

## Lesson Plans and Resources for *Souder*

### IN-CLASS INTRODUCTION

This lesson is designed to provide students with a one-class introduction to the book. The lesson can be used to start off a class reading of the text, or to encourage them to read it independently.

**As a recipient of One Book resources, the Free Library requires that you devote one class period to introducing *Souder* to students, either using this lesson or your own plan.**

#### Introduction Option #1 <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/souder-lesson-plan>

1. On the board write: **If we were to write a book about our school, where would each scene take place?** Students may answer by detailing classrooms, favorite hangouts, neighborhood streets, etc.
2. Ask students to pick one of the "settings" from above and describe it in detail. Encourage students to describe it using their five senses. Share descriptions. (e.g., my classroom smells like chalk, sounds like laughter.)
3. Define setting for students as where and when the story takes place. Ask students how the setting of the school would differ before the civil rights era. (e.g., separate drinking fountains for black and white students, segregation) How might the setting be different during the Vietnam War? (e.g., protest signs, hippies) Explain to students that part of what influences and creates the setting of a story is the historical period in which the story takes place. For some books, the setting (where and when) dominates the narrative and is integral for the story.
4. Read Chapter 1, and then ask students to identify the setting in *Souder*.

#### Introduction Option #2 <http://www.glencoe.com/sec/literature/litlibrary/pdf/souder.pdf>

The novel is named for the dog *Souder*, who plays an important role in its owners' lives. Do you know a family in which a dog plays an important role?

**Think-Pair-Share:** With a partner, try to identify the reasons why the dog is so important to the family.

**Setting a Purpose:** Read to find out why *Souder* is important to the boy and to his family.

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Questions for Class Discussion

Loneliness is a recurring theme throughout *Sounder*. How does the boy try to combat the loneliness and isolation of his life? Does his loneliness offer him any inspiration to better his circumstances?

In the story, characters are identified solely by nouns and not proper nouns—"boy," "mother," "woman," "father," "man," "teacher." Why do you think the author, William H. Armstrong, sought to peg his characters in this way? Is it symbolic that the only character given a name is the dog, *Sounder*?

The story of *Sounder* took place in the Depression-era Deep South. Do you feel that the outright racism and injustice that the boy and his family faced can occur in today's modern times?

The father stole food so that he could feed his impoverished family. Does this sole act make him a bad person, or is he simply reacting the only way he knows how to his unfortunate circumstances? Do you think there are ever times that theft can be justified?

The love in the relationship between the boy and his dog *Sounder* is apparent throughout the story. Why does the boy feel such affection and loyalty for the dog?

How does the mother's deep religious faith help her survive the hopelessness of her poverty and her husband's absence after being sentenced to hard labor?

Time is an immeasurable concept in *Sounder*. The mother repeatedly utters phrases such as "Time's passin'" (p. 58). To cope with her husband's absence, she tells her son that "There's patience, child, and waitin' that's got to be" (p. 63). When the boy is asked how old he is, he "does not remember his age. He knew he had lived a long, long time" (p. 57). How long do you think the father was away from home? How old do you think the boy was at the beginning and at the end of the story? Why is time in *Sounder* not measured by a calendar or a clock? How is the concept of time ultimately represented in *Sounder*?

When *Sounder* was gravely wounded by a shotgun, the boy's mother simply said to him "Come in, child, he is only dying" (p. 21). Do you think the mother was being insensitive to her son's grief for the dog? How does this statement reflect the mother's view of the world?

What do houses with curtains on windows represent to the boy? Why did he feel that "there were always eyes, close against the curtains, looking at him" (p. 30) when he passed a house with curtains?

What does being literate symbolize to the boy? How does the teacher he meets in a chance encounter transform his life? When the boy hears his mother proclaim that dog days are so named because "the heat is so bad the dogs go mad," (p. 76) he does not bother to correct her, even though his teacher "had told him that dog days got their

name from the Dog Star because it rose and set with the sun during that period” (p. 76). Why do you think the boy does not outwardly correct his mother?

From <http://files.harpercollins.com/OMM/sounder.html>

## **SUGGESTED ANALYTICAL & CREATIVE ASSESSMENTS**

Is there an animal in your life that you love as the boy loved Sounder? Write a paper about the relationship between you and this animal, and why the animal has earned your love.

The language in *Sounder* is steeped in religious allegory. Indeed, the mother frequently quotes Bible stories, and the boy’s seemingly endless quest for his father and his ultimate enlightenment through education is in itself almost a Bible story. Research the subject of spiritual quests that are apparent in the Bible or other religious texts. After researching this topic, how can one look at *Sounder* as a religious parable?

Pick a scene from *Sounder* that is the most compelling. Illustrate this scene and write an essay as to why this scene is important to framework of the story.

Examine the student/teacher relationships in *Sounder*. Look at all of the boy’s “teacher’s”—his mother, father, dog, teacher—and write a paper as to what the boy learns from each of these characters.

Write a paper with the subject being what you would do for the survival of your family. Would you steal food, like the father did in *Sounder*? Are there any limits as to what you would do for your family?

*Sounder* was adapted into a critically acclaimed 1972 motion picture starring Cicely Tyson and Paul Winfield. Rent the video, and then write a paper comparing and contrasting the book and the movie. Is the movie faithful to the story line of the original book? Did you prefer the book to the movie, or vice versa?

From <http://files.harpercollins.com/OMM/sounder.html>

## SUGGESTED GROUP PROJECTS

**1. Role-Playing Interview with the Boy.** With your classmates, brainstorm a list of specific questions you would like to ask the boy. Some questions might refer to specific details from this section of *Sounder* or to the novel as a whole. Other questions might extend the story. Then, meet with a small group and imagine that the boy is visiting your classroom. Take turns playing the role of the boy while the rest of the group interviews him. Afterward, discuss how this activity helps you understand him and his story better.

**2. Music Sorrowful Songs.** At several points in *Sounder*, the mother sings or hums the spiritual “Lonesome Valley.” A spiritual is a type of folk song that traces its history back through the time of slavery. With a few classmates, locate and then perform or play recordings of spirituals and folk songs from the southeastern United States. As you share the songs, you might also give some information about their history. Afterward, discuss how the thoughts expressed in these songs relate to the thinking of the people you have met in *Sounder*.

**3. Social Studies Racial Equality: How Have Times Changed?** For the sharecroppers in *Sounder*, the idea of racial equality in the United States must have seemed like a dream that might never come true. Has that dream come true? With a few classmates, do some investigation. Consider equality of education, job opportunities, fair housing, and other topics that may be suggested during your research. As a group, choose the information that you want to share. Then, hold a panel discussion to present your findings and conclusions to the class. Use graphs and charts to help make your presentation clear, and allow time for questions.

**4. Radio: Drama Sounder Theater.** When William H. Armstrong was a young man, radio plays were as popular a form of entertainment as television programs are today. Radio drama has been called “Theater of the Mind,” because each listener creates mental images of the characters and settings in the story. Work together with other students to write and perform a radio adaptation of one or more scenes from *Sounder*. Use Armstrong’s dialogue, include a narrator, and add music or sound effects where you think they will help. Make an audiotape of your performance and play it for the class, or perform it for them live.

From [http://my.hrw.com/nsmedia/novelwise\\_hs/find/bytitlepdf/sounder\\_pdfs/sounder\\_wnovel.pdf](http://my.hrw.com/nsmedia/novelwise_hs/find/bytitlepdf/sounder_pdfs/sounder_wnovel.pdf)

## ONLINE RESOURCES

### LESSON PLANS & RESOURCES

#### **Mc-Graw Hill Companion Lesson Plans**

A comprehensive, 40-page PDF version of lesson plans put out by the publisher, including a historical overview, discussion questions by chapter, a variety of final assessment options, and a wealth of worksheets and pre- and post-reading activities.

<http://www.glencoe.com/sec/literature/litlibrary/pdf/sounder.pdf>

#### **Literature Circle Worksheet with Questions**

From Scholastic — a handout for small group discussion with fourteen questions relating to the entire book.

[http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/collateral\\_resources/pdf/c/clubs\\_pdfs\\_new\\_sounder\\_q.pdf](http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/collateral_resources/pdf/c/clubs_pdfs_new_sounder_q.pdf)

#### **Check-For-Understanding Questions**

Questions organized by chapter that can be used to start class discussion or as reading quiz items.

<http://neyture.info/teachered/novels/sounder.pdf>

#### **Worksheet: “Visualizing Scenes”**

Two-page worksheet with space for students to draw storyboards of the major events in chapters II and III

[http://my.hrw.com/nsmedia/novelwise\\_hs/find/bytitlepdf/sounder\\_pdfs/sounder\\_chap\\_i-ii.pdf](http://my.hrw.com/nsmedia/novelwise_hs/find/bytitlepdf/sounder_pdfs/sounder_chap_i-ii.pdf)

#### **Worksheet: Imagery Graphic Organizer**

Includes selected quotes from the book with prompts for students to identify and respond to sensory imagery.

[http://my.hrw.com/nsmedia/novelwise\\_hs/find/bytitlepdf/sounder\\_pdfs/sounder\\_imagery.pdf](http://my.hrw.com/nsmedia/novelwise_hs/find/bytitlepdf/sounder_pdfs/sounder_imagery.pdf)

#### **Worksheet: Allusions**

Includes selected quotes from the book with prompts for students to identify and explain allusions.

[http://my.hrw.com/nsmedia/novelwise\\_hs/find/bytitlepdf/sounder\\_pdfs/sounder\\_allusion.pdf](http://my.hrw.com/nsmedia/novelwise_hs/find/bytitlepdf/sounder_pdfs/sounder_allusion.pdf)

## MULTIMEDIA

#### **“Lonesome Valley” Recording**

A 1965 video recording of Mississippi John Hurt performing the song hummed by the mother in the book.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gytJemzNTM>

#### **Sharecroppers - History for Kids**

An article with photographs explaining Sharecropping to students.

<http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/northamerica/after1500/economy/sharecroppers.htm>