlam** = a scene of confusion or uproar

**billy** = a male goat

**brooder** = a heated building for raising fowl

**calomel** = a white compound used as a fungicide, an insecticide and a purgative

**chinaberries** = a small tree used for shade or ornament in the southern US

**commiserating** = showing compassion or sympathy

**consigned** = transferred a person to his/her destination

**constitution** = physical nature, health

**continental** = the least bit

**countenance** = expression, appearance

**cringed** = winced, flinched

**cronies** = pals, associates, companions  
**dallied** = loitered, wasted time  
**divinity** = a soft, creamy type of candy  
**docket** = agenda, schedule  
**drummer** = a traveling salesman  
**esteem** = high regard  
**Eureka** = an expression used when something has been found or discovered  
**extinct** = extinguished, put out  
**fan-tail pigeons** = domestic pigeons with rounded tails having thirty or forty feathers  
**Fatima** = a type of cigar  
**galvanized** = spirited, excited  
**ice man** = in days before refrigerators, a man who sold or delivered ice  
**impervious** = unaffected, indifferent  
**incubator** = an apparatus for hatching eggs  
**indignant** = righteously angry, upset  
**induce** = persuade  
**innumerable** = countless  
**jurisprudence** = time sitting on the bench  
**kin** = relatives  
**lightning rod** = a metal rod on the top of a building; used to divert lightning from the building

## M – Z

**malaria** = a disease caused by parasites in the red blood cells and transmitted by mosquitoes  
**means** = resources, device  
**mirable dictu** = from the Latin, "wonderful to relate"  
**mirate** = to be in wonder of  
**misadventure** = accident, catastrophe  
**moguls** = great, notable persons  
**momentous** = important, eventful  
**nasturtiums** = showy ornamental flowers  
**palmetto** = a low-growing palm  
**panama** = a lightweight hat made of plaited strips of natural-colored straw  
**paregoric** = a tincture used to relieve pain  
**plausible** = convincing, credible, believable  
**portulaca** = a succulent plant with showy flowers  
**premonition** = omen, warning, forecast  
**pullets** = young hens  
**quandary** = dilemma, predicament  
**quinine** = medicine used to treat malaria  
**regalia** = special dress; finery  
**retroactive** = covering the time already passed  
**running board** = a footboard on the side of a car  
**sashayed** = strutted, pranced, flounced  
**Shetland pony** = a small hardy pony; the breed originated in the Shetland Islands  
**smidgen** = a very little bit  
**spiel** = extravagant talk, chatter  
**Stetson hat** = a cowboy hat with a broad brim and a high, soft crown  
**subsides** = becomes quiet  
**tangent** = a change of course in discussion; a digression  
**throttle** = a valve regulating fuel vapor entering a car's engine  
**timepiece** = a watch or clock  
**Tom Thumb wedding** = a kind of miniature "wedding," used as a social event, in which a small boy and girl dress up as a bride and groom  
**tongue-tied** = unable to speak

**traipse** = walk without any apparent reason

**transpires** = happens, takes place

**valedictorian** = a student with the highest rank in a graduating class

**vamoosed** = departed quickly

**verbena** = a garden plant with a long growing season; known for its showy flowers

**voile** = a soft fabric used especially for women's summer clothing

**whit** = little bit, particle

Susan Thurman teaches at Henderson College in Kentucky.