

Out of the Dust

By Karen Hesse

1998 Newbery Medal Winner



Objective Tests Teaching Guide

by Margaret Whisnant

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Out of the Dust

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Winter 1934

Beginning: August 1920 Rabbit Battles Losing Livie Me and Mad Dog
Permission to Play On Stage

Pages 3-14



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

- _____ 1. Billie Jo was born (A) in a local hospital, (B) in a cabin on her grandfather's Texas farm, (C) at home on the kitchen floor.
- _____ 2. Billie Jo's daddy (A) wanted a boy, (B) worked in a factory, (C) refused to have anything to do with her.
- _____ 3. Which of the following was **not** true of Billie Jo's appearance? She (A) was redheaded, long legged, and freckle-faced, (B) looked like her father, (C) was short and blonde.
- _____ 4. Billie Jo had a fondness for apples and a hunger (A) to see far away places, (B) to learn everything in books, (C) for playing fierce piano.
- _____ 5. Billie Jo didn't like it much when her Daddy (A) said she was just like a boy, (B) put her on the tractor, (C) made her do housework.
- _____ 6. Although she had tried, Billie Jo's mother had (A) not been able to find work, (B) not been able to get it right when it came to having other babies, (C) not been able to regain her health since Billie Jo's birth.
- _____ 7. Billie Jo's grandfather died from (A) a bad heart, (B) a cancer that ate up most of his skin, (C) a lung disease caused by breathing dust.
- _____ 8. Billie Jo's Aunt Ellis was (A) living in Oklahoma, (B) fourteen years older than her daddy, (C) even meaner than Great-uncle Floyd.

Out of the Dust

By Karen Hesse

Birthday for FDR Not Too Much to Ask Mr. Hardly's Money Handling
Fifty Miles South of Home Rules of Dining Breaking Drought
Dazzled Debts Fowl as Maggoty Stew State Tests Fields of Flashing Light
Pages 15-35

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

- _____ 1. Billie Jo played so well at the Palace Theater, Arley asked her to perform at the birthday ball to honor President Roosevelt.



- _____ 2. Other than the two places she had already performed, Billie Jo had no more offers to play piano.
- _____ 3. Because the family crops had been good for the past few years, Billie Jo's mother made a generous donation when the committee came asking.
- _____ 4. Ma sent Billie Jo to Hardly's store with fifty cents in her pocket to buy supplies for making Daddy's birthday cake.
- _____ 5. Mr. Hardly was a pleasant, honest, and generous man.
- _____ 6. The attic of Hardly's store filled with dust and collapsed under the weight.
- _____ 7. Billie Jo thought about the secondhand sheets of music she could have bought with the four cents in change Ma made her return to Mr. Hardly.
- _____ 8. Fifty miles south in Amarillo, wind blew windows in, destroyed signs, and tore wheat out of the ground.
- _____ 9. Billie Jo's family had to set the table with plates and glasses turned upside down and cover the silverware with a napkin to keep them from being covered in dust.
- _____ 10. Billie Joe got word that Livie Killian's family had found work and were doing much better.
- _____ 11. It frightened Billie Jo to think what it would be like without a place to live and something to eat.
- _____ 12. After seventy days of wind and dust, a little rain came.

Out of the Dust

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Spring 1934

Tested by Dust *Banks* *Apple Blossoms* *World War* *What I Don't Know*
Beat Wheat *Give Up on Wheat* *Apples* *Dust and Rain*
Harvest *On the Road with Arley*

Pages 37-51

a dust storm
the banks
wheat
the piano
Daddy
in dimes

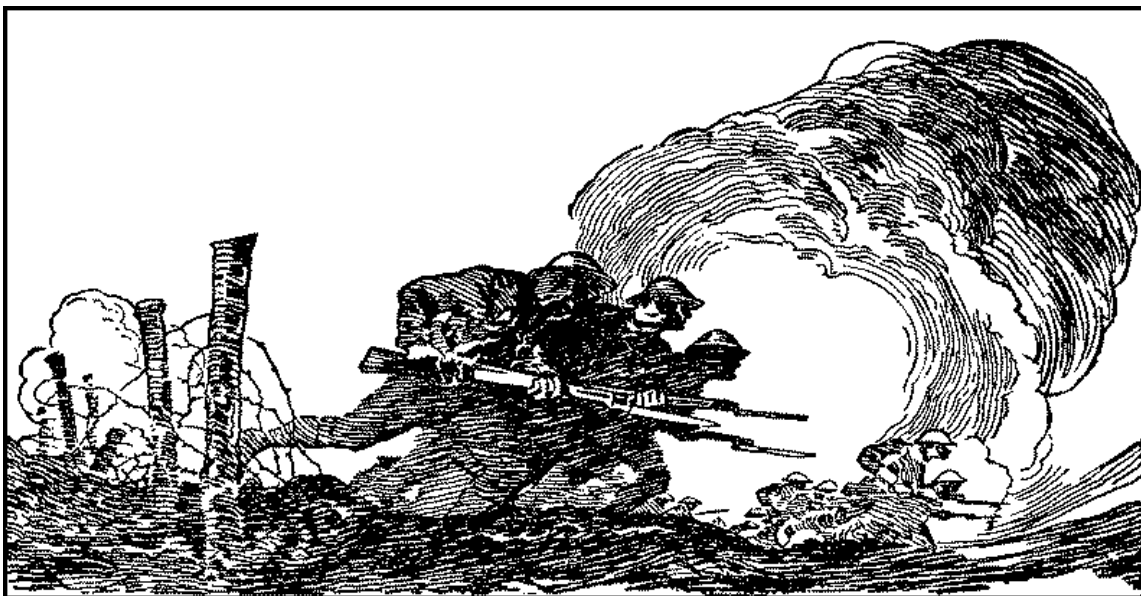
a pond
apple trees
Madame Butterfly
Billie Jo
baby

apples
five bushels
seventy-three cents
Arley Wanderdale
their future

Black Mesa Boys
school
on the road
Ma
poppies

From the list above, choose the name, word, or phrase that matches each of the clues below and write it in the blank. All answers will be used at least **once**. **Some** answers will be used more than **once**.

- _____ 1. Billie Jo stood under the two of them and let a blizzard of flower petals fall into her hair.
- _____ 2. Thanks to him, Billie Jo earned a little money for the family by playing the piano.
- _____ 3. County Agent Dewey predicated that soon there wouldn't be enough of this left for seed to plant the crop next fall.
- _____ 4. He fought in the Great War off in France when he was just seventeen.
- _____ 5. Daddy made Ma's temper boil by refusing to plant crops other than this one.



- _____ 6. When she performed, Billie Jo played a set of songs with this word in it.

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Summer 1934

Hope in a Drizzle Dionne Quintuplets Wild Boy of the Road
The Accident Burns Nightmare A Tent of Pain
Drinking Devoured

Pages 55-69



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

- _____ 1. Did Daddy talk about rain more than anyone else in the family?
- _____ 2. When the quarter inch drizzle came down, did Billie Jo see Ma standing in the rain striped with mud?
- _____ 3. Did Ma cry at the thought of having five babies at once like the lady in Canada?
- _____ 4. When the boy came by the house asking for food, did Billie Jo think about Livie Killian and her brother?
- _____ 5. Was the sixteen-year-old boy's walk to California something unusual?
- _____ 6. Did Billie Jo think that some day she would walk to California?
- _____ 7. Had Daddy put the pail of kerosene next to the stove?
- _____ 8. Did the pail of kerosene catch on fire when Ma mistook it for water and tried to make coffee with it?
- _____ 9. Was Ma burned when the rope of fire rose from the stove to the pail of kerosene?
- _____ 10. As the pail of kerosene sat flaming inside the house, did Ma run, screaming for Daddy, out the porch door?
- _____ 11. Was Billie Jo aware that Ma was running back toward the house when she grabbed the burning pail and threw it out the door?
- _____ 12. Did Billie Jo try to help Ma and the baby by beating out the flames with her hands?
- _____ 13. In Billie Jo's dream, did the piano ruin under a mound of dust?
- _____ 14. When Billie Jo awoke, were her hands swollen, dripping lumps that stung with pain?
- _____ 15. Was Ma so badly burned that Billie Jo couldn't look at her?
- _____ 16. Did Ma lie, without making a sound, under a sheet tent that Daddy had made?
- _____ 17. As Ma lay disfigured and in pain, did Daddy use the money she had hidden to get good and drunk?
- _____ 18. Was the descending cloud that Billie Jo saw a small rain cloud?
- _____ 19. Did grasshoppers destroy Ma's apple trees?
- _____ 20. Did Ma die giving birth to Billie Jo's brother?

About Your Objective Tests Teaching Guide. . .

The primary goal in creating teaching guides for children's novels is to provide a **classroom-ready**, non-threatening method for checking student comprehension and stretching thinking skills. **When used as a basic guide for teaching a novel, the materials offer many and varied opportunities for learning.**

Use your teaching pack as a guide and lead your students into discovering new ideas about

THE PLOT

Each test page is actually an outline of the plot. In your teaching pack, the chain of related events that tell the story has been pulled from the novel and reformatted into a series of questions. Whether they are aware of their ability or not, all good readers sense the **rhythm** of the **connected** events that compose the plot; and consequently **comprehend** the story. This "plot rhythm" is the basic structure of the tests.

To further your students' understanding of plot, try the following activities:

Summarizing the Story: Using only the chapter questions as a guide, have your students write a summary of the chapter. For a set of ten questions, limit the number of sentences they may write to seven. For twenty questions, allow no more than twelve sentences.

Reporting the News: Have students write a newspaper article, based on the events from a set of questions, and add the *who, what, when, where, why* format. Some needed information may be located in previous chapters.

Twisting the Plot: Choose one or two questions from each chapter and change its answer—true to false, no to yes, or a different answer—and explain how changing a single (or several) events would change the story. To further illustrate the rhythm of a good story, try changing the answers to one complete set of questions. Your students will see how difficult, if not impossible, it is to tell a sensible story from a tangled set of events.

THE CHARACTERS

Questions that illustrate character motivation and personality are purposely included. Too often, when they are asked to tell what kind of person a story character is, the only answer many of our students can muster is "nice."

In your efforts to remove "nice" from your students' literary vocabulary, try this idea:

Character Charts: Display individual charts for the main characters. As the chapters are read, record **facts, behaviors, or events** that relate to the each character. Then connect the items with several appropriate words such as **empathetic, brave, calloused, bold, untrustworthy**, etc. The teacher can take the lead by contributing the first few words and then assigning the task of identifying more terms to students. Record the word collections on the charts with the story facts.

This information is a valuable student resource when displayed in the room for all to see and use during a writing assignment. In creating and using character charts, students will soon begin writing more fluently and insightfully about story personalities.

Use the charts to encourage your students to try some "predicting" or "detective" writing about what the character(s) might do next or what might have happened after the story ended. Let the charts help your students recognize **CHARACTER CHANGE (dynamics)**.

Another fun activity with the charts is to match a book personality with a zodiac sign. Students must justify their reason for thinking a character is a particular sign by citing his/her behaviors, words, reactions to situations, etc. that prove the match.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

(Implied Meaning)

Because the primary goal for the objective questions is **basic comprehension**, items requiring a student to **interpret** an event or a character's behavior are not included. Always included, however, are questions that *establish the existence of a story component carrying an implied meaning.*

MAKING PREDICTIONS

(Recognizing Story Clues)

Authors subtly place clues in the story line giving the reader hints as to what is about to happen. Like the implied meaning, these clues are brought to the reader's attention in the form of a question. Once a student learns to spot the gems, his/her ability to comprehend and enjoy a story tends to leap forward.

Use "thinking-out-loud" class discussions to list all the possible meanings of the clue questions. Have your student write their individual predictions (no sharing or telling), store the papers until the novel is finished, and then retrieve them for reading. Sometimes, a wrong prediction makes a story as good as the original.

OTHER FUNCTIONS

The objective test pages are excellent discussion guides for both whole groups and small groups. They work well as homework reading guides and as conferencing tools. They are also useful management tools for teachers who wish to use multiple titles in one classroom.

IMPROVING/DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS

Rather than always requiring your students to answer test questions on a printed page, surprise them (and save paper!!) by occasionally doing the test orally.

Try this technique:

Student Rules for an Oral Test:

The teacher will read each question *two times*. No comments or questions that interrupt this initial phase of the test are allowed.

When all questions have been read, individual students may ask for repeats of any question he/she wishes to hear again.

No interruptions/comments during the re-reading part of the test.

Teacher Rules for an Oral Test:

The teacher will read each question *two times*. Except to remind students that a re-reading phase will following after the last question, he/she will not respond to comment/question during this period.

The teacher will repeat **any** and **all** questions (even if it results in reading the same question multiple times).

(The second teacher rule is a *vital* part of the exercise. Asking for multiple repeats of a question does not mean students aren't paying attention. It does indicate their desire to *understand* and *answer* the question correctly.)

As students become more comfortable and experienced with oral test-taking, the number of requests for repeated questions will diminish. An added bonus to this technique is that skills learned in these testing periods tend to translate into other situations where teacher-talking and student-listening are required components of learning.

Final Note

This Teaching Guide is designed for use as supplementary material that supports a total reading program. It is my goal to provide busy teachers with a classroom-ready, practical resource loaded with motivational and learning opportunities for their students. It is my hope that your purchase will prove to be a hard-working instructional component for years to come. Thanks for choosing one of my products for your classroom.



Margaret Whisnant, Author