

BookNotes

Teacher's Guide

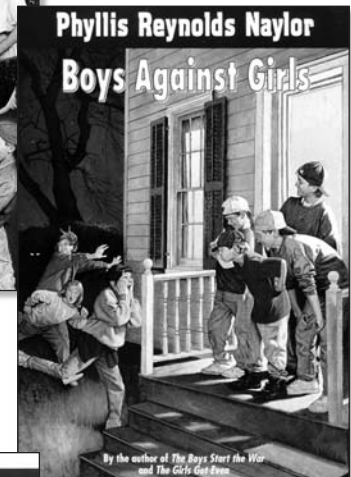
THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Sibling Relationships
Sense of Family
Friendship
Sense of Community
Humor

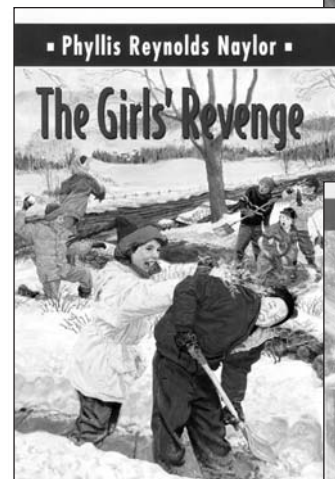
Grades 4-7



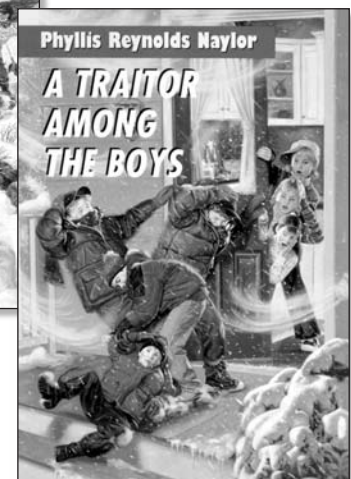
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The Hatford brothers have tricks up their sleeves for the Malloy sisters who have moved across the river from the boys. Not to be outwitted, the Malloys pay back in good fun.

The four Hatford brothers are convinced that their lives in Buckman, West Virginia, will never be the same since their best friends, the Benson boys, moved to Georgia. To make matters worse, a family with three girls, the Malloys, has moved into the Bensons' old house!

In *The Boys Start the War*, the Hatford boys decide to make the Malloy girls so miserable that they will beg their parents to move back to Ohio. But the sisters are not so easily intimidated. They show their ingenuity and fighting spirit in *The Girls Get Even*.

The war between the Hatfords and the Malloys escalates in *Boys Against Girls* and *The Girls' Revenge*. In *A Traitor Among the Boys*, Naylor's latest book, the children are almost resigned to being neighbors. Though still full of tricks, the boys comfort the girls when Mrs. Malloy becomes lost on a mountain road during a blizzard.

About the Books

Pre-Reading Activity

Ask students who have had to move at some point in their lives to share what it was like to be the new kid on the block. Engage the class in a discussion of how neighbors can welcome a new family into the community. What can students do to make newcomers at their school feel welcome?


THEMATIC Connections

In the Classroom


Phyllis Naylor offers spirited humor and comedy in these books about the feud between the Hatford brothers and the Malloy sisters.


The novels are episodic, making them perfect choices for independent reading or read-alouds. Even the most reluctant readers will delight in the creative and clever ways the boys and girls plot their revenge.


*The discussion questions in this guide encourage students to think about **sibling** and **family relationships**, **friendship**, the meaning of **community**, and **humor**. Teachers interested in bringing literature into all areas of the curriculum will find these books a perfect choice for linking language arts, social studies, science, math, and art.*

 **SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS**—Ask students to describe the Hatford boys' relationship with one another. Which boy appears to be the leader? What is Peter's role in the war against the girls? How does he sometimes make trouble for his brothers? Describe the Malloy sisters and discuss their similarities and differences.


In *The Boys Against the Girls*, Eddie shows signs of growing up and appears to be feeling too mature to engage in activities with her two younger sisters. How are these feelings normal for a girl Eddie's age? In *A Traitor Among the Boys*, Mrs. Hatford tells her sons that they are to treat the Malloy girls like sisters. Discuss what Mrs. Hatford means. How does this demand provide a loophole for the boys to continue tormenting the girls?

 **FRIENDSHIP**—Ask students to discuss whether the Hatford boys would have missed the Bensons as much if a family with boys had moved into the Benson house. The Hatford boys never give the Malloy girls a chance to be friendly. In *A Traitor Among the Boys*, Mrs. Hatford tells the boys, "You are going to be helpful, polite, friendly, and whatever else I can think of for as long as they live in our town." (p. 5) How do the boys finally show friendship toward the girls?


 **SENSE OF COMMUNITY**—In *The Girls Get Even*, Mrs. Malloy says, "There is such a wonderful sense of community here." (p. 11) Would the Malloy sisters agree with their mother? Have the class talk about the meaning of community. Cite evidence in each of the novels that Buckman is a close-knit community. What role does this strong sense of community have in revealing the pranks played by the Hatford boys and the Malloy girls?


 **HUMOR**—Ask students to share what they feel are the most humorous scenes in the novels. There are gross scenes, embarrassing moments, and clever dialogue in all of the books. How does each of these elements contribute to the humor in the novel? Eddie says in *The Girls' Revenge*, "These pranks are getting a little stale." (p. 3) Discuss whether Eddie is losing her sense of humor or just maturing.

INTERDISCIPLINARY Connections


 **LANGUAGE ARTS**—In *The Boys Start the War*, the Hatford boys describe the Malloy girls as “three live wires.” (p. 43) Ask students to choose a word or phrase that describes the Hatford boys. Then have students use a thesaurus to locate at least ten additional adjectives that would aptly describe these boys and the Malloy girls.


The boys and the girls have become somewhat friendly in *A Traitor Among the Boys*. What evidence is there at the end of the novel that Mrs. Naylor may be planning another story in this series? Ask students to write a beginning for the next book about the Hatfords and the Malloys.

 **SOCIAL STUDIES/DRAMA**—In *A Traitor Among the Boys*, the town of Buckman is about to celebrate its two hundredth anniversary by having the Buckman Community Players present a play about the history of the town. Ask students to research the history of their city or town from its early beginnings to the present. Then divide the class into four groups and assign each group a period in the town’s history to present as a one-act play. Have students wear authentic dress.

 **SCIENCE**—In *The Boys Start the War*, each student in Mrs. Applebaum’s class writes a paragraph about the world’s greatest invention. Ask students to research inventions of the twentieth century. Then have each student select and write about the invention they think has made the greatest contribution to society.

There is a blizzard in *A Traitor Among the Boys*. Have the class discuss the hazards of a blizzard. What is the difference between a storm warning and a storm watch? Ask students to make a list of things that a family should do to prepare for a blizzard.

 **MATH**—In *The Girls’ Revenge*, the Malloy girls have to pay their dad \$175 for a new sports coat. If each girl is responsible for paying one-third of the cost of the coat, how much money must each earn? List the different jobs that the girls do. How much money per hour can they expect to earn? Calculate how long it will take the sisters to pay their dad.

 **ART**—In *Boys Against Girls*, Wally Hatford tells the Malloy girls that an unknown creature called *Abaguchie* has been spotted in Buckman. Have students draw a picture of the creature that Wally, the artist among the Hatford boys, might have drawn and shown to the girls.

Vocabulary/ Use of Language

The vocabulary in these books isn’t very difficult, but students may find some unfamiliar words that they should try to define using clues from the context of the stories. Such words may include: *The Boys Start the War*: **vaporize** (p. 7), **humiliation** (p. 36), **cordial** (p. 45), and **hostage** (p. 119); *The Girls Get Even*: **debut** (p. 3), **grievance** (p. 12), **gullible** (p. 44), **coup** (p. 39), and **truce** (p. 127); *Boys Against Girls*:

unnaturally (p. 15), **intercept** (p. 95), and **dismay** (p. 122); *The Girls’ Revenge*: **precocious** (p. 1), **fiasco** (p. 98), **swagger** (p. 98), and **exasperation** (p. 145); *A Traitor Among the Boys*: **loophole** (p. 51), **humility** (p. 73), and **treacherous** (p. 113).

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ABOUT the Author

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor knew at a very early age that she wanted to be a writer. She began her career writing short stories for magazines and has since authored more than ninety books for children. Mrs. Naylor sets many of her books in West Virginia. The boys-girls battle series is set in Buckman, West Virginia, a town modeled after Buckhannon, West Virginia, where her husband spent most of his growing-up years. Mrs. Naylor has enjoyed accolades from young readers all across the country, and she has won numerous awards. She was honored with the Newbery Medal for her novel Shiloh.

Born

January 4 in Anderson, Indiana

Previous Jobs

Clinical secretary, teacher, editorial assistant

Hobbies

Writing, reading, singing, playing the piano, hiking, swimming, theater, and snorkeling

Favorites

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| . . . foods | anything chocolate |
| . . . clothes | pants and shirts, or gypsy skirts |
| . . . colors | jade green and blue |
| . . . books | books by Southern authors and
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