

BUD, NOT BUDDY

Teacher / Facilitator Guide

CENTRAL IDEA

What does it actually take to find a family and a home, when the one you were born into is gone — and what do the rules a kid makes up to survive reveal about what they really need?

Resource Information

Novel: Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis

Setting: Flint and Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1936, during the Great Depression

Designed for: Advanced readers in grades 4–6, with adaptable supports

TEXT USE

Use a teacher-approved copy of the complete 19-chapter novel, including the nonfiction afterword. This resource supplies original prompts and no reproduced passages.

Resource Overview & Intended Use

A five-mission whole-novel inquiry for advanced readers, designed for seminar, compacted ELA, enrichment, or a mixed-readiness classroom. It emphasizes resourcefulness under hardship, the difference between charity and genuine community care, and what actually constitutes family.

Nonnegotiable alignment

Use the same ranges throughout: Chapters 1–4, 5–8, 9–12, 13–16, and 17–19. The culminating mission requires the complete 19-chapter novel and its afterword.

Text & Edition Information

- Novel: *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis; published 1999; winner of the 2000 Newbery Medal and the 2000 Coretta Scott King Award — the first book to receive both in the same year; 19 chapters plus a nonfiction afterword.
- Confirm the edition includes the afterword, in which Curtis explains the real family history behind the story.
- Use chapter numbers as the stable reference; record publisher, year, format, and ISBN locally.
- This guide reproduces no novel quotations. Verify any teacher-added quotation against the exact classroom edition.

Content Care

This novel includes real and serious content: the death of Bud's mother (referenced, not depicted), physical abuse and neglect in a foster home, references to period-accurate racism and racial segregation (including sundown towns), and homelessness during the Great Depression. None of this is graphic, but preview it, discuss it analytically, and avoid reenactment. This book was written by a Black author drawing on his own family's history; center that context respectfully.

Learning Objectives & Conceptual Questions

- Track a developing claim across a complete novel and revise it with later evidence.
- Distinguish resourceful, deliberate choices from simple anger or luck.
- Separate genuine community care from pity, using textual evidence.
- Evaluate what actually constitutes family, beyond biology.
- Analyze narrative techniques: the Rules and Things as structural device, dramatic irony, and a recontextualizing reveal.
- Situate the novel in accurate Great Depression and Jim Crow-era history.

Conceptual spine

What does it actually take to find a family and a home, when the one you were born into is gone — and what do the rules a kid makes up to survive reveal about what they really need?

Implementation Map

Phase	Reading	Core Work	Checkpoint
Launch	Before Ch. 1	Pre-assessment; norms; edition check	Initial profile
Mission 1	Chapters 1–4	The Home and the Amoses	What do Bud's self-made “Rules and Things” reveal about what he's actually had to learn in order to survive?
Mission 2	Chapters 5–8	On His Own	What does Bud learn about who helps him and why, once he's alone on the streets?
Mission 3	Chapters 9–12	The Road to Grand Rapids	Why does Bud choose to walk to Grand Rapids alone rather than ride the rails with Bugs?
Mission 4	Chapters 13–16	Lefty Lewis	What does Lefty Lewis's kindness toward Bud cost him, or risk for him, given the world Bud is traveling through?
Mission 5	Chapters 17–19	Not Buddy's Father	Why does the truth — that Calloway is Bud's grandfather, not his father — end up mattering less to Bud than actually being wanted?
Synthesis	Complete novel + afterword	The Rules and Things Casebook	Product + reflection

Suggested Timing

6–9 sessions: one launch, five mission seminars, one context lab, and one exhibition/reflection. Compact routine skill practice when pre-assessment evidence shows mastery.

Pre-Assessment Interpretation

- Score dimensions separately; do not total them into a fixed ability label.
- Advance quickly when a student already separates genuine community care from pity without prompting.
- Teach evidence-location and claim-reasoning links explicitly when needed.
- Offer oral, visual, or speech-to-text response modes without reducing conceptual demand.
- Reassess after Mission 3; profiles should change. Full dimensions and levels are in the companion Pre-Assessment & Interpretation Guide.

Facilitation Principles

- Ask “What makes you say that?” then “Is this Bud getting lucky, or Bud making a deliberate choice?”
- Keep the historical realities of the Great Depression and Jim Crow-era racism visible as real context, not just backdrop.
- Separate explaining why the Amoses or Todd act as they do from excusing their treatment of Bud.
- Center the novel's basis in the author's own family history respectfully.
- Use wait time, written entry points, and structured turn-taking.

High-Level Presses

- What does the text actually show about which of Bud's choices are lucky versus deliberate?
- What would count as evidence that someone is offering genuine community care rather than pity?
- What real risks did adults like Lefty Lewis take on by helping in this era, and why does that matter?
- What can this story illuminate about the real Great Depression or real Jim Crow-era history — and what needs outside checking?

Mission 1 Facilitation: The Home and the Amoses

CHAPTERS 1–4

Essential question

What do Bud's self-made “Rules and Things” reveal about what he's actually had to learn in order to survive?

Look-Fors

- Bud's numbered personal rules, and the specific experiences that seem to have taught them to him
- the escalating conflict with Todd Amos and the adults' unfair response
- Bud's choice to plan a careful, nonviolent revenge rather than a dangerous one

Seminar Sequence: Silent Noticing + Turn-and-Talk

- Silent noticing (2–3 minutes): jot one “Rule” and the experience that seems to have created it.
- Turn-and-talk: compare notices before any whole-group claims.
- Whole-group seminar with the Needs Ledger visible.
- Exit line: “I used to think Bud was ... now I think ... because ...”

Misconception to Press

Do not accept “Bud is just an angry kid causing trouble.” Press students to find evidence — like hiding the shotgun — that Bud's choices show deliberate restraint and strategic thinking, not simple anger.

Craft Focus: The Rules as Structural Device

Bud's numbered “Rules and Things” interrupt the story at intervals. What do these rules let Curtis show about Bud's inner life that straightforward narration wouldn't?

Mission 2 Facilitation: On His Own

CHAPTERS 5–8

Essential question

What does Bud learn about who helps him and why, once he's alone on the streets?

Look-Fors

- the library as a place of safety and hope for Bud
- the family that lets Bud join their breakfast line by pretending he's theirs
- the disappointment of learning Miss Hill has moved away

Seminar Sequence: Fishbowl

- Silent evidence sort (2–3 minutes).
- Fishbowl: an inner circle discusses what motivates strangers to help Bud during the Depression; an outer circle tracks the reasoning moves used.
- Outer circle reports patterns before the whole group responds.
- Exit line: “I used to think Bud was ... now I think ... because ...”

Misconception to Press

Do not accept “strangers only help Bud because they feel sorry for him.” Press students to find evidence of genuine mutual aid and dignity in how help is offered, rather than simple pity.

Craft Focus: Understated Kindness

The breakfast-line scene shows real kindness without any character announcing it as heroic. Find the details that make this small act of community care feel significant without being overstated.

Mission 3 Facilitation: The Road to Grand Rapids

CHAPTERS 9–12

Essential question

Why does Bud choose to walk to Grand Rapids alone rather than ride the rails with Bugs?

Look-Fors

- Hooverville and what it reveals about Depression-era hardship and community
- the train yard scene and what happens when Bud and Bugs try to hop a train
- Bud's reasoning as he decides on a different path forward

Seminar Sequence: Predict-and-Check

- Before discussing, each student writes one prediction for what Bud will decide at the fork in his plan, with a reason.
- Check predictions against the text as a group.
- Whole-group seminar with the Needs Ledger visible.
- Exit line: “I used to think Bud was ... now I think ... because ...”

Misconception to Press

Do not accept “Bud just got scared and chickened out.” Press students to identify the specific reasoning behind his choice, and what it reveals about his growing sense of purpose.

Craft Focus: The Fork in the Road as Structure

This section turns a literal choice (train or road) into a turning point in Bud's character. How does the pacing slow down at this decision, compared to the faster-moving chapters before it?

Mission 4 Facilitation: Lefty Lewis

CHAPTERS 13–16

Essential question

What does Lefty Lewis's kindness toward Bud cost him, or risk for him, given the world Bud is traveling through?

Look-Fors

- how Bud and Lefty Lewis's relationship develops from suspicion to trust
- the historical dangers of the road for a Black traveler in 1936 Michigan
- small details suggesting Lefty may know more than he's telling Bud

Seminar Sequence: Structured Academic Controversy

- Paired controversy: one partner argues Lefty's help is simple kindness, one argues it carries real personal risk, using only textual and historical evidence.
- Partners must produce one joint, qualified position before the whole-group seminar.
- Whole-group seminar with the Needs Ledger visible.
- Exit line: “I used to think Bud was ... now I think ... because ...”

Misconception to Press

Do not accept “Lefty just happened to be a nice guy who gave a kid a ride.” Press students to consider the real social and historical risks an adult might take on by helping a runaway child during this era.

Craft Focus: Dramatic Irony in a Kind Stranger

Readers may sense before Bud does that Lefty already knows something important about where Bud is headed. Find a moment that hints at this, and explain how it shapes your trust in Lefty compared to Bud's.

Mission 5 Facilitation: Not Buddy's Father

CHAPTERS 17–19

Essential question

Why does the truth — that Calloway is Bud's grandfather, not his father — end up mattering less to Bud than actually being wanted?

Look-Fors

- the true meaning of the rocks Bud has carried
- Calloway's reaction to learning who Bud is
- the band's decision to welcome Bud as one of their own

Seminar Sequence: Socratic Seminar

- Each student submits one genuine question about the ending.
- The group selects and pursues the most generative question together.
- Facilitator presses for textual evidence, not guesses — direct rehearsal for the culminating mission.
- Exit line: “I used to think Bud was ... now I think ... because ...”

Misconception to Press

Do not accept that finding out Calloway isn't his father makes the whole journey a disappointment. Press students to name what Bud actually gains despite his original assumption turning out to be wrong.

Craft Focus: The Reveal That Recontextualizes

Discovering the rocks' true meaning changes how earlier chapters should be read. Choose one earlier moment involving the rocks and explain how your understanding of it shifts once the truth is revealed.

Context Packet Integration

After Mission	Context File	Purpose
1	The Great Depression in Michigan	Ground the economic hardship in real regional history.
2	Sundown Towns and Racial Segregation in the 1930s North	Provide accurate historical context for the dangers Bud faces on the road.
3	The Real Family History Behind the Book	Connect the novel to Curtis's own grandfathers, using his own account.
4	The Negro Leagues: Baseball Under Segregation	Deepen the historical basis for the character of Lefty Lewis.
5	Jazz in the 1930s	Ground the novel's central musical world in real history.
6	Riding the Rails: Real Depression-Era Hobo Culture	Contextualize the Hooverville and train-yard chapters.

Culminating Mission Facilitation

Complete novel

Require evidence through Chapter 19 and the afterword. A partial reading does not meet the task.

Students prepare The Rules and Things Casebook: an analysis of what Bud's journey reveals about resourcefulness, community, and family, using evidence from across the whole novel, the afterword's real history, and at least one context source.

- Approve proposals only after checking novel evidence across chapters and at least one context source.
- Require students to address the real family history in the afterword directly.
- Allow varied products but hold one rubric.
- Assess the reasoning, not agreement with the facilitator.

Conference Questions

- What does your strongest piece of evidence establish — and not establish?
- Which moment in the book most complicates a simple “Bud found his father” reading of the ending?
- Where might your casebook understate the real historical risk and hardship Bud faces?

Assessment & Differentiation

Need	Access Without Lowering Rigor	Extension
Decoding / fluency	Audio paired with text; bounded chapter targets	Compare how each mission's chapters open
Writing production	Oral rehearsal; speech-to-text; modular paragraphs	Persuasive closing paragraph
Executive function	Milestones; evidence cards; visible checklist	Student-managed reading calendar
Discussion entry	Questions in advance; written first turn	Seminar co-facilitation
Mastery shown	Compact repeated organizers	Independent source critique
Emotional access	Preview; pause; choice of response mode	Compare to another Great Depression or found-family story

Implementation Checklist

- ☐ Confirm the 19-chapter edition, including the afterword, and record bibliographic data.
- ☐ Read the complete novel before facilitating.
- ☐ Remove or verify every locally added quotation.
- ☐ Send content preview regarding abuse, racism, and homelessness depicted in the novel.
- ☐ Administer and interpret the pre-assessment dimensionally.
- ☐ Use aligned mission ranges in every handout.
- ☐ Verify Great Depression and Jim Crow-era facts against the context packet's sources.
- ☐ Require Chapters 1–19 and the afterword for culmination.
- ☐ Collect student access feedback and revise.

Facilitator Reflection
