

**The Herdmans:**

Imogene, Ralph, Leroy, Claude, Ollie, and Gladys

**Rap Sheet:**

They lie, steal, smoke cigars, talk dirty, hit little kids, cuss their teachers,  
take the name of the Lord in vain, and set fires.  
Armed and Dangerous

**Father:**

Missing

**Mother:**

Working double shifts

**Prognosis:**

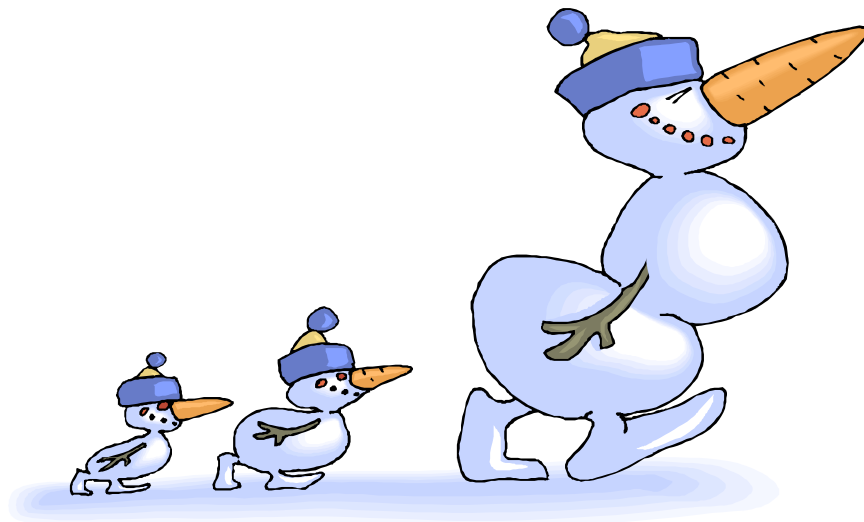
Hopeless

*Enter*

**Mother:**

Producer  
of  
chaos, change  
and

***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever***



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***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever***

By Barbara Robinson

***A Novel Teaching Pack***

By Margaret Whisnant

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## Goals

To . . .

- Offer a teaching guide with a full spectrum of learning experiences that flow from **basic knowledge** to **higher-level thinking skills**.
- Provide **classroom-ready** materials that **motivate** and **instruct**.
- Create **novel-specific activities** that require careful reading, help develop comprehension skills, and challenge the thinking process.
- Accommodate a wide variety of student **ability** and **interest**.
- **Support teachers** by providing a practical teaching resource that saves preparation time.
- Include **cross-curricula activities** as an integral part of the novel study.
- Correlate to various state **education standards and requirements** for language arts.

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## The Seven Components. . .

### 1. Summaries

Written in present tense, the chapter-by-chapter summaries are more detailed than those found in most teachers' guides or other sources. Important points of the plot, character motivation and development, and story clues are all included. For quick reference, the summaries are presented in bulleted format. These synopses are a valuable resource for

*quickly becoming familiar with a title when time is limited  
managing a reading program that involves multiple titles/reading groups  
facilitating independent study  
refreshing memory when using a novel from year to year.*

### 2. Before You Read

In this component, the focus is on sparking student interest. Each teaching pack includes both an **independent activity** and a series of **whole-group/small-group discussion** or **research topics**, written as open-ended questions.

At least one **bulletin board idea** is included. In some cases, activities in the **Think, Write, Create** component also involve the creation of a bulletin board or classroom display.

### 3. Vocabulary

One of the many advantages of literature-based reading instruction is the opportunity to observe vocabulary in action! It is this circumstance that drives the vocabulary portion of the novel teaching packs.

#### **Word Choices. . .**

The words lifted from the novel for focused study are chosen based on one or more of the following criteria:

<i>their level of difficulty</i>	<i>their frequency of use in children's literature</i>
<i>their importance in comprehending the story</i>	<i>their value as useful composition vocabulary</i>
<i>the probability that they will be encountered across the curriculum</i>	<i>unique meanings, spellings, pronunciation, etc.</i>

#### **Word Lists and Definitions. . .**

For teacher convenience and reference, word lists with definitions are included. The selected words are arranged in story order, complete with page numbers so they can be spotted easily and studied in their "natural habitats." For clarity, the definitions are paraphrased to match the word's tense, number, part of speech, etc. rather than cross referenced as in a standard dictionary. The major resource of this information is [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com).

#### **Dictionary Activities. . .**

Long word lists are divided into chapter sets of workable numbers and presented as **Dictionary Digs**—sometimes given a slightly different name to correspond with the theme of the novel. In this introductory

stage, students use a dictionary to answer a series of multiple choice questions about word meanings, usage, unique characteristics, etc.

### **Using the Words. . .**

Other activities, which pull terms from the lists in random order, lead students through a variety of word studies which include

<i>sentence usage</i>	<i>word types (acronyms, onomatopoeia , etc.)</i>
<i>word forms</i>	<i>scrambled sentences</i>
<i>synonyms and antonyms</i>	<i>analogies</i>
<i>anagrams</i>	<i>whole-class/group games</i>
<i>categories</i>	<i>etymologies</i>
<i>word-groups/connections</i>	

Note: Some of these varieties, but not all, are found in each Teaching Pack.

## **4. Assessment**

The two sections in this portion of the teaching pack offer a wealth of materials designed to build a strong **foundation** for student progression to higher level thinking skills. The operative phrase is **basic comprehension**.

### **Short Answer Questions**

Short answer questions for each chapter (or groups of chapters) are the first available assessment tools. The items encourage (and check) careful reading. Some require the reader to recognize a major event or idea while others involve finding a minor detail. The questions are in *sequence* with the pages they cover, but they are **not** designed to call attention to plot construction or other story elements.

The short answer questions can be used as

<i>student reading guides</i>	<i>discussion group guides</i>
<i>pop quizzes</i>	<i>conferencing with individual students</i>

### **Objective Tests**

The objective tests have multiple functions. In addition to their obvious application, they also serve as tools that can *improve **comprehension skills** by providing practice in understanding plot structure and recognizing important story elements.*

### **Rationale:**

#### **Focus on the Plot. . .**

Whether they are aware of their ability or not, all good readers sense the **rhythm** of the **connected** events that compose the plot of a novel, and consequently **comprehend** the story. They are in tune with cause and effect, behavior and consequence, sequence—the heartbeat of the narrative.

This “plot rhythm” forms the framework for the objective tests. The chain of events that tell the story have been pulled from the novel and reformatted into a series of sequential questions, none of which require **interpretation**. They are intended to **draw student attention to the fact that something happened**, not to what the incident means. That comes later.

In addition to their testing function, teachers may use the pages to strengthen their students’ ability to **Summarize**: With only the questions as a guide, have students write a summary of the chapter. For a set of ten questions, limit the number of sentences they may write to seven or fewer. When they work with twenty or more questions, allow no more than twelve sentences.

**Report the News**: Ask your students to write a newspaper article based on the events identified in a set of questions and the *who, what, when, where, why* elements. Some information needed to complete this assignment may be located in previous chapters.

**Twist the Plot**: Choose one or two questions from each chapter and change its answer—true to false, no to yes, etc.—to demonstrate how changing a single (or several) events would (or would not) change the story. This process can be used to help students become proficient in distinguishing major plot movers from minor story details.

#### **The Characters. . .**

Too often, when they are asked to describe a story character’s personality, the only answer many students can muster is “nice.” This portion of the Novel Teaching Pack, coupled with related activities from **Think, Write, Create**, is a well of opportunities for those teachers who wish to eradicate “nice” from their students’ vocabularies!

Questions that identify a character’s personality and/or motivation are purposely and carefully included with the plot movers. Again, the questions do not require **interpretation**. They simply establish that someone did or said something—knowledge that is invaluable when character analysis is required.

### ***Implied Meaning and Story Clues. . .***

The objective tests include items that establish the existence of story components carrying ***implied meaning***. ***Story clues*** that tantalize the reader with hints of future events also appear as question. At this point in the novel study, as before, **interpretation** is not the goal. **Awareness** of the **facts** is the target.

### ***Developing/Improving Listening Skills. . .***

Listening skills are rightfully included on every list of state competency requirements. Rather than always requiring students to answer test questions on a printed page, why not surprise them occasionally by doing the test orally and meeting competency goals at the same time?

### ***Discussion Guide Capability. . .***

The objective tests are helpful discussion guides. Use individual items on these pages to draw student attention to sequence, cause and effect, story clues (foreshadowing), character traits, recognizing and interpreting implied meanings, etc. These “thinking out loud” sessions are an **important building block** for the next learning phase.

## **5. Think, Write, Create**

In this section, students pack up what they already know about the novel and go exploring into its every nook and cranny. Some activities require the simplest interpretation or application, while others will challenge the most proficient thinkers. There is a high probability that young scholars, even reluctant ones, will label some of the selections as ***fun***.

### ***Rationale:***

#### ***Guidelines. . .***

Most of the items in this section are based on the skills presented in the ***Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom’s Taxonomy)***. There are two reasons for this choice. First, it mirrors the Novel Teaching Pack’s primary purpose of building a variety of sophisticated thinking skills on a foundation of basic knowledge. Second, in following the taxonomy guidelines, activities that correlate with many state educational standards emerge automatically.

#### ***Organization. . .***

**Chapter-specific** activities are grouped and presented according to their corresponding sets of **Short Answer Questions** and **Objective Test** page(s). Having led students through the basics for each chapter (or selected section), teachers may shop in this section for in-depth activities to optimize student understanding and interest. Armed with a firm grasp of each successive chapter, students are more likely to anticipate, embrace, and enjoy the next section. By repeating the process, students are also mastering concepts and intricacies connected to the **whole** novel

The **Whole Book Activities**, as their name indicates, require a grasp of the theme(s), characters, implications, etc. as they apply to the full novel. These pages are a teacher’s smorgasbord of culminating possibilities. In some cases, the choices are outgrowths of concepts that students have dealt with in a previous activity. In others, students are encouraged to look at the novel from a new angle.

#### ***Levels of Difficulty. . .***

A broad spectrum of **difficulty levels** to accommodate the needs of individual students, including the gifted, is an integral part of **Think, Write, Create**. However, **all** items from this section are intended to **challenge** and **sharpen** thinking abilities.

#### ***Activities. . .***

**Every** novel teaching pack includes activities that require students to choose and use precise, appropriate, and meaningful **vocabulary**. These exercises involve choosing a group of words to describe a character’s personality or behavior. The following example is from ***Charlotte’s Web***.

Eight-year-old Fern cried and begged her father not to destroy the runt pig. She sealed the little animal’s fate by asking her father if he would have killed her if she had been born very small.

- Which **two** of the following words do you think **best** describe the way Fern’s father behaved during this episode? Explain your choice. Include the definitions of the words you selected in your answer.

<i>practical</i>	<i>sensitive</i>	<i>loving</i>	<i>cruel</i>	<i>considerate</i>
<i>realistic</i>	<i>flexible</i>	<i>callous</i>	<i>compassionate</i>	<i>logical</i>

- Choose **two** words from the list below that you believe **best** describe Fern’s behavior. Explain why they are the appropriate words. Use the definitions of your choices as part of your explanation.

<i>impulsive</i>	<i>compassionate</i>	<i>assertive</i>	<i>tender-hearted</i>	<i>hysterical</i>
<i>undisciplined</i>	<i>naive</i>	<i>juvenile</i>	<i>humane</i>	<i>empathetic</i>

In each case students work with a given collection of terms, all of which can be correctly applied to the character(s) in question. However, the individual words have strengths of meaning. It is the student's task to analyze both the character's behavior and the words, make choices, and then cite events from the story to support his/her selection.

Teachers may opt to narrow the choices to fewer words, choose words for individual students, divide the class into groups and offer a specific set of words to each group, or use the assignment as it is written. Whatever the technique, it is here that the word **nice** can be knocked off the shelf, shattered on the floor, and swept out the door. No longer necessary. Useless. Gone!

**Other items** in this section challenge students to . . .  
*write for self-expression, for communication, and for entertainment*  
*form opinions and theories*  
*cite "evidence" from the story to support their explanations and opinions*  
*connect personal experience to story situations*  
*become familiar with and identify literary elements*  
*analyze story characters and events*  
*make predictions based on given facts*

*think about social issues*  
*create drawings, diagrams, photos, maps, models, recordings, films, etc.*  
*imagine*  
*categorize*  
*engage in research and data gathering*  
*recognize and perceive story theme(s)*  
*understand point of view*

### **Cross Curricula. . .**

**Think, Write, Create** takes full advantage of opportunities to connect both major themes and the smallest story detail to other realms of the curriculum. In **Charlotte's Web**, for example, students may apply their calculation skills to a page of "Spider Math." In the **Holes** teaching pack is a challenge to create a game that utilizes a "saved" group of Camp Green Lake's holes.

### **Options, options, and more options. . .**

**Think, Write, Create** is purposely bulging at the seams to give teachers **pick-and-choose options** for  
*individualizing assignments*  
*group work*  
*whole class activities*  
*capitalizing on student interest*  
*homework*  
*short-term and long-term projects*  
*differentiating assignments*

## **6. Graphic Organizers**

Ideas for the graphic organizers are pulled from the chapter or whole book activities and expanded into a writing assignment. Priority is given to those topics that allow a student to relate personal experiences, make choices, empathize with a story character, and/or imagine.

### **Structure. . .**

The organizers do not repeat a set pattern of circles, squares, lines, etc., prescribed for a particular type of writing. Each one is tailored to a **specific idea** pulled from the novel. **Structured directions** for organizing the topic support the student at this stage of the process so that **writing** is the major focus.

### **Non-writing Organizers. . .**

Sometimes, students are enticed to stretch their imaginations by filling out "forms" or writing "diary entries." One graphic organizer from **Hatchet**, for example, allows students to assume the persona of the pilot who rescued Brian by writing three entries into his log—the day before the rescue, the day of the rescue, and the day after the rescue. In the **Holes** Novel Teaching Pack, students become detectives and conduct a "background check" on Mr. Sir, recording their findings on the provided "official form." In these cases, composition skills take a back seat to **imagination, empathy, and pure enjoyment**. Teachers may wish to capitalize on student enthusiasm by asking for a written "report" based on the information entered on the forms.

## **7. Answer Keys**

Keys for **all items that require a specific answer** are included in this section.

---

### **A final note from the author. . .**

It is my personal wish that when the last page has been read, the last activity completed, and the last idea discussed, at least one of your students will ask, "What are we going to read next?"

  
Margaret Whisnant

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## Chapter Summaries

### 1

- The Herdmans lie, steal, smoke cigars, talk dirty, hit little kids, cuss their teachers, take the name of the Lord in vain and set fire to things. They accidentally burn down Fred Shoemaker's old toolhouse while playing with a chemistry set, which Leroy stole. They hang around to watch and to steal the doughnuts brought for the firemen.
- The fire chief hopes the neighborhood kids will learn a lesson about playing with fire. The Herdmans learn that where there's fire, there's free doughnuts.
- There are six Herdmans—Ralph, Imogene, Leroy, Claude, Ollie, and Gladys—living over a garage. The sign in their yard says "Beware Of The Cat."
- Claude Herdman takes the cat to his first grade class for Show-and-Tell. It scratches kids, trashes the classroom, and eats two pet mice brought by another student. The hysterical first graders have to go outside and have recess the rest of the day.
- The Herdmans are moved from grade to grade through Woodrow Wilson School. They are never held back a grade. No teacher is crazy enough to have two Herdmans in her classroom.
- Imogene Herdman manages to learn secrets about her classmates and uses the information to engage in blackmail or name calling. She uses her skills to become the owner of an expensive charm bracelet, a pocketbook, and ten cents a week. Thanks to Imogene, the other students call Alice Wendleken "Cooties" for a year.
- If she doesn't know a secret about someone, Imogene makes one up. It is useless trying to tease the Herdmans because they don't care about the things they do. It doesn't matter to them their father climbed on a railroad train and disappeared when Gladys was two years old.
- Mrs. Herdman works double shifts at a shoe factory and isn't home much. She refuses help from social services that would allow her to work one shift and spend more time with the children.
- The Herdmans pretty much look after themselves—the older one looking after the one younger than him or her. Gladys, the youngest, is the meanest of all the Herdmans.
- Everyone figures the Herdmans are headed straight for hell by way of the state penitentiary until they get themselves mixed up with the Christmas pageant.

### 2

- Usually, Mother's only involvement with the Christmas pageant is forcing her daughter and her son to be in it and making her husband go see it.
- Everything changes when Mrs. George Armstrong falls and breaks her leg two weeks before Thanksgiving. In delegating Mrs. Armstrong's many duties to other people, Mother gets stuck with the Christmas pageant.
- The Christmas pageant script is always the Christmas story—the inn, the stable, the shepherds, the star. The costumes never change and neither does the casting, including the minister's son as Joseph and Alice Wendleken as Mary.
- Mother says the Christmas pageant is a tradition, and she doesn't plan to change anything.
- Children look forward to Sunday as a day of rest at church away from the Herdmans. Nobody thinks about them in connection with the Christmas pageant.
- Charlie changes things for his mother and the Christmas pageant when he tells Leroy Herdman to go ahead and take his dessert because he gets all he wants in Sunday school. The very next Sunday, the Herdmans come to Sunday school looking for refreshments. They stay when they see the food that is being collected as a Thanksgiving present for the Orphans Home. Imogene takes money from the collection basket.
- At the end of the morning, Mrs. Grady announces to each class that rehearsals for the Christmas pageant will begin the next week. The Herdmans are big moviegoers, and Imogene is interested.

## Word List with Definitions

(Listed in story order. Some words may appear on more than one page.)

- vain** In an improper or irreverent manner; to no purpose; futile; excessively proud of or concerned about one's own appearance, qualities, or achievements, etc.; conceited. *homophones: vein and vane* (p. 1)
- clonked** Hit hard, especially on the head; beat; thumped. (p. 4)
- aquarium** A glass-sided tank, bowl, or other water-filled enclosure, in which fish or other living aquatic animals or plants are kept. (Distinguished from *terrarium*.) (p. 5)
- hysterical** Experiencing uncontrollable outbursts of emotion or fear or panic, often characterized by irrational weeping or laughter; agitated; berserk; upset. (p. 7)
- contagious** Capable of being transmitted by bodily contact with an infected person or object; tending to spread from person to person; catching; communicable. (p. 9)
- blackmail** To extort money (or other payments) from another by use of threats; extortion. (p. 10)
- souvenir** A usually small and relatively inexpensive article given, kept, or purchased as a reminder of a place visited, an occasion, etc.; memento. (p. 11)
- penitentiary** A place for imprisonment, reformatory discipline, or punishment, especially a prison maintained by a state or federal government for serious offenders. (p. 14)
- pageant** An elaborate public spectacle that illustrates the history of a place, institution, religious celebration, or the like. (p. 14)
- contribution** Money, time, knowledge, assistance given to a charity, organization, or fund; worked as an important factor in; helped to cause something to happen; donations; offerings; gifts. (p. 16)
- bazaar** (also **bazar**) A sale of miscellaneous contributed articles to benefit some charity, cause, or organization; a market consisting of a street lined with shops and stalls, especially one in the Middle East. {distinguished from **bizarre** by pronunciation: *bazaar* (bə.zâr') *bizarre* (bî.zâr')} (p. 17)
- standard** An approved model; an object that is regarded as the usual or most common size or form of its kind; accepted; normal; customary. (p. 17)
- tradition** Something that is handed down from one generation to another, as customs, beliefs, legends, information, etc.; custom; heritage. (p. 19)
- congregation** An assembly of people brought together for common religious worship; assembly; audience; gathering. (p. 19)
- shrugged** Raised and contracted the shoulders, expressing indifference, doubt, disdain, etc. (p. 21)
- sentiment** A thought, view, or attitude, especially one based mainly on emotion rather than reason. (p. 21)
- practical** Sensible; suitable or capable of being put into effect; workable; realistic; useful. (p. 21)
- slouching** Moving or walking with a loosely drooping body posture and a careless gait; sitting or standing in a drooping posture. (p. 22)
- sympathize** To share a feeling or have a compassion for, as for suffering or trouble. (p. 31)
- volunteer** To offer oneself for a service without pay; a person who performs a service willingly without pay. (p. 32)

## Dictionary Digs

Dig into a dictionary for answers to the following questions about some special vocabulary words from *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. Write the **letters** of the correct answers in the blanks to the left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which of the following is probably **not** a situation that would cause a person to become **hysterical**? (A) a kitchen fire, (B) winning a large amount of money, (C) watching your favorite television program with your best friend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Which of the three possible words can be substituted for **practical** in the following sentence without changing its meaning?  
*Asking for Dad's advice is the most **practical** solution to our tree-house construction problems.* (A) sensible, (B) embarrassing, (C) difficult
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What is the job of a **truant** officer? to deal with students who (A) live in extreme poverty, (B) stay away from school without permission, (C) move often and miss too much school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. In addition to a *flat-bottom vessel, usually pushed or towed*, the word **barge** also means (A) to push one's way in rudely, (B) a medal emblem worn by police officers as identification, (C) expressing one's opinion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who is likely to live in a **parsonage**? a (A) custodian, (B) government official, (C) pastor
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Which of the following is something **not** generally thought of as **contagious**? (A) a bad sunburn, (B) laughter, (C) the flu.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. An *antonym* of **sympathize** is (A) disapprove, (B) console, (C) synthesize.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Which of the following phrases is the **best** example of the correct use of the word **contribution**? (A) an honest **contribution**, (B) a charitable **contribution**, (C) the **contribution** hidden in his words.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Of the three homophones **vain**, *vein*, and *vane*, which one means *in an improper or irreverent manner*? (A) vain, (B) vein, (C) vane.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What is the difference between a **volunteer** and an *employee*? (A) an employee works for a business; a volunteer works for a charity, (B) a volunteer is usually in a supervisory position; an employee is a member of the work force, (C) an employee gets paid for working; a volunteer does not get paid for working.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. What is unique about a **collapsible** chair? It (A) can seat more than one person, (B) can be folded for storage, (C) is sturdier than regular chairs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. A *synonym* for the word **ridiculous** is (A) unbelievable, (B) serious, (C) absurd.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. A good example of a literary character who is also a **villain** is (A) Lord Voldemort, (B) Batman, (C) Harry Potter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. If someone has been **clonked**, what has happened? He or she has been (A) promoted to another grade, (B) removed from a sports team, (C) hit on the head.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. What is the **main** difference between an **aquarium** and a *terrarium*? An aquarium always contains (A) plants, (B) animals, (C) water.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Which one of the three word choices correctly completes the following sentence?  
*Melanie haughtily **shrugged** her \_\_\_\_\_ and walked away.*  
(A) nose, (B) shoulders, (C) feet
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Which is the *most likely* place to find a **congregation**? (A) at a sporting event, (B) in a movie theater, (C) in a church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. An *antonym* of **disgraceful** is (A) shameful, (B) fanciful, (C) admirable.

## Short Answer Questions

1

1. What did the Herdmans do that made them absolutely the worst kids in the world?
2. How many Herdmans were there, and where did they live?
3. What did Claude Herdman's cat do the day he brought it to first grade for Show-and-Tell?
4. How did teachers avoid having two of the six Herdmans in one classroom?
5. How did Imogene gain possession of Wanda Pierce's charm bracelet, Lucille Golden's imitation alligator pocketbook, and ten cents a week from Floyd Brush?
6. What information did Imogene learn about Alice Wendleken, and how did she use it?
7. Where was the Herdmans' father?
8. What did Mrs. Herdman do when a social worker tried to get some welfare money so she wouldn't have to work two shifts at the shoe factory?
9. Who looked after the Herdmans?
10. Until they got themselves mixed up with the church and the Christmas pageant, where did it seem they were headed?

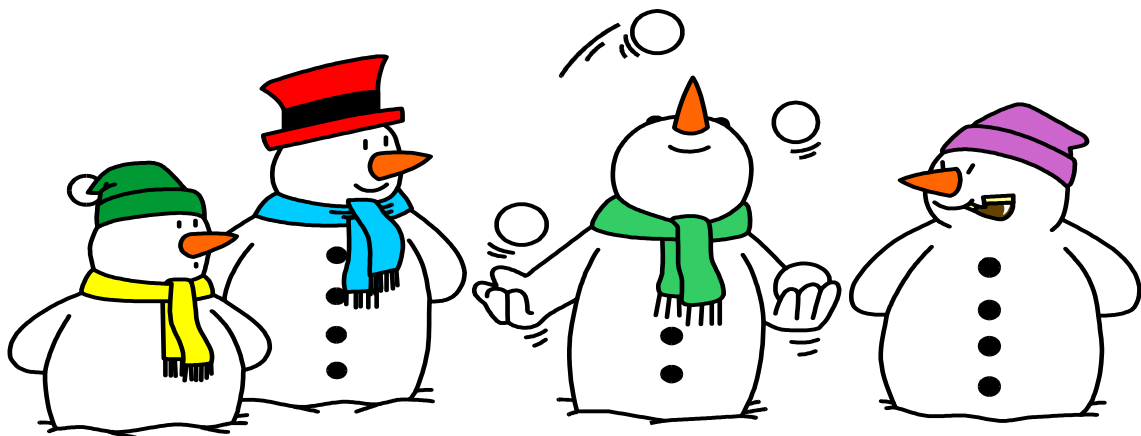
2

1. Before she was put in charge of it, what had been Mother's connection to the Christmas pageant?
2. What event prevented Mrs. George Armstrong being in charge of the Christmas pageant as usual?
3. What was the standard casting for the Christmas pageant?
4. What suggestion did Father make as a way to make a change?
5. What happened the year Alberta Bottles whistled "*What Child Is This?*" for a change of pace?
6. What did Charlie say when he stood up to tell what he liked best about Sunday school?
7. How did the Herdmans get the idea that they would get dessert if they went to Sunday school?
8. On the first Sunday they came to church, why did the Herdmans find all kinds of food in the kitchen?
9. How were the Herdmans able to go to movies without paying their way?
10. What did Imogene say when she was told that the Christmas pageant was about Jesus?

**Chapter 1**  
Pages 1- 4

Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the space before each question.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 . Which of the following was not a Herdman behavior? (A) smoking cigars, (B) using bad language and cussing their teachers, (C) stealing cars.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The Herdmans set fire to Fred Shoemaker's toolhouse when they were (A) playing with a chemistry set, (B) smoking, (C) building a camp fire.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What lesson did the Herdmans learn from the fire? (A) Fires are dangerous. (B) Where there is a fire, there are free doughnuts. (C) Always leave the scene of a crime.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Where did the Herdmans live? (A) over a garage, (B) in an old house, (C) in an abandoned bus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What did Claude Herdman take to his class for Show-and-Tell? (A) his chemistry set, (B) his baby sister Gladys, (C) his cat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Why did the Herdmans never get held back a grade? (A) They were smart. (B) There was always another one coming along, and no teacher wanted two of them. (C) Their mother wouldn't allow it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Imogene terrorized her classmates by (A) hitting them, (B) learning secrets about them, (C) telling lies about them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What happened to the Herdmans' father? (A) He was in jail. (B) He divorced their mother. (C) He climbed on a railroad train and disappeared.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who looked after the Herdmans while their mother worked double shifts? (A) their grandmother, (B) Social Services, (C) They looked after themselves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Why was the youngest of the six Herdmans the meanest? (A) She was abused. (B) She learned from the older ones. (C) She missed her father.



# Think, Write, Create

## Chapter Activities



1

The Herdmans *lied, stole, smoked cigars, talked dirty, hit little kids, cussed their teachers, took the name of the Lord in vain, and burned down a toolhouse.*

- If you took part in just **one** of the Herdman's transgressions, what would happen to you?
- Suppose someone in your class committed a Herdman act of disobedience at school. What kind of trouble would he or she be in?
- Of all the things on the Herdman bad behavior list, which one do you think is the absolute worst? Explain your choice.

In a functioning society there are rules that must be followed in order for everyone to be safe, happy, and productive. *Do not set fire to someone else's property* is a good example.

The Herdmans ignored the usual rules of conduct, preferring to abide by their own concept of etiquette. What are **four** rules that the Herdmans seem to have created as guidelines for their interpersonal relationships? (*Lie when you need to*, for example.) Use events from the story as proof that one or more of the Herdmans was following each rule. Write a composition about **The Herdman Code of Ethics**. (See **Graphic Organizer #1**)

Leroy Herdman stole a chemistry set, which he later used to accidentally burn down Fred Shoemaker's old toolhouse. This makes him both a thief and an arsonist. However, the fact that he stole a chemistry set and how he used it are clues to a *good* (maybe even *normal*) part of his personality.

- Explain how the fiasco with the chemistry set proved that Leroy was intelligent, inquisitive, and self-motivated. For example, why did he steal a chemistry set instead of a candy bar or a toy car?
- How did Leroy's behavior indicate that he is inclined to criminal behavior? Do you think Leroy knew the difference between *criminal* and *acceptable* behavior? Was he *choosing* one over the other? Explain your thinking.

The result of Claude Herdman's decision to take his cat to Show-and-Tell was a wrecked classroom and a group of hysterical first graders who had to have recess for the rest of the day.


- Find the clue that proves Claude Herdman intended to create a ruckus in his classroom with his cat. How did Claude's plan show his lack of regard for the safety of people and animals?
- On the positive side, how did Claude's Show-and-Tell project indicate that he was creative, had a sense of humor, and knew the importance of planning ahead?

## The Herdman Code of Ethics


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Herdman Rule Number One \_\_\_\_\_

Proof. . . 

The Second Herdman Rule \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence of its existence. . . 

A Third Important Guideline \_\_\_\_\_

How the Herdmans used this rule. . . 

A Fourth Herdman standard \_\_\_\_\_

How I know the Herdmans were using this rule. . . 