

# New Windmills

2004

Resource sheets

## Ruby Holler

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# Ruby Holler

## By Sharon Creech

### Synopsis

Dallas and his twin sister Florida are orphans who live in an awful institution, the Boxton Creek Home for Children. They are a boisterous pair and are often being disciplined for trivial misdemeanours. They have been placed with families on a number of occasions, but each set of foster parents has been unsatisfactory. Dallas and Florida know almost nothing about their past, but they have become extremely close in the face of adversity. Their one plan for the future is to run away, but the reader knows that this is an unrealistic dream. Then an old couple, Tiller and Sairy Morey, approach the owners of the children's home and ask for two young people to accompany them on two adventurous journeys; Tiller wishes to navigate a river, while Sairy wishes to trek through the forests. Although Dallas and Florida are initially very suspicious of the old couple's motives, they do go and spend the summer vacation with them, but the actual journeys are poorly planned, and end in near disaster. However, Dallas and Florida are appreciated for the first time in their lives, and by the end of the novel they find themselves a permanent part of the Morey family.

### Prior learning

The novel is set in the USA although it is not made clear where. However, the fictional towns of Boxton and Prosper City are surrounded by forests and mountains. Sharon Creech enjoyed the countryside surrounding her parents' home while she was growing up in Cleveland, Ohio. Consequently, it might be helpful to explore this sort of terrain by visiting the weblink on the Heinemann website.

Visit <http://www.heinemann.co.uk/hotlinks> and type in Express code **0897P** to access all the links for this book. The purpose of going through the Heinemann website is to keep the link updated and to avoid offensive material.

### Study areas

Possible areas for study include:

- **Information writing:** You could ask students to write a brochure to advertise the Boxton Creek Home for Children.  
(Writing to inform: **Yr7** Wr11; **Yr8** Wr10; **Yr9** Wr9, Wr12)
- **Personal view:** You could ask students to look at specific examples of Dallas and Florida's behaviour and say how the responsible adults should have responded.  
(Writing reflectively: **Yr7** Wr19; **Yr8** Wr16; **Yr9** Wr13)
- **Collaborative drama:** Many scenes from the novel lend themselves to dramatic interpretation, for example:
  - When Florida and Dallas are told they are going to be placed with Sairy and Tiller for the summer
  - When Sairy shows Dallas and Florida their carvings.
 (Collaborative drama: **Yr7** S&L16; **Yr8** S&L15; **Yr9** S&L12)

- **Giving advice:** You might ask students to say how foster parents should prepare for taking children into their care.  
(Write to analyse: **Yr7** Wr18; **Yr8** Wr16; **Yr9** Wr16)
- **Analytical writing:** The students could be asked to put themselves in the position of either Tiller or Sairy Morey, and provide detailed plans in order to carry out the relevant journey successfully.  
(Write to analyse: **Yr7** Wr18; **Yr8** Wr16; **Yr9** Wr16)

## Teacher guidance

### Resource Sheet 1

This resource sheet helps the students to obtain an overview of the way Dallas and Florida were treated by a range of adults. An extension activity asks the students to use this information to write an article for a teenage magazine.

### Literacy Framework Objectives

**Year 7:** **R2** Use appropriate reading strategies; **R4** Make brief notes; **R8** Infer and deduce meaning; **Wr12** Develop ideas and lines of thinking in continuous text; **W14** Describe an object, person or setting.

**Year 8:** **R4** Review active reading strategies; **R7** Identify implied and explicit meaning; **R3** Make notes; **Wr5** Develop use of commentary; **Wr10** Organise and present information.

**Year 9:** **R1** Review and extend reading strategies; **R3** Improve note-taking; **Wr10** Explain the precise connection between ideas; **Wr11** Make use of descriptive writing.

### Guided Reading Opportunities

This activity requires close reading and appropriate selection of relevant information about Dallas and Florida's experiences. To help the students focus, a list of page references are given.

Events in Dallas and Florida's lives	Pages
1 How they were abandoned	95–7, 127–8
2 Life at the Boxtton Creek Home for Children	1–6, 8–9, 11–17
3 The Hoppers	10–11
4 The Cranbeeps	75
5 The Burgertons	86–7
5 The Dreeps	81–3, 111–13

Take a group of students and re-read pages 95–7. The resource sheet asks the students to select information about how Dallas and Florida were abandoned and found. Show the group of students how you select the relevant information, and discard irrelevant information, from this extract. If there is time, model how you would summarise this information in your own words. Afterwards, re-read pages 127–8 together. Ask the students to identify any additional information that is provided about the way Dallas and Florida were abandoned and found.

This guided reading activity has two stages: information is extracted from one passage, and additional information is extracted and added from a second passage. These skills could be used again to find out about life at the Boxton Creek Home for Children, (pages 1–6, 8–9 and 11–17) and about life with the Dreeps, (pages 81–3 and 111–13).

### **Resource Sheet 2**

This resource sheet helps the students to produce a piece of information writing. They are asked to write the recipe for the ‘mission-accomplished cake’ described on page 181 of *Ruby Holler*. They are then challenged to create the recipes for other dishes mentioned in the novel.

#### **Literacy Framework Objectives**

**Year 7: Wr10** Organise texts appropriately; **Wr12** Develop ideas and lines of thinking in continuous text; **Wr13** Give clear instructions.

**Year 8: Wr10** Organise and present information; **Wr12** Use formal language.

**Year 9: Wr6** Exploit figurative language in non-literary texts; **Wr7** Entertain in non-fiction; **Wr10** Explain the precise connection between ideas.

#### **Guided Reading Opportunities**

This resource sheet asks the students to write recipes in an appropriate style. While some students may be familiar with the style of recipe writing, many will not. The resource sheet provides the following advice about the structure that might be expected in a recipe:

- **Numbers:** You will be told how many people can be fed with this recipe.
- **Ingredients:** You will be told about all of the ingredients, and how much of each of the ingredients you will need.
- **Method:** The method will be described in the correct order, and will tell you exactly how you need to prepare each of the ingredients.
- **Times:** You will definitely be told how long you will need to cook your recipe. However, you might also be told how long each step of the preparation will take.

With a small group of students, you could visit the website linked through <http://www.heinemann.co.uk/hotlinks>. Type in Express code **0897P** to access the link. Select a number of the students’ favourite recipes and analyse them to see whether a structure for recipe writing can be defined.

### **Resource Sheet 3**

This resource sheet asks the students to imagine that they work for Social Services. From the information provided in the novel they are asked to write a Social Services Report on the Boxton Creek Home for Children.

### Literacy Framework Objectives

**Year 7:** **R2** Use appropriate reading strategies; **R4** Make brief notes; **R8** Infer and deduce meaning; **Wr12** Develop ideas and lines of thinking in continuous text; **Wr14** Describe an object, person or setting.

**Year 8:** **R4** Review active reading strategies; **R7** Identify implied and explicit meaning; **R3** Make notes; **Wr5** Develop use of commentary; **Wr10** Organise and present information.

**Year 9:** **R1** Review and extend reading strategies; **R3** Improve note-taking; **Wr10** Explain the precise connections between ideas; **Wr11** Make use of descriptive writing.

### Guided Reading Opportunities

This resource sheet asks students to select appropriate information from certain pages of the novel. They then have to produce a formal report after their imaginary inspection of the Boxton Creek Home for Children. The following page references are given:

Event	Pages
Weeding	1–5
Rules	3–4, 9
The cellar	4–5, 12–14
The opportunity	15–18
The boy who died	57–8
Sairy's visit	72

You could support a group of students in this activity if necessary. With a small group, first re-read the brief extract on page 9. Next, work together, selecting information from page 9 that might go into a formal report after an inspection of the Home. Encourage the students to explore how the information could be used in a report. Would the information on page 9 be used to support or criticise the Home? This process will help students to infer and deduce information, and to consider the writer's point of view.

Take a longer extract, for example pages 1–5. Ask the students to work together to select information that might go into a formal report. Again, encourage the students to explore how the information could be used in a report

# 1 Dallas and Florida

## Introduction

In the novel *Ruby Holler* Dallas and Florida are treated badly by a number of adults. As the novel develops we are gradually provided with information about the twins' history. However, to get a clear view of the way they were treated before they were taken in by Tiller and Sairy, it would be helpful to have a brief summary of their lives.

Your task is to summarise the details of Dallas and Florida's life before Tiller and Sairy took them in.

## Planning

In order to summarise Dallas and Florida's lives, before they met Tiller and Sairy, you will need to re-read the pages listed in the table on page 7. Afterwards you will have to pick out the information from those pages that relates to each event listed in the table, filling in the 'Details' column of the table as you work. As far as possible, write the details in note form.

## Extension Activity

Most children do not know what it is like to be an orphan. Although Dallas and Florida have a very unusual experience, we can still learn something about the unhappiness of being brought up without your parents. Imagine that an editor of a teenage magazine has asked you to write an article about some of the problems faced by orphans. Use the table that you completed to write your article. The editor has asked you for a positive conclusion to your article. Refer to the twins' experience with Tiller and Sairy to finish off your article.

## 1

**Dallas and Florida****Events in Dallas and Florida's lives****1 How they were abandoned****Pages 95–7, 127–8****Notes:****2 Life at the Boxtton Creek Home for Children****Pages 1–6, 8–9, 11–17****Notes:****3 The Hoppers****Pages 10–11****Notes:****4 The Cranbeps****Page 75****Notes:****5 The Burgertons****Pages 86–7****Notes:****6 The Dreeps****Pages 81–3, 111–13****Notes:**

## 2 Mission-accomplished cake

### Introduction

In the novel *Ruby Holler* we learn that Tiller and Sairy think that food can solve many problems. They mention a number of recipes that they have, including 'getting-used-to-kids-again stew' and 'be-nice-to-orphans' brownies. However, the only time that we are given all of the ingredients for a recipe is for 'mission-accomplished cake' on page 181.

Your task is to re-read page 181, and to then write the recipe for 'mission-accomplished cake'.

### Planning

If you look at a book of recipes you will find that usually each recipe follows the same pattern:

- **Numbers:** You will be told how many people can be fed with this recipe.
- **Ingredients:** You will be told about all of the ingredients, and how much of each of the ingredients you will need.
- **Method:** The method will be described in the correct order, and will tell you exactly how you need to prepare each of the ingredients.
- **Times:** You will definitely be told how long you will need to cook your recipe. However, you might also be told how long each step of the preparation will take.

Use the ingredients from page 181 of *Ruby Holler* and write your own recipe for 'mission-accomplished cake'. You will need to use your own imagination to fill in any details that are not provided in the novel.

To help you, you might want to visit a website and see how a recipe is written up. Go to <http://www.heinemann.co.uk/hotlinks> and type in Express code **0897P** then follow the 'recipes' link.

### Extension activity

Now that you are confident that you can write a recipe, let your imagination go! In the novel the following recipes are mentioned, although we are not told anything about the ingredients:

- getting-used-to-kids-again stew
- getting-over-kids stew
- beat-the-blues broccoli
- anti-cranky crumpets
- be-nice-to-orphans brownies.

Use your imagination to create one of these recipes.

## 3

# The Boxton Creek Home for Children

## Introduction

It would be nice to think that in any country, a couple like Mr and Mrs Trepid would not be allowed to run a home for orphans. They do not seem to like children at all, and they particularly do not seem to like Dallas and Florida. However, it is important to remember that Mr and Mrs Trepid are only fictional characters, and are not based on real people. In America, like Britain, all homes for children are inspected regularly, and standards are high. However, imagine that the Boxton Creek Home for Children was visited by the social services.

Your task is to imagine that you work for Social Services. You have visited the Boxton Creek Home for Children, and now you have to write your report.

## Planning

In the table below you will find important events that happen at the Boxton Creek Home for Children. Re-read the page references that you are given, and in the final column of the table make notes about each event.

Event	Pages	Notes
Weeding	1–5	
Rules	3–4, 9	
The cellar	4–5, 12–14	
The opportunity	15–18	
The boy who died	57–8	
Sairy's visit	72	

Now, using the information that you have collected, write your report. The outline of the official report form has been provided for you on page 10. The first five sentences of the report have also been provided to start you off.

## 3

# The Boxton Creek Home for Children

**Boxton Creek Social Services***Homes for Children Inspection*

**Home:** Boxton Creek Home for Children

**Inspector:**

**Date:**

Today I carried out a visit to the Boxton Creek Home for Children. I spoke to Mr and Mrs Trepid, the proprietors. I also spoke to four of the orphans. In addition, Mrs Trepid provided me with a tour of the Home. Please find my report below.

**Remember that your report should:**

- be written in the first person
- be written in the past tense
- be written in a formal style
- include evidence from your conversations with children and adults
- include your own judgements
- include your own recommendations.