



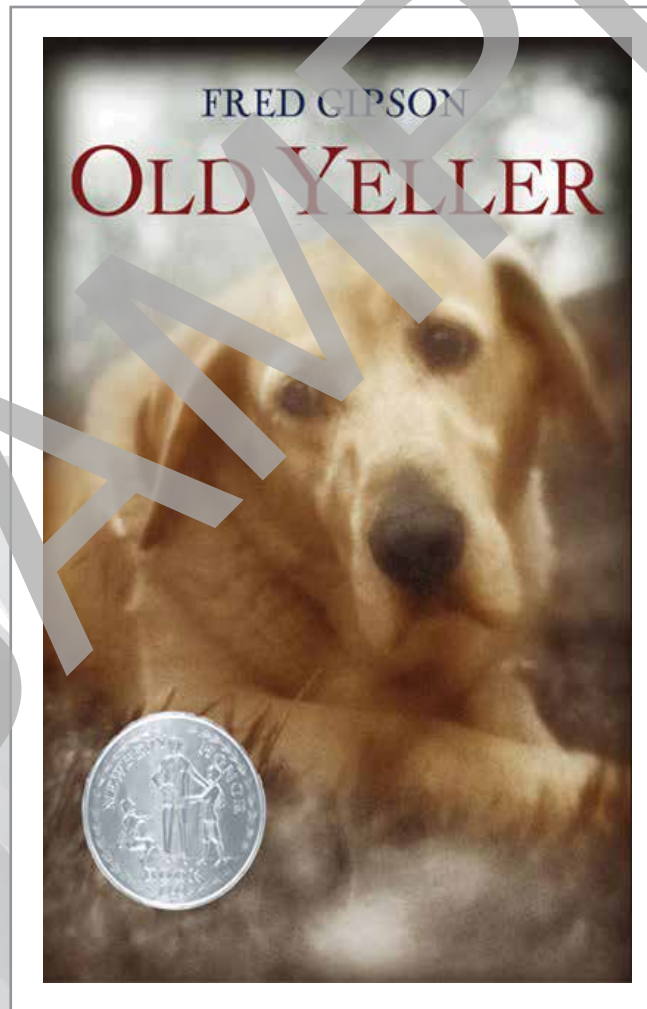
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Old Yeller

Fred Gipson



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Old Yeller

Fred Gipson

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!

ISBN 978-1-50204-045-9

Copyright infringement is a violation of Federal Law.

© 2020 by Novel Units, Inc., St. Louis, MO. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission from Novel Units, Inc.

Reproduction of any part of this publication for an entire school or for a school system, by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers, or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Novel Units is a registered trademark of Conn Education.

Printed in the United States of America.

To order, contact your
local school supply store, or:

Toll-Free Fax: 877.716.7272

Phone: 888.650.4224

3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

novelunits.com

Table of Contents

Summary	3
About the Author	3
Introductory Activities	3
Chapter-to-Chapter	7
Chapters contain: Vocabulary Words and Activities, Discussion Questions and Activities, Post-reading Activities, Predictions	
Supplementary Activities	25
Teacher Information	35
Bibliographies	37
Assessment for <i>Old Yeller</i>	40

Skills and Strategies

Vocabulary

Colloquialisms, context
clues, word mapping,
synonyms/antonyms,
analogies

Writing

Poetry, expository

Listening/Speaking

Discussion

Comprehension

Predicting, comparison/
contrast, cause-effect

Thinking

Brainstorming, research,
visualization

Literary Elements

Characterization, story
elements

Summary of *Old Yeller*

Set in the time just following the Civil War, the author, Fred Gipson, tells the reader what it would have been like for a 14-year-old boy to take over family responsibilities while his father is on a cattle drive from Texas to Kansas. Helped by a stray yellow dog, Travis grows into manhood as the two of them face the problems of the Texas wilderness together.

About the Author

Frederick Gipson was born February 7, 1908, near Mason, Texas. He died August 14, 1973, in Mason, Texas. He was the author of adventure novels for children and adults. Gipson, whose stories usually featured animals, achieved his first big success with *Hound-Dog Man*. However, he is most widely known for *Old Yeller* and its sequel *Savage Sam*. *Old Yeller* was a Newbery Honor Book in 1957, and won the 1958 Maggie Award and the 1959 William Allen White Children's Book Award. Gipson is quoted as saying, "I've always liked true adventure tales and have always felt that I learned more history of my country from these tales than I ever did from the history books."

Note:

Please be selective, and use discretion when choosing the activities that you will do with the unit. It is not intended that everything be done, but that discretionary choices be made as appropriate for your group of children. A wide range has been provided, so that individuals as well as groups may benefit from these selections.

Introductory Activities

1. Civil War/Reconstruction/Texas: Intertwine blue and gray streamers around the room. Have a record or tape of patriotic music playing in the background. (See Audio-Visual Bibliography.) Have a map of the United States on display, with the state of Texas highlighted in some manner. Read aloud the poem that is on the bulletin board. Turn to page two of *Old Yeller*, and read aloud that page, starting "Papa and a bunch..." Have a discussion as to what the children think life must have been like in Texas after the Civil War. (You may wish to use a KWL form at this time. See Chapter One Post-reading Activity #2 for information.)

What They Know	What They Want To Know	What They Have Learned

Chapter One—Pages 1-14

Vocabulary:

strayed (1) scabbard (3) varmints (4) depredations (6)
plunder (8)

Vocabulary Activities:

1. Define the word *depredations*. (*depredations: plunder*) Find the sentence on page 6 in which the word is used. Read it aloud.
2. How many words can you make from the letters in the word *depredations* in five minutes? (*Here are some: in, sin, din, dine, pine, rind, on, son, done, one, tone, at, rat, pat, sat, pad, dad, ad, red, dead, dread, ten, den, pen, send, tend, rend, spend, trend, trade, said, tread, raid, etc.*)

Discussion Questions and Activities:

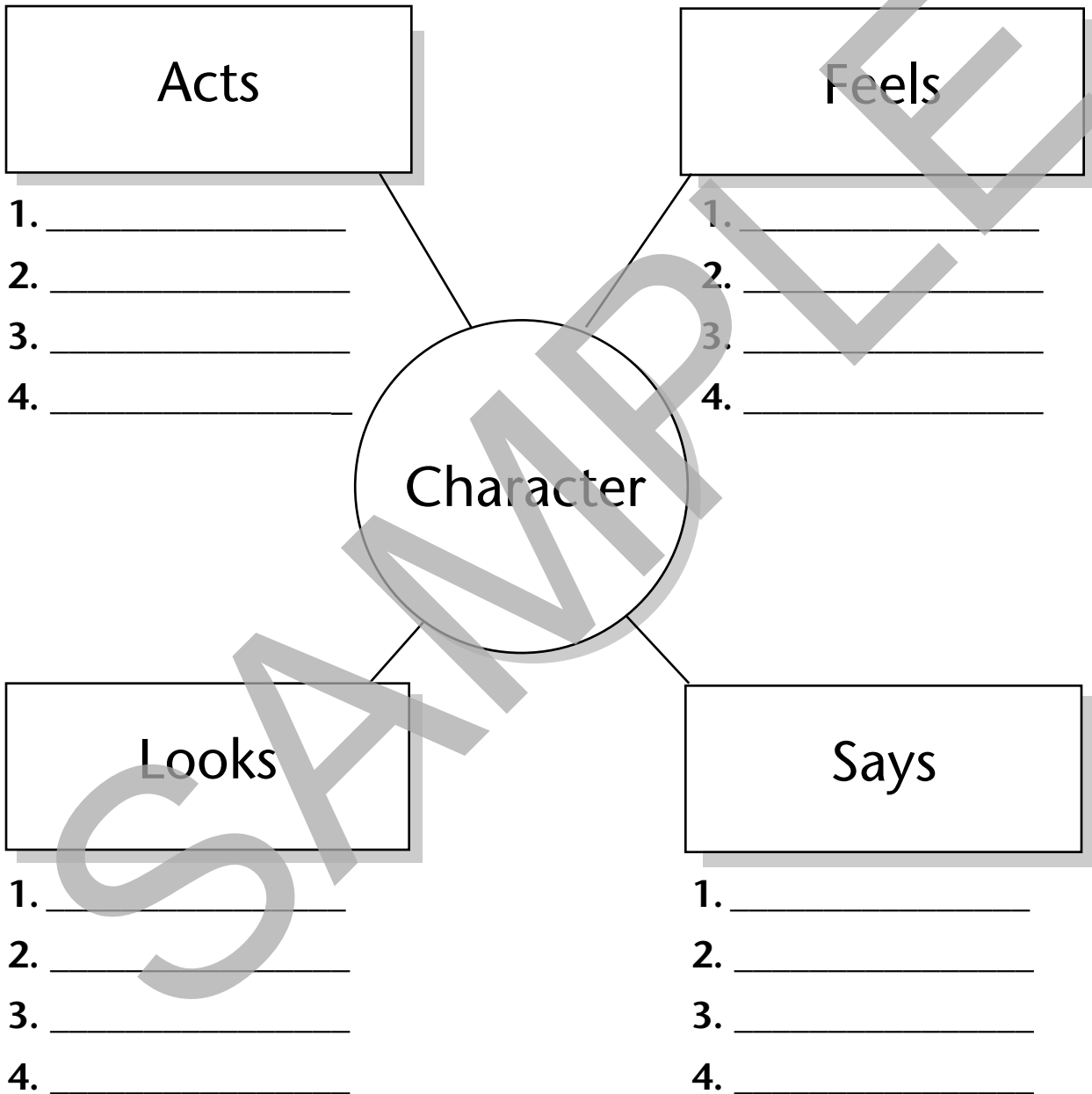
1. Who is telling the story? (*Page 4, A 14-year-old boy named Travis is telling the story.*) (See Post-reading Activity #1.)
2. Why is the dog named Old Yeller? (*Page 1, Read aloud the first paragraph of the story.*)
3. On page 5, Travis' father says that Travis needs a good dog worse than a horse. Why do you think that he says that to Travis? What is a "good dog"? (*Opinion—answers will vary. See page 6 for Travis' ideas about a "good dog."*)
4. Make a list of some of the things that Travis does on his first day as the "man of the family." (*Pages 9-14, Travis disciplines his brother for standing in the drinking water pothole, and plows the corn field without being told.*) How does Travis feel at the end of the day? (*Page 14, "I guessed I'd made a good start. I'd done my work without having to be told. I've taught Little Arliss and Jumper that I wasn't to be trifled with. And Mama could already see that I was man enough to wait supper on. I guessed that I could handle things while Papa was gone just about as good as he could."*)

Post-reading Activities:

1. Start a character attribute web for Travis. (See page 8 of this guide.) Add to it as more is learned about him.
2. Do some research. Find out what was happening in Texas after the Civil War. (*Texas seceded from the Union and joined the Confederate States of America in March, 1861. The state seceded in spite of strong Union feeling in some sections of Texas. Governor Sam Houston refused to take an oath to support the constitution of the Confederate States. As a result, he was put out of office. After the war, Northern sympathizers called Radicals rose to power in Texas state politics. Lawlessness gripped the state as racial violence broke out and the Ku Klux Klan became powerful. During the Reconstruction period, Texas was ruled by a military government, an appointed governor, and three governors elected by the Radicals. Congress readmitted Texas to the Union on March 30, 1870. Reconstruction ended in the state when Democrat Richard Coke became governor in 1874. In the mid-1860s, Texans began driving cattle along trails to railroad centers in Kansas and Missouri. These trail drives continued during the 1870s and 1880s. Indian raids slowed the settlement of the western part of the state. The tribes were subdued by 1880, and cattlemen began to occupy the Panhandle and the western plains. Railroads crossed Texas in the 1880s,*

Attribute Web

The attribute web below is designed to help you gather clues the author provides about what a character is like. Fill in the blanks with words and phrases which tell how the character acts and looks, as well as what the character says and what others say about him or her.



ending the cattle drives and aiding settlement. Pioneers followed the railroads west and began farming the western regions of the state. The Texas Rangers, organized in 1835, helped to protect the far western settlers from bandits. During the 1890s, the state legislature passed various business-reform laws, preventing some price and trade abuses by the railroads and other large corporations. (Source: The World Book Encyclopedia, 1991.)

Chapter Two—Pages 15-20

Vocabulary:

frazzled (15)

belling (17)

whetted (20)

Vocabulary Activity:

The author uses the word *belling* on page 17 to help to describe Old Yeller's actions in the following sentence: "But nobody could have told I missed, after the way he fell over on the ground and lay there, with his belly up and his four feet in the air, squawling* and belling at the top of his voice." How would you define the word *belling*? Is the word found in the dictionary? Discuss.

**The author uses this spelling, squawling. The dictionary and spellcheck use the spelling squalling, the dictionary giving the definition of squall as a loud, harsh outcry; to scream or cry harshly and loudly, which one might assume is the intended meaning that the author wishes to impart. You may wish to discuss this with the students.*

Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. Describe Old Yeller. (Page 16, *Old Yeller is big, ugly, thin, slick-haired. One short ear has been chewed off, and he has only a stub of a tail.*) (See Post-reading Activity #1.)
2. How do the different members of the family react to Old Yeller the morning of his arrival? Why do you think that the reactions differ? (Pages 16-19, *Travis is angry because the dog has eaten the family's meat. Arliss claims the dog as his own, and Mama is glad that Arliss has a companion.*)
3. On page 20, Mama sends Travis on an errand and tells him, "And while you're gone, I want you to do some thinking on what I said about Little Arliss and this stray dog." Help Travis in this situation. List the advantages and disadvantages of having this stray dog as a family pet.

Advantages

Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages

Post-reading Activities:

1. Make an illustration of Old Yeller. You may choose from the variety of media available to you. Make a caption to go with the illustration, and write a paragraph to explain the situation in which you have placed Old Yeller.
2. Start a list of all of the animals mentioned in the book. Add to the list as more is read. What do you know about these animals? What might you like to learn about them? Where could you