

BOOKNOTES

TEACHERS GUIDE

thematic connections

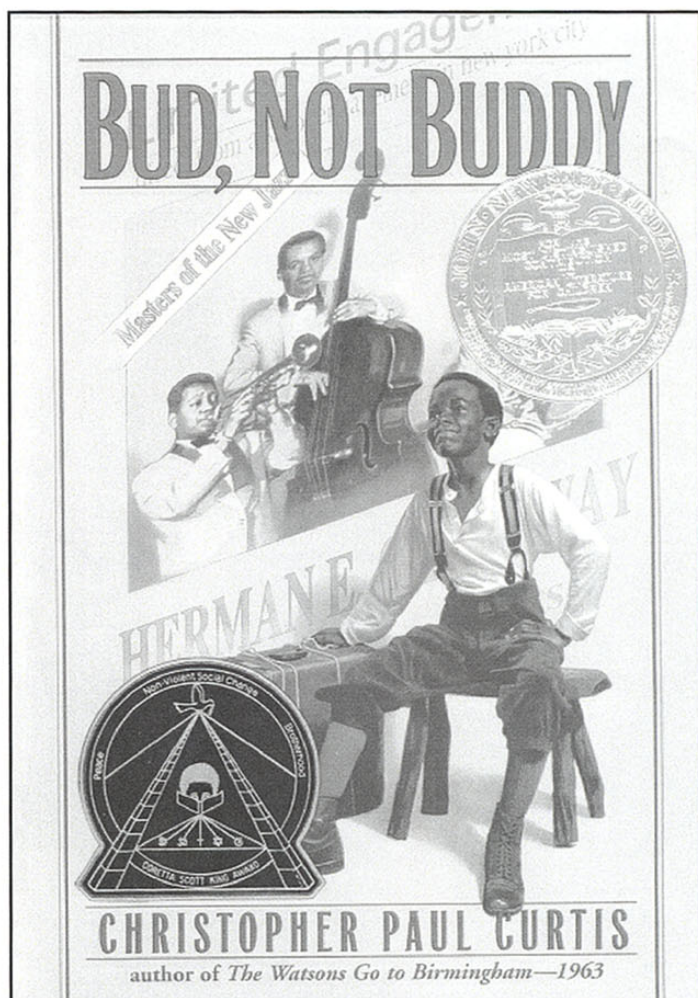
Family • Survival
Hope • Racism

Grades 4–7

about the book

During the Great Depression, a 10-year-old homeless boy sets out in search of a man he believes to be his father.

Bud Caldwell's mother died when he was six years old, leaving him with nothing but a cardboard suitcase filled with memories and a possible hint of who his father may be. Now, ten years old and on the run, Bud lives among the homeless in Flint, Michigan, until he decides to walk to Grand Rapids in search of his father. Helped by a few kind people along the way, Bud eventually locates Herman E. Calloway, a famous musician who denies Bud's claim that he is his father. Finally, the contents of Bud's suitcase provide the clues necessary to prove that Calloway is indeed related to Bud, but not in the way that Bud expects.



Yearling paperback • 0-440-41328-1
Delacorte Press hardcover • 0-385-32306-9
Listening Library audio • 0-8072-8209-X

awards

Newbery Medal

Coretta Scott King Author Award

IRA Children's Book Award

pre-reading activity

Ask students to research the causes of the Great Depression. How did it affect families of all socioeconomic levels? Tell them that Bud, the main character in the novel, is homeless and goes to a mission for a hot meal. Find out other types of organizations that helped people during the Great Depression. Then have students find out what organizations in their city or town provide food and shelter for the homeless today.

thematic

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Family—Ask the class to discuss Bud's relationship with his mother. What are some of his special memories of her? Why did his mother never tell him about his grandfather? Why do you think Bud's mother left home? Changed her last name? If Bud's mother was so unhappy, why did she keep the flyers about her dad's band?

Survival—Bud has been without a family since age six. What type of survival skills does Bud learn at the Home? Make a list of "Bud Caldwell's Rules and Things for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself." How does Bud use these rules to survive difficult situations? Have the class discuss whether Bud will continue using these rules now that he has found a family.

Hope—Ask the class to discuss how the flyers in Bud's suitcase give him hope. Bud's mother once told him, "When one door closes, don't worry, because another door opens." (p. 43) How does this statement give Bud the hope he needs to continue his search for his father? Discuss the moments in the story when a door closes for Bud. At what point does the door open? Cite evidence in the novel that Herman Calloway had hope that his daughter might return.

Racism—Engage the class in a discussion about the different types of racism. Bud encounters racism throughout his journey. Ask students to explain Mrs. Amos's statement: "I do not have time to put up with the foolishness of those members of our race who do not want to be uplifted." (p. 15) How does this statement indicate that Mrs. Amos feels superior to Bud and other members of her race? Why does she think that Bud does not want to be uplifted?



connecting to the

Language Arts—Bud has special memories of his mother's reading to him. He remembers the little lessons that he learned from the fables that she read. Have students select one of "Bud Caldwell's Rules and Things for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself" and write a fable, using the rule as the lesson learned.

Explain to students that a *euphemism* is a word used to soften the meaning of a word that may suggest something unpleasant. For example, Bud says, "I don't know why grown folks can't say someone is dead, they think it's a lot easier to say gone." (p. 178) Ask students to brainstorm other euphemisms for *dead*.

Ask students to explain the metaphor, "The idea that had started as a teeny-weeny seed in a suitcase was now a mighty maple." (p. 146) What is the "seed"? The "mighty maple"? Ask students to find other examples of figurative language in the novel.

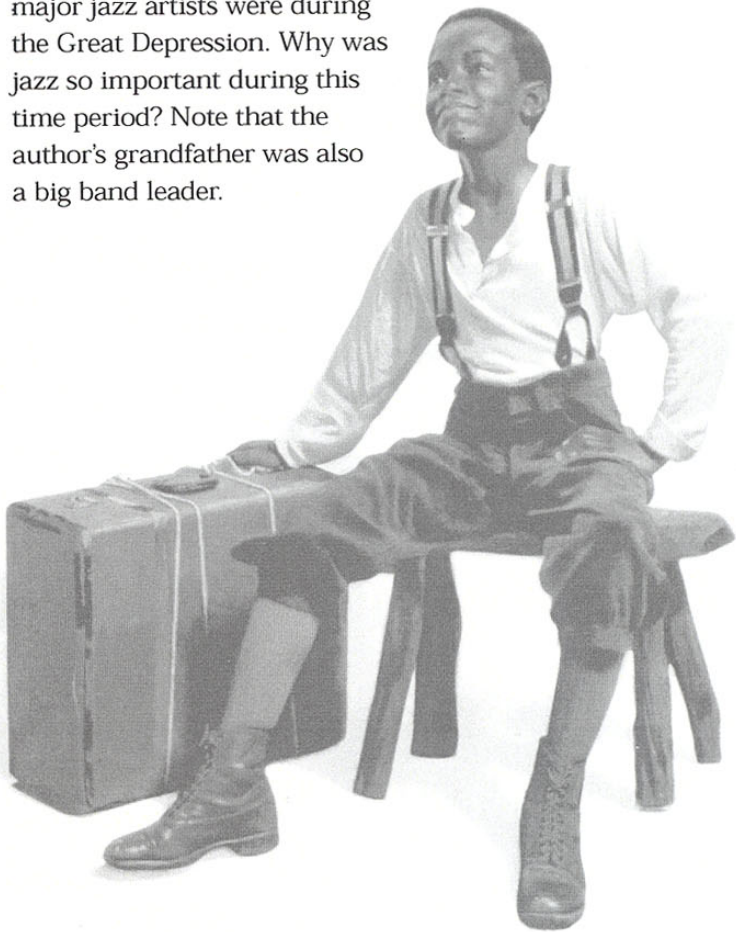
Social Studies—John Dillinger, Pretty Boy Floyd, Baby Face Nelson, and J. Edgar Hoover are among the notorious figures mentioned in the book. Send students to the library media center to research these people and to find out when the FBI was formed. What is its primary purpose? Who is the head of the FBI today? What names are currently on the FBI's most wanted list?

Policemen inspect Lefty Lewis's car because they are searching for labor organizers who are sneaking to Grand Rapids from Detroit. Ask students to find out about the history of labor unions and the existence of unions today. Then have the class debate the pros and cons of labor unions.

Science—Lefty Lewis sends Herman Calloway a telegram telling him about Bud. Have students construct an illustrated time line that shows the development of communication from the invention of the telegraph to today's new technologies. A good choice to introduce students to the earlier time of the pony express is the picture book *The Sweetwater Run* by Andrew Glass.

Art—It is obvious at the end of the novel that Bud is being groomed as a band member. Design a flyer for Bud's opening night with Calloway's Band. Encourage students to give the band a new name in honor of Bud.

Music—Entertainment played a major role during the Great Depression. One of Bud's flyers describes Calloway's Band as "Masters of the New Jazz." Ask students to find out who the major jazz artists were during the Great Depression. Why was jazz so important during this time period? Note that the author's grandfather was also a big band leader.



vocabulary/ use of language

Ask students to find unfamiliar words and try to define them from the context of the story. Such words may include: *urchins* (p.12), *ingratitude* (p.14), *vermin* (p.15), *matrimonial* (p. 56), *devoured* (p. 91), *ventriloquists* (p.101), *sully* (p.141), *embouchure* (p.194), and *prodigy* (p.196).

related titles

by theme

The Face on the Milk Carton

Caroline B. Cooney

Family & Relationships

Grades 6 up / 0-440-22065-3

Monkey Island

Paula Fox

Family & Relationships

Homelessness • Survival

Grades 5–7 / 0-440-40770-2

Gib Rides Home

Zilpha Keatley Snyder

Family & Relationships • Hope • Survival

Grades 5–7 / 0-440-41257-9

A Letter to Mrs. Roosevelt

C. Coco De Young

Family & Relationships • Great Depression

Survival • Hope

Grades 4–7 / 0-440-41529-2

internet resources

All About Jazz

www.visionx.com/jazz

This site provides information about all aspects of jazz, from its history to popular jazz artists today.

The Depression News

www.sos.state.mi.us/history/museum/explore/museums/hismus/1900-75/depressn/labnews2

An online gallery from the Michigan Historical Museum, this page about the Great Depression gives information about various aspects of that era in Michigan.

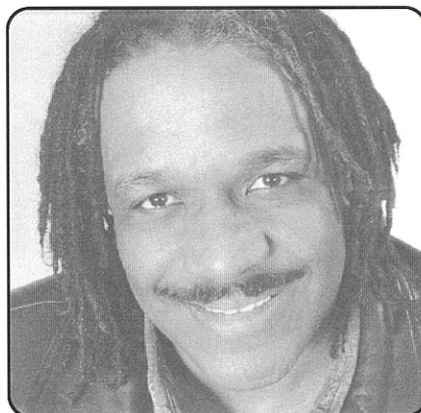


Photo Credit: Tim Keating

about the author

Christopher Paul Curtis grew up in Flint, Michigan. After high school he began working on the assembly line at the Fisher Body Flint Plant No. 1 while attending the Flint branch of the University of Michigan. His first novel, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, was named a Newbery Honor book and a Coretta Scott King Honor book, making it one of the most highly acclaimed first novels for young readers.

Curtis's second novel, *Bud, Not Buddy*, made history when it received both the Newbery Medal and the Coretta Scott King Author Award; it was the first time these two medals went to the same book.

Christopher Paul Curtis and his wife, Kaysandra, live in Windsor, Ontario, with their daughter, Cydney. Their son, Steven, is in the Navy.

on the web

For bios, teachers' guides, and more . . .

Visit our FREE online site
Teachers @ Random

www.randomhouse.com/teachers