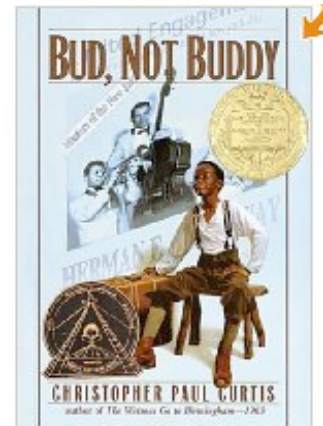


Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis

In this Newbery Award winning book we are asked to believe that a ten-year-old boy, without resources other than his own self-constructed list of rules, will find love, a home and a real family. Such is the skill of Christopher Paul Curtis that we take all that and more with hardly a nod toward the percentages. Meet Bud, not Buddy, one of the most delightful young people you'll ever know.



Bud's mother has been dead for four years when this novel opens and Bud is in an orphanage. He holds all the remnants of his once loving home in a cardboard suitcase: some flyers advertising Herman E. Calloway and various bands, a few mysteriously labeled rocks and his blanket. Soon he is farmed out to a foster home where he is abused. After pausing to wreak a funny, mild vengeance, Bud strikes out on his own, determined to walk from Flint, Michigan to Grand Rapids, the city listed in one of the flyers. Bud is convinced that his father must be Herman F. Calloway.

There are, of course, many set-backs on the way and many people who lend a hand. At the mission where Bud is too late for the evening meal, another homeless family pretends that he's with them. A very kind man who turns out to be a labor union organizer finds Bud hiding at the side of the road near a very intolerant village and takes Bud home to his own family before transporting him to his supposed father.

Having reached his destination, Bud's search must continue. He is still a child in search of family as it turns out that the musician cannot possibly be his father.

Bud's irrepressible good nature, his innocence and his survival skills make him memorable. His literal interpretation of language, his belief system which includes vampires, tokens and ritual behavior all serve to allow us to see the world through the eyes of a ten year old.

The setting in the 1930s, the height of the Great Depression and the small tastes of racism that the author weaves in so skillfully make this book stand head and shoulders above the crowd.

Discussions and Activities:

Bud has a list of things to remember in order to survive. He calls his list, "Rules and Things To Have a Funner Life and Make a Better Liar Out of You".

- Look at his rules and decide which of them proved to be helpful for Bud.
- Make your own list of rules for survival. Compare them to Bud's.
- Make a map showing the action of this book from beginning to end.

There are certain things that Bud accepts as truth that you might differ with. For instance, he is sure that there are vampires and the only reason he accepts a ride from Mr. Lewis is that he is allowed to check his teeth and finds no fangs.

- What other beliefs does Bud have?
- Do those beliefs help or hurt him?

If the setting of this book were in 2010 in your town, how would life for Bud be different?

Why is Mr. Lewis so frightened to be outside a small Michigan town at 2 o'clock in the morning? What could have happened to him?

Extensions:

Compare this book with *Nothing to Fear* and *Out of the Dust* which are also set in the Great Depression. Think about the differences in the action of **Bud, Not Buddy** if Bud came from either New York City or the midwest, the setting of the other books.

We learn a bit about the unionization of the railroad porters in **Bud, Not Buddy**. Make a list of the things you know from the reading and add to it things you find out by interviewing family members. Check those "facts" with research.

Talk to a modern labor union organizer or union member to find out how they feel about unions.

Check out some of the great picture book biographies of jazz artists such as *Django: World's Greatest Jazz Guitarist* by Bonnie Christensen.

The cardboard village of "Hooverville" is the scene of action in part of the book. Find out about such places in the 1930s. Did they all meet the same fate that this one did?

For additional information:

The Great Depression, US History and Children's Literature. Featured subject with books, activities and links.

<http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/ushistory/ushistory.html>

Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse Discussion, activities, related books and links.

<http://www.carolhurst.com/titles/outofthedust.html>

Racism and Tolerance Titles: <http://www.carolhurst.com/products/booksetstol.html>