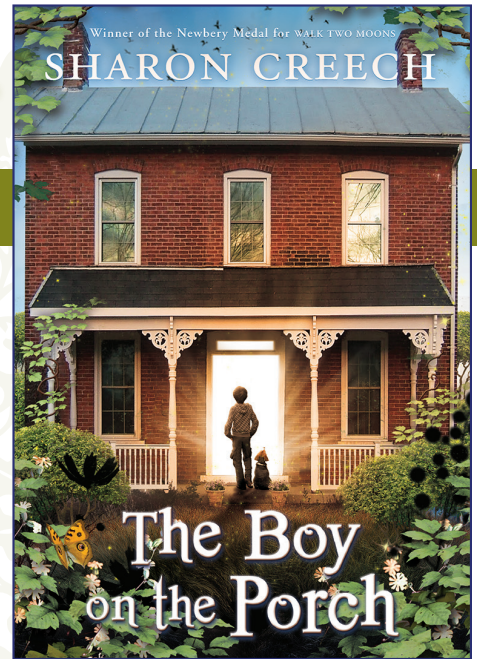


# The Boy on the Porch

BY SHARON CREECH

## TEACHING GUIDE



### Setting the Scene

In the spare, lyrical style of a folktale, *The Boy on the Porch* tells the story of John and Marta, a young farming couple, who find a boy on their porch. A note in the boy's pocket says that the mysterious note writer will return for the child, Jacob. Jacob, the couple discovers, doesn't speak but instead taps out rhythms that show his thoughts and feelings. The couple grows to love him, but what will they do when the note writer returns, as promised? *The Boy on the Porch* is an inspiring story of love, generosity, and hope.

### Discussion Questions

1. What genre would you say this story is and why? Compare and contrast it to stories in the same genre. Compare and contrast it to stories in a different genre but with similar themes or topics. *Common Core State Standards (Reading: Literature):* RL.5.9., RL.6.9.
2. Who are this story's point-of-view characters, and what point-of-view is used to tell the story? How can you tell? Use examples. Do the point-of-view characters always interpret what's happening in the story the way you do? What are the similarities and differences? Why are there sometimes differences between your interpretation of events and the point-of-view characters' interpretations? *Common Core State Standards (Reading: Literature):* RL.3.6., RL.4.6., RL.5.6., RL.6.6.
3. What do you know and infer about Jacob's parents from the action of leaving him on the porch and from the note Marta and John find? When you finally learned the truth about his parents, were you surprised? Why or why not? *Common Core State Standards (Reading: Literature):* RL.3.1., RL.4.1., RL.5.1., RL.6.1., RL.7.1.
4. On page 21, Marta says: "John, we should stop calling him 'boy.' It isn't right. It makes him sound—I don't know—unimportant." What does she mean by this? Do you agree or disagree? Why? *Common Core State Standards (Reading: Literature):* RL.3.4., RL.4.4., RL.5.4., RL.6.4.
5. Is Jacob's music a language or is it simply sound he makes to express himself? Explain your answer. Do you think you would have an easy time communicating with him? Why or why not? *Common Core State Standards (Speaking and Listening):* SL.3.1d., SL.4.1d., SL.5.1d., SL.6.1d., SL.7.1d.
6. On page 52, John asks Marta where Jacob comes up with the ideas for his paintings. Marta says, "I don't know. I think he's a genius." What does she mean by this? Do you agree or disagree? Why? What makes someone a genius and why? *Common Core State Standards (Reading: Literature):* RL.3.1., RL.4.1., RL.5.1., RL.6.1., RL.7.1. *Common Core State Standards (Speaking and Listening):* SL.3.1d., SL.4.1d., SL.5.1d., SL.6.1d., SL.7.1d.
7. Sharon Creech uses some great words to help tell her story, like "foundlings" and "glomming" on page 34, and "dilapidated," "abandoned," and "derelict" on page 92. What do these mean? How do they contribute to the tone of the story? *Common Core State Standards (Reading: Literature):* RL.3.4., RL.4.4., RL.5.4., RL.6.4.
8. Using examples from the story, how would you characterize Marta? How would you characterize John? How do they relate to each other? How do they change over the course of the story? How do their actions affect Jacob and the overall story line? *Common Core State Standards (Reading: Literature):* RL.3.3., RL.4.3., RL.5.3., RL.6.3., RL.7.3.
9. What would you say are the story's central themes? How do these themes develop over the course over the story? Provide examples to support your answers. How does the story compare and contrast with other stories, in this genre or others, that share the same themes? *Common Core State Standards (Reading: Literature):* RL.4.2., RL.5.2., RL.6.2., R.L.7.2., RL.5.9., RL.6.9.
10. What do the shoes Jacob finds represent to him? What do they and the rest of the shoes represent to Marta and John? How do all the shoes contribute to the development of the characters and the overall storyline? *Common Core State Standards (Reading: Literature):* RL.4.1., RL.5.1., RL.6.1., RL.7.1.

*Discussion Questions continued on the next page . . .*

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11. John and Marta eventually keep looking for the boy's parents. Are they right or wrong to do so? Why? Would you have done the same thing if you were one of them? Why or why not? *Common Core State Standards (Speaking and Listening): SL.3.1d., SL.4.1d., SL.5.1d., SL.6.1d., SL.7.1d.*
12. What does the ending suggest about Jacob's life since John and Marta last saw him? Explain your answer. Why do you think Sharon Creech ends the story where she does? Before you read the end, what did you think would happen and why? *Common Core State Standards (Reading: Literature): RL.3.1., RL.4.1., RL.5.1., RL.6.1., RL.7.1.*

Common Core State Standards (Speaking and Listening) also addressed by all questions: SL.3.1a-d., SL.4.1a-d., SL.5.1a-d., SL.6.1a-d., SL.7.1a-d., SL.3.6., SL.4.6., SL.5.6., SL.6.6., SL.7.6.

## Activities

1. **The Tale of Jacob:** *The Boy on the Porch* has an ending that challenges you to imagine the changes in Jacob's life from a few clues, like his appearance and the things he carries. So, rise to this challenge and write the story of how and why Jacob arrived on the porch a second time, ending with the moment when Jacob wakes to see John, Marta, and Beagle—*The Tale of Jacob*. *Common Core State Standards (Writing): W.3.3a., W.3.3b., W.3.3c., W.3.3d., W.4.3a., W.4.3b., W.4.3c., W.4.3d., W.4.3e., W.5.3a., W.5.3b., W.5.3c., W.5.3d., W.5.3e., W.6.3a., W.6.3b., W.6.3c., W.6.3d., W.6.3e., W.7.3a., W.7.3b., W.7.3c., W.7.3d., W.7.3e.*
2. **What Makes a Parent?** For a time Marta and John care for Jacob, and eventually they care for other children as well. Consider definitions of "mother," "father," and "parents." Do Marta and John's actions make them "parents"? Develop a thesis statement that answers this question. Then, using examples from the story, write an opinion essay that develops an effective argument supporting your thesis. *Common Core State Standards (Writing): W.3.1a., W.3.1b., W.3.1c., W.3.1d., W.4.1a., W.4.1b., W.4.1c., W.4.1d., W.5.1a., W.5.1b., W.5.1c., W.5.1d., W.6.1a., W.6.1b., W.6.1c., W.6.1d., W.6.1e., W.7.1a., W.7.1b., W.7.1c., W.7.1d., W.7.1e.*
3. **Foster Care Report.** Pretend you are a reporter for your school or local paper. Research how people in your community or state become foster parents, what their responsibilities are, and the good work they do for kids. Then write your report, making sure to integrate compelling quotations and facts—inform your readers about foster parents' essential work in your Foster Care Report. *Common Core State Standards (Writing): W.3.2a., W.3.2b., W.3.2c., W.3.2d., W.4.2a., W.4.2b., W.4.2c., W.4.2d., W.4.2e., W.5.2a., W.5.2b., W.5.2c., W.5.2d., W.5.2e., W.6.2a., W.6.2b., W.6.2c., W.6.2d., W.6.2e., W.6.2f., W.7.2a., W.7.2b., W.7.2c., W.7.2d., W.7.2e., W.7.2f.*

Common Core State Standards (Writing) also addressed by all activities: W.3.4., W.3.5., W.3.6., W.4.4., W.4.5., W.4.6., W.5.4., W.5.5., W.5.6., W.6.4., W.6.5., W.6.6., W.7.4., W.7.5., W.7.6.



## About the Author

Sharon Creech is the author of the Newbery Medal winner *Walk Two Moons*, the Newbery Honor winner *The Wanderer*, and the Carnegie Medal winner *Ruby Holler*. Her other works include *The Great Unexpected*, *The Unfinished Angel*, *Hate That Cat*, *The Castle Corona*, *Replay*, *Heartbeat*, *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*, *Love That Dog*, *Bloomability*, *Absolutely Normal Chaos*, *Chasing Redbird*, and *Pleasing the Ghost*, as well as three picture books: *A Fine, Fine School*; *Fishing in the Air*; and *Who's That Baby?* Sharon Creech and her husband live in Camden, Maine. You can visit her online at [www.sharoncreech.com](http://www.sharoncreech.com).



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