



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Schooled

Gordon Korman



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Schooled

Gordon Korman

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

Comprehension

Summarizing, predicting,
evaluating, analyzing

Literary Elements

Figurative language,
characterization, conflict,
setting, theme, point of view,
author's purpose

Vocabulary

Definitions, synonyms/
antonyms, parts of speech,
root words

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, dramatization,
debate

Drama

Skit, acting

Critical Thinking

Brainstorming, research,
compare/contrast, cause/effect,
synthesis

Writing

Creative writing, personal
narrative, poetry, journal, essay,
epilogue, script

Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—1960s social
revolution, communes, political
campaigns, mores/ethics,
politics of middle school, driver's
license, "Rainisms," time line;
Science—duct tape, memory
technique; Health—bullying,
tai chi; Music—1960s music;
Math—checking accounts;
Art—Web site, comic strip, flyer

Genre: young-adult fiction

Setting: present day at Garland Farm, a commune, and Claverage Middle School (nicknamed C Average Middle School)

Point of View: first person from multiple characters' points of view

Themes: tolerance, identity, bullying

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

Style: narrative

Tone: humorous

Date of First Publication: 2007

Summary

Capricorn Anderson, nicknamed Cap, has grown up on the Garland Farm commune with his grandmother and caregiver, Rain. When Rain falls and breaks her hip, Cap must spend eight weeks with a foster family. After being homeschooled all his life, Cap suddenly becomes the “new student” at Claverage (C Average) Middle School. In often humorous ways, Cap is bullied by the “popular” students. He even becomes eighth grade president, a position traditionally given to the biggest “dweeb” in the school. Slowly, the students come to know Cap and even begin to respect some of his “freakish” ways.

About the Author

Gordon Korman was born in Montreal, Quebec on October 23, 1963. When he was 12 years old, he wrote his first book *This Can't Be Happening at MacDonalld Hall*. Two years later he submitted his manuscript to Scholastic Canada, where it was published when he was 14 years old. At 16, he won the Air Canada award for the most promising young author in Canada. Korman has written over 50 novels for middle-school students and young adults. His book series, *The Monday Night Football Club*, was the inspiration for the Disney TV series *The Jersey*. Korman received his bachelor's degree from New York University in 1985, with a major in dramatic and visual writing and a minor in motion picture and television. Korman received the Pacific Northwest Library Association's 2003 Young Reader's Choice Award, Intermediate Division; he was also a nominee for the following: 2004 Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award, 2004 California Young Reader Medal Middle School/Junior High Level, and the 2003–2004 Young Hoosier Book Award. *Son of the Mob* was named an ALA Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults, an ALA Top Ten Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Readers, and a Chicago Public Library Best Book of the Year.

Other works by Korman include: *The 6th Grade Nickname Game* (1998), *No More Dead Dogs* (2000), *Son of the Mob* (2002), *Son of the Mob: Hollywood Hustle* (2004), *On the Run* series (2004–05), *Island Trilogy* (2005), *Born to Rock* (2006), and *One False Note* (2008), Book Two of the interactive *39 Clues* series.

Gordon Korman's hallmark in children's literature is his humorous novels. He transforms real-life situations into hilarious plots with his vivid imagination. Some of his later works are suspense and action-adventure novels. He claims that social relevance is not a priority in his books; he simply wants his books to entertain. He and his wife Michelle, a third-grade teacher, live on Long Island, New York with their three children.

Chapters 1–3

Capricorn (Cap) Anderson’s grandmother and caregiver, Rain, falls from a plum tree and breaks her hip. She must undergo eight weeks of rehabilitation therapy, during which time Cap must live with a social worker, Mrs. Donnelly. Cap also attends a public middle school for the first time. Zach Powers, the most popular boy in school, finds Cap an easy target for bullying because of Cap’s long hair, woven sandals, and other hippie trappings. Zach hatches a plan to nominate Cap for eighth grade class president because he considers Cap the newest and biggest nerd in school and wants to make fun of Cap.

Vocabulary

commune
psychedelic
grimace
tremulous
recollections
tsunami
sitar
reluctant
tarmac
conviction

Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice about the point of view after reading Chapters 1–3 of the novel? (*Korman uses multiple narrators to tell the story from different points of view. In Chapters 1–3, Cap, Mrs. Donnelly, and Zach are each viewpoint characters. Each chapter is titled for the character whose voice narrates, with the point of view shifting back and forth, providing different perspectives on Cap’s experience in the world. Readers must decide which narrator seems the most reliable. The contrasting voices imply that Cap’s story is subjective, or dependent on the observer and his/her personal lens. Perhaps one point of view could not objectively report the cultural and personal intersections and clashes.*)
2. Compare and contrast your life with Cap’s life at Garland Farm. (*Possible similarities: Students have to receive an education, do chores, and complete science projects. Possible differences: Garland*

Farm is a commune, but only one family lives there. Cap learned to drive at the age of eight, but typical driving age is 15–17. Cap is homeschooled. He and Rain do not believe in competition. Their doctor is a vet. They have no telephone.)

3. Cite some of Cap’s beliefs about modern society. Do you think these are his own beliefs, or are they Rain talking through him? (*Society is a “money-hungry rat race.” Cap is home-schooled so that he can “avoid the low standards and cultural poison of a world that [has] lost its way” [p. 5]. Trophies are “the shiny symbols of an empty soul” [p. 6]. These are probably Rain’s ideas that Cap has adopted as his own because he has never lived outside the commune or with anyone but his grandmother. However, many young people’s ideas reflect their parents’ until they have had a chance to live independently.*)
4. Rain says “... anger upsets the balance inside a person. So when you yell at somebody, you’re attacking yourself more than whoever it is you’re yelling at” (p. 7). What are some constructive ways to vent anger? (*Possible answers: physical activity, spending time by yourself, making a list of pros and cons, writing a letter, etc.*)
5. Why does Mrs. Donnelly take in Cap? What might have happened had she not been kind enough to do this? (*Mrs. Donnelly grew up at Garland Farm, so she understands Cap’s unique upbringing. She realizes no one else will comprehend Cap’s ways. Cap might have had a difficult time with a family who did not understand his background. He might have gotten into trouble or become depressed.*)
6. How do Mrs. Donnelly’s and Cap’s views on Garland Farm differ? Why do you think they feel so differently? (*Mrs. Donnelly remembers Garland Farm, peasant dresses, war protests, and farm chores almost with horror. Cap thinks the commune is a wonderful place. Mrs. Donnelly left when she was 12 years old and entered a world very different from Garland Farm, where she had to adapt. Cap has never known anything but Garland Farm, so he thinks his way of life is superior.*)

- Describe Zach's personality. (*Zach is the football and soccer team's captain, and he practically runs the school. He makes fun of anyone who is unpopular; he is conceited and self-centered.*)
- Prediction:** How will Zach treat Cap?

Supplementary Activities

- Literary Analysis:** Begin the Story Map on page 23 of this guide. Add to the map as you read the novel.
- Social Studies:** Research communes and the hippie lifestyle of the 1960s. Add to the attribute web begun in Initiating Activity #5. As a class, answer the question: Would you have liked to live that way? Discuss the pros and cons.
- Critical Thinking:** Begin a list of "Rainisms," beliefs or advice from Rain, related either by her or through Cap. For example: "...anger upsets the balance inside a person" (p. 7) and "When we lock things away...we're really imprisoning ourselves" (p. 16). Journal about your reflections.
- Figurative Language:** Begin a chart identifying the figurative language used in the novel (see page 24 of this guide). Continue adding to the chart as you read the novel. Examples: **Simile**—"He was tall and skinny as a rake" (p. 15); **Metaphors**—Capricorn Anderson: time traveler (p. 11); Rain: Garland Farm's queen bee (p. 12)

Chapters 4–6

Cap gets into trouble when he misunderstands others' sarcasm and a teacher accuses him of talking back. Sympathetically, Rain gives Cap a pep talk about being patient with his situation. At school, Hugh Winkleman tries to warn Cap about Zach. Hugh stops short when he realizes Cap has replaced him as "top nerd." Cap is secretly nominated for and becomes eighth grade president, and Naomi joins forces with Zach to harass Cap.

Discussion Questions

- Why is Cap sent to the assistant principal's office? (*A teacher misinterprets Cap's literal answers to her sarcastic questions as him being a "smart mouth," so she sends him to Mr. Kasigi's office. Cap does not understand sarcasm, as he has never experienced it during his sheltered life at Garland Farm.*)
- Why does Sophie object to Cap coming to live with them? (*She is afraid she will become a social outcast and that Josh Weintraub will avoid her because Cap is a freakazoid from a "hippie-dippie flea circus." She is used to being the only child and having her home and family's attention to herself.*)
- Despite her rudeness, what impression does Sophie make on Cap? (*Cap is struck by Sophie's physical beauty, despite her shrieking and yelling. He has never met a beautiful girl and thinks her presence feels "nice." She leaves him perplexed by the complexity of life outside his commune.*)
- Summarize Hugh's advice to Cap regarding Zach. (*Hugh warns Cap to stay away from Zach and all the jocks and wannabes. He also tells him to have nothing to do with "goths, burnouts, skateboarders, hip-hop kids, environmentalists, or anybody who has a baseball cap on backward" [pp. 28–29]. He is basically describing the politics of public school as one who has been victimized and who himself belongs to the unpopular subgroup of wedgie-receivers.*)

Vocabulary

combatants
ventured
roughshod
projectile
autonomous
collective
trajectory
constituents
exhilarated
queried
convulsed
hysterics
decisively
apex
cesspool
groupie
facsimile
reverence

5. If you were Hugh, would you have warned Cap against running for president? Why or why not? (*Possible answers: Yes, Hugh could spare Cap the humiliation of being harassed and ridiculed. No, because if Cap is not nominated and elected, Hugh will be tormented.*)
6. What motivates Naomi's actions toward Cap? (*She wants to impress Zach, whom she has a huge crush on, by joining Zach's efforts to harass the new kid. She is also giving in to the peer pressure of Zach's group.*)
7. Summarize the way Zach and Naomi treat their new class president. (*They put phony suggestions in a suggestion box, asking for things like Gatorade in the fountains and a bullfighting ring on school grounds; invite him to press briefings in rooms that do not exist or are locked; write notes from a bogus secret admirer; and put gross things in his locker.*)
8. How does Cap react to this harassment? (*As Naomi narrates Cap's reactions, readers do not know what Cap himself thinks about the bullying. He seems to react calmly—as if he does not know he is being harassed. When he buries a dead bird left in his locker, for example, he seems to be staying true to his honest and pure nature. He is unconcerned about how his peaceful actions may appear to others.*)

9. **Prediction:** How will Cap react to further harassment?

Supplementary Activities

1. **Character Analysis:** In a group of five students, fill out the Character Web found on page 25 of this guide for one of these characters: Cap, Mrs. Donnelly, Zach, Hugh, or Naomi. Discuss your charts as a class, and then hang them around the room to be revisited at a later time.
2. **Comprehension:** Write suggestions for improving your school, and put them in a suggestion box. Discuss as a class.
3. **Writing/Art:** Analyze the social structure at C Average Middle School according to Hugh. Create a humorous comic strip of the various subgroups interacting.
4. **Values:** Begin a chart listing pranks that are played on Cap and how he handles each one. Discuss Cap's personality and values.
5. **Journal:** Compare and contrast Naomi and Lena's friendship with the relationship you have with your best friend.