



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **No Promises in the Wind**

Irene Hunt



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

# No Promises in the Wind

Irene Hunt

## 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

Brainstorming, classifying,  
research, decision-making

### Comprehension

Predicting, inference,  
comparison/contrast

### Writing

Opinion, defining, naming,  
letter-writing

### Vocabulary

Antonyms/synonyms,  
prefixes/suffixes

### Listening/Speaking

Sounds, drama

### Literary Elements

Mood, character analysis,  
conflict, story mapping

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## Summary of *No Promises in the Wind*

1932 in America was the depth of the Depression and just eating and surviving were hard. The Grondowski Family has fallen on hard times, the father is out of work, the mother does ironing to keep food on the table (barely), Kitty loses her office job, Josh delivers papers before going to school, and Joey is just hungry. The natural tensions of the situation cause Josh, age fifteen, to take to the road. Ten-year-old Joey accompanies him along with his friend Howie. Howie is killed shortly after in a railroad accident. The brothers persevere and work in a carnival for a period, but when a fire destroys the carnival operation, they make their way to Nebraska to Lonnie, a truck driver who had befriended them. The boys are separated when they quarrel over a half loaf of bread and Joey leaves. Though both are seriously ill, they are reunited and convalesce in Lonnie's home. They find work at a local restaurant as musical entertainers and eventually return to Chicago and their parents.

### About the Author

Irene Hunt was born and raised in Illinois. She attended the University of Illinois, A.B. 1939 and the University of Minnesota, M.A. 1946. She taught French and English, 1930-1945 in the Oak Park, Illinois public schools. Between 1946 and 1950 she taught at the University of South Dakota. Ms. Hunt returned to Illinois to act as a teacher and consultant in the Cicero, Illinois public schools.

Irene Hunt received the Charles W. Follett Award in 1964, the American Notable Book Award in 1965, and was the sole runner-up for the Newbery Medal, 1965, for *Across Five Aprils*. In 1967 she received the Newbery Medal for *Up a Road Slowly*.

#### **Other Books by Irene Hunt:**

*The Everlasting Hills*, *The Lottery Rose* (Novel Unit available), *Up a Road Slowly*, and *Across Five Aprils* (Novel Unit available)

### Initiating Activities

(Several possibilities are listed. Choose for your particular class.)

1. The book is set in 1932 in America. What do you know of that time? What do you expect? Record what you know in the "K" column and what you expect in the "E" column. Return to the "W" column to record what you've learned after you read.

What They Know	What They would Like to Know	What They Learned

2. Free-write your feelings if you were fifteen and your father was out of work and angry, lunch was an oleo sandwich, you had a three-hour paper route before school to help out the family, and you wanted to enjoy and develop your musical talent.
3. Look over the cover, the summary on the back cover, and the illustrations. What are your predictions for the book?
4. Consider these facts from the story: a banjo, piano-playing ability, and two brothers aged ten and fifteen on the road. What are your predictions for their fate and what may be included in the book?
5. Read aloud the first seven pages of the book, ending with "patient." Start to fill in a story map with what you've discovered about the book so far. Make some predictions for the conflict in the story. Read on.

## Vocabulary Activities

Teacher Note: It is suggested that vocabulary activities be included in each day's instructional time.

1. Prefixes and Suffixes: Look for these prefixes among the vocabulary words (des-, com-, in-, ab-, e-, mono-, non-, in-, mis-, con-). Identify the words, use them in sentences, and then define the prefix. Do the same for these suffixes (-ery, -ous, -ion, -ity, -ious).
2. Choose six important incidents to summarize the action in the story. Get a notion of the mood of each incident and choose a noun, an adjective, and an adverb to typify the incidents.

Incident	Noun	Adjective	Adverb

3. See page 11 of this guide for a 5 x 5 matrix for Vocabulary Bingo. On the 5 x 5 matrix, students fill in vocabulary words. To call the bingo squares, students prepare definitions, recording them on cards. Encourage "crossword puzzle" kinds of clues.

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## Chapter One—Pages 7-30

### **Plot Summary:**

It is 1932 in Chicago and the storyteller, Josh, age 15, whose dad has lost his job, his older sister has been laid off, his younger brother is sickly, and his mother irons to put food on the table, decides to leave home. He clashes strongly with his father, a proud but broken man, who finds fault with most of what Josh says and does.

### **Vocabulary:**

scorning 8	roused 8	calloused 10	dawdled 10
rancor 11	docile 11	spasms 12	dwindling 13
desperation 14	disheveled 14	improvising 17	sallow 18
ravenous 19	oblivious 19	covered 20	mangy 24
compassionate 24	wrath 26	paltry 27	imperceptible 29
desolate 29			

### **Discussion Questions and Activities:**

1. Who tells the story? (*Josh, a fifteen-year-old son of a Polish immigrant*)
2. What is Josh's family situation, membership and prospects? (*The family of five includes Josh, 2 parents, an older half-sister Kitty, and a younger brother Joey. The family is very poor and the situation seems to be getting worse.*)
3. Why doesn't the family apply for welfare or get help from their church or friends? (*There is no welfare system and the church and friends are also impoverished. It's a time of worldwide depression.*)
4. What is the mood of the chapter? Why? Cite examples from the text to support your answer. (*Answers will vary.*)
5. What is Josh's relationship to each of the other characters introduced in the chapter?

*Joey: Younger brother who idolizes Josh but whom Josh resents mildly because Joey was born frail and garnered a lot of attention and care*

*Father: Once a proud man, now unemployed and resentful, who in anger lashes out at his family*

*Mother: Provides the income, tries to keep everyone calm, supports her husband though she can see his unwarranted attacks*

*Howie: Best friend who shares love of music*

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*Kitty: Older half-sister who tries to help but loses her job*

*Miss Crowne: Supportive, caring teacher who enjoys Howie and Josh's musical efforts*

6. Identify these details from the book and explain their significance.

*Banjo—Howie's prized possession*

*Piano—had to be sold*

*Ironing—the way the mother earns money*

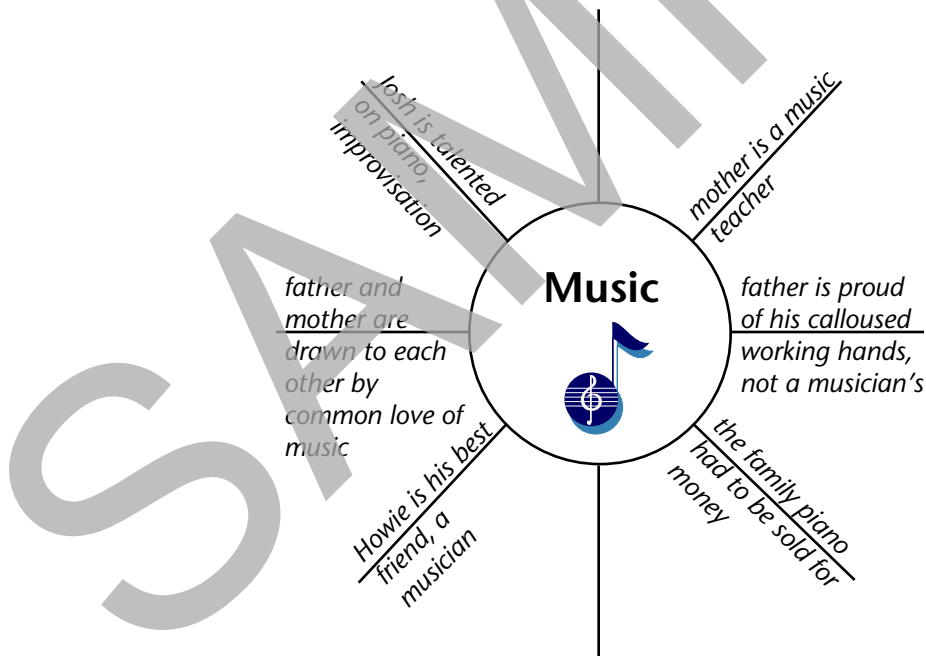
*School assembly—chance for Howie and Josh to appear and entertain*

*Jigsaw puzzle—Howie steals it to give to Joey*

*Five-cent milk bottle—Joey bought it to feed a stray cat*

*More potatoes—Josh's request which leads to his father's verbal attack*

7. Notice how many references there are to music in the chapter.



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8. Look for contrasts in the chapter.

*Page 7—Joey is frail but tough.*

*Pages 9-10—The piano-playing, culturally astute mother works ironing.*

*Pages 13-14—The father, proud of pulling himself up by his bootstraps, is now unable to find work.*

*Page 18—Howie’s humor and his pitiful home life*

*Page 21—Howie and Josh’s beautiful music and the bread lines*

9. Explain the personification on page 19. (*Nature is spoken of as though it is a human person.*)
10. What is Josh’s decision at the end of the chapter and how does he come to the decision? (*He’ll move out. His increasing disagreements with his father lead him to the decision, lest there be a sharper tragedy.*)
11. Predicting: What exactly does “getting out” mean for Josh? What will he do and where will he go? What are his prospects? How will he survive?

**Supplementary Activities:**

1. Examine the character of Josh’s father. What are his good and bad points?

Good	Bad
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•cares for his wife</li><li>•proud of his efforts</li><li>•hard-working</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•angry</li><li>•lashes out at children</li><li>•critical of music</li><li>•hypercritical of children</li></ul>

Summarize the man’s character in one sentence.

2. Talk to someone who was alive in 1932. What were the conditions?
3. Do some research on 1932. Look at history references and newspapers.
4. Start a bulletin board of images and events from the time and places in the book.