



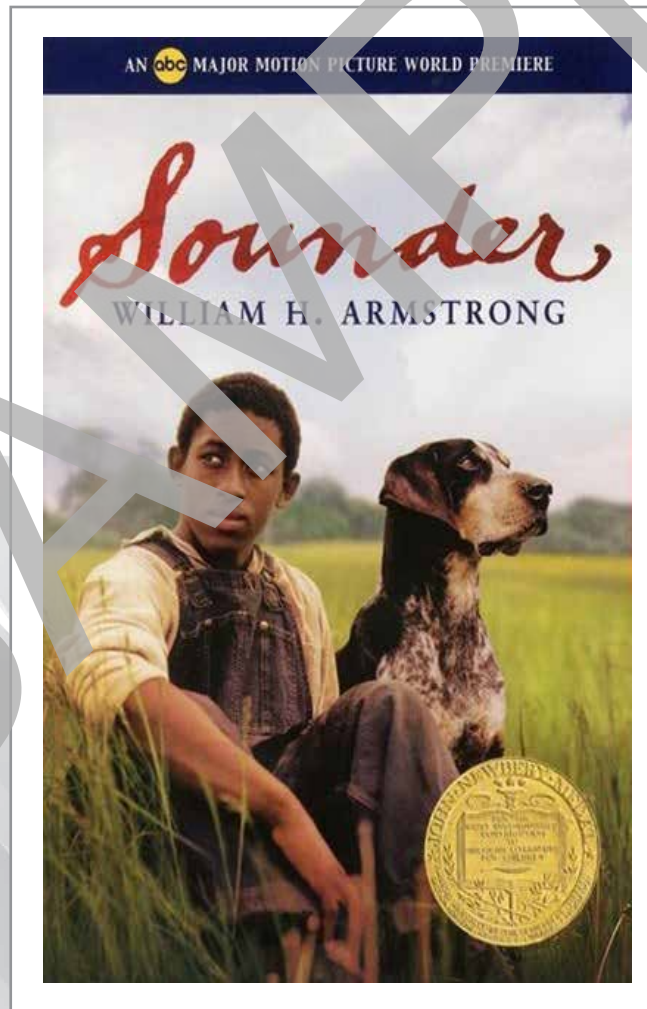
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Sounder

William H. Armstrong



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

# Sounder

William H. Armstrong

## 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

Brainstorming, classifying and categorizing, synthesizing ideas

### Literary Elements

Similes, plot development, details, character development, imagery, figurative language

### Vocabulary

Synonyms, context clues, memory devices

### Comprehension

Predicting, comparison/contrast

### Writing

Concept narration, pattern writing, description

### Listening/Speaking

Vocal recording and visualizing, analysis of noises, onomatopoeia, discussion and cooperative groups

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### **Summary of *Souder*:**

*Souder* is a Newbery medal-winning story of a poor black family. The family whose name we never learn falls on hard times when the father is arrested for stealing some meagre foodstuffs for his family. The oldest son takes over many of his father's responsibilities. Souder, the father's old coon dog, provides some companionship and illustrates lessons of the spirit. It's a sad bittersweet story with a glimmer of hope because the boy learns to read. Students will enjoy the simple uncluttered style and the warm relationship between boy and dog.

### **About the Author:**

William H. Armstrong was born on September 14, 1914, on a farm in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. While he was attending Augusta Military Academy, he was questioned by his teacher, the department head, and the school's headmaster about where he had copied a story he had submitted as an English assignment. That original work was later published when he was a freshman at Hampden-Sydney College. In the interim, he had squelched his literary efforts and submitted bland English papers like those everybody else wrote.

After graduation he became a teacher and since 1945, he taught history at the Kent School in Connecticut. He married and had three sons whom he raised alone after his wife's death at an early age. His books include: *Study is Hard Work*; *Through Troubled Waters*; *The Peoples of the Ancient World*; *87 Ways to Help Your Child in School*; *Tools of Thinking*; *Souder*; *Barefoot in the Grass*; *The Story of Grandma Moses*; *Sour Land*; *Animal Tales*; *My Animals*; *Hadassah: Esther, the Orphan Queen*; *The Education of Abraham Lincoln*; and *Word Power in 5 Easy Lessons: A Simplified Approach*.

### **Initiating Activities:**

1. What does the title mean? What is a souder? Look it up in the dictionary. Brainstorm some predictions about the story.
2. Look at the cover. What significant things do you see? Make up some questions about the cover.
3. Read the quote from Antoine de Saint Exupéry that the author places at the beginning, "A man keeps, like his love, his courage dark." Why does an author use such a quote? When have you seen this device used before? What does the quote mean? What hints does the quote give us about the story?
4. Read the Author's Note at the start. What does it tell us about the setting and characters of the story?

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## Chapter III—Pages 35-45

### **Plot Summary:**

The mother takes the remains of the stolen meat and her walnuts into town. The oldest boy unsuccessfully looks for Sounder's dead body.

### **Vocabulary:**

kernels 36      flannel-outing 36      skittish 38      grub hoe 38  
fencerow 39      pallet 41      rivulets 44      smart 44

### **Vocabulary Activities:**

1. Provide vocabulary words in context. Ask students to "guess" at the meaning from context, asking why for each guess. Generate a listing of the why answers to teach context clues.
2. Vocabulary definition bee. Students prepare for the bee by writing definitions for each word on 3 x 5 cards to be used by the leader of the bee.

### **Discussion Questions and Activities:**

1. Why do you think that the boy's mother did not cook any pork sausages for breakfast? (*Answers vary. Pork sausage was for good times and this was not a good time.*)
2. Where do you think the boy's mother was going with the meal sack? (*Answers vary.*)
3. Why do you think Mother was humming "That Lonesome Valley"? (*It was a lonely time for her.*) If you aren't familiar with the song, do some research.
4. Where did the boy look for Sounder's body? (*in Sounder's favorite spot—behind the porch steps*)
5. What do curtains mean to the boy? (*Richer people have curtains. They make the boy think of sea foam.*) What do curtains mean to you? How are your ideas different from the characters in the book?
6. Why do you think the boy can't find Sounder's body? (*Answers vary.*)

### **Supplementary Activities:**

1. Comparison: This story is about country life. How is country life different from city life? Make a T-diagram to organize your ideas. Put a check next to things about country life which have been revealed in the story.

Country Life	City Life

- 
2. Have you ever lost a pet? How do you think the boy feels thinking Sounder is dead? Write a short paragraph to explain your answer.
  3. What is the relationship between Sounder and Father? Start a list to describe the relationship. Add to your list as you read the rest of the story.
  4. Analysis: Why don't the characters have names? Write a short paragraph to explain your answer.
  5. What things are important to the boy? (*clean pillow case, pork sausage, Sounder, curtains*) How are these things the same or different from things that are important to you? Answer in a short paragraph.
  6. The author gives us vivid pictures of ideas and places in the book. Choose two pictures from this chapter to illustrate. For example, the windows on page 40.

## Chapter IV—Pages 46-64

### **Plot Summary:**

Mother returns from town alone. On Christmas the boy takes a cake to his father in jail. The boy is badly treated by the jail guard.

### **Vocabulary:**

vitals 48	tannery 48	poultice 48	swampland 48
mange 48	glancing 48	pipe-damper 51	troublesome 53
hacksaw blade 59	crumpled 60	pitchfork 60	perkish 62
addled 62	quivering 63		

### **Vocabulary Activities:**

1. Use a "Trivial Pursuit" board with vocabulary words and definitions on 3 x 5 cards for each category. Players must give the word for the definition which is read aloud to score.
2. Vocabulary Password: Students play in pairs, one giving the definition and the other answering. Definition-giver gets a list of words to get partner to say. Pair who can guess the most words in specified minutes wins.

### **Discussion Questions and Activities:**

1. How has the boy's role changed from the beginning of the book? (*He has more responsibility for chores around the house. He is taking over some of his father's jobs. He has matured and has learned about cruelty.*)
2. After thinking, what does the boy's mother suggest has happened to Sounder? (*Page 48, He has gone into the woods to draw out the poison with oak-leaf acid.*)

