



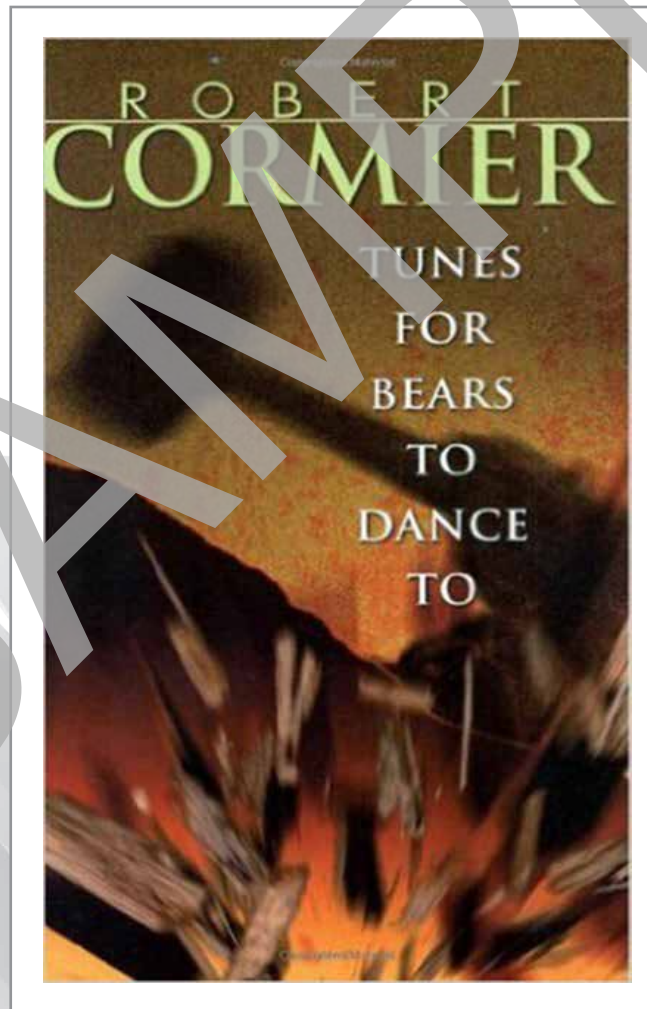
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Tunes for Bears to Dance To

Robert Cormier



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Tunes for Bears to Dance To

Robert Cormier

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, analysis,
evaluation, pros/cons,
problem solving

Comprehension

Inference, prediction,
cause/effect

Writing

Poetry, creative writing,
compare/contrast,
dialogue, book review

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, debate,
personal experience

Vocabulary

Application, comprehension,
definition

Fine Arts

Art, drama, song-writing

Literary Terms

Simile, metaphor,
foreshadowing, symbol

Genre: fiction

Setting: city of Wickburg (further information unknown)

Point of View: third-person omniscient

Conflict: person vs. person, person vs. self

Themes: good vs. evil, loneliness, survival, compassion, emotional and moral maturation

Date of First Publication: 1992

Summary

Henry Cassavant, an 11-year-old boy, is struggling to cope with the recent death of his brother, Eddie. His family has just moved to a new town, and Henry doesn't have any friends. His mother works all of the time, and his father is suffering from depression. Henry befriends an old Jewish man named Mr. Levine. Mr. Levine is a Holocaust survivor who is carving a replica of his village at the local arts-and-crafts center. Henry has a job working for Mr. Hairston at the local store. Mr. Hairston is a disgruntled man who holds many prejudices against people of different ethnic groups. Upon hearing of Henry's friendship with Mr. Levine, Mr. Hairston entices Henry to commit an injustice against Mr. Levine in exchange for a financial favor. Mr. Hairston tells Henry that he will buy a new headstone for Eddie if Henry will destroy Mr. Levine's village carving. Henry struggles with this decision, knowing that he cannot hurt Mr. Levine and unable to comprehend the full extent of Mr. Hairston's depravity.

Characters

Henry Cassavant: 11-year-old boy dealing with the death of his brother; works in Mr. Hairston's store; faced with a terrible ultimatum from Mr. Hairston when he (Henry) befriends Mr. Levine

Mr. Hairston: Henry's boss; manipulative, disgruntled bigot; offers Henry a reward to commit an injustice against Mr. Levine

Mr. Jacob Levine: Jewish man; Holocaust survivor; carves a replica of his village; befriends Henry at the art-and-crafts center

George Graham: gentle man in charge of the arts-and-crafts center where Mr. Levine works on his village

Mrs. Cassavant: Henry's mother; kind, overworked woman; supports her family

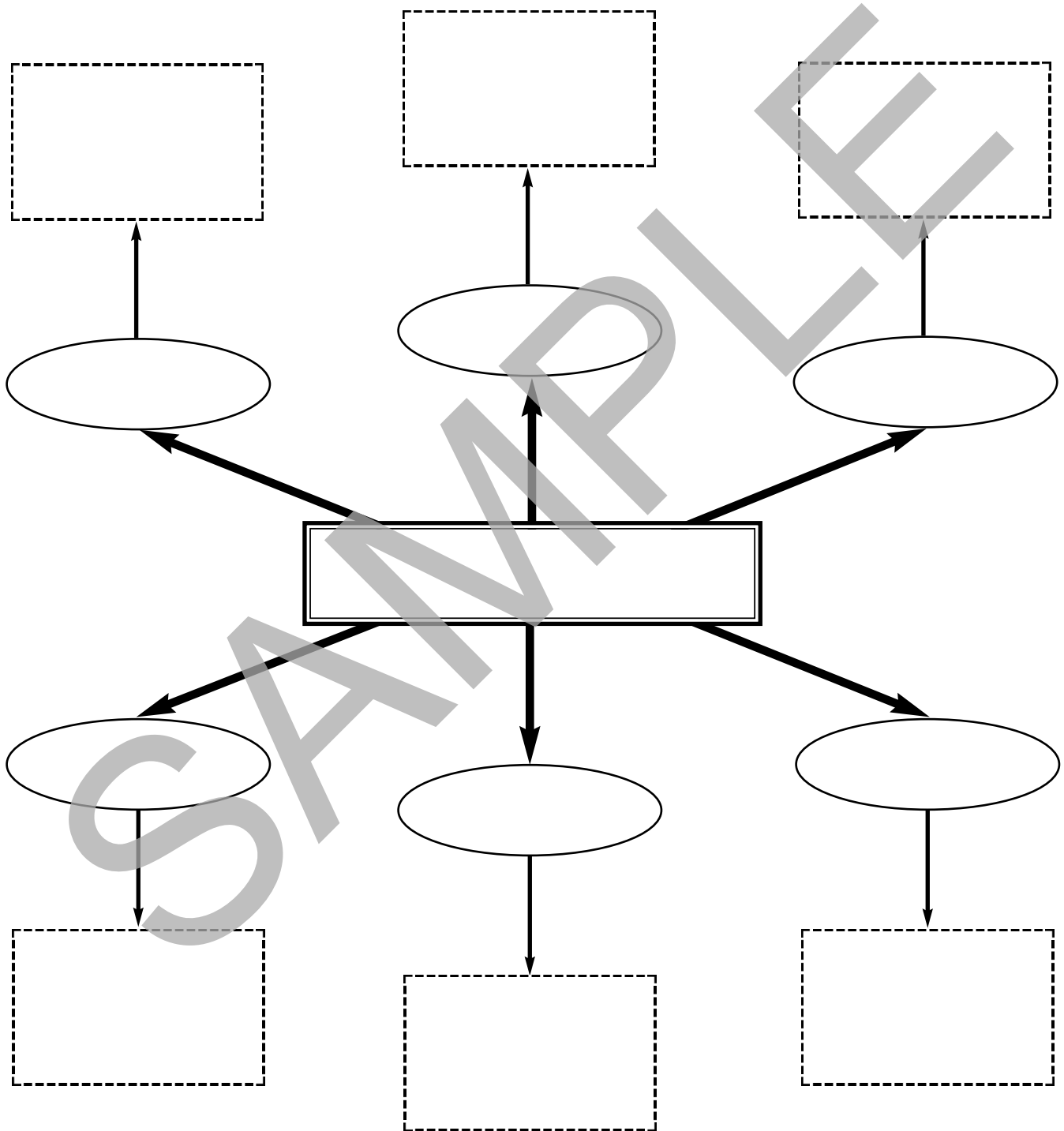
Mr. Cassavant: Henry's father; meek man suffering from depression since the death of his son

Doris Hairston: Mr. Hairston's shy, haunting daughter; suffers abuse from her father; intrigues Henry

Eddie (deceased): Henry's brother; killed in a hit-and-run accident; driving force in both Mr. Cassavant's condition and Henry's consideration of Mr. Hairston's proposal

Characterization

Directions: Write the name of a character from the book in the center rectangle. In each oval, write an adjective that describes the character's personality. Then fill in each dotted rectangle with a detail about the character that illustrates that part of the character's personality.



Vocabulary

wielding (35)
painstakingly (35)
gingerly (36)
pummeled (42)
bleary (42)

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Mr. Levine react badly to the small cut on Henry's finger? *(Answers will vary, but should include some reference to the fact that Mr. Levine cannot bear even the slightest evidence of pain because of what he went through during the war. pp. 37–39)*
2. Analyze George Graham's statement, "But he's...not as old as he looks. The camp made him old, the deaths of his family." Discuss how circumstances in one's life can make him/her appear emotionally and/or physically older than they actually are. *(Answers will vary. p. 38)*
3. Examine and discuss the possible implications of Mr. Cassavant's statement to Henry: "I'm sorry, Henry." Why do you think Mr. Cassavant offered this unprovoked apology? *(Answers will vary, but may include that Mr. Cassavant is aware of his present failure as a father and husband. He knows that Henry is lonely and his wife is overworked, but he feels powerless to help them. p. 43)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Research: As a class, research the concentration camps used during the Holocaust. Have students give an oral report on their findings, noting especially Auschwitz, the camp where Mr. Levine's wife and daughters were taken.
2. Art: Read aloud George Graham's statement, "There is so much evil in the world..." (p. 37). Have students create collages using pictures or text cut out from magazines and newspapers that offer evidence of his statement's validity.
3. Literary Devices: **Simile**—"his touch light as a snowflake" (p. 36); **Metaphor**—"something bad": the Nazis (p. 37)

Pages 45–50

Henry tells Mr. Hairston about Mr. Levine—about his life during the war and the village he is carving. Although Mr. Hairston answers with his usual prejudiced comments regarding Mr. Levine's ethnicity, he appears to be extremely interested in Henry's account of Mr. Levine's story. Henry begins to feel uneasy, as though he has relayed too much information to Mr. Hairston. Doris talks to Henry about her father, offering excuses for why he abuses her and her mother. Doris warns Henry to be careful of her father.

Vocabulary

brusquely (45)
heartened (46)
imperceptibly (48)
defiance (50)
audible (50)

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss possible reasons for Mr. Hairston's enthusiastic interest in Mr. Levine. Contrast this to Mr. Hairston's usual reaction to Henry's stories. *(Answers will vary.)*
2. Why do you think Doris makes excuses for her father's behavior? *(Answers will vary, but may include that Doris is proud and ashamed at the same time. Doris feels weak and helpless, and this embarrasses her. She tells Henry "My father lets me go to the library whenever I want," and "My father loves me and he loves my mother. But he wants us to be perfect." Perhaps she says these things to prove to herself as much as to Henry that her father is not a cruel man. pp. 49–50)*
3. **Prediction:** How will Doris' warning regarding her father apply to Henry?