

Classroom Guide for
BROTHERS IN HOPE: The Story of
the Lost Boys of Sudan
by **Mary Williams**
illustrated by **R. Gregory Christie**

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grade 3

Interest Level: Grades 3–7

Guided Reading Level: S

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 4.7/1.0

Lexile™ Measure: 670

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes

Courage, Survival/Overcoming Adversity, Hardships of War, Faith, Motivation, African History, African American Interest

National Standards

SOCIAL STUDIES: Culture; Time, Continuity, and Change; People, Places, and Environment; Individual Development and Identity; Global Connections

LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading for Perspective; Understanding the Human Experience; Multicultural Understanding; Applying Non-English Perspectives

Synopsis

Garang, an eight-year-old boy in Sudan, tends cattle for his father. When his village is attacked during a civil war, he escapes the destruction and death that comes to his family and the other villagers. He soon discovers that thousands of other boys who were away from their villages during the attack are also orphaned. The Lost Boys band together and set off to walk hundreds of miles to Ethiopia to find safety. They endure numerous hardships and dangers on their journey. In Ethiopia they find shelter at a refugee camp, but fighting soon reaches that country as well, and the boys are chased back to the Sudanese border. From there they walk to Kenya where they settle in another camp. Garang tells his story to a refugee worker named Tom who uses it to inform people in other countries about the plight of the boys. Years pass, and Garang grows into manhood. He becomes a leader and educator in the camp. When Tom returns with an offer of a home and education in the United States, Garang is conflicted. Then he recalls his father's words: *Your heart and mind are strong. There is nothing you cannot do.* He becomes one of some 3,800 Lost

Boys resettled in the U.S. This story is fiction, but is based on the true story of the Lost Boys as told to the author by the young men who lived it.

Background

A civil war has raged off and on in Sudan, Africa's largest country, since 1955. During the late 1980s the conflicts were between the Muslim Arab government of the North and the non-Arab, Christian and Animist black Africans in the South. Thousands of Sudanese boys were orphaned when armed soldiers attacked their villages, killing their families. The Lost Boys, as they came to be called, numbered almost 30,000 when they began their trek over deserts, mountains, and rivers. Thousands died along the way from disease, starvation, exposure, wild animal attacks, and drowning. During the course of their journey, the boys walked almost 1,000 miles. In 2000, the United States began a resettlement program, and about 3,800 Lost Boys started a new life in cities ranging from Atlanta, Georgia, to Fargo, North Dakota. Many have made great strides, but others have found the cultural adjustment difficult. These young men face continue to face formidable challenges, but their faith and belief in education fuel their determination to one day return to their homeland and work toward peace.

Today the Sudanese conflict continues in Darfur, home to mostly Arabic and black Muslim populations. Relentless attacks have been carried out by government backed militias, called *Janjaweed* ("man with gun on a horse"). Considered one of the worst humanitarian crises in history, it is believed that between 200,000 and 400,000 people have been killed. More than two million have been displaced.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

Before introducing the book, share the background information with students. Then you may wish to explore one or more of the following questions.

1. What is the hardest thing you've ever done? Who or what helped you do it?
2. Have you ever been lost? How did you feel? What did you do? Who helped you?
3. What is a refugee? What causes people to become refugees?
4. Why is education important? How can it help change your life?
5. What does it mean to be brave?
6. Why is it important to be able to make good decisions? How does this skill help someone become a good leader?

Exploring the Book

Display the book and read aloud the title. Ask students what they think the title *Brothers in Hope* means.

Let students study the front cover illustration. Then ask them why they think the children in the illustration are lost.

Turn to the map of Africa at the end of the book and indicate where Sudan is. Also point out Ethiopia and Kenya. Explain that the story takes place in these nations.

Review the parts of the book including the dedication, author's note, and afterword.

Ask students to comment on the interior illustrations. Talk about why they think several pictures show people running or walking. Discuss the expressions on people's faces.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

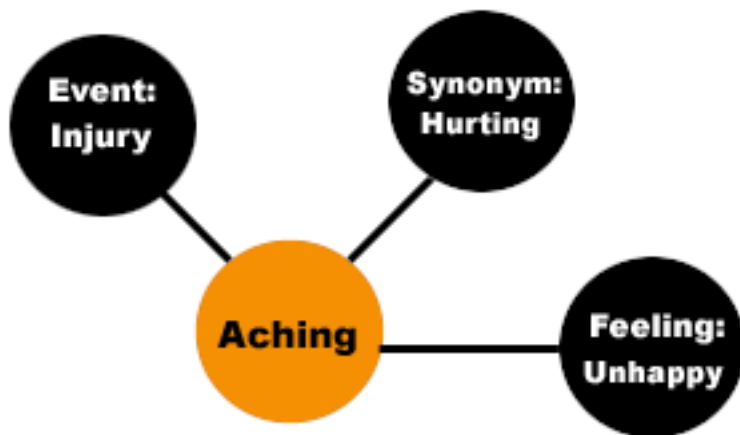
Have students read to find out why the boys are "lost," what happens to them, what the title means, and how the boys survive.

Vocabulary

Write the following words from the story on the chalkboard. Point out that these words are related to war and have mostly negative connotations.

attacked	bullets	survive	fear
destroyed	war	soldiers	refugees
dangerous	severe	foraging	anxiously
scared	fleeing	struggle	tattered
huddled	aching		

After discussing the words' meanings and how they relate to the story, have students make word webs showing events, synonyms, and feelings related to each word. Then challenge students to try using each word in a sentence with a positive meaning.



Positive sentence: Julia used a heating pad to make the aching go away.

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, review comprehension, and deepen students' understanding. Encourage students to refer back to the text and illustrations to support their responses.

1. Who is telling the story? Why is it important that his story be told?
2. What advice did Garang's father give him? How did this help Garang?

3. How did the boys lose their families? What happened to the girls?
4. Why did the boys decide to form groups? Why do you think Garang was chosen as a leader?
5. What are some of the decisions the boys made before heading to Ethiopia? How did these decisions help them?
6. What were some of the problems the boys faced on their journey? How did they solve them?
7. What is a refugee camp? Why are refugee camps needed?
8. Why did Garang think the mud shelters they built at the refugee camp were palaces?
9. Why did Garang decide to go to school? Why did he think of his schoolbooks as “my future—my mother and father”?
10. How did Garang help Tom? How did Tom help Garang?
11. How did Garang change over time?
12. Why did Garang decide to come to the United States? Why might it be hard for a Lost Boy to adjust to life here?

Literature Circles*

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to those in the Discussion Questions section of this guide.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for passages that indicate Garang's feelings at different points in the story.
- The **Illustrator** might draw scenes from the story in a different style or medium.
- The **Connector** might find other stories set in Africa.
The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- The **Investigator** might find more information about Lost Boys who have come to the United States.

*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: *Getting Started With Literature Circles* by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), *Literature Circles: Voice And Choice In Book Clubs And Reading Groups* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and *Literature Circles Resource Guide* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

Use the following questions or similar ones to help students practice active reading and personalize what they have read. Suggest that students respond in reader's journals, oral discussion, or drawings.

1. Would you have made the same decisions Garang did? Why or why not?
2. What did you learn about war in this book? What did you learn about courage?
3. What survival skills did the boys use? What other survival skills do you know that might have been helpful?
4. What kinds of skills do you think a refugee worker like Tom needs? Would you like to have a job like this? Why or why not?

Other Writing Activities

You may wish to have students participate in one or more of the following writing activities. Set aside time for students to share and discuss their work.

1. Garang's father gave his son this advice: *Your heart and mind are strong. There is nothing you cannot do.* Why might this be good advice? How did it help Garang? How might it help you?
2. Imagine that you are going to introduce Garang as a speaker at your school. Write an introduction explaining why he was a good leader. Give examples.
3. Write a letter to a Lost Boy. Tell how you feel about what happened to him.
4. Make a list of at least ten ways that education can help you now and in the future.

ESL Teaching Strategies

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English language learners or who are learning to speak English as a second language.

1. Preteach essential vocabulary to help keep these students focused on the story.
2. Speak or read slowly so students can follow along with an oral reading.
3. Use visuals, gestures, and objects to explain concepts in the story.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

To help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas, you might try some of the following activities.

Social Studies

1. Use a world map or globe to help students understand the location of Africa and the countries mentioned in the book. Have students differentiate between continents and countries; estimate the distance between places within Sudan and the United States, and trace the route of the Lost Boys. Display a landform map of eastern

- Africa and have students discover what the land was like that the Lost Boys traveled over.
2. Set up a bulletin board about Sudan. Include facts about the country and its people and news clippings from current and past publications. Encourage students to bring in articles, clippings, and other information to add to the bulletin board.
 3. Have students make a timeline to show the major events of the story in chronological order. Challenge students to include national events in Sudan as well, and to bring the timeline up to date.
 4. Have students create a chart to compare the lifestyle of the Lost Boys in Africa and how people live in the United States.

Language Arts

1. Write the similes below on the chalkboard. Explain that a simile is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things using the words *like* or *as*. Then have students identify the two things being compared in each simile and explain what the author was trying to convey. Follow up by inviting students to write their own similes about events in the book.
 - a. I could hear bangs like thunder.
 - b. Rushing water roared like an angry lion.
2. Use the text to teach cause and effect. Provide cause and effect graphic organizers and have students complete them to identify relationships among events in the book.
3. Point out that the boys faced many problems. Have students make problem and solution charts to identify these and to show how the boys addressed them.

Science

1. Some students might do research to find out how war affects the environment and the ecology of an area. Have students present their findings in a visual format to the rest of the class.
2. Discuss what the Lost Boys ate on their travels and in the refugee camps. Then have students research foods for a healthy diet and make comparisons between the Lost Boys' diet and their findings.

Music

Ask students to find examples of music and/or sound effects that they think go with different parts of the story. For example, students might find audio that represents tending cattle in peaceful fields, the sounds of war, crossing a river, living in a refugee camp, and so on.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Mary Williams has lived throughout the United States and Africa and been involved in humanitarian organizations such as UNESCO and the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH). She learned about the Lost Boys while working for the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Atlanta, Georgia. Soon after, she started The Lost Boys Foundation. Its goals were to raise awareness about the boys' plight and to assist them in attaining college educations. *Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan* is Williams' first book for children. It has won numerous awards and was praised by *Kirkus Reviews* as "powerful and deeply moving." Said Williams about the boys, "They could be the most angry, bitter people you ever saw. But they weren't. They were so motivated and eager to get jobs and go to school."

Mary Williams is the adopted daughter of Jane Fonda. She credits Fonda with encouraging her to go to college. "Someone took a chance on me," said Williams. "And that's all the Lost Boys wanted. A chance."

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

R. Gregory Christie is a three-time winner of the Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award Honor for his books *Brothers In Hope* and *The Palm of My Heart*, published by Lee & Low Books, and *Only Passing Through*. He was born and raised in New Jersey and received his fine arts degree from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Christie's artwork has appeared in numerous commercial publications, including *The New York Times*, the *Village Voice*, *The New Yorker*, *Parenting* magazine, and on many CD album covers. Other books he has illustrated for Lee & Low include *Love To Langston*, *Richard Wright and the Library Card*, and *DEshawn Days*.

Awards & Honors

- Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award Honor
- ALA Notable Children's Book
- Children's Book Award Notable, IRA
- Notable Books for a Global Society, IRA
- Outstanding Merit, Best Children's Books of the Year, Bank Street College
- Children's Picks List, Book Sense
- Best Children's Books, *Family Fun* magazine

Resources on the Web

Learn more about *Brothers in Hope*:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/26/hc/brothers_in_hope_the_story_of_the_lost_boys_of_sudan

Other books illustrated by R. Gregory Christie:

Deshawn Days

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/41/hc/deshawn_days

Love to Langston

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/81/hc/love_to_langston

The Palm of My Heart

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/88/hc/the_palm_of_my_heart_poetry_by_african_american_children

Richard Wright and the Library Card

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/99/hc/richard_wright_and_the_library_card

BookTalk with R. Gregory Christie about *The Palm of My Heart*:
<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/christie.mhtml>

View other **Active Reader Classroom Guides** at:
http://www.leeandlow.com/p/teachers-african_american.mhtml

Book Information

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10-7/8 x 8-7/8, 48 pages

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Reading Level: Grades 2-3

(Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula)

Themes: Overcoming Adversity, War, Discrimination, Tolerance, Coping with Death, Education, African History, African American Interest

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 4.7/1.0

Lexile Measure®: 670

Order Information

On the Web:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/26/hc/brothers_in_hope_the_story_of_the_lost_boys_of_sudan (secure on-line ordering)

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/ordering.mhtml> (general order information)

By Phone:

212-779-4400 ext. 25

212-683-3591 fax

By Mail:

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, NY NY 10016

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