

BOOKNOTES

educators guide



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THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Father/Son Relationships • Abuse
Fear • Courage • Bullying
Values in Conflict

GRADES 5 UP

ABOUT THE BOOK

In this fast-paced adventure set in the Everglades, Wahoo Cray and his father, an animal wrangler, take a job with a reality TV show and must deal with the egotistical star who mistreats the wildlife.

Wahoo Cray takes his family's financial woes into his own hands and accepts a job with *Expedition Survival!*, a reality TV show, starring an egotistical survivalist, Derek Badger. Wahoo's father, an animal wrangler, is more comfortable with animals than people, and when Derek mistreats Alice, Mickey Cray's prized gator, Wahoo intervenes to keep his father from strangling him. Mickey thinks that everything about Derek and *Expedition Survival!* is false and wants to cancel the contract, but Wahoo manages to convince his father that the money outweighs the distress, and they should keep the job. The Crays set off on a harrowing trip in the Everglades that turns into a true test of survival—man against man, man against nature, and man against self. Ironically, it's the survivalist that is "chomped" in more ways than one.

★ "Humorous adventure tales just don't get any more wacked . . . or fun to read than this."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

The Everglades National Park is the largest sub-tropical wilderness reserve on the North American Continent. Have students take a look at the following website: NPS.gov/ever/index.htm. Then have them point out the boundaries of the park on a Florida map. Approximately how many days would it take to explore all that the park offers?

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

FATHER/SON RELATIONSHIPS

Describe Wahoo's relationship with his dad. How is Wahoo forced to take the adult role when Mickey Cray's temper causes him to do stupid things? Ask students to discuss the meaning of the term "chip off the old block." Explain how this term applies to Wahoo and Mickey Cray. What does Wahoo learn from his dad? What does Mickey Cray learn from his son on the job with *Expedition Survival!*? How do they become a team?

ABUSE

Mickey Cray becomes very upset when people mistreat animals. Discuss how he always acts in their best interest. Describe how Derek Badger abuses the wildlife that he encounters. How has his reputation followed him from previous filming sites? Explain why Tuna Gordon lies to Wahoo and his dad about her black eye. What prompts Tuna to finally tell Wahoo the truth about her dad? Discuss his reaction to her story. Why does Wahoo tell his mother about Tuna?

FEAR

Derek Badger tries to act tough, but there are moments when he is frightened. When does he display the most fear? How does Mickey Cray enjoy instilling fear in Derek? Ask the students to discuss the fear that is created when Jared Gordon enters the scene. Explain Sickler and Link's reaction to Gordon.

COURAGE

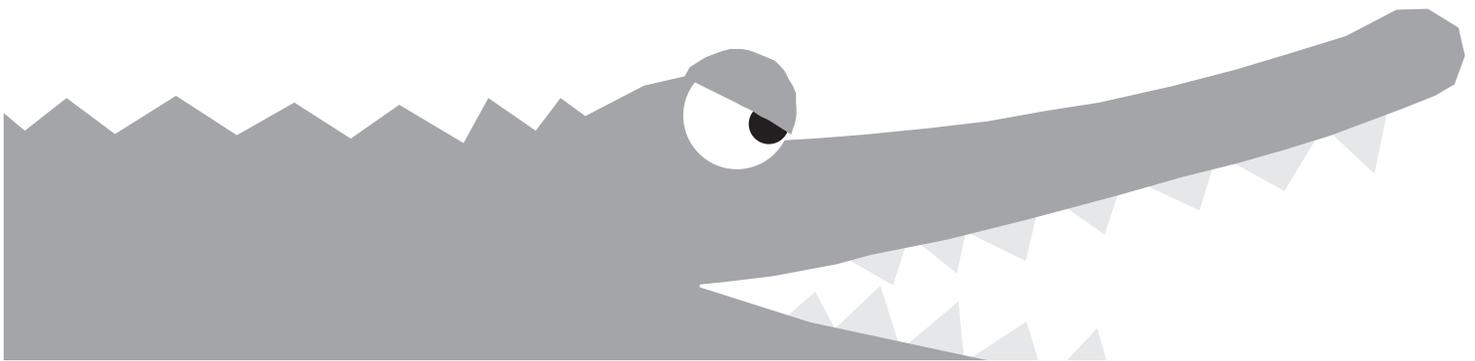
Have students define *courage*. How does it take courage to be an animal wrangler? Wahoo doesn't see himself as an especially courageous person until he tries to divert Jared Gordon's attention at the end of the novel. How does it take courage to navigate his father through the *Expedition Survival!* deal? Discuss other times in the novel when Wahoo demonstrates courage. How does he surprise himself? Debate whether Derek Badger is courageous or cowardly.

BULLYING

Ask students to name the bullies in the novel. Discuss what happens when these bullies encounter one another. Derek Badger is described as arrogant. How does he use his arrogance to bully others? Debate whether Raven Stark is bullied. Why does she put up with Derek Badger's behavior?

VALUES IN CONFLICT

Discuss how Wahoo feels when he realizes that *Expedition Survival!* fakes many of the scenes of the show. Raven Stark, the production assistant, says, "It's known as 're-creating' events for the camera." (p. 76) Consider the behavior of Derek Badger and his attitude toward the wildlife, and discuss why the entire show seems more like a lie. Raven Stark says, "We're all about making it real." (p. 17) How is Mickey Cray the only "real" thing about the entire production?



CONNECTING TO THE CURRICULUM

LANGUAGE ARTS

After the disaster in the Everglades, Gerry Germaine, the producer of *Expedition Survival!*, doesn't want to pay Mickey Cray the contracted wrangler fee. (p. 290) Ask students to write the letter that Julie Cray, a law student, writes to Germaine demanding full payment to her father.

Have students write a two-line credit for the following characters that might run at the end of Episode 103 of *Expedition Survival!*: Derek Badger, Mickey Cray, Wahoo Cray, Tuna Gordon, and Link. Include a site credit for Sickler's Souvenir Shop.

SOCIAL STUDIES

In the United States, cases of child abuse are principally the responsibility of local and state governments. Ask students to find out about the Child Protective Agency in their town or city. Then have them research the laws regarding (1) reporting child abuse cases, (2) investigating incidents, (3) convicting abusers. Debate whether Mickey Cray broke the law by bringing Tuna Gordon along when he suspected that she had been abused.

Wahoo and his dad go shopping at Wal-Mart for supplies to take on their job with *Expedition Survival!*. In addition to the items that they purchase (p. 79), have the class make a list of other equipment and supplies that they need for the trip.

SCIENCE/HEALTH

Mickey Cray suffered a concussion when a dead iguana fell from a tree and hit him in the head. Read information about concussions on the following website: www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/Facts_about_Concussion_TBI-a.pdf. Which of the symptoms does Mickey display? How long should it take Mickey Cray to recover? Wahoo discovers that Tuna's "sugar"

pills make his dad's headaches better. Write a brief article for a health magazine called "The Power of the Placebo" by Wahoo Cray.

Tell students that there are 350 different kinds of birds and 27 varieties of snakes that live in the Everglades. Ask them to identify at least 20 birds and five snakes common to the area. Have them do a colored sketch and write a brief description for a wildlife brochure on the Everglades Park.

CAREERS

Ask students to use books in the library or sites on the Internet to identify at least 10 different career paths involving wildlife—for example, herpetology, ornithology, zoology, etc. Have them write a brief description of each course of study.

DRAMA

Instruct students to stage an on-the-spot news coverage of the scene at Sickler's Souvenir Shop at the end of the novel when Tuna's dad shoots Mickey Cray. Interview all of the players: Mickey, Wahoo, Tuna, Link, Derek, Raven Stark, Sickler, and Jared Gordon.

ART

Have students create an advertisement for a national magazine for Mickey Cray's Animal Wrangler business. Design an appropriate logo.

MUSIC

Talk with students about how rap music tells a story. Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to write and perform a rap music video call "Chomp," which relates the scene when Derek is chomped by the bat.

VOCABULARY | USE OF LANGUAGE

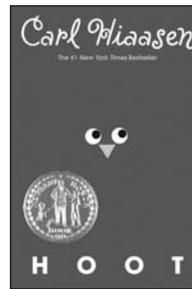
Students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them using clues from the context. Ask students to identify the part of speech for each word, and find appropriate synonym.

Such words may include:

p. 17	<i>verisimilitude</i>	p. 64	<i>lethal</i>	p. 120	<i>regally</i>	p. 147	<i>covered</i>	p. 229	<i>egomaniac</i>
p. 24	<i>euthanized</i>	p. 79	<i>provisions</i>	p. 121	<i>transom</i>	p. 169	<i>pompous</i>	p. 278	<i>demented</i>
p. 44	<i>primal</i>	p. 100	<i>stupendous</i>	p. 121	<i>invincible</i>	p. 217	<i>deflected</i>		
p. 55	<i>motley</i>	p. 118	<i>morosely</i>	p. 147	<i>insubordination</i>	p. 228	<i>morbid</i>		

CONNECTING CHOMP WITH HIAASEN'S OTHER NOVELS

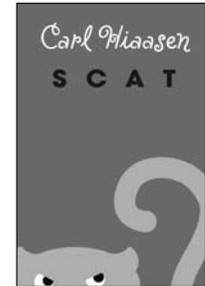
- Noah's father in *Flush* is in jail for sinking a casino ship that is illegally dumping sewage into the ocean. Suppose that Noah meets Wahoo Cray. How might each boy describe his father to the other?
- In a class discussion, have students contrast how the following characters find courage: Wahoo Cray (*Chomp*), Noah (*Flush*), and Nick and Marta (*Scat*). Who had the toughest journey? What was their greatest obstacle?
- Tell students that they are going on a fieldtrip to the Everglades National Park. Because they will be in the wilderness, they must travel with a buddy. Instruct them to choose a character from *Hoot*, *Flush*, *Scat*, or *Chomp* as a buddy. Then have them write a two-page essay about their choice.



HOOT
978-0-440-41939-6



FLUSH
978-0-375-86125-3



SCAT
978-0-440-42104-7



Photograph © Tim Chapman.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carl Hiaasen has been writing about Florida since his father gave him a typewriter at age six. In the beginning, he wrote stories about neighborhood kickball and softball games. Now Hiaasen writes a column for the *Miami Herald* and is the author of many bestselling novels for adults and children. *Hoot*, his first novel for young readers, was the recipient of numerous awards, including the prestigious Newbery Honor.

For more information about the author, visit CarlHiaasen.com.

ON THE WEB

For bios, teachers guides, and more, visit our FREE online site:



Be sure to sign up for our online newsletter
RHTeachersLibrarians.com

INTERNET RESOURCES

Everglades National Park
NPS.gov/ever/index.htm

Dealing with Bullies
KidsHealth.org/kid/feeling/emotion/bullies.html