

Teacher Guide

Grades 7–8

Out of the Dust

Karen Hesse

NOVEL UNITS[™]

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OUT OF THE DUST

by
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Teacher Guide

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Note

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Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with your class.

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, visualization,
inference

Vocabulary

Alliteration

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral memory

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,
comparison/contrast

Literary Elements

Characterization, story
elements

as well as in the coal mining, railroad, and textile industries. The stock market crash of October, 1929, though not a fundamental cause of the Depression, certainly marked the beginning of this most traumatic economic period of modern times.

In 1930 and 1931, the decade opened with unparalleled growth in the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas. *Nation's Business* magazine labeled the panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma as the most prosperous region in the country, in contrast to the soup lines of the eastern states. After a phenomenal crop in 1926, wheat farmers bought tractors (with hefty payments) and began plowing and planting wheat as never before. Damage to the grasslands was extensive. A bumper wheat crop in 1931 drove the price down—many farmers went broke and others abandoned their fields. The three record drought years of 1934–1936 made matters worse. Rains, blizzards, tornadoes, and floods increased the devastation to the land.

Section-by-Section Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Activities

Winter 1934

Vocabulary:

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|--------------|------------|
| howling 3 | huddled 5 | scowl 7 | stunned 11 |
| testy 12 | disembodied 12 | mastering 14 | fetch 17 |
| dazzled 21 | bindled 26 | feeding 27 | maggoty 29 |
| ratched 30 | | | |

Beginning August 1920—pages 3–7

Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. Who is telling the story? (Billie Jo, a fourteen-year-old living in Oklahoma, born in 1920)
2. How does the author get you into the story? (tell about Billie Jo's birth, her family, her environment, and her world) What have been some of the very best story beginnings that you've read? Share with classmates and assign as a class on a best beginning.
3. What do you learn about Billie Jo in the first chapter? (She is long-legged, freckle-faced, and freckle-faced. She likes people and playing the piano.)
4. What does "January 1920" written at the end of the poem suggest to you? (The book is written as a series of journal entries, written in the voice.)
5. What do you learn about Billie Jo's extended family in this poem? (There are few relatives around—Daddy's older sister and her father's great uncle Floyd.)
6. What do you make of Billie Jo's relationship with her father? (Answers will vary. He treats her affably, teaching her how to handle herself on the farm, as he would a son.)

Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how the conflict will be resolved, which details given by the author will be important to the plot, which details will help to fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses. As students work on predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give us to help us in making our predictions? Why are some predictions more likely than others?

A predicting chart is for students to record their predictions. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, you can review and correct previous predictions. This procedure serves to focus on predictions and to reread the stories.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own knowledge.

Use new information that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions:

Prediction Chart

| What characters have we met so far? | What is the conflict in the story? | What are your predictions? | Why did you make those predictions? |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | | |

Vocabulary, Discussion, Questions, Activities, Worksheets

Name _____

Minor Characters

Directions: Identify the following minor characters from *Out of the Dust*—who are they, and what do they contribute to the story?

Mr. Noble (page 6):

Mr. Romney (page 7):

Missie Killian (page 8):

Arley Wende (page 10):

Mad Dog Craddock (page 10):

Mr. Hardly (page 17):

Mrs. Brown (page 81):

Name _____

Descriptions from the Book

Directions: What do the following descriptions mean? Look at each quotation from *Out of the Dust*. Explain the meaning of each one and your personal reaction to the words.

| Quotation | Meaning | My Reaction |
|---|---------|-------------|
| "smooth/butter rhythms" (page 13) | | |
| "whittled down to the bone" (page 6) | | |
| "food as maggoty stew" (page 29) | | |
| "so much flannel on the line" (page 30) | | |
| "like a pot in an empty kitchen" (page 41) | | |
| "his legs like willow limbs" (page 59) | | |

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