



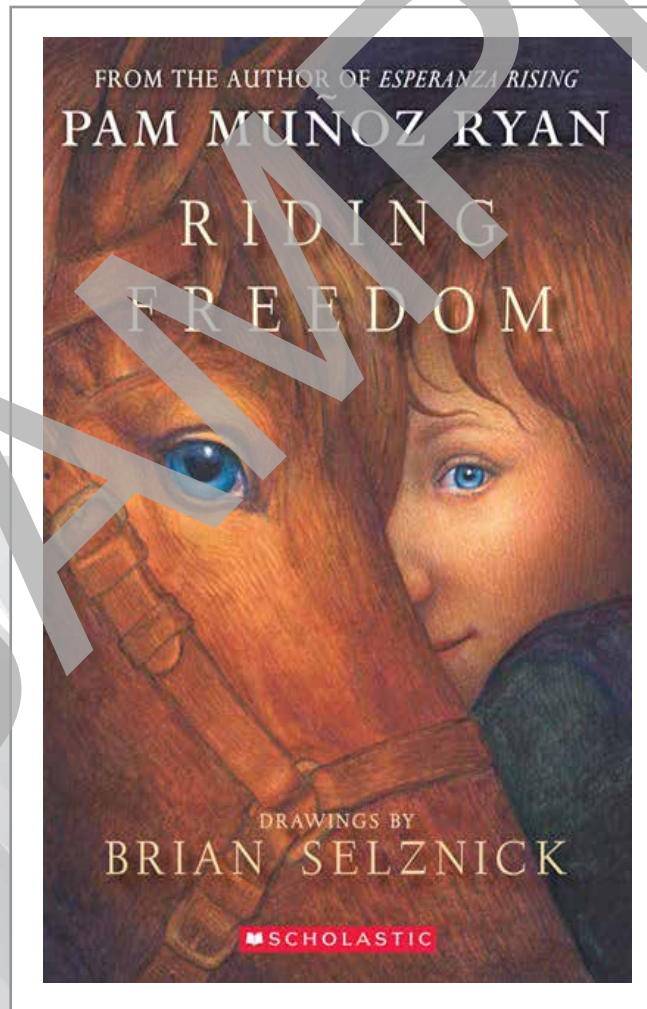
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Riding Freedom

Pam Muñoz Ryan



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Riding Freedom

Pam Munoz Ryan

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

Research, compare/contrast, analysis, brainstorming, predicting, pros/cons

Comprehension

Cause/effect, retelling

Writing

Letter, poem, short story, diary, essay, review the book, song

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral presentation, public speaking, teaching

Vocabulary

Definitions, parts of speech, synonyms, antonyms

Literary Elements

Setting, conflict, theme, characterization, point of view, resolution

Across the Curriculum

History—transportation, biography, Gold Rush, slavery, women’s rights, politics; Science—horses, technology advancement, sight; Art—drawing, collage, diorama; Math—distance, speed; Geography

Genre: historical fiction

Setting: New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and California in early to mid-1800s

Point of View: third person

Themes: courage, freedom, adventure

Conflict: person vs. society, person vs. person, person vs. self

Tone: candid, conversational, informative

Summary

Charlotte “Charley” Parkhurst was born in New Hampshire in 1812. After she is orphaned at a young age, she finds herself in an orphanage where she discovers her gift for working with horses. Charlotte escapes from the orphanage dressed as a boy and begins going by the name “Charley.” She becomes a stable boy and then learns to drive a stagecoach for a kind man named Ebenezer Balch. When gold is discovered in the West, she moves to California to drive stagecoaches there but suffers an eye injury when she is kicked by a horse. Although she has lost sight in one eye, she continues to drive stagecoaches and becomes known as “One-eyed Charley” because of the eye patch she wears. After purchasing her own property in California, Charley registers to vote—both of which she can do only because people believe she is a man. She becomes the first woman ever to vote in a presidential election. Her lifelong friend, Hayward, comes to visit her, fulfilling their childhood dream. Ebenezer then comes to live with Charlotte on her California ranch.

About the Author

Pam Muñoz Ryan was born in California on December 25, 1951, and raised in the San Joaquin Valley. She considers herself to be “truly American,” as she is the descendant of those with Spanish, Mexican, Basque, and Italian ethnicity. As a young girl, she loved to read and wanted to become a teacher. She earned her bachelor’s degree at San Diego State University and became a teacher and eventually an administrator. While earning her master’s degree at SDSU, she became interested in writing. Today, she lives in San Diego County with her husband, four children, and two dogs.

Ryan has written over 25 books for young people, including the award-winning *Esperanza Rising*. Her picture books include such titles as *Amelia and Eleanor Go For a Ride*, *When Marian Sang*, and *Mice and Beans*.

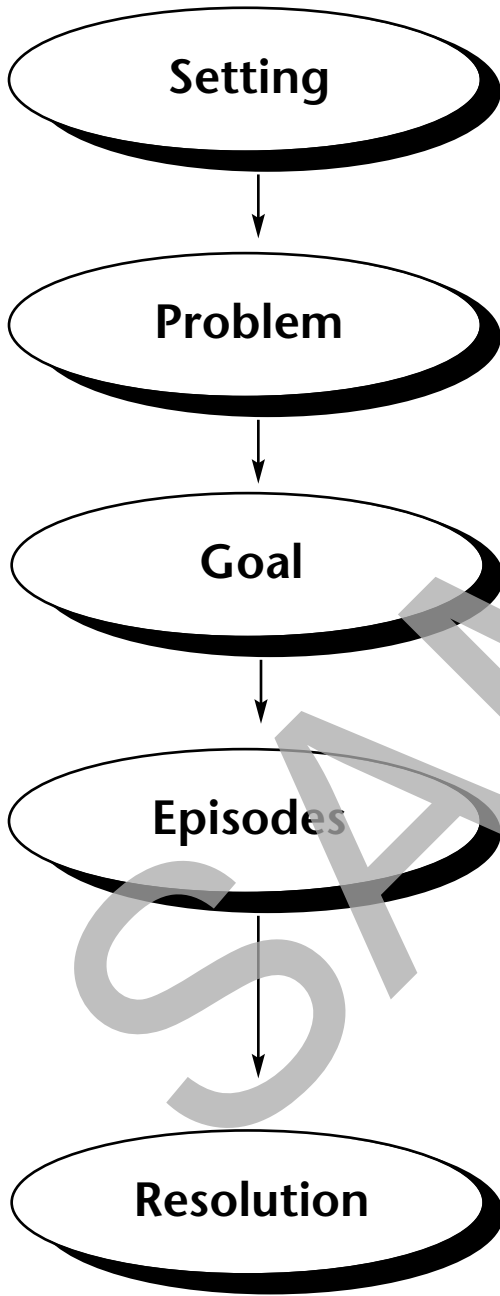
Background Information

Charlotte “Charley” Parkhurst is an American historical figure. She was born in New Hampshire in 1812 and died in 1879 in California of rheumatism and cancer. She was orphaned at a young age and drove stagecoaches after escaping from an orphanage disguised as a boy. She had an excellent reputation as a stagecoach driver. After moving to California, she lost sight in one eye, causing her to wear a patch while driving horses. Besides being famous for stagecoach driving, Parkhurst is also famous for being the first female to vote in a presidential election, which she did in 1868. As the book indicates, her true identity as a woman was not discovered until after her death. At that time, it was also discovered that she was a mother.

While the rough outline of Parkhurst’s life is accurately represented in *Riding Freedom*, some of the dates have been changed for the purposes of the story. The story surrounding how Charlotte was orphaned and the people who helped her through the years is fabricated.

Story Map

Directions: Add to the story map as you read the novel.



Characters _____

Time and Place _____

Problem _____

Goal _____

Beginning → Development → Outcome

Resolution _____

Vocabulary

coddle (68)
precarious (68)
recognition (69)
manifest (70)
jittery (72)
reputable (73)
maneuvered (74)
rollicking (74)
mired (75)
bog (77)
untamed (80)
secured (81)
bullion (83)
livery (84)
delta (85)
disembarked (86)

4. Why does Charlotte enjoy having power over Mr. Millshark? What does she do with her “power”? Do you agree or disagree with Charlotte’s actions? (*She enjoys having power because he had so much power over her for so many years. Because she can, Charlotte takes the coach through a muddy bog so it will get stuck, and Mr. Millshark has to get muddy to help her free the coach. Answers will vary. pp. 75–77*)
5. Do you think it was right or fair of Charlotte to hide Mr. Millshark’s fancy boots so she could give them to Ebenezer? Why or why not? (*Answers will vary. pp. 77–78*)
6. Why does the talk about land interest Charlotte when approached with a job offer from Stevens and Birch? (*She has always dreamed of owning her own ranch.*)
7. What is Ebenezer’s reaction to Charlotte’s leaving? Why does he have this reaction? (*He is very critical of her decision. He does not want her to go. Answers will vary. Suggestions: He is afraid something will happen to her. He doesn’t want to lose his best driver. pp. 82–83*)

8. Who interests Charlotte once she arrives in California? Why does she think this person is brave? Do you think Charlotte considers herself brave? (*a woman handing out handbills and talking about women’s right to vote; because she is standing in front of a group of jeering men; Answers will vary. pp. 87–89*)
9. **Prediction:** Will Charlotte survive in the West? Will she be able to buy a ranch?

Supplementary Activities

1. **History:** Research the California Gold Rush. Try to find specific information about Sacramento, California, and what it means to be a “boomtown.”
2. **Math/Science/History:** Calculate how long it would take you to travel from Rhode Island to California today by car or plane. Then compare that length of time to one month, the length of time it would have taken Charlotte to travel there. Have a class discussion about the pros and cons of the advancing technology of transportation.

Chapter 8–In the End, pp. 93–134

Charlotte gets kicked in the face by a wild horse, causing her to go blind in one eye. She continues to drive stagecoaches, and after saving the lives of some passengers, becomes a famous driver. After buying a ranch, she receives a visit from Hayward and becomes the first woman to vote in a presidential election. In the end, Ebenezer joins Charlotte in California.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the doctor discover about Charlotte? What else does he tell her that relates to his discovery? (*that she is a woman; that she is not the only woman pretending to be a man, pp. 94–95*)
2. How do you think Charlotte feels when the doctor tells her she may never be able to see again in her left eye? How would you feel if you were in her situation? (*Answers will vary.*)