

Teacher Guide

Grades 5–6

Ruby Holler

Sharon Creech

NOVEL UNITS[™]

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RUBY HOLLER

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 them.

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Skills and Strategies

Literary Elements

Foreshadowing, climax, figurative language, theme, characterization, setting, point of view, genre, conflict

Writing

Journal, recipe, poetry, letter, newspaper article, motion picture pitch, short story

Comprehension

Main idea, cause/effect, predicting

Critical Thinking

Compare/contrast, research, evaluating decisions, brainstorming

Listening/Speaking

Interview, oral presentation, discussion

Vocabulary

Definitions, synonyms/antonyms, glossary

Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—cartography, passport; Art—whittling, painting, caricature, sketch; Health—water safety, heart health; Science—plant identification

Chapters 1–7

Dallas and Florida Carter are “trouble twins” at the Boxton Creek Home for Children, an overlooked facility managed by Mr. and Mrs. Trepid. The Trepids are lazy, tired, stern, and easily frustrated by the Carter twins’ antics. After many bad placements and nights of planning an escape on the night train, the Carter twins discover they are going to spend the summer with an elderly couple, preparing for and accompanying them on big adventures. However, they will each go on a separate trip, meaning they must be separated for three months.

Vocabulary

veering
basin
wrenching
snare
ramshackle
unkempt
rimmed
nutritious
profit
dribbled
gopher
inevitably
forgiving
inhale
cooed
cowardly
tentative
gestured
deposited
reservation
canvas
splayed
ushered
wincing
propelled
delinquents

Discussion Questions

1. What are your first impressions of Dallas’s and Florida’s personalities? *(Answers will vary. Dallas seems to be a thinker and a planner. Florida is feisty and speaks her mind. While Florida easily sees the worst in difficult situations, Dallas tries to make the best of them. For example, when Florida and Dallas are served an unidentifiable mush for dinner, Dallas pretends that the “meat” chunk is a juicy steak. Florida, however, declares that the chunk is “chopped-up cardinals and ground tree bark with a dash of hog’s blood” [p. 5]. Both, intentionally and unintentionally, break the Trepid’s many strict and unfair rules. The twins are each other’s best friends and rely on each other for emotional and moral support.)*
2. Describe the novel’s opening setting. What do you think about the way the Boxton Creek Home for Children is run? How do Dallas and Florida feel about living there? *(Answers will vary. The children’s home is a poor shape and is run by the Trepids, who are short-tempered, lazy, tired, impatient people. They create an oppressive atmosphere through endless rules and punishments. Running, playing, and talking are just a few of the things that manage to bring a child in trouble. Many children who come to the home find adoptive or foster families, but Dallas and Florida, after many unsuccessful placements, have been there longer than any of the other children. Social workers no longer visit the home, and there is no longer a doctor on staff. The length of time a child has spent in the Home determines how far from the front of the Home their living space will be. Dallas and Florida live in the very back. They feel stifled, neglected, and unloved and want to run away.)*
3. After a Mr. Sully Morey talk about how their life could be different if they moved. What does their discussion tell you about their home? *(They live in a rural area and have farmed for quite some time. They have to dig for water from a well since they do not have tap water and chop wood for heat since they do not have electricity. They are uncertain that they want to keep living this way and sometimes wish for modern conveniences.)*
4. Why do you think Dallas and Florida keep hiding under the floorboards? *(Answers will vary. Dallas and Florida have a tendency to get hungry at night. This may be because the meals provided by the Home are insufficient and/or because Dallas and Florida have often been punished by being deprived of dinner.)*

5. Why do Dallas and Florida try not to think about their experiences in foster homes? What do you think of Dallas and Florida’s time with the Hopper family? *(They had looked at these places as potential homes, but every family treated them poorly. Answers will vary. The Hoppers accused the Carters of wanting to steal their money, not considering that the twins were curious five-year-olds who had probably seen very little money in their lives. As a little girl, Florida felt she was not good enough for the Hoppers even though the truth is that the Hoppers were not ready for children.)*
6. What are Dallas’s and Florida’s first thoughts when the Tepids tell them that they are going to have a new temporary placement? Why do the twins respond as they do? What do you think life will be like at the Moreys’ home? *(Florida is wary of foster parents after enduring so many bad placements. Dallas’s excitement for a possible adventure outweighs any concern he might have about potential problems. The idea of a trip to Krangadon captures Dallas’s active imagination. Answers will vary.)*
7. What keeps the twins from catching the night train and leaving before they can be placed with the Moreys? *(Dallas is cautious about the trip and convinces Florida to look at the pamphlets again and think over what they would do. Florida agrees and realizes that she is interested in the boat trip.)*
8. **Prediction.** How might life at the Morey home be different from the twins’ previous experiences in foster homes?

Complementary Activities

1. **Figurative Language:** As you read the novel, complete the Metaphors and Similes chart on page 27 of the guide. Example: **Similes**—“Sun slanted as if a spotlight were aimed on the bird” (p. 1); “a lava flow walk like a crab scuttling across the ocean floor” (p. 8); “yellow paint curls on the wall like peeling skin” (p. 8); “the hallway to Florida’s room: grimy, dark dungeon” (p. 7); “the Hoppers’ home: heaven” (p. 17)
2. **Social Studies/Writing:** The twins are going to live with a couple who will take them on a trip. Using a world map, show where you think Rutabago and Krangadon might exist. Use your imagination to create fun facts about each location and write a paragraph describing them.

Clue Log

Directions: When you read something you think might be important later in the novel, write it down. See if you can solve the novel's mystery.

Page	Clue (event or item)	You'd have something

Character Web

Directions: Complete the attribute web below by filling in information specific to a character in the novel.

A character web diagram consisting of a central circle labeled "Name" connected to six surrounding circles. Each surrounding circle contains a label and several horizontal lines for writing.

- Top circle: His/her statements
- Top-left circle: His/her thoughts
- Top-right circle: His/her behavior
- Center circle: Name
- Bottom-right circle: Others' behavior toward him/her
- Bottom-left circle: Others' statements to him/her