

# *Hootie*

## Classroom Lesson Plans

Reading Circle Schedule: Chapters 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-11 and Glossary terminology

### Chapter One

1. What was Hootie's (the little bird's) first clue that she was a separate life form from everything else around her?
2. As used in this story, what is a witches' broom? (See Glossary)
3. During her first two weeks of life, what did Hootie do?
4. If you were a baby owl, what would you want to learn and experience before leaving the nest?

### **Bonus**

**Theme: Boundaries.** As babies, how do we first discover that we are separate from other people and objects in our environment?

### Chapter Two

1. What helped Jim Odom recover from surgery?
2. Do you think Jim felt sad about losing the sycamore tree? Explain your answer.
3. How many events or tasks had Jim already completed on the farm prior to this chapter?
4. How did Jim compare himself to the sycamore tree?
5. What nemeses (bad guys) are introduced in this chapter?
6. Why do you think Jim Odom usually fell asleep before bedtime? Did this bother Sally Odom?

### **Bonus**

**Theme: Balance.** Can working too hard make you sick? What examples did you see in this chapter?

### Chapter Three

1. How did Hootie know that something bad was about to happen to the sycamore tree?
2. What lulled the bobcat to sleep?
3. How did Hootie save herself?
4. Can animals lose consciousness (faint), and why or why not?
5. Did you think the bobcat would catch the baby owls, and why or why not?

### **Bonus**

**Theme: Circle of Life.** Did the death of the sycamore tree create new life? How?

### Chapter Four

1. What made the sycamore tree fall?
2. Why does Texas Parks and Wildlife recommend leaving wild animals alone?
3. What prevented the bobcat from getting the owls the second time?
4. What did Jim feed Hootie?

## **Bonus**

**Theme: Weather.** Who and what could be affected by the flash flood in this chapter, and in what ways?

### Chapter Five

1. Did Hootie identify any objects in her new home, and what were they?
2. What did Hootie think about Jim?
3. How did Hootie begin helping Jim in this chapter?
4. What made Hootie's walking difficult?

## **Bonus**

**Theme: Creating Environments.** What makes a safe environment? Besides removing dangerous objects, if you change your environment, how might that change you?

### Chapter Six

1. What task did Jim put off in order to have more time with Hootie?
2. Do you think Sally was a good cook? Why or why not?
3. How did Mason Classon become mute?
4. How were Pete Classon and Jim Odom alike? How were they different?

## **Bonus**

**Theme: Inspiration.** What makes an idea just too good to ignore? Does an inspiring idea always involve helping yourself or someone else?

### Chapter Seven

1. Did Hootie miss her sister? What did Hootie think had happened to her?
2. What are wheel pants, and why did Jim have to repair them? (See Glossary)
3. What bird toy did Hootie and Jim discover in this chapter?
4. What did Hootie do when she first saw Mason? Why?
5. How did Joe Running Deer communicate with Mason?
6. Did Mason remember the entire car accident? How did he choose to remember it?
7. Why did Hootie nibble Mason's fingers?

## **Bonus**

**Theme: Recovery.** Mason first recovered his speech with his urge to name the bird. Why do you think that particular event prompted Mason to speak?

### Chapter Eight

1. How did Hootie help Mason recover his ability to walk?
2. What species of owl was Hootie?
3. Do you think Mason was an owl whisperer? Why?
4. What was Jim concerned about at the end of this chapter?

## **Bonus**

**Theme: Relocation.** Why do humans and other animals relocate? What improvements or challenges may they face? Do you think animals inherently know how their ancestors lived?

### Chapter Nine

1. What unusual nighttime activity did Hootie have?
2. A Barred Owl's hoot can sound like human speech and laughter. What question does its common four-note hoot sound like?
3. Why did both Jim and Mason need more physical therapy before they flew in Jim's plane?
4. What did Joe Running Deer call Mason's first flight?
5. How did Mason describe the sensory illusion of flight?

## **Bonus**

**Theme: Flight.** Do you think Hootie and Mason thought about flight in the same way? Did their ways of understanding flight affect their chances of success?

### Chapter Ten

1. Why did Jim wait to release Hootie?
2. Why did Jim design and use a fancy cage for Hootie in order to release her?
3. What do you think caused Hootie's disorientation?
4. How did Hootie help Mason adjust to his new school?
5. Did you expect the bobcat to come back? Why or why not?

## **Bonus**

**Theme: Transitions.** When you learn to ride a bicycle, you start on a tricycle, then onto a bicycle with training wheels, then without training wheels. Learning to ride a bicycle therefore has three stages, three transitions. If such stages and transitions weren't available to you, do you think you'd be less likely to succeed, and why?

### Chapter Eleven

1. What happened to Hootie's original home? How does she feel about it?
2. Why did Hootie stay near the farm?
3. What does Hootie do before she leaves?

## **Bonus**

**Theme: Leaving Home.** How is the hangar's box window symbolic of leaving the nest? Why does Hootie know she can return, but never come back in the same way?

# *Hootie*

## Classroom Lesson Plans

### Answer Key

#### Chapter One

1. Her sister's stomach growled.
2. A disease or deformity in a plant or tree causing dense masses of downy shoots that resemble a broom.
3. She became aware of her sister, realized her sister was bigger, distinguished her father from her mother, heard her own voice, viewed her immediate surroundings outside the broom, discovered the fragile nature of sycamore tree bark, investigated an achene with her sister, responded to taxis about the achene's potential danger to them, traced etchings on the tree trunk, took her first tumble when her sister pushed her, digested different kinds of food, discovered raindrops.
4. Answers will vary but should reflect anticipation about learning how to fly and leaving the nest.

#### **Bonus:**

Answers will vary. Early indicators of existence as separate beings come from being held as a baby and fed, our first exploration of immediate environments such as a crib or a playpen, as well as distinguishing noises not generated by oneself. Improvements in vision or visual acuity occur during the first three months of life and serve to increase awareness about separate objects in one's environment.

#### Chapter Two

1. Physical therapy, weight loss, and time
2. Answers will vary but should include Jim's history of climbing and carving his initials on the sycamore tree, his careful diagnosis of its condition over the past two springs, his comparison of himself to the tree, his appeal to the tree not to fall on his hangar, and giving the tree permission to fall on his tractor instead.
3. Thirty-three
4. Jim compared the difficulties he was experiencing with old age to tree rot. "The bugs get us all, old friend."
5. Jim's knee replacement, the impending storm, lightning, possible power outages, flooding, the bobcat, the sycamore's condition, the Lamborghini and the Ferrari, Mason's forgetfulness
6. Answers will vary but should include Jim's recovery from surgery, his age, physical labor on the farm, too much sun, and habit.

#### **Bonus:**

Jim and the sycamore's conditions are parallel examples of overwork, particularly during their prime. The tree grew very tall, and is now rotting and in danger of falling, as is Jim with his new knee replacement, a surgery necessary after he lost all weight-bearing cartilage from overuse. Mason, too, with his tendency to play video games for long periods of time, could develop PlayStation thumb, poor posture, or shoulder stiffness.

## Chapter Three

1. Answers will vary but should include wind, thunder, lightning, darkness of cloud cover, taxis about danger, her sister's sleeping position, changes in barometric pressure, and the increase of the tree's cant.
2. A meal of mice
3. Hootie climbed out on top of the broom, held on as long as she could, gasped, tucked, and rolled.
4. Yes, animals can lose consciousness from hyperventilation, shock, head injury, seizure, or low blood pressure just like humans.
5. Answers will vary but should include the bobcat's hunger, his injury, and his cautiousness in open pasture.

### **Bonus:**

The sycamore's impending death attracted the owls with its witches' brooms, which serve as ready-made nests. Barred and Spotted Owls frequently choose old-growth trees because they have rotted hollows, even former nests, and witches' brooms for nesting. With its fall, the sycamore tree dies and Hootie's sister dies, but Hootie's life is reborn into living in *all the unidentified below*. Jim's life and enjoyment is renewed as he raises and cares for Hootie. Later, both Jim and Hootie will help inspire Mason Classon to walk and talk again.

## Chapter Four

1. Age, rot, bugs, rain, high winds, saturated ground
2. Parents may return and move their babies out of danger, raising a baby animal requires around-the-clock care and expertise, wild animals can carry or develop diseases that transmit to humans, wild animals may not accept a surrogate [human] parent, wild animals typically do not domesticate fully during their lifespan, wild animals need experience from birth in the wild to hunt and protect themselves.
3. A neighboring dog, the owls' parents, Jim's arrival, and his return with Kate and Sally
4. Tuna and sardines

### **Bonus:**

The flash flood saturated the ground, which caused the weakened sycamore to uproot after straight-line winds blew in with the storm. The muddy ground made it difficult for Jim to navigate to the tree before and after its fall. If the tree had fallen on Jim's hangar, it would've also very likely damaged his airplane. The sycamore tree also could have fallen on his tractor. In the country, flash floods can frequently cause power outages that last for days. This is more difficult for elderly persons, who can succumb to exposure or heat exhaustion. Ground-burrowing birds and animals, as well as those who nest in trees, can become displaced or killed during flash floods. County roads and bridges can become overrun with water or collapse during flash floods, posing dangers to drivers and their vehicles.

## Chapter Five

1. Hangar, four-cubic-foot avian cage, water bowl, newspaper bedding, hideaway box, wooden roost, Whiskas choice cuts, concrete, handkerchief
2. Hootie identified Jim as a kind big bird with an injured leg and gentle talons. She trusted him

- because he provided her with more food, water, and shelter than she'd previously had.
3. Hootie's walking made Jim laugh, and she reassured him she could take care of herself by her determination and resilience.
  4. Hootie had zygodactyl toes, or feet made for perching and walking along branches, not on flat surfaces.

**Bonus:**

Answers will vary but should include removing or restricting objects that are physically, emotionally, or morally dangerous; finding ways to vary one's activity and lifestyle within healthy perimeters; maintaining certain frequently-used objects or articles; personal hygiene and disinfecting homes with eco-friendly products; recycling; adding creative elements of beauty in one's surroundings. Any one of these will promote better physical and emotional health as well as improve quality of life. Such improvements can provide a platform for setting and reaching personal goals.

Chapter Six

1. Mowing the pasture
2. Answers will vary but it appears that Sally did enjoy cooking and kept a collection of cookbooks she used regularly. She gave Jim a lengthy grocery list, and the narrator called the food she cooked "culinary delicacies." She cooked enough to fill a Yeti for the Classons.
3. Mason became mute following the car accident which paralyzed him and killed his parents.
4. Pete and Jim both carried their weight in their bellies, had knee injuries, enjoyed country life, liked visiting over coffee, knew how to conceal their emotions, and were self-sacrificing but stubborn. Pete was a slow worker, whereas Jim did things quickly. Pete refused any surgery while Jim opted for the chance that surgery would improve his ability to walk.

**Bonus:**

Answers will vary but in this story, Jim was already fascinated with Hootie, and wanted others to see what an amazing bird she was. He felt sorry for Mason, and felt like at the very least, meeting Hootie would distract the boy from his own sadness. Though the conditions for the inevitable introduction had been brewing for several weeks, the idea came to Jim all at once during his conversation with Pete.

Chapter Seven

1. Yes, particularly at night. She wondered why the big bird hadn't found her sister; she assumed that her sibling had found a similar place with big food like she had (assumed the best).
2. Wheel pants cover the airplane's wheels and reduce air friction and drag when in flight. Airplanes can fly without wheel pants, but their absence will affect the flying dynamics of the craft.
3. Red bandanna
4. She froze mid-stride, dropped the bandanna, and dipped into a bob-and-weave movement. Mason was a new visitor, and in a wheelchair; Hootie was not familiar with either. She was trying to figure out what Mason was.
5. Spoken English, and Choctaw sign language
6. No. He replayed the accident in his mind like a Need for Speed video game.
7. Since owls' eyesight is typically poor during the day, and they have limited sense of smell, as

well, they use their beaks to investigate what they don't recognize or understand.

**Bonus:**

Mason very likely experienced a psychosomatic muteness from the shock of suddenly losing both parents at once. He also felt guilty about possibly contributing to the accident. His experience meeting and handling Hootie served first as a distraction from his own misfortune. Mason also discovered he had a special ability to communicate with Hootie and he quickly learned things about her that no one else knew. She had gone without a name for several weeks, and he knew she wanted a name.

Chapter Eight

1. Mason had carefully studied the way Hootie trained herself to walk on flat surfaces, which is difficult for an owl. He copied the way she carefully placed her feet, which made him able to articulate his toe and ankle movements more fully.
2. A Barred Owl, usually capitalized by bird-watchers, but not necessarily in other publications.
3. Answers will vary, but there's a very good chance that Mason was an owl whisperer, by the farm stories he was able to accurately tell Jim.
4. Jim was concerned about Mason's emotional response when he found out Jim was planning to release Hootie. Jim was also concerned whether Hootie, raised in captivity, would be fully ready to reenter the wild.

**Bonus:**

Answers will vary but should include early nomadic movement to forage for food and seek out more comfortable climates, escape dangerous weather or geological changes, and avoid territorial disputes. Contemporary relocation and nomadic movement usually centers on a need for better job and educational opportunities as well as healthier working and living conditions. Challenges in either nomadic era may involve drought, polluted water and air, flooding, wildfires, earthquakes, warfare, predators, overpopulation, and unsanitary living conditions. Improvements in either nomadic era may involve better weather, more crops, game, livestock, friendlier relations, better housing and security measures, and more opportunities to learn and work. Certainly taxis or instinct is readily observable in animals. Some owl lore claims that owls act as collectors of and guardians of specific geographic regions, storing up historical events in that territory as memories they pass on to their babies. The idea of morphic resonance was first proposed in the 1920s, which teaches that morphic units (atoms, molecules, crystals, cells, plants, animals, societies, planets) influence subsequent units at birth with habits of activity and memory, that is, memories and habits particularly pertaining to survival are stored within our ancestor's cells and inherited by us.

Chapter Nine

1. She stretched out flat on the stepladder's painter's tray to sleep.
2. Who cooks for you?
3. Both Jim and Mason needed to be strong and flexible enough to board his plane, which could only be boarded using the peg steps onto the wings.
4. An owl pilgrimage
5. Like floating in a pond, except you're in the sky

**Bonus:**

Although Mason communicated with Hootie, chances are they understood flight differently. Hootie was biologically made to fly, and Mason was not. Mason could only experience flight by riding in a reliable craft that was made for flying. Mason trusted Jim and his airplane to take him safely up and down through the air. Mason's success at flying depended on his own ability to calm his initial trepidation about trying something new. Hootie had to develop trust in her own ability to navigate the air currents and the new environment around her.

**Chapter Ten**

1. Jim was waiting for Hootie's legs to develop pinfeathers.
2. Answers will vary. Though not indicated in the text, Jim probably felt that Hootie was less likely to injure herself while attempting her first outdoor flight if she started from cage's roost.
3. No ceiling, air currents, and open environment
4. Hootie was the subject of Mason's science project.
5. Answers will vary but should include his hunger, physical condition, interest, and knowledge about Hootie and where she lived.

**Bonus:**

Answers will vary but should include observations about stepwise learning and practice as well as the gratification one feels when mastering something that once “seemed” so difficult.

**Chapter Eleven**

1. The original sycamore was cut up and removed. Bermuda grass had grown over the land where the tree once stood. Hootie remembered the tree but adopted a circle-of-life acceptance—for the grasses would be cut and baled as hay, which would contain mice and crayfish, her food.
2. Hootie continued observing Jim's and Mason's recoveries. She also accustomed herself to a larger flight and hunting range and located some of her own kind near the farm.
3. Hootie looked (through the box window) inside the hangar, remembering the original home Jim had made for her there, where she grew up.

**Bonus:**

On first mention, the hangar's box window was purposefully not described in detail. We don't know whether the window will allow Hootie full access to the hangar. When she roosted in the box window in Chapter Eleven, we find out that it is rimmed with chicken wire, not allowing her to reenter the hangar. Her old “room” was left much the way it originally was, with all its accouterments and toys. The hangar home was Hootie's childhood world, including the magic of its strange and wonderful objects. Hootie, like other Barred Owls, will probably remain within a thirty-mile radius of this farm as long as food is plentiful. She will return sporadically, but as she is further reintroduced into the wild, meets a mate, and starts a family of her own, she will be less likely to fly up this closely. The farm will change with time, and so will she.