

Sounder



By

William H. Armstrong

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

Sounder

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This 68 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one chapter of **Sounder** and is comprised of these different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include poverty, justice, societal prejudice, courage and sacrifice, the importance of friends and family, love conquers all, perseverance, overcoming difficulty.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Working with anagrams.
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel.
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card

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Synopsis

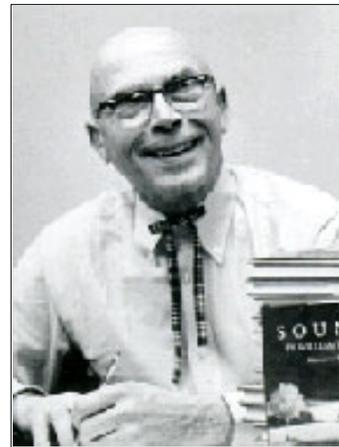
Sounder, a landmark in children's literature, traces the keen sorrow and the abiding faith of a poor African-American boy in the nineteenth-century South. The boy's father is a sharecropper struggling to feed his family in hard times. Night after night, he and his great coon dog, Sounder, return to the cabin empty-handed. Then, one morning, almost like a miracle, a sweet-smelling ham is cooking and the family will have a good meal. But that night, an angry sheriff and his deputies come, and the boy's life will never be the same.

Author Biography

William H. Armstrong

William Howard Armstrong was born in Lexington, Virginia in 1914 during the worst hailstorm and tornado in the memory of his neighbors. He was the third child born to Howard Gratton Armstrong, a farmer, and his wife, Ida Morris Armstrong. He had a difficult time in school, being a small child with asthma and glasses.

After growing up on a farm near Lexington, Armstrong graduated from the Augusta Military Academy. He attended Hampden-Sydney College where Armstrong wrote for the college's newspaper and its literary magazine, and even served as the magazine's editor. He graduated cum laude in 1936, then continued his higher education with graduate work at the University of Virginia. He farmed in Connecticut near the Housatonic River, also learning to be a carpenter and a stonemason. In 1945, he became a history master at Kent School in Kent, Connecticut, where he remained for fifty-two years, teaching general studies and ancient history to generations of ninth grade students.



[biography courtesy of Wikipedia]

Sounder



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Name: _____

Sounder

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main (human) protagonist of *Sounder* is a young boy, whose name is never revealed to us by the author. In fact the only character named in the book is the family dog, Sounder. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting protagonist?

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Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

| | | | | |
|------------|------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| punctuated | successive | heritage | quarry | sustained |
| precision | cavity | addled | embraced | scythe |

1. The old woman _____ her husband in front of all of her grandchildren.
2. The Pittsburgh Penguins were _____ champions in 1991 and 1992.
3. Do you think the lawyer can keep up _____ pressure on the witness?
4. His speech was _____ by loud comments from the unruly audience.
5. The bump on his head caused my brother to become quite _____ for a time.
6. A patient in surgery relies on the _____ of the surgeon.
7. The farmer removed the _____ from the barn and began the harvest.
8. No one expected the _____ under the house to be as deep as it was.
9. Not many people of this generation value their family’s _____ anymore.
10. The big hound corned his _____ in the gravel pit.

Questions



1. As was mentioned earlier, only the dog is actually given a name in this novel. Why do you think the novelist did not reveal the names of any other characters?

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2. Describe the **setting** of Chapter One.

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3. What two factors discouraged the boy from attending school?

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| 1 | |
| | |
| 2 | |
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4. Think of three appropriate adjectives to describe Sounder (either his appearance or personality):

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5. When trailing his quarry, why did Sounder become quiet as he approached his prey?

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6. Why don't animals move very much when it's windy?

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7. What crisis did the family face, and how did the father relieve this crisis?

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8. The author says that the boy *heard the deep concerned breathing of terror above the sound of the humming*. What do you think caused the woman to be so afraid?

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9. What did the boy think would prevent him from being lonesome – even if his mother didn't sing?

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Good to Know – The Walnut

The walnut fruit is enclosed by a leathery, inedible husk. The removal of the husk reveals the hard, wrinkly walnut shell which is in two halves. The kernel is made of two halves separated by a partition – these seed kernels are enclosed by a brown coat which contains antioxidants. The antioxidants protect the oil-rich seed from atmospheric oxygen.



Language Activities



A. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is “... scattered the cabins ... like flyspecks on a whitewashed ceiling.”

What two things are being compared in this example?

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Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something else.

a) the sound of waves on the seashore

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b) a creaking floorboard

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Bonus: Keep your eye open for another example of a **simile** as you read the novel. When you find one, remember to come back and enter it here

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B. Your Favorite Genre Of Books

Sunder is a very popular adventure novel. What genre of books do you enjoy the most? (i.e. mystery, humor, biography, romance, fantasy, historical fiction, science fiction, poetry, etc.) Why do you especially enjoy this type of book?



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C. The Quatrain Poem.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain is the first four lines from a poem called **My Doggie, Clark**, written by the famous poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*My doggie, Clark, he sings to me,
When I'm awake at night.
He keeps the prowlers far away,
His bark's worse than his bite.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - B - C - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBA, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first seven chapters of our novel.

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

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D. Racism in all its ugliness is a large part of this novel. Eliminate the following letters from the puzzle to reveal the secret message written by Rosa Parks : **Z, X, Q, K,**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Z | R | A | C | I | S | M | X | I | S | Q | S | T | I | L | L | X | Z | Q | K |
| Q | K | W | I | T | H | Q | U | S | Q | B | U | T | Z | I | T | Q | I | S | X |
| U | P | Z | T | O | Q | U | S | X | T | O | Q | P | R | E | P | A | R | E | K |
| K | Q | O | U | R | X | C | H | I | L | D | R | E | N | K | Z | X | Q | K | X |
| X | F | O | R | K | W | H | A | T | K | T | H | E | Y | Q | W | I | L | L | Q |
| Q | Z | X | M | E | E | T | X | A | N | D | K | X | Q | K | X | Q | Z | X | K |
| K | H | O | P | E | F | U | L | L | Y | Q | W | E | K | Z | K | Z | Q | K | Z |
| Z | X | S | H | A | L | L | Q | O | V | E | R | C | O | M | E | K | X | K | Q |

Answer:

E. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **PAN** can also form the word **NAP**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



- a) read the clue in the right-hand column.
- b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters.

Each of the words in the left-hand column is found in the first chapter of our novel.

| Word | Anagram | Clue |
|-------|---------|----------------------|
| forth | | Agitation of bubbles |
| stove | | Elects |
| cents | | Odor: smell |
| treed | | Discourage |
| stalk | | Speaks |
| lips | | A speech impediment |

Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of *Sunder*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |