

# A BOY CALLED PREACHER

By Cheryl Schuermann

Instructional Guide for Teachers

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## About the Author

Cheryl Schuermann spent many years in the classroom as a reading specialist and special educator. For sixteen years, she worked in several states as a literacy consultant and staff development trainer. She wants every student she meets to love reading and learning!

Cheryl loves to write about real people who inspire us. Her first book was released in 2008 with a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 2019, PenIt Publications. *When the Water Runs: Growing Up with Alaska* details her mother’s childhood in an Eskimo village north of the Arctic Circle.

*Jordan Tang: Think ... Create ... Discover*, Oklahoma Heritage Publishing, 2015, tells the inspiring story of world-renowned medical research scientist.

*A Boy Called Preacher*, Intense Publications, 2020, is Cheryl’s debut middle grade novel. Set in Kansas during World War II, this fiction story was inspired by Cheryl’s father’s childhood. Anticipating the release of the sequel, *All Roads Home*, during Fall 2021.

When Cheryl is not in schools or writing, she can be found having fun with her thirteen grandchildren.

## A Note from Cheryl

This teacher’s is designed for students in the middle grades. However, the instructional ideas can be easily modified to match the levels of other students.

The most common question I am asked by teachers is, “How can I help my students comprehend text?” This question is usually followed by, “They can read, they just don’t comprehend what they read.” Yikes! Comprehension is the ultimate goal, isn’t it? If our students are missing the mark, we need to adjust our instruction to get the results we want to see.

This guide focuses first on ways to teach and strengthen the Big Five Comprehension Skills—Predicting, Questioning, Clarifying, Retelling, and Summarizing. Next, you will find several effective ways to continue teaching across the curriculum with this biography. These instructional strategies can be applied to any text throughout the school day.

All reader needs tools for their toolbox--strategies that support the reading process and increase comprehension.

*Good readers are metacognitive—they think about their thinking as they read.*

# Reading Language Arts

## Predicting

Good readers spend a few minutes looking at a new book before reading. They form ideas in their minds about what they might learn as they read. (Predictions do not have to be correct, but they must be logical based on the evidence you see.)

- Point out the title, subtitle, author, name of series, publisher.
- What do you think this book will be about? What clues have the author and art designer given us to help us make a logical prediction?
- What do we already know about the characters by looking at the front and back covers? What are your logical predictions based on the evidence you see and read?
- Would you predict this is a fiction text or a non-fiction text? Why? What is the evidence? Think, pair, and share with your neighbor.

**Teacher Tip:** Inference tends to incorporate more prior knowledge with the physical evidence. Again, after reading a text, readers may discover their inferences are not true, but the inferences must be logical.

## Questioning

Good readers ask rich questions before, during, and after reading.

- Just seeing the front and back covers, what do you wonder about? What questions do you have?
- What would you like to see answered in the text?
- Teacher question: What do you anticipate learning?

Have students turn to a neighbor and discuss their questions. Share thoughts with the whole group. If time allows, record some of the questions on a chart tablet. Put students' initials by their questions.

Some questions will be answered in the text and some may not. What would be our next steps if we have questions that are not answered? (inference based on prior knowledge and evidence in the text) (further research) Where would we go to find the answers to our questions? (dictionary, encyclopedia, thesaurus, online resources, other books and articles about the subject)

## Additional Pre-Reading Activities

**Word Splash**—Word Splash activates prior knowledge and builds anticipation of the upcoming text. Write vocabulary words from the text on bright paper strips or use different colored markers. “Splash” the words on the board or a large chart tablet. Group students into trios and allow them to talk about what they already know about each word. They can draw a T-chart and write headings—*Words I Know/Not Sure About These*.

Your students will pay attention when you encounter these words in the text!

**Quick Write**—A Quick Write is a short, focused writing in response to a specific prompt. As an activating strategy, Quick Write provides a bridge to new concepts the student will be learning. The teacher formulates a statement or question related to the content. Students respond in writing within a specified amount of time—usually 3-7 minutes. When the time is up, students share their ideas in pairs, trios, or with the whole class for discussion.

Optional: Repeat Quick Write after reading for reflection. Focus on three or four key pieces of information learned.

### READ

Read the book aloud. Pause every few pages to ask students if they have additional questions. (*What do you wonder about?*) They might share with the group or with a neighbor. Record a few additional questions on the chart tablet. Put students' initials by their questions. Ask students how their understanding of Jordan Tang changes as they hear his story.

**Teacher Tip:** Good readers understand how they synthesize information as they read. Each time they read new information they synthesize it with what they already knew. This forms a new, richer understanding of the topic. Each new bit of information adds to the reader's understanding of the characters and the story.

### Clarifying

Good readers monitor their own reading and use Fix-Up Strategies to clarify and increase understanding. Fix-Up Strategies may include:

- ✓ Reread
- ✓ Read ahead, then come back
- ✓ Adjust reading rate
- ✓ Think about your purpose for reading
- ✓ Look at the pictures, charts
- ✓ Stop and check your understanding
- ✓ Use context
- ✓ Try your word attack system

**Teacher Tip:** Consider taking a moment to do a think-aloud as you read, modeling a couple of the Fix-Up Strategies. (Example: *Whoa. I have never heard that word (concept) before. I am going to go back and reread that paragraph to make sure I understand it in context before moving on.*)

### Retelling

Good readers think about *who, what, when, where, why, and how* to retell a text. Create a large 5 *Ws and H* graphic organizer on chart paper.

<u>WHO</u>	<u>WHAT (action)</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>WHY</u>	<u>HOW</u>

After reading, fill in the above chart with your students. Have students use information on the chart to retell the story of Johnny “Preacher” Wilcox.

**Teacher Tip:** A good retelling will include as many details as possible and will be stated in order.

**Teacher Tip:** Another effective tool for retelling is to use Somebody Wanted But So Then. A reproducible bookmark for this strategy can be found on [www.cherylschuermann.com](http://www.cherylschuermann.com).

### **Summarizing**

Good readers summarize text after they read. They think about the main idea of the text and what they would want someone to know about the book.

The above 5 Ws and H chart can easily be used to summarize text.

- Select the most important “who” in the text. Who is the star of this story?
- Select the most important action. This choice will determine the when, where, why, and how.
- Use the selected words to construct a brief summary of the text. Add connecting words and additional information to create a concise statement of the main idea of this book.
- A summary can be one sentence, or several sentences included in a short paragraph.

Novels are made for one-sentence summaries. Have students record a one-sentence summary for each chapter they read.

The *Somebody Wanted But So Then* strategy can also be used to summarize text. Think about what the main character(s) wanted, the challenges they faced, and how they obtained their goals.

## **Instructional Activities A Boy Called Preacher**

### **Vocabulary**

#### Chapter 1

magneto, Pearl Harbor, snarly, coot, spark plugs

#### Chapter 2

Uncle Sam, pelts, glycerin, nitroglycerin

### Chapter 3

welt, cellar, sand bur, acre, afghan

### Chapter 4

Co-op, contagious, scram, corral, exaggeration, crowdads

### Chapter 5

knapsack, shrill, firing pin, trespassing, shattered, flush

### Chapter 6

mounted deer, Mona Lisa, sheriff, trigger, triumph, good fortune

### Chapter 7

whacked, squirmed, squawked, voltage, fuel, plowing, nook and cranny, ignition, spark, wrench, inconvenienced, rationing, throbbed, winced

### Chapter 8

buffet, President Roosevelt, recipes, stubble, carcass, mangled, haunches, grove

### Chapter 9

wrestling, testifying, bologna, complained, shovel, hobbled, barreled, ridges, keels

### Chapter 10

rigging, rebuilding, armadillo, crank, limp, hardware cloth, ghoulish, baling wire

### Chapter 11

predictable, fire and brimstone, budge, glared, exception, minerals, plastered, cranky neon

### Chapter 12

catalogs, sneered, tangle, lanky, mangy, ribbed t-shirt, Martian

### Chapter 13

motivation, whined, emery cloth, choke, throttle, lever, temperature gauge, straightaway swath, vibrated

### Chapter 14

swarm, gnats, echoed, shuddered, whirled, squinted, squatting

### Chapter 15

sprawled, swooped, sharecropped, literally

### Chapter 16

concentrating, upstream, smacked, solution

### Chapter 17

description, contest, dam, rights, flared

### Chapter 18

steaming, betrayed, qualities, bin, convince, rustle, bounded, underbelly

### Chapter 19

wiggled, rotated, canteen, whooped, thermos, lurched

### Chapter 20

splintered, confident, mortar, tripod, old-timers, geyser

### Chapter 21

growled, grazing, scavenging, pulley, rafters

### Chapter 22

mustering, rumbled, coils, glared, aquifer

### Chapter 23

peering, stake, gunstock, dangling

### Chapter 24

strongbox, blabbering, padlock, commended, challenge

### **Comprehension Questions**

Give students plenty of opportunity to discuss their answers. *Students who talk about the content increase their comprehension!*

#### Chapter 1

- How do you know Preacher was nervous about being on Eldon Dunn's porch?
- Why was Preacher there?
- What is a magneto?
- Describe the setting of this story—place, time, season.
- What did we find out about Earl Floyd?

#### Chapter 2

- Who is Mr. Wallace?
- Why were the boys excited about Mr. Wallace's new poster?
- What did Mr. Wallace tell Preacher about a stranger?
- What did Earl Floyd think about the stranger?

#### Chapter 3

- What trouble did Billy get into?
- How did Mom treat the welts on Billy's skin?
- How did Preacher feel when he sat on the cellar door? Explain in your own words.

#### Chapter 4

- Compare the personalities of Preacher, Earl Floyd, and Billy. How are they similar? How are they different?

- What did Preacher mean when he said Earl Floyd had the “gift of exaggeration?”
- What did Preacher notice about the creek?

#### Chapter 5

- Describe the Donovan house. Why did it seem spooky?
- What caused Preacher’s disappointment?
- Describe the jackrabbit.

#### Chapter 6

- Describe the deer head on the wall. What was so odd about it?
- What did the boys observe in the house?
- What does “good fortune” mean? How did Preacher feel about Earl Floyd’s success?
- Why did Billy’s actions seem suspicious?

#### Chapter 7

- When Preacher gathered eggs, what struck him as odd?
- Describe Preacher’s thoughts about his dad.
- How did Preacher hurt his foot?

#### Chapter 8

- Describe how Americans pulled together during World War II. Talk about ration coupons and the need for “victory gardens.”
- What happened to Deke?
- What did Preacher plan to use to get rid of the skunk smell?

#### Chapter 9

- Describe what happened when Preacher and Earl Floyd checked for eggs.
- What did Deke do?
- Describe the snake—color, length, markings.
- How did Preacher get the egg out of the snake?

#### Chapter 10

- How did Preacher intend to add light to the tractor?
- What did Earl Floyd reveal when he visited Preacher in the barn?
- How did Earl Floyd and his dad treat the snakeskin?

#### Chapter 11

- What message did Preacher often hear at church?
- Who did Mr. Wallace suggest might be interested in the snakeskin?
- Describe the diner and what the boys did when they went inside.
- What did Mr. Henley pay for the snakeskin? How did he treat the boys?

#### Chapter 12

- Why did Preacher consider Monday to be the “day of doom?”
- What happened when Preacher went to see Eldon Dunn?

### Chapter 13

- How did Preacher finally get the tractor started?
- What did Dad always say about starlit nights?
- What did Preacher see after turning the light on?

### Chapter 14

- What did Preacher do when the tractor died? How would you have felt?
- Describe how Preacher reacted when a man walked up to him.
- Who was the man and how did he know Preacher's name?

### Chapter 15

- Why did Preacher decided to not tell his mom about Hank Brown?
- How did Billy react to preacher's retelling of the night's adventure?
- What did Preacher discover when he went back to the field?
- What did Preacher ask Hank?

### Chapter 16

- What did Preacher notice about the creek?
- How did Earl Floyd react to the news about the stranger?
- Why did Earl Floyd decide to go to the jail?

### Chapter 17

- How was the truth about the diminishing water level revealed when talking to Hank Brown?
- What did Earl Floyd reveal to Preacher? How did Earl Floyd feel about this news? How did Preacher respond?

### Chapter 18

- What did Mom think they should do about a well?
- How did Preacher respond when Earl Floyd tried to make amends?
- What is a Honey Do chart?

### Chapter 19

- Who visited Preacher in the wheat field? What happened?
- What did Earl Floyd offer Preacher?
- Did Preacher take Earl Floyd's offer of friendship? Why or why not?

### Chapter 20

- Describe the old well.
- What tip did Mr. Wallace give Preacher?
- What information did the men at the diner give him?
- Where did Preacher go after leaving the diner and what did he discover?

### Chapter 21

- Where did Preacher find supplies for digging out the well?

- What happened when he climbed to the loft?
- What did Preacher discover in the shed?

#### Chapter 22

- How did Preacher build a wood frame? Was he successful? Why or why not?
- Who showed up to help?
- What is an aquifer?

#### Chapter 23

- Consider the chapter title. Why are two sometimes better than one?
- What kept Earl Floyd from going down into the well?

#### Chapter 24

- What happened when Earl Floyd went down into the well? What did he see?
- What did Preacher find in the well? Describe the contents?
- What was the significance of finding the strongbox? What was Preacher's attitude as he walked home?

#### **Reflections:**

- How did adversity help Preacher gain strength and courage?
- What do you think Preacher would tell us about what he learned?
- What does Preacher believe about himself at the end of the book?
- How did Preacher's attitudes change from the beginning of his story to the end?
- What must a person do to survive a difficult situation? What did Preacher do?

#### **Writing Extensions**

Write about it! Possible writing prompts for journals and essays:

- Would you like to be a farmer? Why or why not?
- What qualities does someone need to be a good farmer?
- Why are farmers important to our economy?
- What are some challenges farmers face?
- What challenges have you faced and how did you overcome them?
- What qualities did you see in Preacher that helped make him successful?
- Has Preacher inspired you? Explain.
- In what ways did Preacher change from the beginning of the book to the end?

#### **Ideas for Research:**

- Post a large chart tablet page in the classroom with the title, Invention Ideas. Allow students to write their ideas for inventions on sticky notes and put on the chart throughout the week. Use the chart for discussion and brainstorming.
- Have students think of a problem they would like to solve, then detail their plan in writing.

- Provide time for journal writing to reflect on what students learned about Dr. Tang and his significant work. Ask them to share their hopes and dreams about what they would like to do in the future to help others.

### **Social Studies**

- *A Boy Called Preacher* takes place in 1943 during World War II. What did the “War Effort” look like at that time? How did people come together to support the soldiers?
- What were the factors that started World War II?
- Preacher’s dad fought in World War I. When did this war take place and which countries fought in it? Who was the U.S. president at the time?

### **Science**

Topics to explore:

- Tractor engine
- Magneto
- Building a water well
- Water table and the aquifer
- Illustrate a water table and label the parts.

### **Mathematics**

- How many square feet are in an acre?
- What is a section? How many acres are in a section?

### **Music**

- Listen to patriotic songs of WWI and WWII.