

Shiloh Lesson Plan Ideas

LESSON 1

Response to Literature: Reading Log Options

GOAL: To review reading log options; to provide a model of fluent reading; to consider how the author establishes setting

ASSIGNED READING: Chapters 1–2

DISCUSSION TOPICS & QUESTIONS: Prediction: Do you think Marty will try to help Shiloh? If so, how? Compare and Contrast: How is Marty different from his sister Dara Lynn? How are they similar? Character Map: Make a character map for Marty.

Read Chapter 1 aloud to the class. This will provide a model of fluent reading for the students and will get them excited about reading the rest of the story. *Shiloh* is written in the dialect of rural West Virginia, and reading the first chapter aloud will also introduce students to the unique sound and rhythm of this dialect.

Before students begin reading Chapter 2 independently, review some of the options they have for responding in their logs. Three of these options—Prediction, Compare and Contrast, and Character Map—are covered in today's Writing Prompt.

Note: If your class is new to Book Club, you may want to devote part of this day's lesson to reviewing the behaviors that contribute to a good small-group discussion. See Lesson 4 of this lesson plan for teaching ideas on this topic.

After students have read Chapter 2, written in their logs, and met with their book club groups, bring the class together for community share. Discuss what students have written in their logs and talked about in their book clubs.

During community share, you might also wish to discuss the setting of *Shiloh* and how the author establishes this setting. Ask students where the story takes place (in which U.S. state? in a rural or an urban area?) and when (a long time ago? in the present? in the future?). Have them back up their statements with specific evidence from the book.

LESSON 2

Literary Elements: Author's Craft—Characterization

GOAL: To analyze how the author reveals her characters

ASSIGNED READING: Chapters 3–4

DISCUSSION TOPICS & QUESTIONS: What do Marty's words and actions in Chapters 3 and 4 tell you about him? What do Judd's words and actions reveal about him? Describe Marty's relationship with his mother. In what ways do Marty and his dad disagree about Shiloh? In what ways do they agree?

Begin today's Book Club session with a brief lesson about characterization. Remind students that an author can tell readers what a character is like by describing what the character looks like, what he or she says and does, and how he or she interacts with other characters. Students who made character maps for Marty yesterday may want to share these. Talk about what the students know about Marty and how they know it, based on evidence from the book.

After students have met with their book clubs, have a community share discussion about the main characters in *Shiloh*. Students who responded to the writing prompts should have some new insights to share. Encourage students to back up their opinions with evidence from the book. This exercise will help them appreciate the author's craft.

While discussing Marty, you might point out this paragraph in Chapter 4 (page 42 in the Yearling Newbery edition):

And the way [Shiloh's] eyes look at me then, the way he reaches up and licks my face, it's like it seals the promise. I'd made a promise to Judd Travers I wasn't going to keep, Jesus help me. But I'm making one to Shiloh that I *will*, God strike me dead.

Ask students to analyze what this paragraph reveals about Marty.

LESSON 3

Comprehension: Concept Web About Honesty

GOAL: To draw on students' background knowledge about honesty and to explore the concept in relation to the book

ASSIGNED READING: Chapters 5–6

DISCUSSION TOPICS & QUESTIONS: How is Marty's secret growing? Why does he have to keep telling more lies? Is Marty an honest person? Explain why. Does Marty feel sorry for Judd? Do you? Why?

Begin a concept web on the chalkboard with the word *honesty* in the center. (You can use the word *integrity* if your students are familiar enough with it.) Ask students to brainstorm all of their associations with this word. If necessary, prompt them with questions such as: What does an honest person say when you ask her a question? Would you trust an honest person? What would an honest person do if he made a promise? Does an honest person have a strong sense of right and wrong?

Tell the class that honesty is one of the major themes of *Shiloh*—that is, the author is conveying a message about honesty through her story. Suggest that students keep this theme and the related ideas from the concept web in mind as they do today's reading.

During community share, return to the theme of honesty and ask students to share what they wrote in their logs and talked about in their book clubs. Guide students to appreciate the complexity of Marty's situation and his internal debate about right and wrong. This issue is brought out very poignantly through Marty's prayer in Chapter 6 (Yearling Newbery, page 57), in which he asks Jesus whether it's better to be "one hundred percent honest" and return Shiloh to an abusive master or to protect and care for one of the Lord's creatures. You might take a class vote on the question of whether or not Marty is an honest person and ask students to explain their opinions.

LESSON 4

Language Conventions: Elements of a Good Book Club Discussion

GOAL: To review the behaviors that promote successful book club discussions

ASSIGNED READING: Chapters 7–8

DISCUSSION TOPICS & QUESTIONS: How would you describe the Prestons' community? What does all the food that Dad finds in the mailboxes show about the community? How is David's family different from Marty's? Marty says that his secret about Shiloh is "like a time bomb waiting to go off." What do you think he means?

Discuss with students the behaviors that contribute to a good book club discussion. Ask them to recall some of their past experiences in book clubs and other discussion groups and to think about what made the experiences good or bad. On chart paper, create a two-column chart with the headings "Qualities of a good group" and "Qualities to avoid in groups." Have students brainstorm items to add to the chart. (Note: Guidelines for successful book club discussions are outlined in *Book Club: A Literature-Based Curriculum*.) Suggest that students keep these positive behaviors in mind when they meet with their book clubs today. Keep the chart posted in the classroom so that students can refer back to it.

Remind students that having good conversations in their book clubs requires commitment and practice. Suggest that they keep in mind the behaviors that they brainstormed as they meet with their book clubs today.

Because good small-group discussions are so central to the success of Book Club, you'll probably want to make a special effort to monitor and assess students' progress in this area. Some Book Club teachers use a tape recorder to record individual book clubs so that they can listen to the groups at a later time. (You can rotate the tape recorder between groups over a two- or three-day period.) Use of the tape recorder also puts a little added pressure on students to participate, which tends to promote better conversations.

During community share, discuss the issues that came up in students' book clubs and also how well their discussions met the criteria that the class outlined earlier. You might wish to have students write assessments of their book club performance, giving themselves and their groups letter grades and explaining why they earned those grades.

LESSON 5

Response to Literature: Issues of Right and Wrong

GOAL: To explore students' responses to the complex moral issues presented in the book

ASSIGNED READING: Chapters 9–10

DISCUSSION TOPICS & QUESTIONS: Why do you think Ma agrees not to tell Dad about Shiloh for one day? How does Dad feel when he finds out that Marty has been lying? How would you feel in his place? Why do you think Dad agrees to keep Marty's secret until Shiloh is healed?

Students have already explored the issue of honesty in Lesson 3. Today's reading further explores the moral dimensions of Marty's situation. You might prepare students for reading with a brief discussion about what makes certain actions right or wrong. Ask them to rank the following in order of moral importance: following the law, being "one hundred percent honest," obeying one's parents, doing what one feels is right. Help them see that real-life situations can be so complex that it's not always possible to establish rigid guidelines in advance.

During community share, bring students' attention back to the issue of right versus wrong. Ask them to list the factors that make Marty's situation so complicated. Lead them to see that some questions are simply too complex to have definite answers. This point is made when Dad tells Marty, "I want you to do what's right," and Marty stumps him with the question, "What's right?" (Yearling Newbery, page 94).

When a person believes that someone else will do the right thing, we say that there is trust between the two people. Use students' reading log responses as a springboard to discuss trust as a bond that holds people together—in families and in communities. Point out the

relationships that are threatened by Marty's secret: Marty's relationship with his parents, Marty's relationship with David, Ma and Dad's relationship, the family's relationship with Judd and with the rest of the community. Ask students how they feel when someone they trust lets them down in some way. How can such an injury to a relationship be healed?

LESSON 6

Literary Elements: Point of View

GOAL: To review what point of view is; to analyze how Marty's point of view affects the telling of this story

ASSIGNED READING: Chapters 11–12

DISCUSSION TOPICS & QUESTIONS: How do you think Marty feels about sharing Shiloh with his family and friends? How does Judd feel when he finds out that Marty has had his dog all along? What do you think Marty will do once Shiloh is healed and must go back to Judd?

Review point of view with students. Remind them that a story can be told from the first-person point of view (in which the narrator is a character in the story and refers to himself or herself as "I") or from the third-person point of view (in which the narrator is not a character in the story). Point of view also refers to how the beliefs and feelings of the narrator affect how a story is told.

Make sure students understand that Marty is the first-person narrator of *Shiloh*. Ask them to think about how Marty's point of view—his opinions and feelings about everything that happens—comes across in Chapters 11 and 12.

During community share, have students share what they wrote in their logs and discussed in their book clubs. Focus the discussion on point of view again, and ask them how they think the story would be different if it were told from Judd's point of view. How does Judd's sense of right and wrong differ from Marty's? How does he view Marty's decision to keep Shiloh away from him? What might readers learn about Judd if he were the narrator of the story?

You might point out to students that Phyllis Reynolds Naylor has avoided making the villain of this story completely evil; instead she allows readers to see Judd's human side. One example is when Judd tells Marty how his father used to beat him. Another is when Judd finds out that everyone has been keeping secrets from him and seems wounded by this betrayal.

As an extension activity, students could rewrite a scene from *Shiloh* from the point of view of another character besides Marty.

LESSON 7

Literary Elements: Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action

GOAL: To review the basic structure of a story and apply this structure to *Shiloh*

ASSIGNED READING: Chapters 13–14

DISCUSSION TOPICS & QUESTIONS: Do you think Marty is "crazy" for talking to Judd the way he does? What makes him feel brave? Is making a deal with Judd the right thing for Marty to do? Why do you think so? Do you predict that Judd will honor his agreement with Marty? Why?

Review with students the basic structure of a story: rising action, climax, and falling action. If necessary, explain that every story has a central conflict or problem, and that the climax of the story is when the problem is solved. The events leading up to the climax, called the rising action, create a feeling of suspense because the reader wonders how the problem will be solved. The events after the climax, called the falling action, tell how any remaining issues are resolved. You might draw a graph on the chalkboard to illustrate these story elements, giving a familiar story as an example. (Fairy tales often provide simple examples of this structure.)

Ask students what they think is the central problem in *Shiloh*. Suggest that they keep this problem in mind as they continue reading and that they look for a climactic scene in which the problem is solved.

During community share, ask students whether they think the events in Chapters 13 and 14 represent the climax of this story. If necessary, prompt them with questions such as: What has prevented Marty from owning Shiloh since the beginning of the book? Was there ever any hope that Judd would simply let Marty buy Shiloh? What happened in today's reading that changed Marty's situation? Is his problem solved now? (Note: Although there are still some doubts in Marty's mind that Judd will honor their agreement, Marty now has information that he can bargain with. Up until this point in the story, he has had only his love for Shiloh, which means nothing to Judd.)

Once your class has reached agreement about the climax of the story, you might ask students what issues still remain to be resolved in the final chapter. Students can share any predictions that they recorded in their reading logs.

LESSON 8

Response to Literature: Feelings About the Book

GOAL: To explore students' emotional responses to the book; to analyze characters' motivations; to make intertextual connections

ASSIGNED READING: Chapter 15

DISCUSSION TOPICS & QUESTIONS: Why do you think Judd makes Marty work so hard? What do you think finally causes Judd to honor his agreement? How did you feel at the end of this book? Were your feelings anything like Marty's? Compare and contrast *Shiloh* with another book or movie you know.

One idea that we hope all Book Club students will take away from the program is that their personal responses to literature are valued and important. This lesson, which focuses on students' emotional responses to *Shiloh*, is an opportunity for you to make this idea clear to your class.

Ask students whether they have found *Shiloh* to be an emotionally powerful story. Ask volunteers who answered yes to explain how the story has made them feel and why. Then ask the class whether they think the author wanted her readers to feel something when they read this story, and why. Reinforce the idea that many writers aim to create certain feelings in their readers, and that these feelings are an important part of the reading

experience. By thinking about how a story makes us feel, we can understand the story better and get more out of reading it.

During community share, ask volunteers to share their feelings about the end of the story. Emphasize that there is no right way to feel, and that good literature causes different readers to feel different emotions (just as real-life experiences do).

Depending on your class and your curricular goals, you may also want to discuss intertextuality and/or character motivation at this point. (You could extend your study of *Shiloh* by an extra day or two to cover these topics.) A child's relationship with an animal is a common theme in juvenile literature, and students will probably have plenty of other literary experiences with which to make intertextual connections. The final chapter of *Shiloh* is such an interesting character study that you may also wish to allot some time to discussing Judd's motivation for trying to make Marty break their agreement.