

Prestwick PowerPacks™

Practical Activities for Comprehension and Key Skills



Sounder

by William H. Armstrong

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Name: _____

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Activity I: Research—Background**Pre-Reading**

In America's South in the 1800s, prominent class distinctions separated the rich from the poor along very broad lines. The poor attempted to survive with less than the basest essentials of living. Frequently, African-Americans in the South were mistreated by many white landowners who were unable to picture a society in which whites and blacks shared the same rights. Many white Southerners were unwilling to accept African-Americans as anything but slaves, even after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863.

After the Civil War, many freed slaves became sharecroppers as a means of supporting themselves, even though this lifestyle barely provided them with what they needed to survive.

Using resources available to you, such as encyclopedias, books, and the Internet, find as much information as you can about sharecropping. You will write at least three paragraphs about it. Include a bibliography that tells where you found your information. Use the **BIBLIOGRAPHY FORMAT** to help you set it up correctly.

In your essay, be sure to include the answers for the following questions with the other information you learn:

- What is a sharecropper?
- How would you manage your household if you were a sharecropper?
- How would you feel about the person who owned the land you were farming?
- What rights do you have as a sharecropper? How do you feel about what you are allowed to do and what you are not allowed to do?
- What means would you, as a sharecropper, use to properly provide for and care for your family?

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Activity I: Vocabulary **Author's Note and Chapter I**

Several words from the beginning of the book through Chapter I may be unfamiliar to you. When you look them up in the dictionary, you will see that they have multiple definitions. In this situation, you need to use context clues to help you choose the correct definition. For example, when you look up the word "intoxication" from the following quote, you will find two definitions. Looking at the context clues, it certainly does not mean being under the influence of an alcoholic beverage. That would not make sense. Instead, it means excitement, which is another definition of the word.

"There was a lasting, magnificent intoxication about the man that has remained after half a century."
(Author's Note)

Use a dictionary to look up the following words. Then, find them in the novel (the page numbers are given). Use the context clues to choose the correct definition, and write a sentence for each, using the word **in the same context as it is used in the story**. Remember to underline the word in your sentence. The first one has been done for you as an example.

1. **Eloquent** (Author's Note): Our principal was not an eloquent speaker, but we liked hearing him give the graduation speeches. _____
2. **Punctuated** (Pg. 2): _____

3. **Calloused** (Pg. 4): _____

4. **Heritage** (Pg. 5): _____

5. **Long-sustained** (Pg. 5): _____

6. **Kernels** (Pg. 8): _____

7. **Chitlins** (Pg. 15): _____

8. **Sowbelly** (Pg. 15): _____

9. **Whetstone** (Pg. 16): _____

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Activity II: Response **Chapter I**

It is clear to see how the life of the family in *Souder* differs from life for many families today. For example, the boy's family farmed the land, just as a large part of the population did in the 1800s. Today, however, less than 3% of the population makes a living by farming. In the 1800s, farmers toiled without the help of the advanced machinery and irrigation systems available today. Their lives were quite different from anything we can imagine.

On the COMPARISON CHART below, compare how the boy's family lived to how you live. The first column names the conditions under which the boy's family lived and worked. In the second column, write what you have as substitutes for those items in the first column, and in the third column, write how the difference makes you feel. The first one has been done for you as an example.

COMPARISON CHART

The Boy's Family Had...	I Have...	This Makes Me Feel...
Sagging roof on posts	A new shingled roof	More secure, dry
Rafters		
A door latch		
An eight-mile walk to school		
No crops, no pay in the winter, very little to eat		
No winter work but hunting for raccoon hides to sell for money to buy flour		
Lantern light		
Wood chunks to burn for heat and cooking		
A straw pillow; a slat bed		
Corn mush for supper		
A cut up blanket lining an overall jacket		

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Activity I: Reading Aloud**Chapters II and III**

William Armstrong is a master of language that has a great impact on the senses. When he writes in Chapter I of the ham and sausage cooking in the pot, a reader almost gets a whiff of the meat from “under the lid.”

In Chapter II, he writes a frightening scene that takes the reader inside the house, trembling and fearful, just like the boy's family, awaiting the terrible noise of the handcuffs that encircle their father's wrists. Starting on the top of page 21, take turns reading the passage that ends at the bottom of page 26 with Sunder lying still in the road.

The narrator's part can be assigned to more than one reader, and the characters' parts, in actual dialogue or in thought, can be read by various other students.

Put as much feeling in the reading as you can, and read slowly, with inflection and tone. Use your voice to show the emotion of the story.

Name: _____

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Activity II: Similes and Metaphors **Chapters II and III**

Authors frequently use figurative language, including similes and metaphors, to make their writing more interesting and descriptive. A simile is a comparison of two unlike things using the words **like** or **as**. A metaphor is the comparison of two unlike things without the use of those words. You can write more creatively through similes and metaphors than through simple descriptions. Consider the following examples, which both mean, "Her voice was irritating."

Simile

"The sound of her voice was like fingernails scratching a chalkboard." This is a simile because it uses the word **like** to make the comparison.

Metaphor

"Her voice was a nail against a chalkboard." This is a metaphor because it does not use the words **like** or **as**. Instead, it states that one thing is another.

In the following activity, you will look up the similes, which can be found on the given pages. Once you have determined the meaning of each simile, you will rewrite each as a metaphor, using your own words, not those in the text. Do not merely remove the words **like** or **as**; instead, rewrite the comparison altogether. The first one has been done for you as an example.

1. **Simile:** "The road which passed the cabin lay **like** a thread dropped on a patchwork quilt." (Pg. 19)
Metaphor: The road passing the cabin was a narrow, black river winding around hills and rocks.

2. **Simile:** "The click of the handcuffs was like the click of a gate latch ... " (Pg. 22)
Metaphor: _____

4. **Simile:** "He didn't want to be shot down like a dog in the road." (Pg. 29)
Metaphor: _____

5. **Simile:** "One edge of it was bloody, and jagged like the edge of a broken windowpane." (Pg. 30)
Metaphor: _____

6. **Simile:** "The curtains, moving in the breeze were like the sea's foam." (Pg. 39)
Metaphor: _____

7. **Simile:** "The dry dust got in his mouth and tasted like lime and grease." (Pg. 42)
Metaphor: _____

8. **Simile:** "Under the cabin it smelled stale and dead, like old carcasses and snakes." (Pg. 42)
Metaphor: _____

Name: _____

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Activity III: Conflict**Chapters II and III**

The word **conflict** has a number of meanings, one of which is disharmony, and another war, but the conflict we see in *Sunder* in Chapters II and III is a much more complicated issue. A major conflict begins in Chapter II, but there is more to it than the brutality that is described. An underlying factor in this conflict has more to do with class differences and the way business and everyday life operated in the South before the Civil War. After the war, many people were determined to continue that way of life, refusing to acknowledge racial equality.

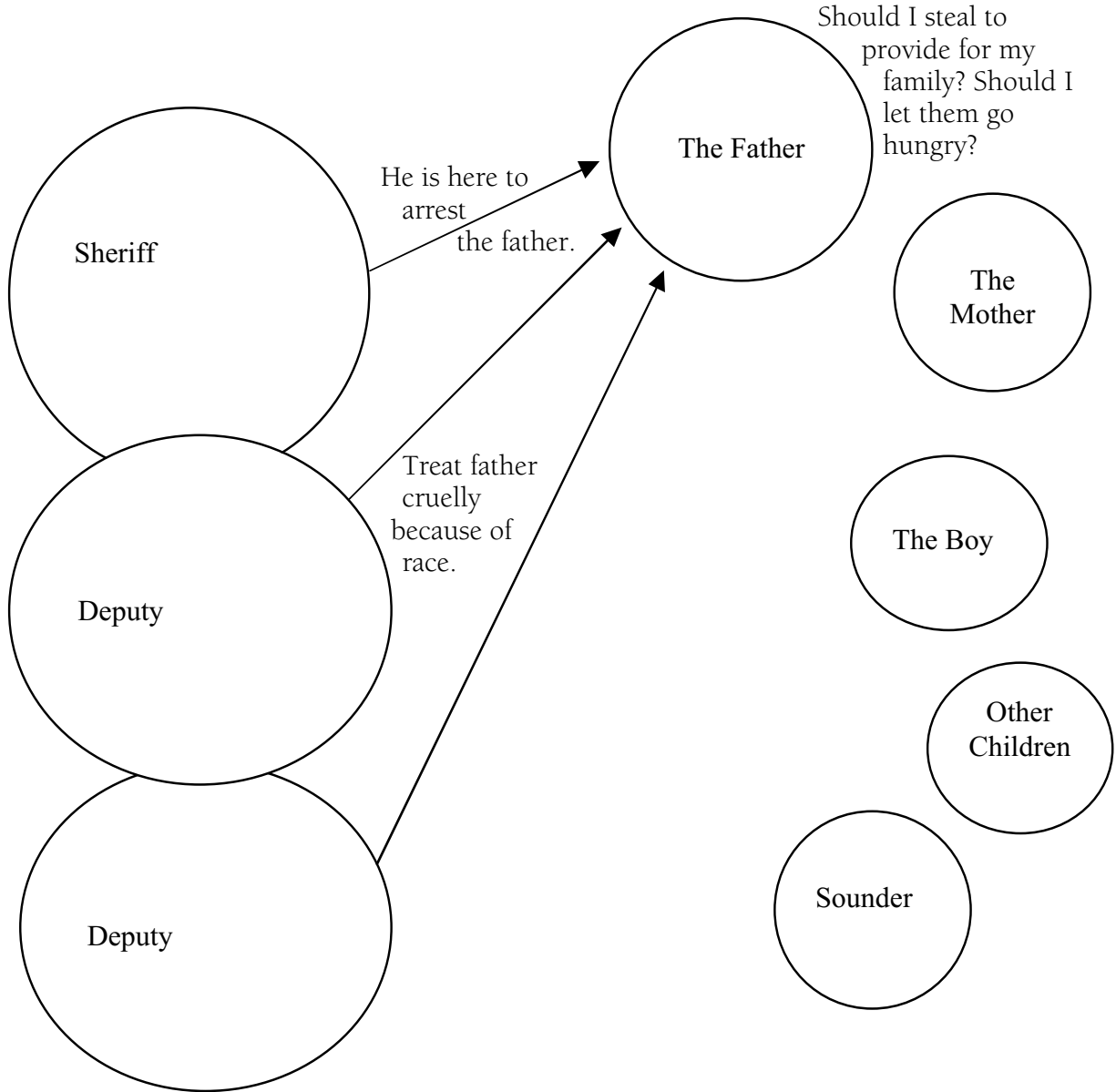
People regularly experience conflicts, both internal and external. Inner conflicts frequently center around questions of right and wrong. Should I report a wrongdoing to the proper authority, or should I remain quiet and see what happens? Should I take a chance on hiring a newcomer in town, or should I say I don't have any openings? Is it all right for me to sneak in a stray cat when the landlord said absolutely no pets? External conflicts often occur between characters or between a character and a force of nature, such as a snow storm.

You will map out the conflicts present in Chapters II and III on the following **CONFLICT MAP**. Draw arrows between characters who share an external conflict. Then, briefly describe the conflict beside each arrow. If a character experiences an internal conflict, describe the conflict beside the character's circle. The activity has been started for you, but you may add and label as many circles as you feel are necessary to depict the conflict. There may also be inner conflicts that need to be drawn, as well!

Name: _____

Date: _____

CONFLICT MAP



Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity IV: Vocabulary Crossword Puzzle**Chapters II and III**

Some of the words used in these chapters may be new to you. Use a dictionary to look up the words in the **WORD BANK**. Then, read the following sentences, and decide which vocabulary word best fits the meaning of each sentence. Finally, fill in your answers in the corresponding spaces in the **CROSSWORD PUZZLE**. An example has been done for you. The example is not an answer on the crossword puzzle.

WORD BANK

fallow	evidence	ashen	mongrel	constrained	plaintive
murmur	addled	faraway	haunches	pallet	rivulets

Example: Amid the grime and collected dirt, little streams form glistening trails.
 rivulets

- The land of stalks, plowed but unseeded fields, and brushland, all appeared to be sewn together. _____
- The stifled sound barely escaped from his throat. _____
- As he slept, the little one would be confused, even in his slumbering rest. _____
- The man said he found something that clearly indicated guilt. _____
- The boy was told he needed to make sure the dog of mixed breeds did not try to come inside. _____
- It was arranged with empty sacks as a simple, hard bed for an outside creature.

- The shocked and still little bodies of the younger children had turned pale in the dim light

- The boy waited silently for any sound he could hear from a great distance.

- There were times when she didn't really speak words to anyone but herself in a softly whispered confidential complaint. _____
- The dog looked almost regal as he sat tightly on his hips and upper thighs waiting for an answer to his one-note song. _____
- The noise we heard was sorrowful and pleading. _____

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Activity V: Characterization **Chapters II and III**

The mother in *Souder* is a very soft, unimposing character, but she is an influential person in the family, especially the to oldest boy. In the novel, she creates a sense of stability by balancing her inner conflict between her beliefs and those outside forces over which she has no control, such as the arrest of her husband.

On the following **CHARACTERIZATION CHART**, the empty boxes represent the mother's qualities and traits that allow her to maintain her own emotional and spiritual balance as well as her family's safety and security in the world. Numbers 1 through 8 are those traits you feel she displays to accomplish this. Boxes 9 and 10 are her most important qualities, her greatest strengths.

With your small group, scan the novel for examples of the mother's behavior that demonstrate the good qualities and personality traits that allow her to remain a positive role model for her children and others in the community. In the boxes on the **CHARACTERIZATION CHART**, write what those traits are, and beside each answer, write the page number where you found evidence of it. If you feel there is an imbalance somewhere, you may add another weight on the appropriate side. The chart has been started for you.