



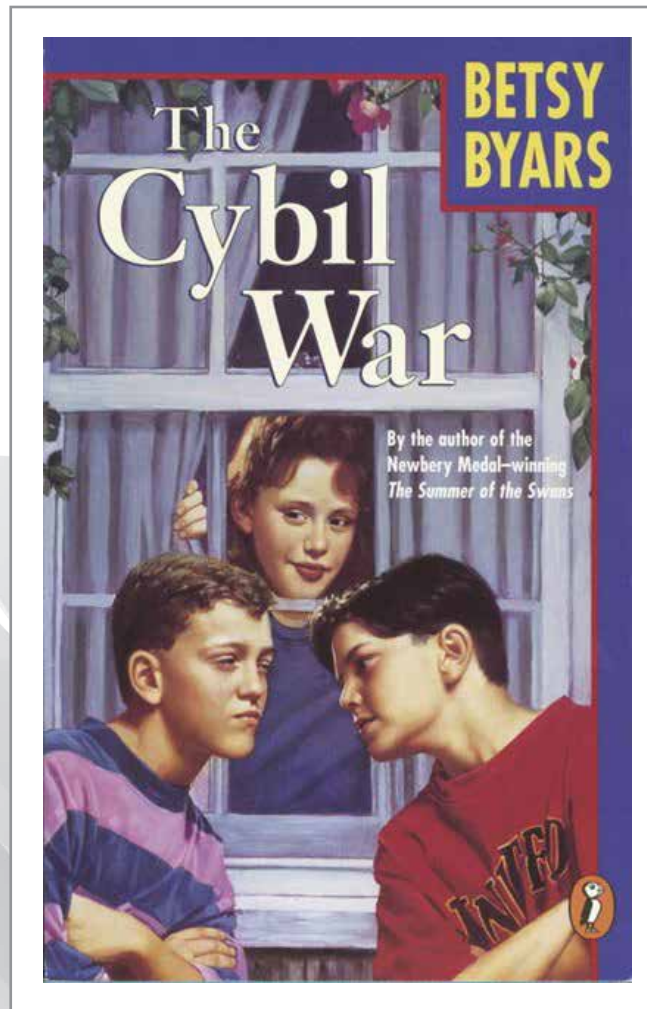
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Cybil War

Betsy Byars



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Cybil War

Betsy Byars

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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Summary

Three's a crowd. That's what Simon discovers in the fifth grade, when he and his best friend Tony both decide that they like Cybil (hence, the title of the book). Tony, a habitual liar, does his best to keep Cybil from Simon, and Simon finally grows angry enough to stick up for himself, even if it means losing a friend.

Prereading Discussion Questions

1. **FRIENDSHIP:** Have you ever felt that your best friend let you down? What was the situation? What did you do about it? Have you ever grown apart from someone you were close friends with when you were younger? Why? Have you ever noticed that sometimes a third person comes between two best friends? When have you seen this happen?
2. **ANGER:** What do you do when you are angry with a friend? With a sibling? With a teacher? With yourself? Have you ever been jealous? Is it the same as being mad? How do people act when they are jealous?
3. **LOVE:** Why do you think people fall in love? Do you think a fifth grader can fall in love? Why or why not?
4. **LYING:** What are some different reasons people tell lies? Is there ever a good reason to be deceptive? Have you ever known someone who seems to lie all the time? Why do you think that person lies so much?

Initiating Activities

1. Introduce the decision-making grid on page 6 of this guide after reading the first chapter and continue as chapters are read. Have students fill in the "C" grids for specific decisions characters make as the book progresses.

Tell students: This is a realistic story about people who will probably remind you of people you have known; some of them may remind you of yourself. You may find that the young people in the story face some of the same problems that you do.

What are some common problems young people face? How do you decide what to do when you have a problem? (Try to elicit from students that it is helpful to try to think of as many solutions as possible, then judge which solution is best.)

2. Before beginning the book, have students look at the front and back covers and skim the Table of Contents. Ask a volunteer to read the first line of the story. As a class, flip through the rest of the pages.

Decision-making Grid

The decision-making grid below is supposed to make it easier to find the best solution to a problem. Give examples of other questions you should ask yourself when you are trying to weigh different solutions. Then fill the grid for the following problem: My best friend has been telling lies about me. See if classmates agree with the solution you decide is best.

Problem:	Criterion #1	Criterion #2	Criterion #3
State the Problem.	Will the solution hurt someone?	Will it make me feel better?	
Solution #1			
Solution #2			
Solution #3			
Solution #4			

Chapters 1–2, Pages 3-16

Vocabulary

motto (3)
tributes (11)

ecology (5)
crook (11)

deprived (6)
solitude (13)

humiliation (11)
tidal wave (13)

Vocabulary Activity

Complete the following sentences in a way that shows you know what the *italicized* word means. Use a dictionary if you need one.

1. My *motto* is _____
_____.
2. I find *solitude* _____
_____.
3. The worst *humiliation* I ever experienced _____
_____.
4. One thing the study of *ecology* has taught us is that _____
_____.

Discussion Questions

1. Simon is the main character in the story. How can you tell? What is he like? Let us begin an attribute web of all the things we can learn about him. (See pages 10-11 of this guide.)
2. Why wasn't Simon looking forward to the nutrition play? Would you like to be in such a play? (*He doesn't like plays; for once he had decided it wouldn't be so bad to put on a costume, and then his part was taken away. page 8*)
3. What does Simon mean when he tells himself that the thing that really bothered him was that Cybil participated in his humiliation. Do you think she did the wrong thing? (*Simon was in love with Cybil; it was Cybil who had pointed out that boys always got the best parts, which led to Simon's losing the role. page 11*)
4. What do you learn about Simon's father? (*He left home when Simon was in second grade because he wanted to get back to the simple life and live on the land. page 13*) Do you think he had a right to leave home?
5. Why was Arbor Day "for the birds"? (*It was on Arbor Day that Simon had to face that his father was gone and wouldn't be around to help plant the tree. page 11*)
6. What do you think Simon's Arbor Day poem would have been like if his father hadn't left home? Why do you suppose Cybil voted for the poem? What is your opinion of having students vote on the best poem, composition, etc. in the class?

7. Why was Simon surprised to see that it was Miss McFawn, not Miss Ellis, in front of the class? (*He had been lost in thought about second grade, when Miss McFawn was his teacher.*) Do you ever get lost in your daydreams and forget where you are?

8. **Prediction:** Do you think Simon will have as bad a time as he thinks he will in the play?

Supplementary Activities

1. Drama: Suppose you are a teacher who has instructed your second graders to write poems in praise of trees. Role play your way of handling a student like Simon who has written an “I hate” poem.
2. Drama: Writing a tribute to trees. You may choose to write a serious or humorous piece of writing.
3. Literary Analysis–Flashback: Some stories tell about events in the same order as they happened. Other stories contain flashbacks. In these stories, the author stops to tell you about something that happened earlier. The flashback to the past often helps you understand what is happening in the story’s present better. What flashback did you find in the first two chapters? What does it have to do with the present action (Simon’s reaction to the play)? (*We learn how Cybil stuck up for Simon on Arbor Day in second grade, causing him to fall in love with her.*)

Chapters 3–4, Pages 17-32

Vocabulary

cast (17)	inflate (19)	formation (20)	rival (25)
retaliate (26)	attire (27)	bluntness (29)	exhale (29)
decency (30)			

Vocabulary Activity

Match each of the phrases below with the antonym (opposite), in the above list.

1. _____: (exhale) take a breath in
2. _____: (inflate) take the air out
3. _____: (flaws) perfect quality
4. _____: (rival) teammate

Discussion Questions

1. What lies did Tony tell about Simon? Why do you think he told these lies? (*Tony told Harriet, Simon had called Cybil “Popsicle Legs” and Harriet “Tub of Blubber.” pages 18 and 19*)
2. How did Simon react to hearing Tony lie about him? What else could he have done? What would you have done in his place? (*Simon asked him why he lied so much and told him to quit*)