

Charlie Pippin

Candy Dawson Boyd

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

Critical Thinking

Brainstorming, research, survey

Literary Elements

Characterization, story elements, simile

Writing

Similes, opinion, directions, creative, journaling, slogans

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, interviewing

Vocabulary

Synonym, antonym, word mapping

Comprehension

Inference, predicting, comparison/contrast

Across the Curriculum

Math; Art—posters, buttons, T-shirts; Health—nutrition

Summary of Charlie Pippin

The story takes place during 1985, the year of the tenth anniversary of the Vietnam War/Conflict. Eleven-year-old Charlie Pippin is in the sixth grade at Hayden Elementary School in Berkeley, California, and is an energetic girl with a flair for making and selling things. Bound by the rules of a School Discipline Code, Charlie, despite her good intentions, experiences restrictions at school and at home that cause her pain.

Charlie's father, a veteran of the Vietnam War, is embittered and unwilling to discuss his experiences or the changes the war caused in his life. His uncompromising rules add stress to the lives of all of the family members. Charlie undertakes a report on the Vietnam War for her social studies class, hoping to understand it and her father better.

While doing research for her project, Charlie inadvertently learns that her father was a war hero. Charlie learns from her mother that as a young boy, her father fought for his beliefs, and as a young man, he had special dreams. Although Charlie finds all of this hard to believe, she is willing to try. Will her father allow Charlie to see him as he once was?

(Some suggested topics of interest: Vietnam War/Conflict, Persian Gulf Crisis, World Conflicts, Nuclear War, Peace Kids Projects, origami, entrepreneurial skills, vegetarian/healthy eating.)

About the Author

Marguerite (Candy) Dawson Boyd was born August 8, 1946, in Chicago, Illinois. She received a B.A. degree from Northeastern Illinois State University in 1967, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of California, Berkeley in 1978 and 1982, respectively.

Candy Dawson Boyd taught in the public schools of Chicago, Illinois and Berkeley, California before becoming a professor of education and an award-winning children's writer. As a light-skinned African-American, Boyd experienced many discouraging obstacles in her life. However, her father's pride, spirit, and refusal to buckle under all of the things that got in his way affected her greatly. Because of her background, Boyd tries to impart a positive message to her readers through her book characters: "you can make it." Life is hard and not always fair, but you can do it, she tries to say.

Initiating Activities and Information

Research: Before starting this unit, collect library books, maps, posters and other materials about the Vietnam War/Conflict and other world conflicts that you may want to include at this time. (Student interest may indicate that additional materials be obtained after the unit is in progress.) Place the books and materials in an area that provides easy access for the students.

Art: Provide an additional origami area in the room. Have books of instruction and suitable paper available for the students to use.

Guest Speakers: Make arrangements to have volunteer speakers and project assistants, such as: Vietnam veterans, peace advocates, origami instructors, dietitian, etc.

Bulletin Board Idea: Cover the bulletin board with plain background paper. Place on the bulletin board the maps and other materials that pertain to the Vietnam War/Conflict, the Persian Gulf Crisis, the Bosnian War and any additional information about world conflicts that you may want to include at this time. Allow the students to add to the bulletin board anything they find or make during their research. As the amount of information increases, you may want to make additional board/display space available to students, and put groups in charge of the displays.

Previewing the Book: Look at the cover of the book. What does the cover illustration tell about the story? Do you think the story takes place at the present time, or long ago? What makes you think as you do? Where do you think a great deal of the story takes place? What does the sign that one of the children is holding tell about the story? Do the children look happy? Which child do you think is Charlie? What does Charlie have painted on her face? Why do you think she is wearing face paint? What do you think this story is about? Have students make a prediction about the story.

Prereading Activity: Read the statement at the bottom of the cover. (*Charlie knows that dreams can die . . . but she won't give up hers without a fight.*) What does the word DREAM mean in this context? (*Dream: a strongly desired goal or purpose.*)

Prereading Discussion: What additional information do you think this statement, at the bottom of the cover, conveys about the story? What do you think might be Charlie's dream?

Chapter Three—Pages 27–34

Charlie is seen by Mr. Rucker, the principal, as she sells origami rabbits during recess. Mr. Rucker calls Mr. Pippin at work to report on Charlie, and then informs Charlie that she will be suspended from school if she sells anything else there. Mr. Pippin is waiting for Charlie when she arrives home. His hollering and demeaning words echo through Charlie's pounding head. Mama Bliss, Oscar's mother, arrives and intervenes on Charlie's behalf. After Mr. Pippin leaves the house, Mama Bliss warns Eleanor that something wrong is going on. Mama Bliss then tells Charlie that she will spend the night and the next day with her.

Vocabulary

distorted 29
rebel 32

berating 30
overreact 32

propelled 30
ken 33

infraction 31

Vocabulary Activity

Use as many of the vocabulary words as possible in a short paragraph.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is Charlie's father waiting for her at home after school? (*Page 29, Mr. Pippin knows of Charlie's trouble at school because he received a telephone call at work from the school principal.*) What effect did that telephone call have on Mr. Pippin? (*Page 29, Mr. Pippin is enraged, and yells at Charlie, "Do you have any idea how embarrassed I am?" He continues to holler names at Charlie that hurt her—names like "bad," "irresponsible," and "no good."*) Do you think Mr. Pippin is concerned about his embarrassment or Charlie's school behavior as he yells? Why do you think as you do? Discuss student responses.
2. Mr. Pippin's mother, Mama Bliss, enters the house during Mr. Pippin's tirade and stops her son. What is his reaction to her? (*Page 30, Mr. Pippin says, "Mother, this is none of your business. You may be renting me this house, but I'm the man here."*) Do you agree or disagree with what he has to say? Why?
3. What is the reaction of Sienna to Charlie? (*Pages 31-32, Sienna says, "But, Charlie, you've got to learn that getting along with Daddy means one thing—doing what he tells you."*) Do you think this is good advice? Do you think Charlie would be able to follow this advice from Sienna? Why or why not?
4. What is Eleanor's reaction to Mama Bliss, and to Charlie? (*Page 33, Eleanor tells Mama Bliss, "Let us handle this in our own way. And, Charlie, try to stay out of trouble with your father."*) Does Mrs. Pippin's advice to Charlie seem like an effective way to deal with the situation? Does Mrs. Pippin tell Charlie how to stay out of trouble with her father?
5. As Charlie prepares to leave with Mama Bliss (page 34), is anything about the problem situation resolved? (*Page 34, No, Mr. Pippin has left the house, and Mrs. Pippin tells Mama Bliss, "I don't want to discuss this."*) What would be your advice to your choice of one member of the Pippin family?
6. **Prediction:** Will Mr. Pippin still be angry when he gets home? Will Sienna be kinder to Charlie? What do you think might happen next?