



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Biggler

Patricia Calvert

READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Biggger

Patricia Calvert

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Classifying and categorizing,
comparing and contrasting,
evaluating, making judgments,
decision making

Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion,
participation in dramatic activities,
interpretation of event

Literary Elements

Character, plot development,
figurative language, cliffhanger,
personification, motivation, persuasion

Writing

Journal/diary, letters, quatrain poetry,
cinquain poetry, lists, research
reports, descriptions, dialogue, print
media articles

Vocabulary

Use and effectiveness of words,
synonyms, alphabetizing and defining,
word comparisons, root/base words,
target words, sorting

Comprehension

Predicting, comparing, story mapping,
attribute webbing, substituting

Summary of *Bigger*

It is 1865 and the war is over. It has been four years since John Bohannon rode off to join the men in gray of the Iron Cavalry Brigade of Missouri. When a stranger stops for food and shelter at the Bohannon cabin and tells of General Shelby's plan to take the Iron Cavalry Brigade to Mexico, Tyler decides that he must know if his father is dead or alive. If John Bohannon is alive, twelve-year-old Tyler intends to tell his father that he is needed at home. Tyler is joined on his long trek by a dog that he names Bigger. Bigger, with his one brown eye and one blue eye, listens as Tyler reads aloud his father's letters home. The two walk over eight hundred miles only to discover a changed John Bohannon, who is following a dream that he cannot relinquish, no matter what the cost. Tyler and Bigger return to Missouri, where they are cruelly separated. Bigger is shot by his former owner. Tyler's heart finally breaks, as he returns home with only memories of his father and of his faithful friend, Bigger.

About the Author

Patricia Calvert was born July 22, 1931, in Great Falls, Montana. She attended Winona State University, B.A., 1976, graduate study, 1976. She has held a variety of jobs. Although she knew at the age of ten that she wanted to be a writer, it was not until her own children had grown up that she was able to begin writing the books she wanted to write. Raised in rural Montana during the Great Depression, Calvert wants to pass on her philosophy to her young readers: "No matter how young one is, it is sometimes necessary to declare to the world *I am accountable.*"

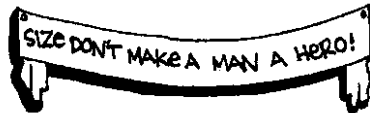
Background Information

Joseph Orville Shelby, (1830-1897):

Born in Kentucky to a wealthy and prominent family of planters and manufacturers, Shelby moved to Missouri in 1849. During the next decade, Shelby became one of the wealthiest landowners in Missouri. In the border troubles between Missouri and Kansas, he supported the pro-slavery faction.

When the Civil War broke out, Shelby joined the Confederate side, organizing his own cavalry company and accepting a commission as captain in the Missouri State Guard. He was one of the Confederacy's most effective cavalry leaders, serving in the Trans-Mississippi West. As a company commander, he fought at Carthage, Wilson's Creek and Pea Ridge. As a colonel in charge of a brigade in John S. Marmaduke's mounted division, he fought at Prairie Grove and was wounded at Helena. Upon his recovery, he was promoted to brigadier general and led a brigade at Jenkins' Ferry. During Price's invasion of Missouri in the late summer and fall of 1864, he led a cavalry division.

When the Confederacy's collapse came, Shelby refused to surrender and led about six hundred former Confederates into Mexico. In return for land to establish a Confederate colony, Shelby offered to provide some military support for the Emperor Maximilian. When Maximilian was executed in 1867, Shelby returned to Missouri, where he took up his life as a planter. In 1893, President Cleveland appointed Shelby a Federal marshal, thereby giving the former Confederate a kind of "official pardon."



Note:

It is not intended that everything presented in this guide be done. Please be selective, and use discretion when choosing the activities you will do with the unit. The choices that are made should be appropriate for your use and your group of students. A wide range of activities has been provided so that individuals as well as groups may benefit.

Initiating Activities

1. Previewing: Look at the cover of the book. What has the cover artist chosen to tell about the story? At what time of the year do you think the story takes place? What do you think is the setting of the story? At what time in history do you think the story takes place? What do you think the relationship between the boy and the dog might be? What do you predict the story will be about?
2. Bulletin Board: Form groups of students with similar interests to use a bulletin board to go with the area of study.

For example:

A. Learn About the Confederate States of America

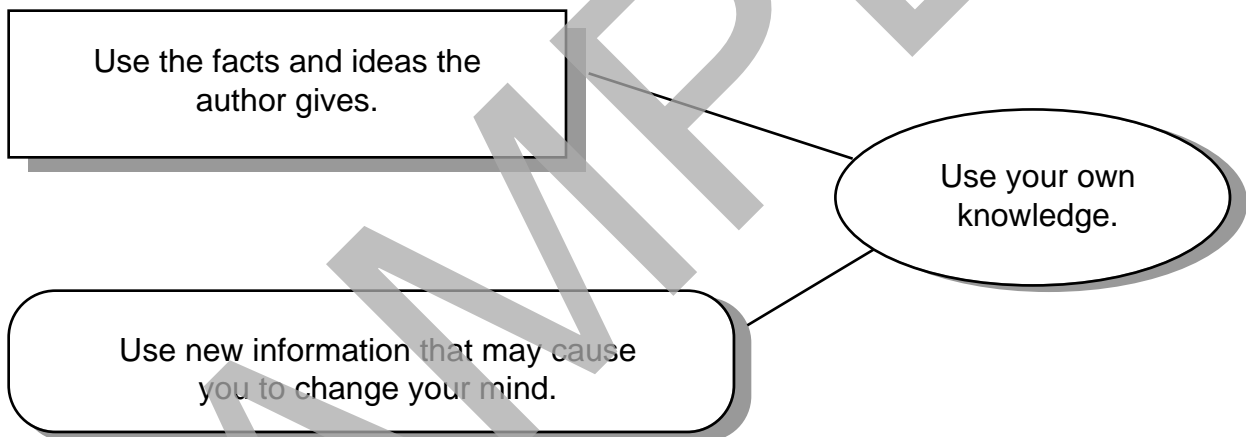
- a) Constitution
- b) Government Leaders
- c) Military Leaders
- d) Significant Battles

B. Record Tyler's journey from Missouri to the border of Texas and Mexico. Place a large map on the board. Follow Tyler's journey on the map. Note stops made and anything of interest and/or significance to the story.

Using Predictions in the Novel Unit Approach

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how the conflict will be resolved, which details given by the author will be important to the plot, which details will help to fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses. As students work on predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give us to help us in making our predictions? Why are some predictions more likely than others?

A predicting chart is for students to record their predictions. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, you can review and correct previous predictions. This procedure serves to focus on predictions and to review the stories.



Prediction Chart

| What characters have we met so far? | What is the conflict in the story? | What are your predictions? | Why did you make those predictions? |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | | |

-
2. Where does the stranger tell the Bohannons that General Shelby is going to go? *(Page 11, The stranger tells the Bohannons that General Shelby is going to Mexico and will cross the Rio Grande in Texas.)*
 3. What is Shelby's plan? *(Page 12, The soldiers cannot be taken prisoner by the Union once they are in Mexico. While there, the general hopes to get enough men to come back to wage war against the Union again.)*
 4. What does the stranger give to Tyler? Why? *(Page 14, The stranger gives Tyler an old tattered map. Tyler has been asking the stranger questions pertaining to travel to Mexico.)*
 5. What do you think is Tyler's dream? *(last paragraph, page 14) Explain.*

Supplementary Activities:

1. Start a character attribute web for Tyler. Add to the web as the story continues.
2. When Mama remarks to the stranger that General Shelby would not be excluded from those being allowed to go back to leading "regular lives" after the war, the stranger tells Mrs. Bohannon, "But some men don't give up their dreams as easy as others." (page 10) What do you think the stranger means by this statement? Would you use the term "dreams" in this instance? Why or why not? Explain.
3. Write a description of the stranger.

Chapter 3: Pages 15-23

Summary:

In the morning, the Bohannons discover that the stranger has gone. Tyler finishes his chores and takes Lucas fishing. The next morning, Tyler collects a few things and prepares to go in search of his father. He waits for his mother to get up, so he can share his plans with her. Tyler is determined to know his father's fate. More than anything, Tyler wants to find his father and bring him home.

Vocabulary:

predicted 15 clutches 18 flustered 18 aggie 18
countered 20

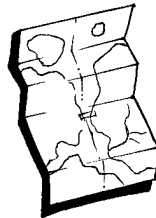
Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think the stranger leaves before any of the Bohannons are up in the morning? *(Opinion—answers will vary. Page 15, Tyler thinks the stranger leaves early because he wants to get home to his own family.)*

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2. What does Tyler take from the tin box under his bed on the morning he intends to start searching for his father? Why? (*Page 18, Tyler takes a pale, blue-white aggie because it is a lucky piece.*)
 3. Tyler gets up early on the day he intends to leave home. Why do you think he waits for his mother to get up before he departs? (*Page 19, Opinion—answers will vary.*)
 4. What is his mother's initial reaction when Tyler tells her that he intends to find his father and to tell him how much he is needed at home? (*Page 20, Mama's initial reaction is to tell Tyler, "If General Shelby leaves the country, your papa will go with him."*)
 5. What does Tyler think is really going through his mother's mind? (*Page 20, "One of my men left me and never came back; now another one is going to follow him."*)
 6. Why do you think Mama Bohannon changes her response to Tyler and tells him she thinks his father is dead? (*Opinion—answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities:

1. Start a story map of Tyler's journey to find his father. (A story map is an outline that helps the reader understand and remember the story better. As the story is read, more characters may be added and the setting and the problem may change, so additions may be made.)
2. Choose one of the Bohannons that Tyler leaves behind on the porch. Use prose or poetry to write out the thoughts that might be going through the mind of that person as Tyler leaves home.



Chapter 4: Pages 24-34

Summary:

Tyler's destination for his first day of travel is the home of his Uncle Matt, thirty miles from Sweet Creek. Along the way, Tyler reads a few lines from one of the letters his father has written to the family. As he approaches his uncle's home, Tyler notices a dog tied to a stake halfway between the house and the livery barn. Tyler is welcomed by his uncle, aunt, and his cousin Clayton. Uncle Matt warns Tyler about the dog, noting that the dog will be shot in the morning.

Vocabulary Word Search

Directions: Do the word search. Find the words that may be printed forwards, backwards, horizontally, vertically, and on a diagonal. Write down the letters that have not been used, starting at the top and working left to right in each row. Group the letters into words to find the hidden message.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | Y | L | S | E | R | M | O | O | C | H | I | N | G | T |
| R | M | C | A | O | N | H | W | P | L | U | M | E | D | R |
| B | P | I | L | C | R | I | E | A | G | D | A | F | T | A |
| G | R | E | L | O | O | G | T | U | R | T | A | D | R | N |
| G | E | F | I | I | S | M | H | R | M | I | N | D | B | S |
| U | D | L | S | A | T | U | P | U | A | Y | L | G | C | F |
| F | I | F | K | K | J | I | R | E | M | I | N | Y | N | I |
| F | C | L | U | A | C | E | A | E | L | I | P | E | K | X |
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AGGIE
BRUSQUE
CLOSURE
COMPELLING
DAFT
EXCLUDE
FLINT
GUFFAWING
MILITIA
MOOCHING
MUSED
OMINOUS
PALLET
PLUME
PREDICTED
QUEST
RHEUMY
SKULK
SLATHERING
SORGHUM
SULLEN
TAD
TINTYPE
TRAIPE
TRANSFIXED
TRELLIS
WARILY