



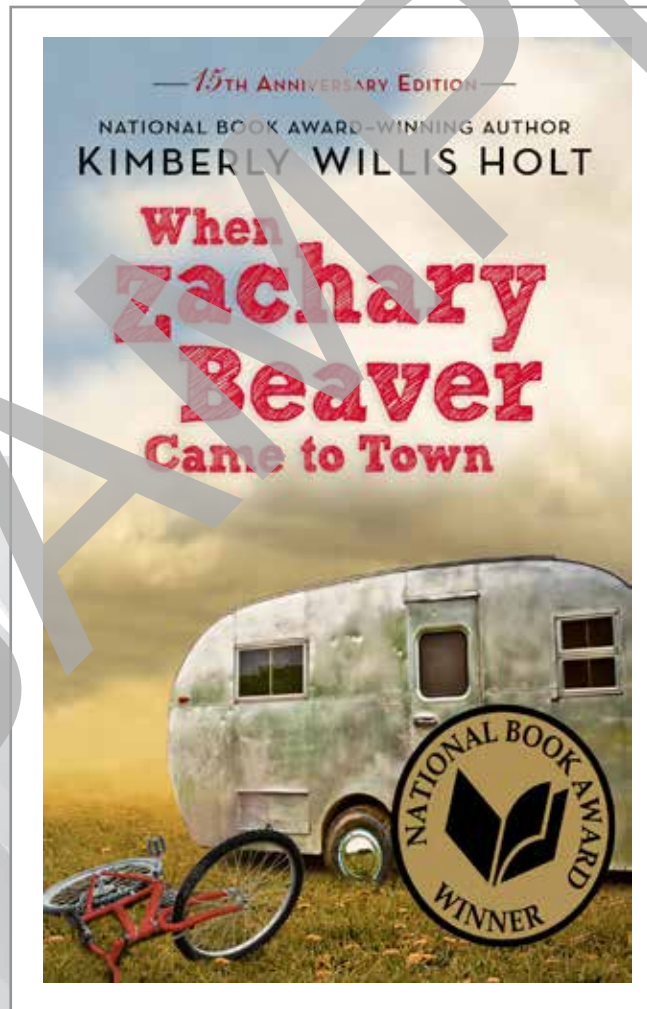
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

When Zachary Beaver Came to Town

Kimberly Willis Holt



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

When Zachary Beaver Came to Town

Kimberly Willis Holt

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

Compare/contrast, research, critical thinking, problem solving

Comprehension

Cause/effect, predictions, analysis, application

Writing

Diary, journal, letter, book review, brochure

Vocabulary

Target words, synonyms

Listening/Speaking

Class discussion, small group discussion, communicating through song, drama

Literary Elements

Characterization, imagery, story mapping

Across the Curriculum

History, geography, art, photography, science

Summary

Zachary Beaver is the heaviest boy in the world, and his sideshow comes to visit the tiny town of Antler, Texas. Zachary's presence affects everyone in town, especially Toby and Cal, whom he eventually befriends. In the story, Toby Wilson faces many difficult situations. His parents separate, and his mom goes to Nashville to chase her dream of being a country singer. An only child, Toby looks up to Cal's older brother, Wayne, a soldier who dies fighting in the Vietnam War. Toby must learn how to adjust to changes in life and mend destroyed relationships. He learns the value of kindness and the importance of friendship and honesty.

About the Author

The story of Zachary is based on an experience that Kimberly Willis Holt had when she was thirteen—she saw the “Fattest Boy in the World” at the Louisiana State Fair. *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town* is a Book of the Month Club selection. Ms. Holt has also written *My Louisiana Sky*, which received numerous awards. She has lived all over the world and now resides in Amarillo, Texas, with her husband, Jerry, and their daughter, Shannon.

Introductory Activities

1. Previewing the book: Have the students study the cover of the book. Ask them to respond to the following questions about what they see: who? what? where? when? why? Based on their answers, students predict what the novel is about.
2. Given the following clues, students will write a paragraph predicting what they think will happen in the story.
war friendship loyalty relationships honesty appearances
3. Character Diary: Introduce the main character, Toby Wilson. After they finish reading each day, or as they go along, encourage students to write diary entries from Toby's perspective. Provide time for the students to share their entries with the class.
4. Create an Attribute Web (p. 5 of this guide) with students for each of the following ideas: friendship, loyalty, war, honesty, and family. Focus on one word at a time. Begin by writing the word in the center of a large piece of paper. Ask students to quickly tell what each word brings to mind. Encourage students to elaborate on particular ideas.
5. Prediction Chart: Have the students set up a prediction chart to use as they read the novel. (pp. 7-8 of this guide)

6. Anticipation Questions: Have students respond to each of the following statements with a “thumbs-up” (I agree) or a “thumbs-down” (I disagree) and discuss their responses.

- It is important to like yourself.
- War is a necessary evil.
- Families should stick together.
- People truly are as they seem.
- It is important to follow your dreams.
- You should always consider the feelings of others.
- It is important to always respect your relationships.
- It is impossible to improve upon your character.

7. Influences: Ask each student to recall an event that greatly influenced him or her. Ask students to consider how these events shaped them and what they might be like had the events never taken place.

Vocabulary Activities

1. Word Wall: Assign each student one or two words from the vocabulary list for the section of the book you are reading. Students should look up the word in the dictionary and once they understand the definition, draw a picture that illustrates the word. They will then share the word and the drawing with the class. The students in the class will record the definition in their notebooks. The drawing and the word will be added to a word wall in the classroom.
2. Sentences: Have the students select five or six vocabulary words and use as many as possible in one sentence.
3. Synonym Match: Have students select vocabulary words from a section and list one synonym for each vocabulary word on a small piece of paper. Students mix the papers and match each synonym to the appropriate vocabulary word.
4. Vocabulary Sort: Have students sort the words into categories they choose. Then ask the students to share their reasoning with you and the class.
5. Vocabulary Around the World: Have one student stand next to the desk of the student at the front of the room. Announce a vocabulary word. The first of the two students to give the correct definition moves on to the next desk. The other student sits down. The student who is winning continues to rotate around the room until someone else beats him/her.
6. Vocabulary Charades: Place the vocabulary words in a basket. Have the students draw out a word and act it out to the class. This can be done individually, with a partner, or in small groups. You can also pick specific words from the novel that you wish to target.

Chapters 9-11, pages 84-116

Vocabulary

initiation (84)	smirks (85)	optimum (85)	confess (87)
postponed (87)	tiara (88)	verdict (89)	notify (94)
social services (94)	juveniles (95)	gazebo (95)	utter (95)
protest (95)	pathological (97)	engrossed (100)	stewardess (102)
international (103)	ambassador (103)	penitentiary (104)	lunges (105)
pining (107)	possessed (107)	trapeze (111)	queasy (112)

Discussion Questions

1. What is truly going on with Toby's mom? *(His mom lost the contest but still decided to stay in Nashville. She won't come back to Antler.)*
2. Why does Toby lie to Mrs. McKnight about Mom's contest? *(He doesn't feel like explaining the whole situation.)*
3. How does Toby feel about the idea of Zachary going into foster care? *(He would hate to see Zachary live with strangers.)*
4. What is significant about Toby cleaning himself up without help while Cal has Wayne to help him? *(Toby doesn't have an older brother and must take care of himself; it foreshadows the fact that Wayne tries to take care of Cal.)*
5. It is not Toby's nature to lie to everyone. Why does he keep doing it? *(Answers will vary.)*
6. What will happen since Toby decided not to take the cake to Zachary right away? *(Answers will vary.)*
7. What does the Judge keep telling Toby? *(He will have to pay for his crime.)*
8. Why does Toby spray on some of Scarlett's perfume? *(He likes the way she smells.)*
9. What does Scarlett tell Juan when he calls? *(She doesn't want to see him and already has company.)*
10. Why does Scarlett tell Juan that Toby is at her house? *(She is trying to upset him.)*
11. What does Toby realize while he is at Scarlett's? *(She still loves Juan, just as she has for years.)*
12. Why does Toby agree to take Tara to see Zachary Beaver? *(He is a nice guy and will do just about anything to please Scarlett.)*
13. Why does Toby say that "Loser" is his middle name? *(He doesn't think much of himself. He is ashamed that he left Scarlett crying in the kitchen.)*
14. Why do Cal and Toby treat Tara differently? *(Toby doesn't have any brothers or sisters. Cal does and feels more comfortable treating Tara with less patience than Toby.)*
15. How does Toby feel when Zachary smells Scarlett's perfume on him? *(Answers will vary.)*

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16. Why is it ironic that Zachary tells the boys that they are pigs? (*Cal and Toby are devouring the cake like pigs. Even though Zachary is heavier than they are, he at least uses his manners to eat.*)
 17. Does Zachary know the truth about The Grand Ole Opry fire? Why would he? (*Yes; he watches the news often.*)
 18. Why is Cal reaching out to Zachary? Why is Cal so interested in Zachary's baptism? (*Answers will vary.*)
 19. What does the letter from Toby's mom say? (*She isn't coming back home for a while; she is going to stay in Nashville.*)
 20. How does Toby feel after reading the letter? (*Answers will vary.*)
 21. **Prediction:** Will the boys find out the truth about Zachary's baptism?

Supplementary Activities

1. Writing: Ask the students to pretend they are Toby. Have them write a letter to Mom in response to her letter.
2. Class Discussion: Ask the students to consider whether or not it is a good idea for Toby to lie about Mom's contest. Ask them to come up with some reasons why it was the right or wrong thing to do.
3. Critical Thinking: Toby thinks that he is a loser. Have the students examine Toby's behavior in the story. How would they describe him? Is Toby's opinion of himself accurate? Ask them to support their opinions with specific evidence from the story.

Chapters 12-14, pages 117-149

Vocabulary

manual (117)	satisfied (118)	procedure (119)	sonatas (119)
despising (121)	marina (122)	suspenders (123)	accelerates (125)
dictate (126)	enthusiasm (129)	sincere (131)	obscene (137)
gestures (137)	concession (138)	hermit (139)	obvious (140)
mandarin (144)	famished (144)	lingers (147)	prance (147)
Reverend (149)			

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Toby feel satisfied that he has disappointed and hurt his father by refusing to eat the pancakes? (*He misses his mom. Dad is trying to do the things she did, and Toby wants him to know that she can't be easily replaced. He is being mean and wants to hurt Dad just as he is hurt.*)
2. What does Toby think Dad could have done to make Mom stay? (*She might have stayed if Dad did something more interesting than raise worms and work at the post office.*)