

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Saving Shiloh

by

### Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

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### Book Information

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, Saving Shiloh  
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Book Level: 4.9  
Interest Level: MG

Sixth-grade Marty and his family try to help their rough neighbor Judd Travers change his mean ways even though their West Virginia community continues to expect the worst from him. Book #3.

**Award:** BCCB Blue Ribbon Book; Misc./Other; State Award

**Topics:** Animals, Dogs; Community Life, Prejudice; Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship; Interpersonal Relationships, Neighbors; Recommended Reading, Crown/Lamplighter Nominee; Recommended Reading, Elementary School Library Collection; Series, Shiloh; U.S. States/Regions, West Virginia

### Main Characters

Becky and Dara Lynn Preston the younger sisters of Marty

David Howard the best friend of Marty

Doc Collins the local veterinarian; Marty has a part-time job working for him

Doc Murphy the local doctor; Marty works for him to pay off a medical bill for Shiloh

Judd Travers the former cruel and abusive owner of Shiloh

Ma and Dad Preston the parents of Marty

Marty Preston the kind-hearted boy who rescued Shiloh from a cruel and abusive owner

Shiloh the lovable beagle Marty rescued from Judd Travers

### Vocabulary

**convict** a person found guilty of a crime

**Eskimo** a native person to the Arctic North America

**gristmill** a mill for grinding grain

**pilgrims** the English travelers who founded a colony in America

**reputation** the esteem in which a person is held, usually as a result of his deeds

**vegetarian** a person who does not eat meat

### Synopsis

This is the third book in the *Shiloh* series, picking up the storyline about one month after the events in the second book end. Judd Travers is recovering from his truck accident, and despite the opinions of some townspeople, Marty's mother and father both believe in giving Judd another chance. Judd seems to make some progress socializing when he accepts their kindness and an invitation to Thanksgiving dinner with the Prestons.

One day Marty is at David Howard's house and learns that a man Judd once got in a fight with is missing. David suspects Judd is involved, but Marty doubts his involvement. Later, the boys learn the man from Bens Run has been found dead. Many in the community speculate Judd is responsible, but Marty tries to stay on Judd's side, hoping he has changed.

Meanwhile, Marty is worried about Judd's dogs. Until Judd completely recovers, they have been staying with neighbors and have been treated well. He decides Judd needs a fence so the dogs can run rather than remain chained. He persuades Doc Murphy to give him his old fencing to use for Judd's dogs, and Marty and his father put up the fence. Additional suspicions come against Judd when scattered robberies occur around town; the Prestons are even robbed. Marty still tries to trust Judd, but he feels some doubts.

Shortly after a huge winter blizzard, Marty and David investigate the old schoolhouse because Marty has been seeing the light from a flashlight near it. Marty finds his father's missing things, as well as a glove and a boot. The sheriff is called and the boys are credited for finding the hideout of two escaped convicts. It turns out these convicts had murdered

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the man from Bens Run, and Marty feels relief that the murderer is not Judd.

In spring, Marty decides to help Judd install a gate in his fence. Judd accidentally backs up onto his dog's foot, and the dog viciously attacks Judd's leg. Judd is unable to free himself from the dog's grip and brings down his hammer on the dog's skull, killing it and horrifying Marty. Many people use this information to further build their biases against Judd.

Later, the heavy spring rains come and the waters begin to rise. While the children are out on a bridge, Dara Lynn falls into the rising creek, and Shiloh jumps in after her. A neighbor manages to help Dara Lynn out, but the current carries Shiloh downstream. Judd comes by and stops to help. He places a rope around himself and a tree, then wades out into the water where he eventually rescues Shiloh. Marty is overjoyed and hugs Judd. Judd hugs Marty back. Judd is now a local hero, and the newspapers even write about him. He may even volunteer as a firefighter.

Marty goes over and fixes Judd's gate while he is gone. He longs for the day when Shiloh will follow him across the bridge to Judd's, feeling confident and safe with Marty.

### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

### Initial Understanding

Why is much of the community against Judd and eager to believe he murdered the man from Bens Run?

*Judd has a long history of drinking and doing careless or mean things. He has knocked over people's mailboxes while driving drunk. He treats his dogs terribly. He yells at them and abuses them. He makes threats toward people who bother him, and he has generally been uncooperative. He has been in arguments with people in the past. Plus, Judd is quiet by nature, and many people may interpret his quietness as secretiveness.*

### Literary Analysis

Judd is perceived to be an antagonist who is cruel and unfeeling. How does Judd show a better side in this story?

*The chief way in which Judd shows a positive side as a character occurs when he rescues Shiloh from the flooding waters of the creek. It is a dangerous situation and Judd has two injured legs, but he overlooks any risk to himself in order to help Marty's dog. In the end, we see Judd actually accept and return a hug from Marty. Judd also shows a thoughtful nature when he plows the Prestons' driveway following the blizzard. He even plows for some other people. Finally, Judd shows greater concern for his dogs when he agrees to put up a fence to allow them running room.*

### Inferential Comprehension

How are Marty and David different?

*Their backgrounds and family lives are somewhat different. David's parents are well educated. His mother is a teacher and his father is a reporter. David also lives in a big house. Marty's parents seem to be less educated, down-to-earth people. Marty's family appears to have less money than David's. As far as differences in personality, David has a very active imagination. He is always looking for clues or hidden meanings in things. Marty, on the other hand, tends to be more rational and cautious. He looks for objective explanations to things.*

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#### Constructing Meaning

Why is it surprising when Judd returns Marty's call about the fence for the dogs?

*Judd seems uninterested after Marty's initial conversation with him about the fence. Judd's suspicious nature causes him to wonder what the catch is. It is hard for him to accept that someone would do something out of kindness and want nothing in return. Plus, Judd may already feel indebted to the Prestons, and his pride keeps him from accepting "charity."*

#### Teachable Skills

**Recognizing Setting** In the story, Marty and his class learn all about Alaska. For a project, have students learn about the state where the Shiloh stories are set -- West Virginia. Are the towns mentioned in the stories real or fictitious? Marty describes the fierce winter blizzard. Is snow common in West Virginia? What is the climate like there? When was the state founded? What is the terrain like there? Have students make a map and label various locations on it. Add a legend to show land formations and other details.

**Understanding the Author's Craft** Though Shiloh's actions are carefully described, he is not particularly personified. His thoughts and feelings are not discussed in much detail at all. What if Shiloh's thoughts could be heard? Have students choose a scene from *Saving Shiloh* that features Shiloh. Re-write a portion of the scene from Shiloh's perspective. What does he see, hear, smell, taste, and feel? What does he think about?

**Recognizing Cause and Effect** It was revealed in one of the earlier Shiloh books that Grandma Preston suffered from a stroke. In scenes with her, she sometimes seems unable to recognize people. She does things she would not normally do if her mind was clear. The children are even reluctant to visit her. Have students learn about the effects of strokes. How do strokes affect a person's mind and body? What other diseases might affect people in a similar way?

**Recognizing Details** In *Saving Shiloh*, Marty takes a part-time weekend job with Doc Collins, the local veterinarian. Marty has mentioned that he wants to become a veterinarian. Have students learn about veterinary medicine. What do veterinarians do? How long do they have to go to school? What subjects do they study? What types of veterinary specialties are there (equine or wildlife, for instance)? Find pictures and write captions based on the information found. Display on a poster.