

Sounder

5TH GRADE



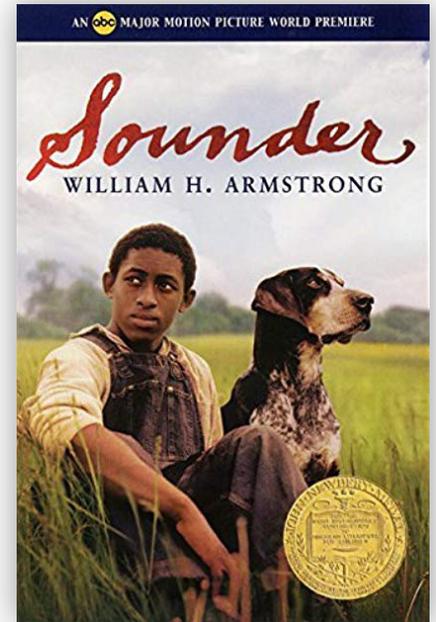
LITERACY



MINDSET

Students will engage in activities that build foundational skills while practicing speaking, listening, and writing skills.

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Writing Historical Fiction

Give students the following prompt:

You just finished reading Sounder. The novel is a historical fiction novel. Brainstorm situations, events, and characters that are appropriate for a historical fiction narrative. Then, write a brief historical fiction narrative with characters, events, a setting, and details.

Characters in Sounder

Provide students with the following prompt:

If you could be any character in the novel Sounder, which character would you be and why?

Have your students write an essay (you can determine the length) with a topic sentence, supporting details, proper grammar, and a concluding sentence. Then have students work with partners to revise their essays.

Comparing Characters

Tell the students to choose two characters from the novel *Sounder*. Have students complete a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting two characters. Then have students identify *one* event in the story and change the outcome of the event. Students explain how both characters would react.

Reading Song Lyrics

Song lyrics appeared throughout the novel *Sounder* by William H. Armstrong. The song lyrics that are repeated several times throughout the novel are from a song called “Lonesome Valley” that was written by Woody Guthrie. Song lyrics sound a lot like poetry.

Have the students read the song lyrics for “Lonesome Valley” by Woody Guthrie orally. Remind the students to speak slowly and clearly. Also, they should pay attention to the punctuation marks and read with emotion.

LONESOME VALLEY

Words and Music by Woody Guthrie

You gotta walk that lonesome valley,
You gotta walk it by yourself,
Nobody here can walk it for you,
You gotta walk it by yourself.

Some people say that John was a Baptist,
Some folks say he was a Jew,
But your holy scripture tells you
That he was a preacher too.

Daniel was a Bible hero,
Was a prophet brave and true,
In a den of hungry lions
Proved what faith can do for you.

There’s a road that leads to glory
Through a valley far away,
Nobody else can walk it for you,
They can only point the way.

Mamma and daddy loves you dearly,
Sister does and brother, too,
They may beg you to go with them,
But they cannot go for you.

I’m gonna walk that lonesome valley,
I’m gonna walk it by myself,
Don’t want to nobody to walk it for me,
I’m gonna walk it by myself.

https://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/Lonesome_Valley.htm

Reading with Different Expressions

When reading, it is important to use expression. Expression can enhance the story. Have students read the song lyrics for “Lonesome Valley” by Woody Guthrie orally, but this time, use different expressions. First, read the lyrics with an angry tone, next excitedly, and finally with a scared tone. Discuss how the different tones give the song different messages. (The song lyrics are written out above in the **Reading Song Lyrics** activity.)

Losing Someone Special

Ask students to answer the following journal prompt:

The boy in the novel Sounder experiences the loss of both his father and Sounder. Describe a time when you experienced the loss of a loved one or something important to you. Be sure to discuss how you felt. Identify several things you think a person should say or do for someone who has lost someone or something they care about. Be sure to include an introduction, two to three supporting paragraphs that contain reasons and support, and a conclusion that sums up the main ideas.

The Life of a Slave Versus the Life of a Sharecropper

Read the articles “Plantation Life” and “Sharecropping.” As a class, identify several similarities and differences between the life of a slave and the life of a sharecropper. Have students note two similarities and two differences. Then, have students write about the similarities and differences in an informational essay. Be sure students include an introductory statement, a conclusion statement, and evidence to support their ideas.

PLANTATION LIFE (FROM READWORKS)

As Europeans colonized the Americas, they began establishing plantations. Cash crops could be grown on these plantations, then sold or traded. However, plantation work required a lot of hard labor. Settlers in the English colonies of North America turned to the slave trade to fill that demand for hard labor with enslaved people from Africa.

The life of an enslaved person was very hard. People were sold as slaves at a market where owners bid against each other. Slaveholders bought the people they thought would work best for them. Families were frequently broken up; children were separated from their parents, and husbands from wives.

On the plantation, enslaved people had no freedom. They had to do what their masters told them to do and could not travel anywhere without permission. They could not testify in court, so an owner could mistreat an enslaved person and get away with it. Many colonies also had laws that made it illegal to teach enslaved people to read or write.

Enslaved people worked from dawn to nightfall, with an hour off midday in the heat. The work was hard. They worked in the cotton, rice, indigo, and tobacco fields. They chopped wood, built fences, cleared roads, and dug wells. All the while, they were watched by a person called an overseer. Other enslaved people worked in the master’s house, performing tasks such as cooking and cleaning.

Not all Africans in the colonies were enslaved. Some managed to gain their freedom. A few slaveholders even gave freedom to their enslaved workers. Free Africans in the colonies made their living as farmers and crafts workers. After the American Revolution, slavery was abolished in most of the northern states. But slavery spread in the American South, where it survived until the end of the Civil War in the mid-nineteenth century.

You can find the sharecropping article here: <http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/sharecropping/>

Farming: Long Ago and Today

In the novel *Sounder*, students learn about the life of a sharecropping family living in the South around 1900. Farming practices have changed quite a bit since 1900. Show students the video “Agriculture: Farming Today & Tomorrow” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LskhU6KskZ8>) created by Science Screen Report. This video below explains farming techniques that are used around the world.

After watching the video, put students in small groups. Ask students to discuss how today’s farming practices differ from the farming practices that appear in the novel *Sounder*. Encourage students to cite evidence from both the video and the novel to support their claims.

Sounder Discussion

Complete this activity after the students have completed reading *Sounder*.

Assign students to small discussion groups. Give each discussion group five cards with open-ended discussion questions written on them. These questions can be specific to the novel or more general.

Here are some example discussion questions:

1. Which character in the novel is most like you? Why?
2. Which character in the novel shows the most bravery?
3. What other book does this novel remind you of?
4. Did the novel end how you expected it to?
5. What part of the novel was the most surprising to you?

While in small groups, have students take turns pulling a card and reading the question. Everyone in the group should answer each question. Remind students to take turns when speaking instead of speaking over one another. Encourage students to expand upon others' ideas by agreeing, disagreeing, or elaborating on them.

Remind students that these discussion questions are meant to produce opinions not facts. No student's answer is incorrect.

Understanding the History of Sounder

In the novel *Sounder*, students learn about the life of a sharecropping family living in the South around 1900. Show students the video "Sounder" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8aiwQsLtrQ>) created by Erin Mayes. The video contains historical information related to the setting of the novel as well as an overview of the novel.

Write the following directions on the board for students to consider (and write down) as they watch the video:

- List two to three pieces of new information you got from the video that you didn't already know.
- List two to three plot events that were left out of the video.

After watching the video, organize students into small groups and ask them to discuss their lists.

Discrimination and Racism Discussion

Two topics addressed in *Sounder* are discrimination and racism. Ask students to determine if they feel the boy in the novel experiences discrimination and if he encounters racism. Tell students to support their claims with evidence from the text. After completing their analysis, have students organize their ideas on index cards and present their findings to the class. Listen for the main idea, appropriate facts, and a reasonable speaking pace.

Digital Summary

Partner students. Have partners work together to create a short summary of *Sunder*. The summary should be presented in a digital format such as a slideshow presentation. After practicing, partners should share their presentations with the class.

Presentations should include the following:

1. A clear summary of the novel in complete sentences
2. Visual elements
3. Audio elements (optionally, depending upon the technology available)

What Do You Want to Learn?

In the novel *Sunder*, the boy really wants to learn to read. The boy thinks that he will not be lonely anymore if he can read. Ask each student to identify something they really want to learn to do.

Have students create a brief digital presentation about what they want to learn. The students' presentations should include a clear statement identifying what the student wants to learn, the purpose of learning their chosen topic or task, and an explanation of how they plan to achieve their goal.

Have each student share their presentation with the class using appropriate formal language.