

Riding Freedom

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Library of Congress Summary: A fictionalized account of Charley (Charlotte) Parkhurst who ran away from an orphanage, posed as a boy, moved to California, and fooled everyone by her appearance.

Book Information:

Time Period: 1880's

Setting /Location: California

Genre: Historical Fiction

Booktalk:

<http://www.mackinbooktalk.com/viewbook.aspx?BookId=1474>

http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/ryan_riding.htm

Author Information

<http://www.pammunozryan.com/>

Illustrator Information

http://www.theinventionofhugocabret.com/about_brian_bio.htm

Pre-Reading Activities

Students will write a paragraph about their knowledge of horses. For example, students can write about how to take care of a horse, how to ride and/or race a horse, and give any interesting facts about horses they may have learned previously.

Students will write another paragraph, this time about the mid 1800's. They will best assess what they believe the time period was like for a young woman at that time. They will think critically about what living in the 1800's was like for a young woman.

In the Beginning and Chapter 1

Questions:

What characteristics does Charlotte have that give her the ability to adapt to her environment with the boys?

What is the cause of William's extreme competitiveness with Charlotte?

Who do you think is the boy (or girl) that will be adopted?

Journal Topic:

What would it be like to live in an orphanage rather than in a home?

Vocabulary:

Rickety (2) - in weak physical condition

Skittish (2) - easily frightened

Lurched (3) - to roll or tip suddenly

Pursed (10) - pucker, to contract into folds or wrinkles

Chapter 2

Questions:

Why didn't Charlotte speak up and let the nice couple know that she was up for adoption?

What is the real reason that Mr. Millshark no longer wants Charlotte to race horses?

How do you think that Charlotte plans to escape from the orphanage?

Journal Topic:

Write about what you think it felt like for Charlotte to lose Freedom. Write about a lost loved one if you lost someone or a pet.

Vocabulary:

Prospective (18) - likely to come about

Anxious (21) - afraid or nervous about what may happen

Clenched (24) - to set or close tightly

Stern (25) - hard and severe in nature or manner

Adopted (27) - to take legally as one's own child

Chapter 3

Questions:

What did Charlotte's leather bracelet come from?

Why was it easier for a young boy to be seen alone than a young girl?

Where do you think Charlotte will find shelter?

Journal Topic:

Write about an object that means a lot to you and explain why it means so much.

Vocabulary:

Ruffled (33) - to disturb the smoothness

Furrows (36) - a narrow groove or wrinkle

Chapter 4

Questions:

Why do you think Charlotte was able to calm horses she had never seen before?

What compelled Charlotte to clean the stranger's stall?

What do you think the man with the pitchfork will decide to do with Charlotte?

Journal Topic:

Write about a time when you were in an unfamiliar place, and how you coped.

Vocabulary:

Trotted (45) - to have gotten along quickly

Cramped (49) - confined in a tight space

Loft (51) - the upper part of a barn where hay is stored

Shinnied (52) - to have climb up or down something vertical by grasping it with the arms and legs and moving oneself by repeated jerks

Chapter 5

Questions:

Would you rather work at your age or go to school? Why?

Does Ebenezer know that Charlotte is the missing girl? What leads you to that conclusion?

Why did Ebenezer have Charlotte try to drive a six-horse wagon?

Journal Topic:

Write about a time when you learned something new, even though it was difficult to learn.

Vocabulary:

Bridles (55) - devices for controlling a horse made up of a set of straps enclosing the head, a bit, and a pair of reins

Mucking (56) - To fertilize with manure or compost

Peculiar (62) - different from the usual or normal

In the Middle and Chapter 6

Questions:

Why was Charlotte so cautious about how to send Hayward her letters?

Why did Mr. Millshark still cause so much fear in Charlotte? How did she get over this fear?

Should Charlotte have stolen Mr. Millshark's boots? Why or why not?

Journal Topic:

Write about a mischievous act you or someone you know committed, and what the results of this act were.

Vocabulary:

Precarious (68) - dangerously lacking in security or steadiness

Persuade (73) - to win over to a belief or to a course of action by argument or earnest request

Recognition (78) - acknowledgment of something done or given

Chapter 7

Questions:

Why did Ebenezer try to talk Charlotte out of going to California?

Do you think Ebenezer would really move out to California someday?

Why did Ebenezer ask “Charley” his name? What do you think Charlotte whispered in his ear?

Journal Topic:

Write about a time you helped someone out, and how you felt.

Vocabulary:

Enthusiasm (82) - strong excitement and active interest

Mustang (82) - a small hardy wild horse of the western plains of the U.S. that is directly descended from horses brought in by the Spaniards

Delta (85) - the triangular or fan-shaped piece of land made by deposits of mud and sand at the mouth of a river

Jostled (87) - to have run or knocked against so as to jar

Chapter 8

Questions:

How do you think Charlotte was able to cope with her new condition?

Why did the people react so differently to Charlotte new features after her accident?

What do you think will happen with Charlotte career now that she saved all of those riders?

Journal Topic:

Write about a time you overcame a difficult obstacle and how you overcame it.

Vocabulary:

Retched (93) - to have tried to vomit

Bandits (95) - people who lives by stealing and often as a member of a band

Chapter 9

Questions:

What compelled Charlotte to buy Margaret's land for her?

Why was Charlotte cautious with Hayward when she first met him?

Why did Charlotte decide not to hide her tears for Vern?

Journal Topic:

Write about a time when you got a pleasant surprise.

Vocabulary:

Rustic (111) - of, relating to, or suitable for the country or country people

Lanky (116) - being tall, thin, and usually loose-jointed

Chapter 10 and In the End

Questions:

Why did Charlotte feel so strongly about going in to vote?

What did the names Charlotte picked for the foals mean?

Do you think Hayward will come back and live with Charlotte? Why or why not?

Journal topic:

Write about something you wish you could do, but are not allowed to. How do you feel about not having the option to choose certain things in your life?

Vocabulary:

Banter (127) - to speak in a friendly but teasing or witty way

Coaxed (132) - to have influenced by gentle urging, and special attention

Interdisciplinary Activities

After reading the book, students will get into groups and create a newspaper from the day that Charlotte escaped her orphanage. They will research the kinds of things that would be typical of the time period and creatively incorporate that information into the articles of the paper. They will be using their imaginations to come up with good realistic stories that could really have happened. The instructor will have examples of real newspapers found at this website:

<http://blog.rarenewspapers.com/?tag=collecting-rare-newspapers>

Students will create banners and signs stating why women should have the right to vote. They will then each write a letter to one of the Presidents of the United States from the 1800's persuading him why women should have the same rights as men. The signs and banners will decorate the classroom, and the teacher will collect the letters.

Other Works by Pam Munoz Ryan:

The Dreamer

Paint the Wind

Esperanza Rising

Becoming Naomi Leon

Related Reads:

Rough, Tough Charley by Verla Kay

Related websites

<http://pbskids.org/wayback/goldrush/>

This website is an education kid friendly site that focuses on the time period of the gold rush.

<http://www.42explore2.com/suffrage.htm>

This website is a look back at many of the famous and courageous women from the 1800's who fought for equal rights.