

Story Squares for Grades 4-6

Multiple Learning Styles for Reading Comprehension

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Grades Four to Six

Bud. Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis

Set in 1930s Michigan, *Bud, Not Buddy* tells the story of a young orphan. ten-year-old Bud, orphaned four years ago, is being sent to a new family. Unfortunately for Bud, it is a cruel family, and he stays only one evening before fleeing.

Bud ventures out on his own to find his father, Herman E. Calloway. During his journey he runs into many adults who are willing to help the young boy as he makes his way through Michigan. Once he finds Mr. Calloway, Bud's hopes for a happy ending seem to be lost, as Herman E. Calloway is a bitter old man who wants nothing more than to find fault in young Bud.

After more twists and turns, friendships form with Calloway's band members, a home is found, and discoveries are eventually made. Without a doubt, this is a touching story that most children will enjoy.

This book is recommended for advanced fourth-graders or independent fifth- and sixth-graders. With the historical elements throughout the book, it may be helpful to review the Great Depression Era prior to reading.

The Borrowers by Mary Norton

The Clock family leads what seems to be an ordinary life in a grand house in England, but they live under the kitchen floor and are only a few inches tall! They borrow household items from the "human beans" that live in the house. Their biggest fear is being discovered. Mrs. Driver, the house cook, realizes the Clocks exist, but nobody believes her story of mice dressed in clothing. She tries everything in her power to get rid of them, including having a rat-catcher flush them out. Do the Borrowers survive, or do they really exist at all?

This book is similar to *The Littles*, but is at a higher reading level due to the British wording in some parts. This book is recommended for fourth- through sixth-graders.

Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan

During the 1930s, Esperanza lives a privileged life on her family's ranch in Mexico. But her father's untimely death leaves her and her mother no choice but to flee to the United States, away from Esperanza's evil uncles. They settle in a camp for farm workers in California, a lifestyle to which Esperanza is not accustomed. The Depression is making work hard to find. Working conditions are not fair among the different ethnic groups working in the camp. Should the workers strike and risk losing their only means of support for their families? Esperanza faces many problems that force her to become a strong young woman and a provider for her family. She learns to value the important things in life rather than the material things.

This book is recommended for fourth- through sixth-grade students, depending on the ability level of the students.

Bud, Not Buddy

by Christopher Paul Curtis

Choose _____ from each square.

1

- 1 Find at least ten details that prove this story is set in the past.
- 2 List all the places Bud lived, from his earliest memory to the end of the story.
- 3 List at least ten character traits for both Bud and Herman.
- 4 Make a road map with directions for Bud to follow to get from Flint, Michigan to Chicago, Illinois.
- 5 Find photos of all the instruments the band uses and describe each one.

2

- 1 Describe what you would do if you were an orphan put into the horrible Amos household.
- 2 Bud is desperate to find his father. In a narrative essay, tell about a time that you were determined to accomplish something and did so successfully.
- 3 Both Bud and Herman break down in tears at different points in the story. Write a journal entry for each character describing why that happened.
- 4 Write a *birthday poem* about the band.
- 5 Give at least five advantages and five disadvantages of living in a group home compared to living with a foster family.

3

- 1 Now that Herman and Bud know the truth, what are ten questions that Herman might ask Bud? How would Bud answer them?
- 2 Herman was a very angry man. Describe why he is this way and how you think he will change in the future. Write at least two to three paragraphs.
- 3 Write a summary for each chapter.
- 4 Bud was *on the lam*. How did being on the lam affect Bud's safety? Give examples from the story.
- 5 Bud feels that he has all the proof he needs about the true identity of his father. What clues did you notice about Herman as you read the story?

4

- 1 Decorate some rocks (like Herman did) to commemorate important events in your life. Be prepared to tell for what they stand. Decorate at least eight rocks.
- 2 Make a travel brochure promoting places of interest in the Michigan cities Bud traveled through, as well as where he planned to travel.
- 3 Find some jazz music from the Depression Era. Listen to it and write a music critique. Describe it and tell what you like or dislike about it.
- 4 Write an *epilogue*. What happens after both Herman and Bud grow to understand the recent events?
- 5 Create a promotional poster for Herman E. Calloway and the Dusky Devastators of the Depression.

The Borrowers

by Mary Norton

Choose _____ from each square.

1

- 1 Make a list of all the Borrowers mentioned in the story.
- 2 How does Mrs. Driver react when she lifts the kitchen floorboard and sees the Clocks' home?
- 3 Define these words in alphabetical order: governess, wainscot, diction, crochet, hassock, fortress, emigrate, mantel.
- 4 Make a list of 15 plural nouns from the story. List the pages on which you found them.
- 5 Describe five items the Clocks borrowed and how they used them in their home.

2

- 1 If you could be one of the Clocks, who would you be and why? Write one paragraph explaining your choice.
- 2 What are three advantages and three disadvantages of being a Borrower?
- 3 Summarize the story by writing a seven-line *two-word poem*.
- 4 You are Arrietty. In a paragraph, write how you feel about your life as a Borrower.
- 5 Is the boy responsible for the Borrowers being discovered? Why or why not?

3

- 1 Do you think Mrs. May believes the Borrowers exist? Explain why or why not in a well-written paragraph.
- 2 Why do the Clocks decide to tell Arrietty about the real world?
- 3 Make a *Venn diagram* comparing Arrietty to Mrs. May's brother.
- 4 How would this story be different if it took place today? What would happen to the Borrowers?
- 5 Are the Borrowers really borrowing or are they stealing? Defend your opinion in one to three paragraphs.

4

- 1 Make a title for each of the book's 20 chapters.
- 2 Write another chapter predicting what actually happened to the Clock family.
- 3 List five things you own that the Borrowers could use in their home.
- 4 Draw what you think the Borrower's under-the-floor space looked like. Do **not** use illustrations from the book.
- 5 What if the Clocks had the opportunity to become "human beans?" Describe how their lives would change and the challenges they might face.

Esperanza Rising

by Pam Muñoz Ryan

Choose _____ from each square.

1

- 1 There are many Spanish words in the book. List 15 and write their English translations and definitions.
- 2 Each chapter is named for a fruit or vegetable. Explain why each chapter is given its name. Include story details to support your answers.
- 3 Why were people from Oklahoma looking for jobs as camp workers in the 1930s?
- 4 Keep a record of all the things that happen to Esperanza that she feels are “beneath” her.
- 5 Define the following words: deportation, devious, stagnant, antiseptic, relapse, arbors, capricious, propriety, scythe, methodical. Use each in an imperative sentence.

2

- 1 What birthday traditions does your family have?
- 2 List five advantages and five disadvantages of staying in Mexico with Tio Luis and five advantages and five disadvantages of fleeing to the United States.
- 3 At the end of each chapter, write a diary entry as if you were Esperanza. Be sure to express your feelings.
- 4 Write a *diamante poem* about Esperanza comparing her life in Mexico to her life in California.
- 5 Esperanza learns that some things are more important than others. Prioritize the five things she holds most dear. What are your top five priorities?

3

- 1 Miguel says, “In the U.S. even the poorest man can become rich if he works hard enough.” Give an example of how this statement is true and one that proves it false.
- 2 How are Miguel and Esperanza “on different sides of the river?”
- 3 Like Abuelita’s blanket, Esperanza faces many valleys and mountains. Create a *cause-and-effect chain* showing the ups and downs of Esperanza’s life.
- 4 Discuss the pros and cons of the camp workers going on strike.
- 5 Create a *Venn diagram* to compare Esperanza’s life in Mexico to her life in the United States. Give at least five details in each section.

4

- 1 Use your imagination to draw El Rancho de Las Rosas.
- 2 With a small group, prepare a script and dramatize part of the train ride to Los Angeles.
- 3 Predict what Esperanza’s life will be like when she is 30 years old. Write an *epilogue* describing your ideas.
- 4 If you were forced to move unexpectedly, what would you do? Where would you go? Explain.
- 5 Design a work camp that workers would live in today. Remember, workers are given only necessities, not luxuries.