



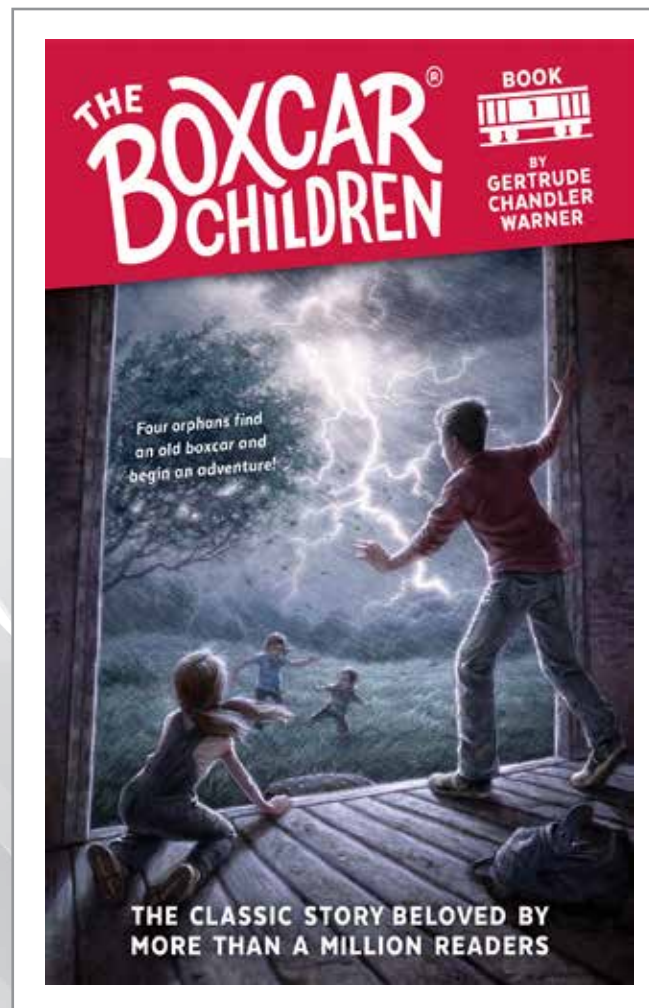
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Boxcar Children

Gertrude Chandler Warner



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Boxcar Children

Gertrude Chandler Warner

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

Compare/contrast, research,
brainstorming, analysis

Writing

How-to, poetry, creative,
narrative, descriptive,
recipes, songs

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral presentation,
drama, small group/partner
interaction

Comprehension

Decision-making, pros/cons,
predictions, evaluation

Vocabulary

Definitions, compound
words, spelling, application

Literary Elements

Plot, point of view,
characterization, setting,
figurative language

Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—geography,
heritage; Math—word
problems; Science—research,
plants, time line; Art—
collage, drawing, design,
puppets; Health—field day,
diet/nutrition

Summary

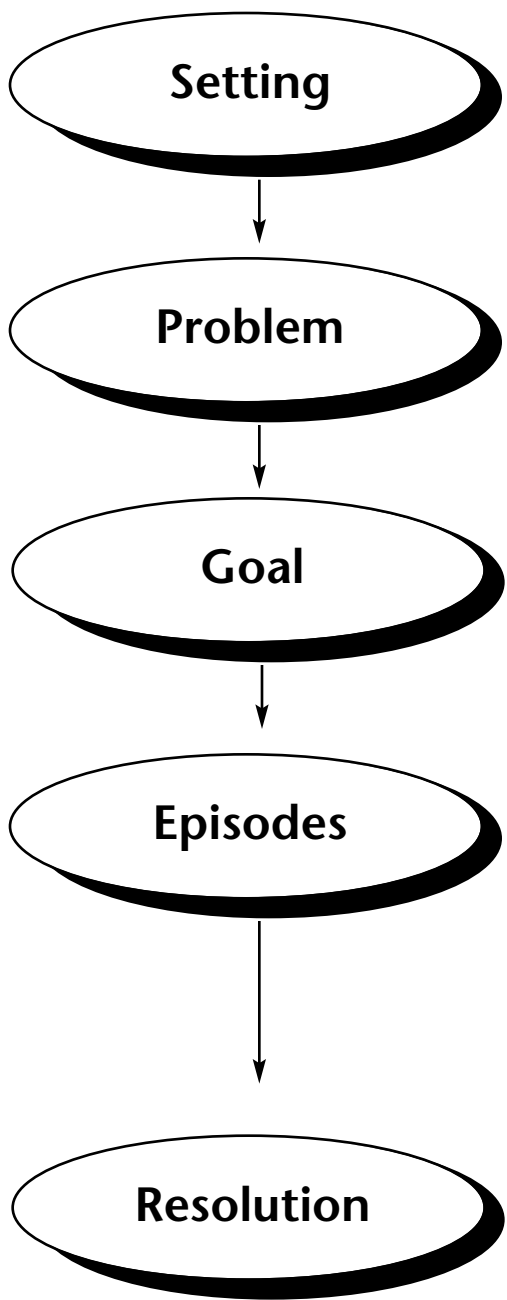
Four children, Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny, are orphaned after their parents' death. Rather than live with a grandfather they do not know, they find shelter in a boxcar in the woods. The children self-sufficiently turn the boxcar into a comfortable home and adopt a dog they name Watch. Henry finds a job working at the home of Dr. Moore and his mother in Silver City. Dr. Moore soon discovers that the children's grandfather is the wealthy Mr. Alden. When Violet gets sick and the children stay at Dr. Moore's home while she is nursed back to health, the children meet a lovable man they later learn is their grandfather. The four Alden children go to live with Mr. Alden who cares for them. Because they sometimes miss their old home in the boxcar, Mr. Alden has it transported from the woods outside of town to his own yard.

About the Author

Gertrude Chandler Warner was born in Putnam, Connecticut, on April 16, 1890, across the road from a railroad station. She was a first-grade teacher for 32 years. She published her first book, *House of Delight*, in 1916. While recuperating from an illness, Warner began wondering what living inside a train was like. This led to the writing of the Boxcar Children series, the first of which was published in 1924, and then again in 1942, revised with simpler language. Warner wrote 18 more of the Boxcar Children stories (48 exist in the series today). She died in her hometown on August 30, 1979.

Initiating Activities

1. Creative Writing: With the class, brainstorm a list of chores students must do at home or in the classroom. Allow each student to pick a chore from the list and then compose a poem or short story about an imaginary character who loves to do that chore. The students should give their character a funny name associated with the chore (i.e., Lori Lawnmower or Larry Laundry). Set aside time for the students to read their stories and poems to the class. If time allows, instruct the children to illustrate their story or poem.
2. Previewing the Book: Read the first paragraph of the story and any book jacket information. From these readings and from looking at the title and cover of the book, have the students write a paragraph predicting what the book will be about.
3. Prediction: Ask if the students have read any other books in the Boxcar Children series. Discuss how other books are alike and different and try to predict what the first book in the Boxcar Children series will be like.



Story Map

Characters_____

Time and Place_____

Problem_____

Goal_____

Beginning —> Development —> Outcome

Resolution_____

Chapters V-VI, pp. 45-68

Henry goes into Silver City to find a job while the other three children go exploring for treasures at a dump. They find dishes, four wheels, and a shelf for the boxcar. Henry returns home with a new job working for a doctor and many new bundles. That night, Watch, Henry, and Jessie hear someone walking in the woods.

Vocabulary

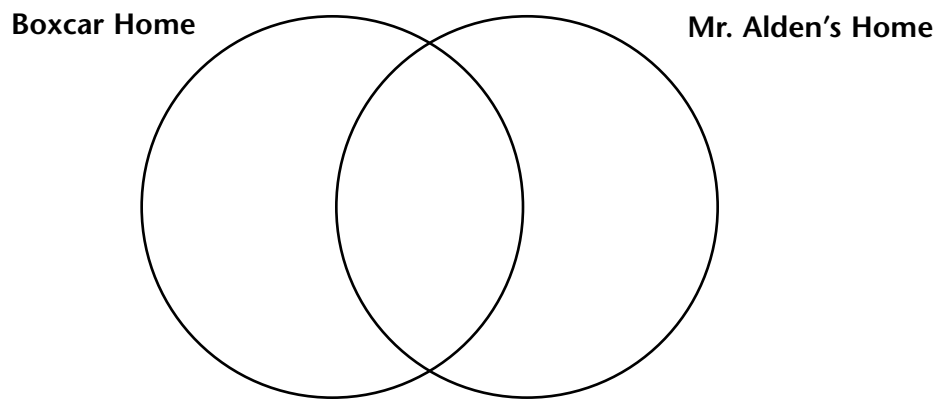
housekeeper (45)	waterfall (46)	refrigerator (46)	treasures (47)
explorers (48)	pitcher (51)	carefully (52)	admired (52)
suddenly (53)	hem (61)	growl (66)	frightened (66)

Discussion Questions

1. What are the children using as a refrigerator? *(a hole behind the waterfall)*
2. Why does Henry go into town? *(to find work so that the children can eat)*
3. What is ironic about Jessie's plans for the day? *(She wants to look for treasures at a dump. "Treasures" and "dump" have two different meanings—treasures are valuable and the items thrown away at a dump are worthless.)*
4. Why do you think Benny wants to find wheels at the dump? *(Answers will vary.)*
5. Who finds the treasures first? *(Benny)*
6. What do the children find at the dump? Why do they consider these items to be treasures? *(a white pitcher, a white cup, a teapot, two other cups, bowls, five rust-covered spoons, a pink cup with a handle, four matching wheels; These items are things the children don't need to survive, but that will make their life more comfortable.)*
7. How do the children keep the dishes in the boxcar? *(They make a shelf from a board they find at the dump.)*
8. Why does Jessie want to clean the dishes with soap, sand, and hot water? *(The soap and sand clean the rust and the dirt, and hot water kills any germs that are still on the dishes.)*
9. What does Henry bring back from town? *(funny-looking bundles containing bread, milk, dried meat, and a bone for Watch; a job working for a doctor)*
10. How does Henry find a job? *(He sees a man mowing his yard and asks if he can mow it instead. He does such a good job that the man, who is a doctor, asks Henry to come work for him the next day as well.)*
11. What does the doctor's house look like? *(It is big with a yard, garage, vegetable garden, and cherry orchard.)*
12. What does the cook give to Henry? *(cookies)*

Post-reading Discussion Questions

1. How will the children's lives be different now that they are living with their grandfather?
2. What do you think it would feel like to be homeless?
3. How would *The Boxcar Children* be different if Henry never met Dr. Moore?
4. Judging from their personalities and skills, what do you think life was like for Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny before their parents died?
5. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the children's home in the boxcar to their home at Mr. Alden's house.



6. What part or parts of the story didn't you like? Why not? Explain how and why you would change them if you were the author.
7. Discuss how the children made different things while living in the woods. What kinds of things would you like to make from nature? Explain how you would make those items.
8. How realistic is this story? What beliefs does the reader have to suspend to enjoy this book?
9. When was this book first published? Do you think the story would be different if it were written about children today? Why or why not?
10. What lessons do the children learn by running away from the adult who is supposed to take care of them? How did living on their own benefit the children? What benefits are there when they live with their grandfather?