



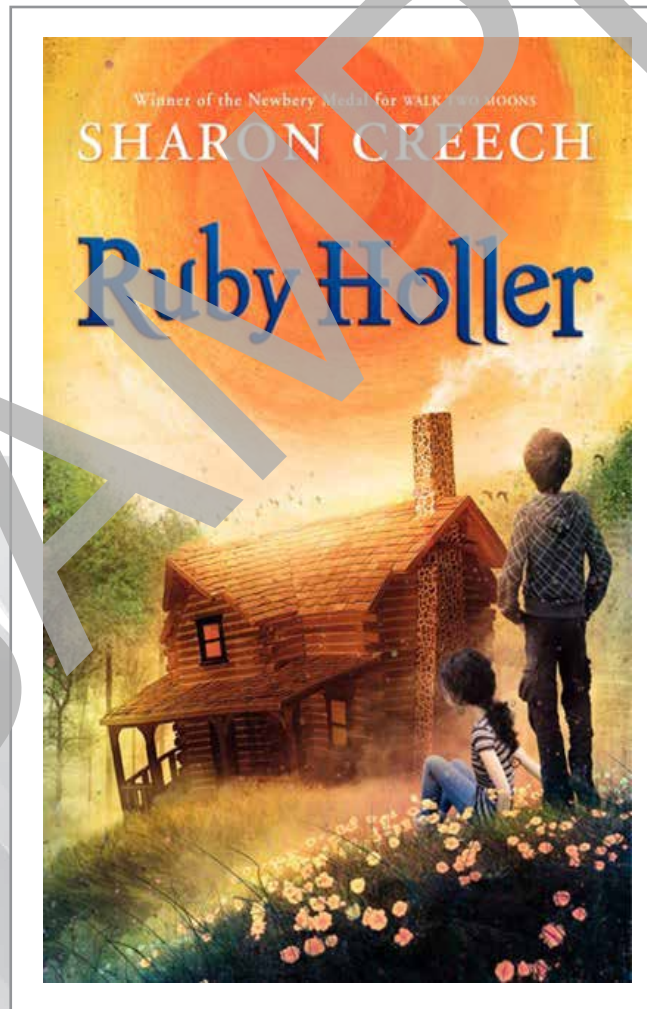
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Ruby Holler

Sharon Creech



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Ruby Holler

Sharon Creech

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

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

Genre: young adult fiction; magical realism

Setting: the small town of Boxtton and Ruby Holler

Point of View: third person

Themes: identity, security, companionship, dignity, compassion, unconditional love, hope, fear, family, trust

Conflict: person vs. person; person vs. self; person vs. nature

Tone: folksy, conversational

Date of First Publication: 2002

Summary

The Carter twins, Florida and Dallas, have a chance to temporarily escape their “putrid” living arrangements at the Boxtton Creek Home for Children. The Trepids, who run the orphanage, are happy to let an elderly couple, Tiller and Sairy Morey, take the twins on a summer adventure. The twins find life with the Moreys in Ruby Holler quite different from their life in the Home and their previous foster homes. For the first time ever, the twins have the freedom to run, explore, scream, and play. They are held accountable for their mistakes, but they are not punished. Work is rewarded with pay rather than with more work. In this new loving environment, the twins begin to reassess their identities. Sairy and Tiller take the children on separate ill-fated trips, and in their absence Mr. Trepid plots to steal the Moreys’ savings from their property. With a little help from their mysterious neighbor, Z, the Moreys emerge from the ordeal with a renewed appreciation for their own relationship and a desire to raise the Carter twins as their own.

About the Author

Born on July 29, 1945, Sharon Creech was one of five siblings in a “noisy and rowdy” house in South Euclid, Ohio. She never thought she would end up a writer until attending Hiram College in Ohio where she became very interested in storytelling. She earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Hiram College and George Mason University, respectively, and worked as an editorial assistant. She moved to England in 1979 and taught high school writing and English. In 2007, she, her husband, and her two grown children returned to the United States. Her two favorite things are being with family and writing stories.

Creech often uses her own life experiences to develop a story. *Ruby Holler’s* storyline came to her after reading a letter from her aunt. In the letter, her aunt talked about Creech’s father’s formative years in a holler. While some authors use outlines to develop a novel, Creech develops the story as she goes along, traveling the paths of discovery with her characters.

Creech’s other works include the 1995 Newbery Medal winner *Walk Two Moons*, the 2001 Newbery Honor book *The Wanderer, Chasing Redbird*, which was an ALA Best Book for Young Adults in 1998, and *Absolutely Normal Chaos*, a fictional account of what life was like in her family.

Chapters 1–7

Dallas and Florida Carter are “trouble twins” at the Boxtton 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
putrid
misfit
dribbled
gopher
inevitably
forgiving
inhabited
cocked
cowed
tentatively
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 dreamer. 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 cardboard...and ground tree bark with a dash of hog’s blood” [p. 15]. Both, intentionally and unintentionally, break the Trepids’ many strict and unfair rules. The twins are each other’s best friends and need each other for emotional and moral support.)*
2. Describe the novel’s opening setting. What do you think about the way the Boxtton Creek Home for Children is run? How do Dallas and Florida feel about living there? *(Answers will vary. The children’s home is in 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 activities that may get 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, frustrated, and unloved and want to run away.)*
3. Tiller and Sairy 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 remote rural area and have for quite some time. They have to haul 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 food 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 Trepids 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 Kangadoon 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 curious about the trip and convinces Florida to look at the pamphlets again and think over what they will 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?

Supplementary Activities

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

Character Web

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

