

# *Sounder*

By William H. Armstrong

**1970 Newbery Medal Winner**

## **A Novel Teaching Pack**

by Margaret Whisnant



with

**Chapter Summaries  
Prereading Activities  
Vocabulary**

**Short Answer Questions**

**Objective Tests (Chapter-by-Chapter and Whole Book)**

**Think, Write, Create Activities  
(Chapter-by-Chapter and Whole Book)  
Graphic Organizers for Writing**

**and  
Answer Keys**

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***Souder***  
by William H. Armstrong  
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by Margaret Whisnant

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ISBN 978-1-934538-25-8

Taking Grades Publishing Company  
1110 4<sup>th</sup> St. Dr., S.E.  
Conover, NC 28613  
[www.takinggrades.com](http://www.takinggrades.com)

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## Chapter Summaries

### I (Pages 1-11)

- The boy, shivering in the cold October wind, stands with his father on the cabin porch. He pets the head of the coon dog Sounder. Three small children peer from inside the cabin, but they are not allowed to come out in the cold to pet the dog.
- Sounder and the boy are about the same age.
- There are no visible lights from other sharecropper cabins. The white man has scattered them over his endless fields. Sometimes the boy and his parents walk to visit the distant cabins, or to go to the meetin' house.
- There is also a school, which opens after harvest and ends before planting time, but it is eight miles away. The boy has tried for two Octobers to make the long journey in the cold, but he is laughed at for always being late. His mother encouraged him to give it up. When he is bigger, he believes he can walk faster and get to school on time.
- Without school, the boy is pleased to have Sounder. There is no other dog like him.
- The boy's father stands silent and motionless, listening. But the boy hears nothing.
- Sounder—a mix of redbone hound and bulldog—is named for his voice, louder and clearer than any purebred hound. The dog stalks quietly, but when his quarry is close, his voice fills the night. Neighbors listen and know that it is Sounder.
- The boy's father promises to let him go hunting with him that night if the wind doesn't rise. The two of them bring a stick of wood inside for the cabin stove. The boy hears the leaves rattling as he closes the cabin door.
- The mother serves corn mush, and talks with the boy's father about how things will be better next year.
- The hunting is getting worse this winter. Sounder and his master come home with an empty brown sack night after night. There are few scraps for Sounder, and the people inside the cabin are hungry for solid food.
- After supper, Sounder's master goes out of the cabin and stands listening. Back inside, he sits behind the stove for a long time. When it is bedtime for the smaller children, the man goes back outside without the hunting lantern or Sounder or the boy. He orders the whining dog to go back under the porch.
- Inside, the boy's mother picks kernels of walnuts with a bent hairpin. She intends to pick two pounds, which she can sell for thirty cents at the store.
- The stories the woman sometimes tells take away the boy's night loneliness, which fills him when the younger children have gone to bed or when his father is not in the cabin. His mother had once explained that his night loneliness was part fear. He is never afraid when his father is near.
- The woman, who does washing once a week for the people in the big house down the road, tells her son the story of the mighty flood which the Lord sent to wash away all the evil in the world.
- Later, tucked in bed with his little brother, the boy hears Sounder whimpering under the porch. He wonders where his father has gone without the dog. He dreams of the land being covered by the Lord's mighty flood and of all the cabins floating together forming a town—a place where he wouldn't be lonely anymore.

### I—continued (Pages 11-18)

- The boy awakens to find there is no floodwater. Except for the frost, everything is the same as it had been the day before.
- The possum kettle boils on top of the stove, which the family uses for cooking and heating. In the skillet are pork sausages and the possum kettle holds hambone, which the boy has smelled only twice in his life.
- The aromas excite Sounder, and the dog scratches at the door. The boy calls to him to hush and go away.

## Word Lists with Definitions

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

### Set One: Chapters I—V (Pages 1-75)

- ajar** Neither entirely open nor entirely shut; partly open. (p. 2)
- peering** Looking intently, searchingly, or with difficulty; being partially visible. (p. 2)
- sharecropper** A tenant farmer who gives a share of the crops raised to the landlord as rent. (p. 2)
- successive** One following another in a regular sequence; one after another in uninterrupted order; consecutive; continuous. (p. 3)
- bulging** Curving of swelling outward; protruding. (p. 4)
- calloused** Made thick and tough through wear or work; insensitive or indifferent, especially to the sufferings of others. (p. 4)
- quarry** A hunted animal; prey; game, especially that hunted with hounds or hawks; hunted animals considered as a group; an excavation or pit, usually open to the air, from which building stone, slate, or the like, is obtained by cutting, blasting, etc.; the act of taking stone from a quarry. (p. 5)
- addled** Confused; muddled; upset; bewildered. (p. 9)
- spires** Tapering, pointed parts of something; a tall, sharp-pointed summits of something, as of buildings or trees. (p. 16)
- fallow** Pertaining to land that has been plowed and left unseeded for a season or more; not in use; inactive; unproductive. (p. 19)
- bramble** A prickly shrub or bush, such as a blackberry; a brier. (p. 20)
- gruff** Low and harsh; surly; hoarse; rough; brusque. (p. 22)
- ashen** Extremely pale; drained of color; pale, as from illness or emotion. (p. 23)
- mongrel** A dog of mixed or indeterminate breed; of mixed origin or character. (23)
- constrained** Forced; stiff or unnatural; kept within close boundaries; confined; uneasy or embarrassed. (p. 27)
- plaintive** Expressing sorrow or sadness; mournful; pathetic; pitiful. (p. 27)
- floundering** Making clumsy attempts to move or regain one's balance; moving or acting clumsily or in confusion. (p. 27)
- murmur** A low, continuous, indistinct sound, especially of discontent; mumbling; babbling. (p. 32)
- rivulets** Small brooks or streams; a branch. (p. 44)
- spiraled** Moved in a circular motion or course; circled. (p. 45)
- poultice** A soft moist mass of bread, meal, clay, or other adhesive substances, usually heated, spread on a cloth and applied to an aching or inflamed part of the body. (p. 48)
- mange** Any of several skin diseases caused by parasitic mites, affecting animals and characterized by skin lesions, itching, and loss of hair. (p. 48)
- mistletoe** A plant having yellowish flowers and white berries, growing parasitically in trees, used as Christmas decoration; the floral emblem of Oklahoma. *Mistletoe is a hemi-parasite, having green leaves that do some photosynthesis, using the host mainly for water and minerals.*(p. 54)
- bittersweet** A climbing, trailing plant, also called woody nightshade, having small, violet, star-shaped flowers with a protruding yellow center and scarlet berries; both bitter and sweet to the taste, such as chocolate; producing or expressing a mixture of pain and pleasure; a dark to deep reddish orange. (p. 54)
- chute** An inclined passage, channel, or trough through which things may pass; a parachute; to drop from an aircraft by means of a parachute. (p. 60)
- corridor** A hallway; a passage into which several rooms or apartments open; a narrow tract of land forming a passageway, as one connecting two cities or for allowing an inland passage to the sea. (p. 63)
- fret** To feel or express worry, annoyance, discontent, etc.; brood; mope. (p. 68)
- famished** Extremely hungry; starving to death. (p. 68)
- scarred** Showing a mark left by a healed wound, sore, or burn; blemished; marked by a scar or scars. (p. 71)

# Dictionary Digs

Set One: Chapters 1-V (Pages 1-75)

Use a dictionary to find answers to the following questions about some challenging words from pages 1-75 of Sounder's story. Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank to the left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which of the following statements is **not** true of **mistletoe**? (A) It is used as a Christmas decoration. (B) It grows in trees as a type of parasite. (C) Its berries are often used to make jams and jellies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The most likely person to have **calloused** hands is (A) a teacher, (B) a farmer, (C) an electrical engineer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The word that is a *homophone* for **chute** is (A) shoot, (B) cute, (C) shoe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which word can be substituted for **addled** in the following sentence without changing its meaning?

*The boys were **addled** for a few seconds after their collision.*

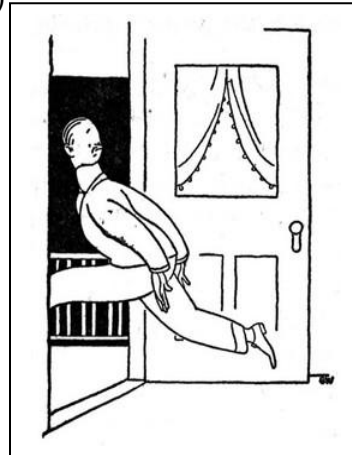
- (A) confused, (B) hysterical, (C) enraged

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Identify the drawing that illustrates a door left **ajar**.

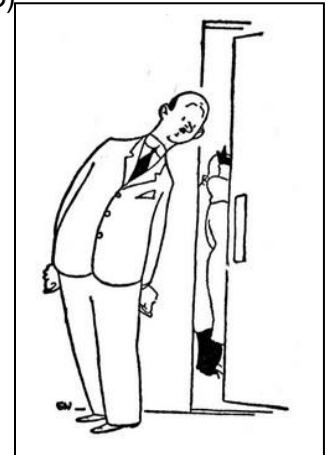
(A)



(B)



(C)



- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Which of the following could be correctly described as "*flowing in rivulets*"? (A) a row of flags on display, (B) muddy water after a downpour, (C) a flock of ducklings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. An *antonym* for **plaintive** is (A) pathetic, (B) obstinate, (C) pleased.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Which of the following statements is **not** true of a **sharecropper**? A sharecropper (A) gives part of the crops he raises to a landlord, (B) does not own the land he farms, (C) works as a supervisor for the person who owns the land.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A correct definition for **scarred** is (A) showing a mark left by a healed wound, (B) being extremely frightened, (C) showing or compelling a feeling of reverence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The *least likely* place for **spires** is (A) atop a large church, (B) in a new elementary school, (C) in a forest of tall trees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Choose the word that can change the meaning of the sentence if it replaces **gruff**.  
*Mrs. Gillespie spoke to the class in a **gruff** manner.*  
(A) courteous, (B) surly, (C) brusque
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. A **bramble** is (A) a group of noisy animals, (B) a prickly shrub or bush, such as a blackberry, (C) a row of landscaped, flowering shrubs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Which phrase is the *best* example of the correct use of **constrained**? (A) **constrained** by a tall fence, (B) **constrained** with enthusiasm, (C) **constrained** for a good friend.

## Short Answer Questions

### I (Pages 1-11)

1. What time of the year was it when the man and the boy stood on the cabin porch with Souder?
2. Besides the boy, how many younger children were there in the family?
3. Who lived in the other cabins that were scattered over the fields?
4. Why did the boy's mother encourage him to give up going to school that was far away at the edge of town?
5. Explain how Souder got his name.
6. How were Souder's skills as a hunter helpful for the family?
7. Explain why the family had only corn mush for their supper.
8. When the boy's father left the cabin, what did he **not** take with him?
9. How much did the boy's mother get for the walnut kernels that she picked from the shells?
10. What story did the boy's mother tell before he went to bed?

### I—Continued **Pages 11-18**

1. What two purposes were served by the cabin's chunk stove?
2. Why was the boy surprised to see that there were pork sausages in the skillet?
3. What was boiling in the possum kettle?
4. How did the boy know that his mother was worried about something?
5. What was the only other time the boy remembered when the oak slab had ham on it?
6. Which part of the ham did the boy's father say was to be saved for Souder?
7. What did the boy's father do toward evening?
8. What did the boy's mother do before she began picking walnuts?
9. Instead of telling a story, what did the boy's mother do as she picked walnuts?
10. What did the boy wish for his mother and his father and for himself?

**Pages 1-11**

Write either **True** or **False** in the blank before each statement.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Sounder had been given to the boy's father as payment for work he had done.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. There were three children in the family younger than the boy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The sharecroppers' cabins were built side by side on the edge of a huge field.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The boy had to walk eight miles to and from school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The past two Octobers, the boy had given up trying to get to school because the trip was too long and too cold.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. In addition to going to school, the boy liked hunting with Sounder.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Sounder got his name from his loud hunting voice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Sounder was a purebred Georgia redbone hound.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. In the winter, the boy's family made money selling the possums and skins from the raccoons that Sounder caught.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Everyone in the countryside recognized Sounder's voice when he was hunting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The boy's father explained that animals didn't move about when it was windy because hunting dogs could easily catch their scent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. The boy's father promised to take him along if he went hunting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. For supper, the boy and the younger children ate wedges of browned corn mush.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The crop and the hunting had been better for the boy's family this year than last year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. When he left the cabin and went out into the night, the boy's father was alone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Each year after the first hard frost, the boy's mother picked kernels from the walnuts she gathered and sold them at the store.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Before the boy went to bed, his mother told a story of the days of slavery.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. The boy's mother did washing for the people who lived in the big house down the road.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. The boy's pillow and mattress were stuffed with straw.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. The boy dreamed about his cabin floating into a town where he wouldn't be lonesome anymore.





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**Pages 19-bottom of Page 26**

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. In winter, (A) almost no one passed on the road near the cabin, (B) no visitors came to the cabins, (C) a lot of wagons on the way into town passed the cabins.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The third day after the ham bone and pork sausage were cooked , (A) the family's food supply was low again, (B) the boy's father and Sounder went hunting, (C) the cabin still smelled good.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The three white men (A) wanted to question the boy's father, (B) accused the boy's father of stealing the ham, (C) were looking for an escaped prisoner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When a stool fell over, one of the men (A) kicked it across the room, (B) crushed it with his foot, (C) pitched it out the door.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. One of the men (A) threw the oak slab and the ham on the floor, (B) asked where the ham came from, (C) offered to bring food to the family.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The three white men were (A) the owners of the big house, (B) bounty hunters from the next county, (C) the sheriff and two deputies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The boy's father was (A) tied up with ropes, (B) knocked out, (C) put in handcuffs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Sounder hadn't warned the family of the men's arrival because he (A) was locked up, (B) had wandered away to hunt on his own, (C) was asleep.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Before the men could get the boy's father out of the house and in the wagon, Sounder (A) was through the door, (B) knocked one of the men down, (C) was growling and scratching at the door.



- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The boy's father had torn his overalls on (A) the door hook of the smokehouse, (B) a wire fence, (C) a sharp thorn bush.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The men said the boy's father would soon be wearing (A) really ragged clothes, (B) big black and white stripes, (C) a uniform.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. The boy was given orders to hold Sounder if he didn't want (A) him shot, (B) the dog to be taken away, (C) the whole family thrown out of the cabin.

**IV**  
**Pages 46-52**

Write either **Yes** or **No** in the blank before each question.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Did the boy's mother return by the end of the day?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Did the boy's mother sell the last of the ham and sausage?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Did the boy's mother say that if Sounder rested on a bed of oak leaves, the acid in the leaves would heal his wounds?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Did the boy's mother think Sounder might have been hit by a glancing shot that tore the hide off his head and shoulders?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Was it likely that Sounder would heal in about two days?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Did the boy's mother explain why she brought home an empty cardboard box the storekeeper had given her?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Did the boy's mother sing and tell Bible stories as she picked kernels from the walnuts?



- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Did the boy go out and search all day in the great woodlands for Sounder?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Did the boy's mother say she reckoned they were among the people who were born to lose?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. After weeks had gone by, did Sounder come back?

# Think, Write, Create

## Chapter Activities

### I Pages 1-11

When the story begins, the boy is standing on the porch in the cold with his father and Sounder. He pets the dog and listens to his father tell how the dog had come to him along the road when he was no more than a pup.

- Write Sounder's history before he found the boy's father. Where had he been born? Why was he wandering alone along the road?
- The boy says that he and Sounder must be about the same age. What age do you suppose they are?
- How do you know that both the boy and his three younger siblings loved Sounder.

Sounder was a mixture of Georgia redbone hound and bulldog. *His ears, nose, and color were those of a redbone. The great square jaws and head, his muscular neck and broad chest showed his bulldog blood.*

- Find a picture or an illustration of a Georgia redbone hound and of a bulldog.
- Use the picture(s) and/or illustration(s) as guides to draw a picture of what you believe Sounder probably looked like.

The boy finally agreed with his mother and gave up walking the eight miles morning and evening to get to the school located far away at the edge of town.

- Why do you suppose the boy was willing to make such an arduous journey to get to school?
- If school buses and all motor vehicles suddenly disappeared, what would happen to the way we live? How would it affect school?
- Would you be willing to ride a bicycle from your home to your school? Why or why not?
- Would you agree to walk or ride a bicycle to places you enjoy, such as your favorite restaurant? Elaborate on your answer.
- Speculate as to whether computers and the internet might some day make it unnecessary for people to travel from place to place. What would be some advantages of such a system? What problems would it create?

When the boy said, "*There ain't no dog like Sounder,*" he was making a bold statement. He was not exaggerating, however.

Explain how the dog was an important part of the boy's life. Find evidence to prove that Sounder was not only a hard-working, contributing member of the family, he was also well-respected in the community.

Organize your ideas, and then write a composition to prove that the boy was telling the truth—***There Ain't No Dog like Sounder.*** (See **Graphic Organizer #1**)

On page 6 the author wrote, *At the door, the father took down the lantern that hung on the wall beside the possum sack and shook it. "There's plenty of coal oil," he said.*

- What is coal oil? Where does it come from?
- Besides providing fuel for a lantern, what were other uses for this substance?
- Do we still use coal oil for anything? Elaborate on your answer.

## Think, Write, Create

### Whole Book Activities

Even before his father was taken away, the boy felt a profound sense of loneliness. It came to him again when he went to visit his father in jail.

Loneliness is an emotion normally associated with being alone. As part of a loving family, the boy was not alone. So, what exactly was the loneliness that came over him?

- Which of the following do you believe explain the boy's loneliness? Use facts from the story to support your choices.

*living in extreme poverty*  
*living in isolation from other people*  
*being separated from mainstream society*  
*having limited access to travel and exploration*  
*lack of opportunity for improving one's life*  
*enduring discrimination*  
*lack of education and educational opportunities*  
*feeling disconnected from the world*

---

Reluctantly, the boy's mother agreed that he could go looking for his father.

- Speculate as to how the boy's story would have been different if his mother hadn't allowed him to leave. Think about how his travels were life-changing experiences.
  - The boy read in his book, "*Only the unwise think that what has changed is dead.*" When the boy became a man, how did this statement prove to be true?
- 

Though he did not specifically name the place where Sounder's story takes place, the author included many clues that can lead an observant reader to determine correct location.

- Use the following facts to identify the **state** where you believe the boy and his family lived. Explain how each item helped you reach a conclusion.

*There were four seasons and the ground froze during the winter.*

*Wild animals of the area included raccoons, possums, dry-land moccasins, and copperheads.*

*There was swampland and bog water nearby.*

*The area was lowland woods and foothills.*

*People lived in "big houses" and cabins—leftovers from the plantation system.*

*The author mentions Gilmer County and Bartow County as places where the boy searched for his father.*

- Once you have identified the state, name the region—southeast, northeast, etc.. Include a list of towns—large ones and small ones—where you think the boy might have traveled or lives as a man.
- 

The author did not include a single date that would pinpoint the time of Sounder's story. However, he did plant clues that can narrow the time frames of the story.

Based on the following facts, decide what **decade(s)** could be a logical time for Sounder's story. Explain how you used each item to eliminate or include various time periods.

*The boy's family worked as sharecroppers.*

*Hunting was a major source of food for the boy and his family.*

*Racial discrimination was a fact of life.*

(Continued on next page)

## *There Ain't No Dog Like Sounder*

When the boy said, "*There ain't no dog like Sounder*," he was making a bold statement, but he was not exaggerating.

Explain how the dog was an important part of the boy's life. Find evidence to prove that Sounder was not only a hard-working, contributing member of the family, he was also a well-respected in the community.

Organize your ideas below, and then write a composition to prove that the boy was telling the truth—***There Ain't No Dog like Sounder***.

*Sounder was important to the boy because . . .*



*Sounder contributed to his family by . . .*



*Sounder was well known and respected in the community because . . .*

