



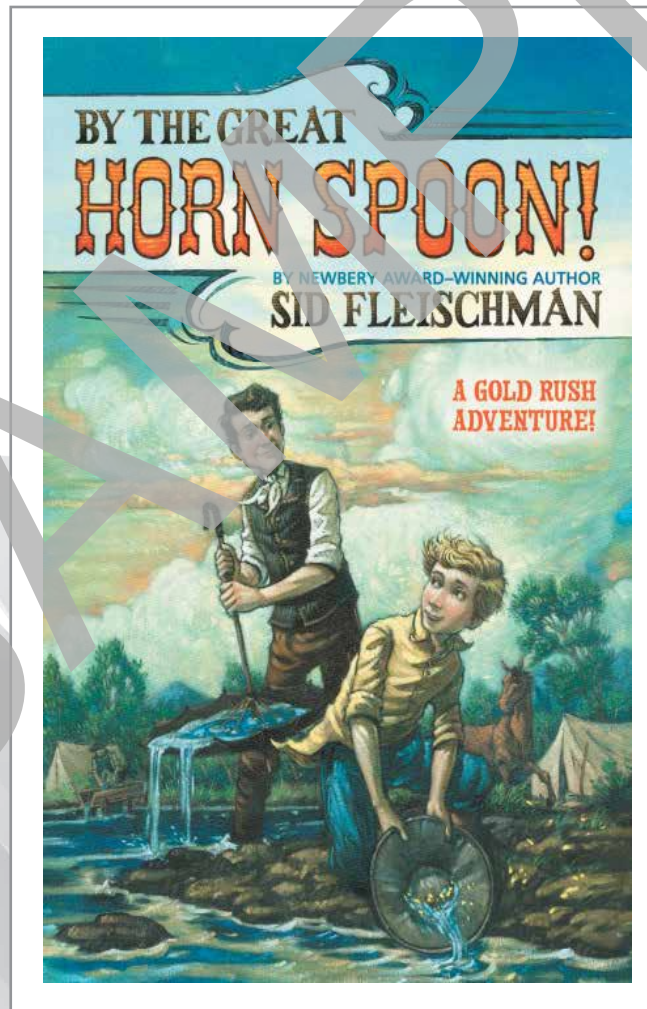
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# By the Great Horn Spoon

Sid Fleischman



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# By the Great Horn Spoon

Sid Fleischman

## 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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3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

[sales@novelunits.com](mailto:sales@novelunits.com)

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, classifying  
and categorizing,  
interpreting, analyzing,  
evaluating, synthesizing

### Literary Elements

Characterization, setting,  
conflict, theme, mood, point  
of view, figurative language,  
imagery

### Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion  
and cooperative groups,  
dramatic activities, debate

### Writing

Narrative, expository,  
persuasive, procedural,  
creative

### Vocabulary

Synonyms/antonyms,  
analogies, compound words,  
context, derivations, dialect

### Comprehension

Author's purpose, cause and  
effect, comparing and  
contrasting, drawing  
conclusions, fact and  
opinion, predicting,  
summarizing

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## Summary

It is 1849 and the story's main characters—Praiseworthy and Jack—have been swept up by the California Gold Rush. When lovely Aunt Arabella falls upon hard times, her nephew Jack and butler Praiseworthy board a ship bound for California to seek their fortune. On the way to the gold fields, several problems put their wits to the test. Before the boat departs, their passage money is stolen. The ship runs into stormy weather and runs out of coal. The cook plans to make a pork dinner out of a pig Jack has befriended. In California, there are highway robbers and grizzly bears to contend with, and of course the unflappable Praiseworthy and young Jack must figure out where to find gold. Throughout it all, these two prove to be an ingenious pair, up to any challenge. This is a wonderful spoof that will amuse readers while providing many nuggets of information about an exciting period in U.S. history.

## About the Author

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Sid Fleischman grew up in San Diego, California. After a stint of active duty with the U.S. Naval Reserve during World War II, he graduated from San Diego State University with a bachelor's degree in English (1950). Before he began writing fiction, he toured the country as a professional magician and worked as a reporter for the *San Diego Daily Journal* for a year until the paper folded.

Known as a master of the "comic novel," he has written dozens of award-winning children's books, many of which reflect his love for the American frontier. He has said that of the over 50 books he has authored, these are among his favorites: *The Whipping Boy* (Newbery Award, 1987), *Mr. Mysterious & Company* (his first children's book), *Chancy and the Grand Rascal*, *The Hey Hey Man*, *Humbug Mountain*, *McBroom*, and *The Scarebird*.

Fleischman has written for *Sesame Street* and the Disney channel, and has done scripting for adult audiences as well. He wrote the script for the John Wayne action film, "Blood Alley" (his first novel) and the Sam Peckinpah thriller, "Deadly Companions."

Fleischman spends his time writing novels and TV/movie scripts. He has three adult children (including writer Paul Fleischman) and resides in Santa Monica, California.

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## Chapters 1-2

A year after gold is discovered in California, Praiseworthy and Jack decide to leave Boston for the gold fields of the West. While they are in line to buy a ticket, a cut-purse steals their money, so they stow away on the *Lady Wilma*. Once underway, they reveal themselves to the captain and agree to earn their way shoveling coal into the ship's furnace. Praiseworthy comes up with an inventive plan for capturing the thief, and "Cut-Eye Higgins" ends up taking their place in the coal bunkers.

### Vocabulary

stowaways 3	cargo 3	smartly 4	slake 5
accommodations 5	dire 6	carpetbags 6	dandies 7
pantaloons 7	fray 8	oilskins 8	weathered 10
defraud 11	plague 11	scows 12	argonauts 12
cholera 12	clipper ship 14	bunkers 15	galley 15
berth 15	sidewheeler 17	forged 18	undaunted 19
balmy 20	tea service 20	dandyfunk 20	plum duff 20
despicable 22	joshed 23	impostor 26	

### Discussion Questions

1. What is "California fever"? (*the rush to the California gold fields*) Would you have "caught" it?
2. Who are Jack and Praiseworthy? (*Jack is a 12-year-old boy; Praiseworthy is the family butler.*) What problems do they face? (*Jack's aunt is about to use up her inheritance; their passage money to California has been stolen.*) Are they a good "team"? How would you describe their relationship? Why do you suppose Praiseworthy insists on calling the boy "Master Jack"?
3. How can you tell almost from the beginning that this story is going to be a humorous one? (*The opening situation and picture—describing and showing the stowaways—are funny.*) It is only later that you find out why Praiseworthy and Jack are in potato barrels. Explain the chain of events that led up to their hiding in these barrels. (See the diagram below.)

#### Cause

Aunt Arabella has money troubles.

#### Effect/Cause

Jack and Praiseworthy collect money for passage to the gold fields.

#### Effect/Cause

A thief spots their money and steals it.

#### Effect

Penniless, Jack and Praiseworthy stow away in potato barrels.

4. Why does the "wild bull of the seas" want so badly to beat the Sea Raven? (*The captain will get command of a new clipper ship if he wins the race.*) In what ways is the *Lady Wilma* at a disadvantage in this race? (*She is carrying a heavy cargo and is overfilled with passengers.*) Predict who will win.
5. Why does Praiseworthy guess that the captain is "a gentleman at heart" (page 16)? (*Instead of chaining them up, the captain gives the stowaways work and suggests they stop at the galley for food.*)

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6. What job do Praiseworthy and Jack have? (*They have to shovel coal into the ship's furnace.*) What is hard about it? (*The coal is heavy; the furnace is hot.*) How do they “make the best of it”? (*At first, they enjoy the warmth while other passengers are freezing; they tell themselves that the work will toughen them up for the gold fields.*) When have you tried to “look on the bright side”?
  7. Would you say that Jack is a good letter-writer? What sorts of details does he decide to share with Aunt Arabella, Constance, and Sarah? (*He tells them about the race, the weather, the food, the other passengers, the animals.*)
  8. What is Praiseworthy’s plan for catching the thief? (*He coats the pig with coal dust, then tells the passengers to touch the pig on the back one by one; he says the pig will squeal when touched by the thief.*) Does it work? (*Yes; all the passengers except Cut-Eye touch the pig and are marked by the dust.*) Does it remind you of the strategy used by any fictional detectives you have met in other stories? What else might Praiseworthy have tried?
  9. What sorts of punishments do the passengers consider for the thief? (*hang him; throw him overboard; chain him up*) Which one does the captain choose? (*He orders Cut-Eye to shovel coal.*) Why does he say the thief will soon “think he’s in Hades” (p. 28)? (*Working near the furnace is getting to be even hotter work as the ship moves south.*) Do you think the punishment fits the crime? Do you think criminals were treated more harshly during the gold rush days than today?
  10. What do you notice about the way the author, Sid Fleischman, uses language? What is one sentence or passage in this section of the book that you wish you had written?
  11. **Prediction:** How will Praiseworthy and Jack try to get their money back?

## Supplementary Activities

### Literary Analysis: Setting

The **setting** is the time and place of events in the story. What is the setting in which the story begins?

setting: → time \_\_\_\_\_  
 → place \_\_\_\_\_

(*The story opens on a ship sailing from Boston to San Francisco, during the gold rush—January, 1849.*)

How important do you think the setting is going to be to the story? Could it just as easily have taken place in another time and place? (*The gold rush setting is very important to this story, which could not have taken place during any other time.*)

### Research

1. Find out more about how “justice” was imposed during the gold rush era. How were criminals punished?

2. Find out more about bartenders during California’s gold rush days—who, like Praiseworthy, earned money by removing gold dust residue from hair and beards (their own) after accepting payment for the customer’s drink from his “poke” (supply of gold dust). (See *Our Fascinating Earth* by Philip and Nancy Seff.)

**Writing Ideas**

1. You are Jack. Write a letter to Aunt Arabella about events in this section of the story.
2. You are Praiseworthy. Make a list of “things to do.”

What the character says:	Generalizations you can make:	What the character does:	Generalizations you can make:
1.		1.	
2.		2.	
3.		3.	

Character: \_\_\_\_\_

What the character thinks:	Generalizations you can make:	What others say about him:	Generalizations you can make:
1.		1.	
2.		2.	
3.		3.	