

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Shiloh Season

by

### Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

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### Book Information

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, Shiloh Season

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120 Pages

Book Level: 4.8

Interest Level: MG

When mean and angry Judd, who has never known kindness, takes to drinking and mistreats his dogs, Marty discovers how deep a hurt can go and how long it takes to heal. Book #2.

**Award:** ALA Notable/Best Books; Golden Kite Award/Honor Book; Publishers Weekly Best Book; State Award

**Topics:** Animals, Dogs; Behavior, Brutality; Community Life, Animal Rights; Recommended Reading, Children's Literature Choice; Series, Shiloh

### Main Characters

Becky and Dara Lynn Preston the younger sisters of Marty

David Howard the best friend of Marty

Doc Murphy the doctor who saved Shiloh after he was attacked in the first book; Marty now works for him on Saturdays to pay off the bill

Doctor John Collins the veterinarian who cares for Shiloh and advises Marty

Judd Travers the cruel and drunk former owner of Shiloh

Ma and Dad Preston the parents of Marty

Marty Preston the kind-hearted, eleven-year-boy who loyally protects his dog Shiloh, whom he rescued from the abusive previous owner, Judd Travers

Shiloh the gentle beagle who was rescued by Marty; he is now a loyal family pet

### Vocabulary

**blackmail** to try to gain something by threatening with exposure

**game warden** an official who makes sure people comply with hunting and fishing laws

**poachers** people who hunt or fish illegally

**rabies** an acute, deadly viral disease

**veterinarian** a doctor who takes care of animals

### Synopsis

*Shiloh Season* is the second book in the Shiloh series. The book begins at the start of a new school year, with Marty remembering how he rescued Shiloh from Judd Travers. Now, Judd is drinking a lot again. Lately the Preston family has been hearing gun shots up in their woods. One day Dad finds Judd's brand of beer cans on their property and warns his children to stay away from the area. Then Dad visits Judd to find out if he has been hunting on his property, but tells Marty that Judd was uncooperative. Later, Judd shows Marty a scratch on his truck and asks him, in a suspicious manner, who did it.

Marty has his friend from school, David Howard, spend the night at his house, and the boys go spy on Judd. While hiding in the weeds, Marty witnesses Judd shoot a squirrel for his own amusement. As Judd is about to shoot a second squirrel, Marty yells out, "No, don't!" Judd recognizes Marty's voice and threatens to shoot Marty if he messes with his truck. The boys hurry home, but Marty worries that Judd may declare a "Shiloh season" and kill his dog.

Marty pays Judd a visit in hopes of smoothing things over. He admits that he and David were on his property spying. Judd blows up and accuses either him or David of scratching his truck.

During the last week in September the Prestons receive a call from Judd during dinner one evening. He says his mailbox has been knocked over, and he thinks Marty did it. Marty denies everything, but his father does not know if he can believe him because the boy had lied in the past.

Later, Marty is picking apples for his mother, and he sees Judd's three dogs approach. He grabs Becky and Shiloh and places them in the house, but Dara

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Lynn is bitten by one of them. When the dog is found, it will be quarantined to check for rabies.

Judd shows up shortly and accuses Marty of letting his dogs loose. When he sees Dara Lynn's bite, he is convinced it is just a plan to lock up his dog and thus rob him of several weeks of hunting.

The weather is turning colder and Marty reflects on how unhappy his family is because of Judd. One brisk evening, he and Shiloh take a run near Doc Murphy's house, where Marty rests on a log. Moments later, a shot is fired that hits the log. Marty sees Judd's truck drive away and wonders if the shot was just intended to scare him or do more than that.

One Saturday night, Marty goes to bed late and hears a loud bang and a thump. He is terrified when he hears Shiloh howl. Marty and his dad go outside and find Shiloh in the road. He is not hurt, but he leads them to an accident: Judd's truck has gone down the bank by the bridge. For a moment, Marty wishes that Judd were dead so their problems could be over. Feeling ashamed, he takes his wish back. Marty and Dad find that Judd's leg is pinned under the truck's cab. It seems he has been drinking. Marty wonders if Judd had seen Shiloh on the road and tried to run him off. Marty notes that were it not for Shiloh, Judd would have remained pinned under his truck and would probably have died.

Halloween passes, and Judd is in the hospital. From Doc Murphy, Marty learns that Judd was abused as a child and that he never learned how to be kind to anyone. When Judd comes home from the hospital, Marty is determined to teach the man kindness. He takes food to Judd's doorstep and eventually begins leaving notes about Shiloh. Soon he decides to tell Judd it is Shiloh who saved his life.

As a final attempt to help Judd, Marty and his father take Shiloh over for a visit. Shiloh is terrified, but Marty holds him close. To their surprise, Judd invites them inside his trailer. He acknowledges that Shiloh found him, and he begins to pet the dog. Shiloh licks Judd's hand.

## Open-Ended Questions

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

### Initial Understanding

Doc Murphy says, "Some people seem to have a string of bad luck they can't do anything about, and other folks have a string of bad luck all their own doing. Guess Judd's a little of both." How is Judd a "little of both"?

*The "bad luck they can't do anything about" probably refers to Judd's childhood. It is believed that Judd was abused by his father. As a child, Judd was completely helpless and could do nothing about his abusive situation. The "string of bad luck all their own doing" probably refers to the problems caused by Judd's drinking. It is clear that Judd is at his meanest and most dangerous when he drinks. Drinking is initially a choice; he chose to drink so it is his "own doing." To reverse his choice at this point, he may need to accept help from others.*

### Literary Analysis

On the back of the book, there is a snippet from a *Publishers Weekly* review stating that *Shiloh Season* "maintains the previous work's lump-in-the-throat vibrato." How does the author of *Shiloh Season* accomplish this?

*There are many examples of this. One example occurs when the Prestons realize Judd has been hunting on their land. It is suspenseful because the reader worries that Judd may accidentally shoot one of the characters. Also, when Judd is drinking, he accuses Marty or David of scratching his truck, and when he catches them spying on him, he threatens them. This is also suspenseful because Marty worries Judd will come after Shiloh for revenge.*

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#### Inferential Comprehension

Doctor Collins tells Marty about chained dogs. How is Judd like a chained dog?

*Judd is defensive and leery of people. Chained dogs act aggressively because they know they cannot attack. They hope to frighten people away by their mean actions. Judd is somewhat like that. He acts hostile to people, perhaps in hopes of frightening them away. Doctor Collins explains the best way to change a chained dog is by leaving little bits of food out until the dog gradually develops trust. Judd is the same way. Neighbors leave food, and Marty leaves notes for him until Judd responds.*

#### Constructing Meaning

What does "Shiloh season" refer to?

*It refers to Marty's fear that Judd will attempt to kill Shiloh. It is similar to "deer season" or another hunting season. Judd's drinking and irrational thinking are increasing, and he accuses Marty of scratching his truck. Knowing Judd's cruel nature, Marty feels that a "Shiloh season" could begin at any time, with Judd hunting down his dog for revenge.*

### Teachable Skills

**Extending Meaning** Marty's dog, Shiloh, is a beagle. Beagles are members of the hound family and are used primarily for hunting. Have students learn about beagles and the hound groups. They can discover why hounds makes such excellent hunters and how they are used and trained. Also note traits such as an excellent sense of smell and the notorious, and sometimes bothersome, baying that makes them ideal hunters. Have students find pictures of beagles and other hounds, such as bassets, bloodhounds, and coonhounds.

**Recognizing Cause and Effect** When the Prestons take Shiloh to the veterinarian, he receives some vaccinations for canine diseases. Some diseases mentioned are rabies, distemper, and hepatitis. Worms are also mentioned. So students can have a better understanding of

these and other common canine ailments to prevent and treat, have them do some research on the subject. They can use dog magazines, encyclopedias, or the Internet. If students would like, they can even interview their own vets for information, just as Marty did with Doctor Collins.

**Identifying Reasons** Miss Talbot assigns Marty and the rest of her class an "Imagine the Future" project in which the students are to think about what they would like to be when they grow up and write a short essay about the profession and why they chose it. Have students participate in a similar project. Allow them to research different professions and even interview people from those professions. Then they can write short essays and present them to the class.

**Comparing and Contrasting** Doctor Collins explains to Marty about the characteristics of chained, neglected, or abused dogs. He tells Marty why they are mean and how they can be changed. It takes time and patience to earn an abused or mean animal's trust. This is similar to the plot in *White Fang* by Jack London. Have students watch the film version of *White Fang* and pay close attention to the scenes in which the main character attempts to gain the trust of his new animal companion. List ways this is somewhat similar to Doctor Collins's suggestions.