

Bud, Not Buddy

by Christopher Paul Curtis

After he runs off from the third foster home he's been to, Bud (not Buddy) Caldwell sets off out to find the man he's convinced is his father, a jazz musician and band leader named Herman E. Calloway, guided by a flyer about a jazz band and a handful of rocks his mother gave him just before she died.

THEMES

family, the great Depression, humor, African American history, courage, jazz

Young Listener Unabridged Audio

I. PRE-TEACHING

A. These terms should be defined and discussed:

glum, provoked, tolerate, ilk, vermin, wallop, vampire, centipedes, revenge, spigots, drowsy, hypnotizing, retrieve, stricken, matrimonial, radiating, gait, orphanage, wiry, locomotive, genie, gigantic, alias, devoured, ventriloquists, karat, paltry, knickers, scrawny, resourceful, loathsome, confidential, negotiating, dignity, ethyl, sulky, kin, snaggletooth, shunned, meddling, infected, musings, prodigy, recorder, insinuating, tragedies, saxophone, prestige, brunt, immortal

B. Consider the following questions:

1. Have you heard of the Great Depression? What were people's lives like during this time? How was it different for African Americans than for white people?
2. What are some of the rights denied African Americans during the thirties?
3. What would it be like to live in an orphanage?
4. Do you like music? What kind of music do you like best? What do you think about when you are listening to your favorite kind of music?

II. PRESENTATION

A. Understanding the Story:

1. Begin with Chapters 1 - 6: How does Bud feel about going to yet another foster home? What does he suspect about the man in the picture on the flyer? How is Bud treated at the foster home? What mistake does Bud make about the vampire bat in the shed? How does he get his revenge on Todd? How had his granddad spoiled the day for Momma at the Miss B. Gotten Moon Park? Why had she named him Bud? What happens when Bud goes to the mission for breakfast?
2. Advance to Chapters 7 - 12: Why has Bugs come looking for Bud? Describe the people in Hooverville. Why does Denza think Bud shouldn't ride the rails? Why does Bud miss the train? What does he decide to do? Why does the man stop when he sees Bud on the side of the road? Why are the police stopping cars? What does Lefty Lewis have in the box in the car?

What's the first thing Bud notices about Herman E. Calloway?

3. Complete the story with Chapters 13 - 19 and Author's Note: What happens at the Sweet Pea restaurant to embarrass Bud? What do Calloway and Miss Thomas argue about? What does Steady Eddie give him? How do the band members choose Bud's musician name? How does he feel about his name? What does Bud find in Calloway's glove box? How does Calloway react when Bud shows him his own rocks? Who does Calloway turn out to be? Why had Bud's mother run away? Which parts of the story are based on real events?

B. For Discussion:

1. What does Momma mean when she says, "When one door closes, another one opens?" In what ways does this come true for Bud?
2. Trace Bud's "Rules and Things." Why does he have all these rules? How do they help him size up the grown-ups he meets? Which rules turn out not to be true?
3. Why is Todd so mean to the children that come to the Amos home?
4. Why are the shanty towns called Hoovervilles? How do people treat each other in these settlements?
5. Why does Herman E. Calloway always have a white man in the band? How do the other members treat him?

III. EXTENDING THE LESSON

Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:

A. Language Arts:

1. Have students write about their names and nicknames. How did their parents choose their names? What nicknames do they have? How did they get their nicknames?
2. Have students read Uncle Remus stories about Bre'r Rabbit and the other animals. How did Bre'r Rabbit fool Bre'r Fox? Where did these stories originate?

3. Have students write a message to someone as if it were a telegram and they had to pay for every word.
4. When Bud says, "My eyes don't cry no more," Steady Eddie says that would be a great name for a song. Have students make up names for songs, especially country western songs. Another group might come up with funny names for bands, especially rock bands.
5. Have students follow the author's advice and ask their grandparents, aunts, uncles, or parents to tell them family stories. Have them write these stories in their journals and share them with the class.

B. Art and Music:

1. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They might copy pictures of jazz musicians and their instruments and photos from the Depression, include rocks with places and dates on them and a cardboard suitcase with flyers and posters for Herman E. Calloway's band.
2. Have students create an illustrated book of the Bud's "Rules and Things" and add some of their own.
3. Have students listen to the images Bud sees as he listens to the band. Have them listen to jazz and draw the images they picture.
4. Assign a group to select records, tapes, or CDs from the library that might serve as appropriate background music to some of the scenes. Jazz of the period would be appropriate for the scenes with the band; songs of the Depression or folk music like "Shenandoah" would fit the Hooverville scene.

C. Social Studies:

1. Have students learn about the Great Depression, especially how African Americans were treated.
2. Bud is interested in the famous gangsters he has heard about like John Dillinger, Al Capone, Pretty Boy Floyd, Baby Face Nelson, and Machine Gun Kelly. Have students find more about these gangsters and about the rise of organized crime during the 1920s.
3. Have students find out more about George Washington Carver. What did he accomplish?
4. Hoovervilles are named after President Hoover. Have students find out about other people whose names have become words, like maverick, boycott, chauvinism, braille, and saxophone.

5. Have students learn about the history of jazz. What is it? How is it different from other kinds of music? How and where did it begin? Who are some famous jazz musicians?
6. Have students learn about the foster care system and about orphanages of the past and today.
7. Have students learn about the limited opportunities for work for African Americans during the 30s, 40s and 50s. How did this change in the 60s?
8. Have students learn about unions. Why were unions needed during this time? Have unions become too powerful? Why or why not?

D. Science and Math:

1. Have students learn about the causes of depressions and recessions. What safeguards have banks and the government put into place to prevent another great depression in this country?
2. Bud is convinced that vampire bats will suck his blood. Have students learn about real vampire bats. Are they dangerous? How did the stories about them arise?
3. Using an atlas, have students calculate the distance from Flint, Michigan to Grand Rapids, Michigan. How long do they think it would have taken Bud to walk that distance?
4. When Calloway puts the rock away, it strikes some silver dollars in his pocket. Have students learn about silver dollars. Why are they no longer in circulation? What in recent times has taken their place? Why are these not more popular?

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