



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Woodsong

Gary Paulsen

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

# Woodson

Gary Paulsen

## 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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## Table of Contents

<b>Rationale</b> .....	3
<b>Plot Summary</b> .....	5
<b>About the Author</b> .....	6
<b>Initiating Activities</b> .....	7
<b>Two Sections</b> .....	13
Sections contain: Vocabulary Words and Activities, Discussion Questions, Predictions, Supplementary Activities	
<b>Post-reading Discussion Questions</b> .....	24
<b>Post-reading Extension Activities</b> .....	25
<b>Cooperative Groups as a Strategy with the Novel Units Approach</b> .....	30
<b>Evaluation: Rubric for Essay-Writing</b> .....	34
<b>Evaluation: Alternative Means of Assessment</b> .....	35
<b>Assessment for <i>Woodsong</i></b> .....	36

## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Comparing, evaluating,  
analyzing details

### Writing

Ads, directions

### Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussions,  
participation in dramatic  
activities, describing,  
defending opinions

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,  
story mapping, cause/effect,  
inference, problem solving

### Vocabulary

Compound words, words in  
context

### Literary Elements

Character analysis, setting,  
plot, figurative language

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## Rationale

How do you ensure that the needs of individual students are met in a heterogeneous classroom? How do you challenge students of all abilities without losing some to confusion and others to boredom?

With the push toward “untracking” our schools, these are questions that more and more educators need to examine. As any teacher of “gifted” or “remedial” students can attest, even “homogeneous” classrooms contain students with a range of abilities and interests.

Here are some of the strategies research suggests:

- cooperative learning
- differentiated assignments
- questioning strategies that tap several levels of thinking
- flexible grouping within the class
- cross-curriculum integration
- process writing
- portfolio evaluation

Novel Units are designed with these seven facets in mind. Discussion questions and projects are framed to span all of the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. Graphic organizers are provided to enhance critical thinking. While most activities could be completed individually, many are ideal vehicles for collaborative effort. Throughout the guides, there is an emphasis on collaboration: students helping other students to generate ideas, students working together to actualize those ideas, and students sharing their products with other students. Extension activities link literature with other areas of the curriculum—including writing, art, music, science, history, geography, and current events—and provide a basis for portfolio evaluation.

Finally, teachers are encouraged to adapt the guides to meet the needs of individual classes and students. You know your students best; we are offering you some tools for working with them. Here are some of the “nuts and bolts” for using these “tools”: a glossary of some of the terms used above that will facilitate your use of the guides.

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*Bloom's Taxonomy*: A classification system for various levels of thinking. Questions keyed to these levels may be:

- *comprehension questions*, which ask one to state the meaning of what is written;
- *application questions*, which ask one to extend one's understanding to a new situation;
- *analysis questions*, which ask one to think about relationships between ideas such as cause/effect;
- *evaluation questions*, which ask one to judge the accuracy of ideas;
- *synthesis questions*, which ask one to develop a product by integrating the ideas in the text with ideas of one's own.

*Graphic Organizers* are visual representations of how ideas are related to each other. These "pictures"—including Venn diagrams, flow charts, attribute webs, etc.—help students collect information, make interpretations, solve problems, devise plans, and become aware of how they think.

*Cooperative Learning* refers to learning activities in which groups of two or more students collaborate. There is compelling research evidence that integration of social activities into the learning process—such as small group discussion, group editing, group art projects—often leads to richer, more long-lasting learning. (See "Cooperative Groups as a Strategy with the Novel Units Approach" at the end of the guide for a more detailed description.)

*Evaluation*: Portfolios are literally, portable cases for carrying loose papers and prints. More and more teachers at all levels are utilizing portfolios—product folders—in assessment of student learning. (See the end of the guide for a more detailed description.)

*Process Writing* is a way of teaching writing in which the emphasis is no longer on the product alone. Rather, students work continuously through the steps of prewriting, drafting, and revision—often through collaborative effort—in order to develop a piece for sharing with a real audience.

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## Prediction

What happens to teach Paulsen about the temper of a dog? What else does Paulsen learn from his dogs?

## Writing Activities

1. The author makes a list of humorous “images” of Hawk’s attacks. Using Paulsen’s descriptions (pages 46-47) as a model, describe several funny related scenes you have observed (such as incidents in which your dog or cat made you laugh).
2. The author could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the dead doe. Describe a time when you could hardly believe your eyes.

## Chapters 7-8—Pages 64-85

### Vocabulary

regimen 65	persistence 65	belling 65	momentum 66
deftly 66	idiocy 67	floundering 67	putz 67
mutiny 68	tuck 68	emit 76	tarp 80
hunkered 80	hallucinate 81	elemental 85	logistical 85

### Discussion Questions

1. The author begins chapter 7 with the line, “We have had and been owned by many dogs since we started to run them.” What does he mean? (*The dogs make many demands on their owners, and control their human owners as much as the owners control them.*)
2. Who was Fred? What did he teach the author? (*An overweight, normally good-natured dog, Fred bit the author when put on a diet; the author learned about temper in dogs.*)
3. Who was Cookie? Where have you seen her name come up before in the book? What was she like? What did she teach the author? (*The book is dedicated to Cookie, a sweet lead dog who once got fed up with the author and let him lead the team into a gully.*)
4. What sort of tricks did Storm play on the other dogs and on the author? (*snorting in the ears of other dogs, hiding the author’s hat, dog booties, tape*)
5. What does the author mean by saying that Storm “had scale eyes” (page 73)? (*Storm could mentally weigh each load and would growl at loads that were too heavy.*)
6. How did Storm communicate with the author using a stick? (*Each time the sled stopped, Storm would show the author the stick and gently growl while the author took the stick to examine it—Storm’s indication that everything was all right.*)
7. Why did the author tie old Storm to a chain rather than letting him walk through the kennels freely? Why did the author regret having chained Storm the day he died? Did you know that many animals face east to die? Ask some experts in animal behavior what they know about that. According to the author, why did Storm die with the stick in his mouth? (*He was afraid*)

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*that younger dogs would fight with Storm; Storm tried valiantly to face east, but couldn't because of his chain; the stick was Storm's sign that the author was forgiven.)*

8. What causes the author to hallucinate about the Eskimo man the first time? How does the man in the hallucination help the author? *(The author had flu or food poisoning; the Eskimo keeps untangling the dogs and reloading the sled, helping the author back into the sled each time he falls out because he is weak and sick.)*
9. What is the Iditarod? What route is covered? *(a famous dogsled race held each year in Alaska—Anchorage to Nome)*
10. Why is the Iditarod such a challenge, today? Is it the sort of challenge you would enjoy? Why does the author enjoy running that race? Do you see any similarities between the author and fictional characters who go on quests? *(We are used to comfort-controlled environments; this is a grueling trip of 1100 miles through icy wilderness.)*

### **Prediction**

During the Iditarod, how is running during the night different from running during the day? How much interaction is there between different teams and “mushers”?

### **Writing Activities**

1. Suppose Paulsen had written some sort of memorial piece for Storm the day Storm died. Write the piece (ode, short prose, song, etc.) you might have found on Paulsen's desk that night.
2. Remember or imagine a time when you were very sick. Describe the mixture of nightmares and actual events that comprise your memory of the illness.

## **The Race**

### **Days 1-6—Pages 89-109**

#### **Vocabulary**

checkpoints 89  
delirium 96  
rookies 101  
befuddled 107

pandemonium 95  
reconcile 97  
caren 101

deprivation 96  
benediction 98  
mandatory 103

whiteouts 96  
futile 100  
chaos 106

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. What sort of planning has to be done by someone who is going to race in the Iditarod? *(Food has to be shipped to all the checkpoints, dogs have to be transported to the starting line, snow has to be brought in.)*