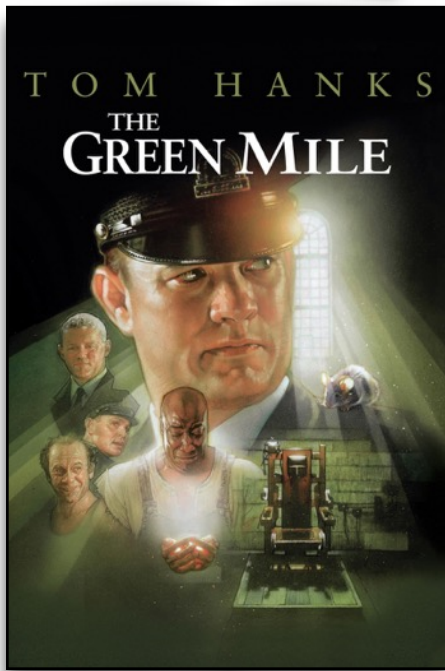




## THE GREEN MILE #1


## « DEAD MAN WALKING! »



This happened in 1932, when the state penitentiary was still at Cold Mountain. And the electric chair was there, too, of course. The inmates made jokes about the chair, the way people always make jokes about things that frighten them but can't be gotten away from. They called it Old Sparky, or the Big Juicy. They made cracks about the power bill, and how Warden Moores would cook his Thanksgiving dinner that fall, with his wife, Melinda, too sick to cook.

But for the ones who actually had to sit down in that chair, the humor went out of the situation in a hurry. I presided over seventy-eight executions during my time at Cold Mountain (that's one figure I've never been confused about; I'll remember it on my deathbed), and I think that, for most of those men, the truth of what was happening to them finally hit all the way home when their ankles were being clamped to the stout oak of "Old Sparky's" legs. The realization came then (you would see it rising in their eyes, a kind of cold dismay) that their own legs had finished their careers. The blood still ran in them, the muscles were still strong, but they were finished, all the same; they were never going to walk another country mile or dance with a girl at a barn-raising. Old Sparky's clients came to a knowledge of their deaths from the ankles up. There was a black silk bag that went over their heads after they had finished their rambling and mostly disjointed last remarks. It was supposed to be for them, but I always thought: it was really for us, to keep us from seeing the awful tide of dismay in their eyes as they realized they were going to die with their knees bent.

1932 was the year of John Coffey. The details would be in the papers, still there for anyone who cared enough to look them out - someone with more energy than one very old man whittling away the end of his life in a Georgia nursing home. That was a hot fall, I remember that; very hot, indeed. October almost like August, and the warden's wife, Melinda, up in the hospital at Indianola for a spell. It was the fall I had the worst urinary infection of my life, not bad enough to put me in the hospital myself, but almost bad enough for me to wish I was dead every time I took a leak. It was the fall of Delacroix, the little half-bald Frenchman with the mouse, the one that came in the summer and did that cute trick with the spool. Mostly, though, it was the fall that John Coffey came to E Block, sentenced to death for the rape-murder of the Detterick twins.



1. Introduce the document
2. Analyse the situation and find elements about WHO - WHEN - WHERE
3. What is « Old Sparky »?
  - Why is it called this way?
4. Describe the feelings of « those who had to sit down on that chair »
5. Who is John Coffey?
  - Say everything you can about him.
6. What can you say about Percy's attitude?

John Coffey was black, like most of the men who came to stay for awhile in E Block before dying in Old Sparky's lap, and he stood six feet, eight inches tall. He wasn't all willowy like the TV basketball fellows, though - he was broad in the shoulders and deep through the chest, laced over with muscle in every direction. They'd put him in the biggest denims they could find in Stores, and still the cuffs of the pants rode halfway up on his bunched and scarred calves. The shirt was open to below his chest, and the sleeves stopped somewhere on his forearms. He was holding his cap in one huge hand, which was just as well; perched on his bald mahogany ball of a head. He looked like he could have snapped the chains that held him as easily as you might snap the ribbons on a Christmas present, but when you looked in his face, you knew he wasn't going to do anything like that.

"Dead man walking!" Percy trumpeted, hauling on that bear of a man's wristcuff, as if he really believed he could move him if Coffey decided he didn't want to move anymore on his own. Harry didn't say anything, but he looked embarrassed. "Dead man---!" "That'll be enough of that," I said. I was in what was going to be Coffey's cell, sitting on his bunk. I'd known he was coming, of course, was there to welcome him and take charge of him, but had no idea of the man's pure size until I saw him.

Stephen KING, *The Green Mile*, 1996