



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Shades of Gray

Carolyn Reeder

**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

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Carolyn Reeder

## 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, visualization

### Comprehension

Predicting, comparison/  
contrast

### Writing

Letter writing, poetry

### Vocabulary

Analogies, synonyms

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, role play

### Literary Elements

Characterization, story  
elements

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## Summary of *Shades of Gray*

Twelve-year-old Will Page, orphaned during the Civil War, goes to live on a farm with relatives. Rural Virginia has been devastated by the war, but that is the only resemblance there is to Will's hometown of Winchester. Working hard to prove his worth, Will is taught the skills he needs to be able to cope in this new life with an uncle he deems to be a coward. Will comes to learn that having the courage of one's convictions and standing by one's beliefs can be more difficult than going to war.

### About the Author

Carolyn Reeder was born November 16, 1937, in Washington, D.C., the daughter of Raymond and Pauline Owens. She is married to Jack Reeder, and they have two children, David and Linda. Carolyn Reeder attended the American University, B.A. and M.Ed. She is a writer and elementary school teacher. She received the Scott O'Dell Award for historical fiction in 1989 for *Shades of Gray*. She has written, with her husband Jack, historical nonfiction for adults about the Shenandoah Valley in northern Virginia. Her novels for children include *Shades of Gray* and *Grandpa's Mountain*.

### Introductory Information and Activities

**Note:** Please be selective, and use discretion when choosing the activities that you will do with the unit. It is not intended that everything be done, but that discretionary choices made are the most appropriate for your use and group of students. A wide range has been provided, so that individuals as well as groups may benefit from these selections.

#### Introductory Activity

Make a copy of the poem "This Land Is Your Land" by Woody Guthrie\*. (See Bibliography, Other—Contemporary.) Have it on display in the room. Have on hand a record or a tape of the song by the same name, so that it may be played for the students at the start of this activity. Make one or two large banners with "This Land Is Your Land" on them. Point out the map and the caption on the bulletin board. Brainstorm the word **BRAVE**.\*\* Go on to the section, "Previewing the Book." (\*\*See the poem quoted in the Conclusion section of this unit, following Chapter 17. Refer back to this activity at that time.)

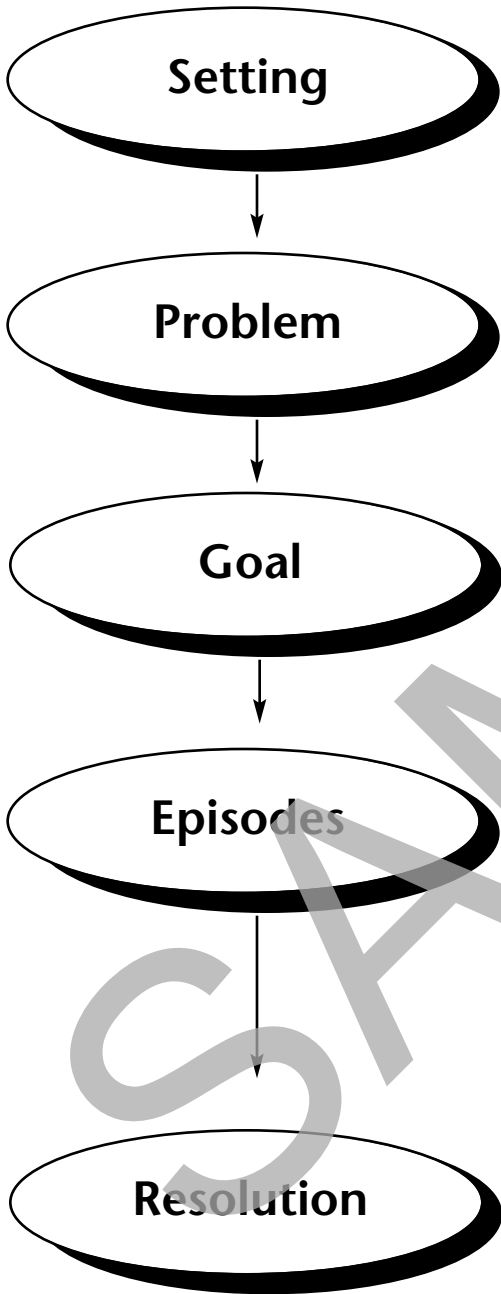
\*Use at least stanzas one, two, and three which are quoted below:

This land is your land, this land is my land  
From California to the New York island,  
From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters;  
This land was made for you and me.

As I was walking that ribbon of highway  
I saw above me that endless skyway;  
I saw below me that golden valley;  
This land was made for you and me.

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## Story Map



Characters \_\_\_\_\_

Time and Place \_\_\_\_\_

Problem \_\_\_\_\_

Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning → Development → Outcome

Resolution \_\_\_\_\_

---

## Chapter One—Pages 1-14

### Vocabulary

monotonous (1)	waterwheel (1)	scrunched (1)	traitors (2)
encampments (2)	forded (3)	doffed (4)	methodically (5)
wistfully (5)	rebels (5)	halter (6)	desolation (7)
concentrating (7)	carpetbags (8)	partitioned (8)	kerosene (9)
luxuriant (10)	savored (10)	sarcastic (11)	adversary (12)
scornfully (13)			

### Vocabulary Activity

Complete each of the comparisons using a vocabulary word.

(Sample: GOOD is to BAD as HOT is to COLD.)

1. UP is to DOWN as \_\_\_\_\_ is to EXCITING. (MONOTONOUS)
2. GLAD is to HAPPY as \_\_\_\_\_ is to ABUNDANT. (LUXURIANT)
3. MORE is to LESS as \_\_\_\_\_ is to PUT ON. (DOFFED)
4. NIGHT is to DARK as \_\_\_\_\_ is to PENSIVELY. (WISTFULLY)
5. BETTER is to WORSE as \_\_\_\_\_ is to HAPHAZARDLY. (METHODICALLY)
6. UNHAPPY is to SAD as \_\_\_\_\_ is to CAUSTIC. (SARCASTIC)
7. HERE is to THERE as \_\_\_\_\_ is to WHOLE. (PARTITIONED)
8. WHITE is to BLACK as \_\_\_\_\_ is to REMAIN. (FORDED)

### Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What do you know about Will from pages 1 and 2 of the novel? Do you think that the author has given the reader a good deal of information? How was this done? List the information offered by the students. (*Will is in the Piedmont area of Virginia, having come from the area of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Food is scarce in both areas. He is on his way to the farm of the sister of his mother, as Will's mother had instructed in a letter written before the war. Will's mother, father, brother, and sisters are dead. Will's father and brother were killed by the Yankees. His sisters died from an epidemic spread from the encampments. His mother died of grief. Will's uncle did not fight the Yankees in the Civil War, but he did not help them, either. The war is over. Doc Martin, a family friend, is taking Will to the farm.*)
2. Meg and Will discuss the reason for the Civil War. (pages 12-13) What is Meg's reply when Will tells her that the war was about states' rights? (Page 13, "Anyway, people's rights are more important than states' rights, and Pa had the right to decide not to fight in the war!") What is your reaction to Meg's reply? (See Post-reading Activity #1.)
3. How is Will feeling by the end of the day? (page 14) How do you think you would feel if you were thrust into a similar situation? Discuss. (See Post-reading Activity #3.)

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## Post-reading Activities

1. Will's Uncle Jed was not a member of the armed forces of the North or the South during the Civil War. Would he have been classified as a conscientious objector? Find out more about people who claim that their beliefs prevent them from bearing arms in their country's armed forces. (*A **conscientious objector** is a person who claims that his beliefs prevent him from bearing arms in his country's armed forces. A conscientious objector may be willing to serve in the military, but only as a noncombatant, such as a medical corpsman, or he may claim that his principles do not allow him to take part in any effort associated with war. Of the major countries, the United States and Britain were the first to consistently accept the claim of conscientious objection in exempting people from military service and from combat training. This history of conscientious objection in the United States dates back to colonial times, when men had to serve in their colony's militia. The first conscientious objectors in America were members of pacifist religious groups, such as the Quakers. In 1661, Massachusetts became the first colony to exempt conscientious objectors from service in its militia. **Congress passed the first federal draft law during the Civil War. This law recognized conscientious objectors, and they received special consideration in both the North and the South. To be classified as a conscientious objector, a man had to belong to a pacifist religious group. This requirement was also followed during World War I. Men were excused from combat, but were expected to perform some sort of military service. Source: The World Book Encyclopedia, 1991.***)
2. Locate the Shenandoah Valley and the Virginia Piedmont on a physical map\* of the State of Virginia. Compare these two locations, and find out more about each area. You may wish to use a T-Diagram for comparison purposes. (\*See encyclopedia.)
3. Will decides that he will never call his uncle, "Uncle Jed." (page 14) Do you think that he will keep his resolve? Make a prediction. (See pages 7-8 of this guide.)
4. Start attribute webs for Will, Meg, Aunt Ella and Uncle Jed. Think of words that best describe each of these people. Add to the webs as more is learned about them. (See pages 10-12 of this guide.)

## Chapter Two—Pages 15-25

### Vocabulary

gruel (16)  
tintype (20)

foragers (16)  
tentative (20)

intervals (18)  
riving (21)

brusquely (18)  
grudging (23)

### Vocabulary Activity

Match up the vocabulary word with its definition.

#### Definitions

photograph  
tearing apart  
searchers for food  
resentful  
spaces  
harshly  
provisional  
watery porridge

#### Vocabulary Word

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(tintype)  
(riving)  
(foragers)  
(grudging)  
(intervals)  
(brusquely)  
(tentative)  
(gruel)