



Fiction Readers

Lessons and Activities

Advanced

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Implementation Guide

Fiction Readers

**Advanced/
Advanced Plus**

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Research to Practice

Fiction Readers instruction begins with a simple 20-minute guided reading lesson.

► Introduce the Text

Quickly and efficiently introduce the book and prepare students to read. In just five minutes, present the elements of the book cover, identify the genre and/or establish a purpose for reading, and review reading behaviors.

► Read the Text

Students read the passage aloud independently. Observe as students explore the story, experience appropriate struggle, and apply strategies to draw meaning from the text. After the passage has been read once, prompt students to share their initial understandings of the selection and their experiences with the act of reading. Respond with praise and problem-solving support. Lastly, guide the group through a targeted reread under teacher guidance.

► Discuss the Text

For the last five minutes of the lesson, use targeted questions and prompts to lead students to consider the text again and build a more complete understanding of what they have read.

Cottonmouth Creek

Guided Reading Lesson

3 Introduce the Text

1. Display the front cover of the book. Read the title, author name, and illustrator name.
2. Let students know that this book is a story about surviving in the wilderness.
3. Remind students that good readers look at the cover and table of contents; review the images from page to page; and think, talk, and ask questions about what they read.

10 Read the Text

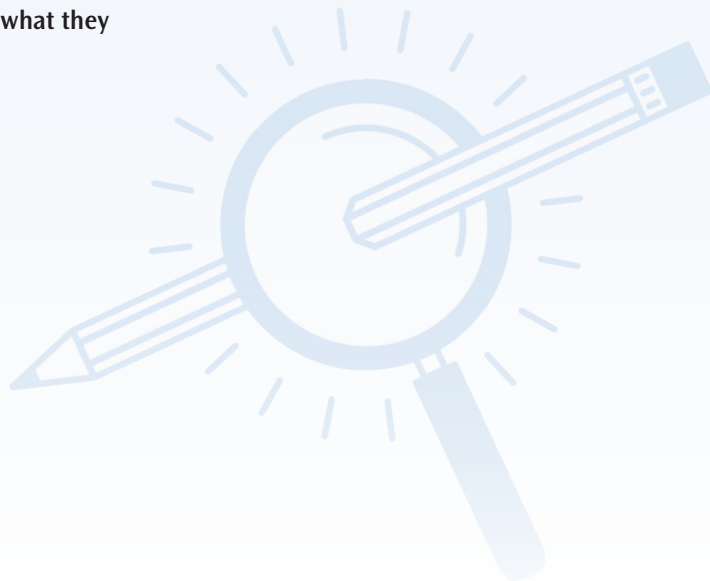
1. Have each student read pages 5–7 aloud independently. Direct students to whisper read. As they read, observe each student's reading successes, struggles, and strategies.
2. Ask students to tell you about the story. Encourage them to refer to the chapter titles, words, and illustrations as they retell the story.
3. Ask students to tell you specifically about the words in the story. Acknowledge the words or word parts students were able to recognize accurately. You may want to use the following ideas to address words that caused struggle or inaccuracies.
 - **DODGING**—Say, "On page 6, Samantha is dodging the trees as she runs after Hickory. She is swerving and avoiding running into them. This word has a *d* and *g* in the middle of it. I know the sounds that these letters make individually. But in this word, they are blended to make a *ijf* sound. Let's think of other words with these two letters that make the blended sound (lodging, gadget, budget)."

5 Discuss the Text

Use the following prompts to discuss the words and pictures that tell the story:

- *Where does the book begin? (setting)*
(less support) Describe the opening setting.
(more support) Describe where and when the book begins.
- *What happens at the end of pages 5–7? (rising action)*
(less support) How does the author start to build suspense?
(more support) What happens to Samantha on page 7? What does she see?

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Research to Practice

Fiction Readers instruction includes a simple 20-minute comprehension strategy lesson:

► Introduce the Strategy

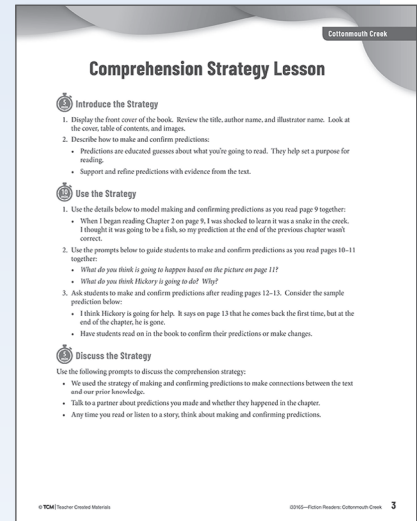
Quickly and efficiently, review the book and introduce a key comprehension strategy. In just five minutes, define the strategy and its purpose.

► Use the Strategy

Return to the story to model using the strategy to better understand the story. Students follow the model to use the strategy, with support, as they continue to reread the story.

► Discuss the Strategy

For the last five minutes of the lesson, guide students to restate the strategy and to identify when and how they will use the strategy with other books and reading tasks.



Fiction Readers instruction includes a simple 15-minute close reading lesson:

► Set a Purpose for Rereading

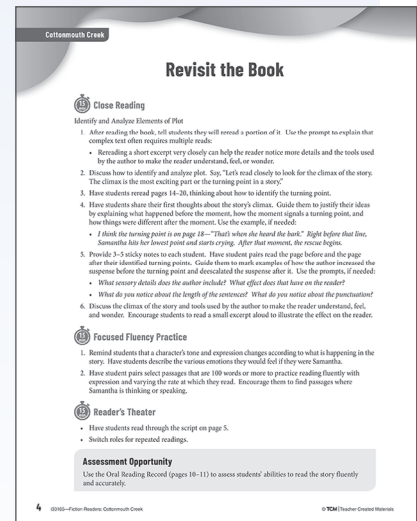
The teacher guides students to think about story elements, word choice, language, or author's craft as they prepare to reread.

► Reread an Excerpt

Students reread a rich, complex passage from the book. As they read, they look for layers of meaning and tools used by the author to communicate meaning.

► Annotate and Discuss Specific Tools Used by the Author

Students find and explore specific examples to support and expand their ideas about the text and the author.



Research to Practice

Fiction Readers instruction includes three options for fluency instruction and practice:

► Focused Fluency Practice

Define and model one aspect of expressive reading that fits well with the story. You may highlight the best way to read dialogue or how a reader's cadence changes when reading long sentences. Students then read the book with strong expression to a partner or group.

► Reader's Theater

Students work together to prepare a performance of the story. They read a script of the story several times, concluding in a performative read aloud. Teachers may choose to assign roles or allow students to choose them. Each script includes roles for advanced, on-grade level, and striving readers.

► Fluency Model

Students listen to the professional recording of the story.

Reader's Theater

Cottonmouth Creek

Samantha: After I was bit by a cottonmouth, I thought it would be smart to have Dr. Asper come talk. He's an expert on snakes.

Timothy: Welcome to the neighborhood, Dr. Asper! He'll be teaching all of us how to be safe outside.

Dr. Asper: I am excited to share what I know about snakes. Does anyone have a question for me?

Friend: I do! How can we tell the difference between a cottonmouth and a harmless water snake?

Dr. Asper: Great question! First, a cottonmouth has a thick heavy body, and a water snake is long and slender.

Timothy: I never knew that! Do they always attack humans?

Dr. Asper: No, snakes normally try not to bite humans. They only do so if they feel threatened.

Samantha: So, what are some of the ways to be safe from snakes out here?

Dr. Asper: First, when you are hiking, always watch your step.

Friend: Something else we can do is wear jeans and boots when walking through tall grass.

Samantha: Yes, or if you're wading in the creek.

Timothy: I know what else we can do: leave any snake we see alone!

Samantha: Yes! I learned that lesson the hard and will definitely be wearing the right clothes from now on. Thank you, Dr. Asper, for coming today to speak to us.

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Research to Practice

Fiction Readers instruction includes four options for extending each lesson:

► Word Study

Lessons focus on a word pattern that is found in the story and can be widely generalized to other texts students will encounter. In the lower levels of the program, instruction includes phonemic awareness, phonics, and basic decoding. In the upper levels, more sophisticated aspects of decoding are taught along with morphemes and vocabulary strategies. Each lesson includes a brief mini-lesson and student activity page.

► Fluency Model

Students listen to the professional recording of the story. They can listen to the audio alone as they follow along in the print book or listen to the audio embedded in the read-along eBook.

► Writing about Reading

The writing activity prompts students to write about what they have read. They are encouraged to draw upon the story and the discussions around the text to complete the activity. A reproducible activity page is included.

► Content-Area Connection

The content-area connection links the topic and vocabulary from the story to mathematics, science, social studies, or the arts and movement. Most activities can be completed independently. A reproducible activity page is included.

Cottonmouth Creek

Extension Options

Word Study
Prefixes *un-* and *dis-*

1. Explain that a prefix is added to the beginning of a root word to change its meaning.
 - The prefixes *un-* and *dis-* both mean "not" or "opposite of."
 - Have students look at the word *unpacked* on page 6. Ask them to define the word using the root word and the meaning of the prefix (e.g., *unpacked* = the opposite of packed).
 - Repeat with the word *disappear* on page 7.
 - Explain that words like *uncle* and *discuss* start with the same letters, but do not function as prefixes. They do not change the meaning of a root word.
2. Have students search for other *un-* and *dis-* words in the book.
 - Record the words on a chart.
 - Have students define the words using the root word and meaning of the prefix.
3. Use the activity on page 7 to practice sorting the prefixes *un-* and *dis-*. If needed, provide a list of base words for students to make words using the two prefixes.

Fluency Model

- Have students listen to the professional recording of the reader's theater script (provided in the Digital Resources).

Writing about Reading
Letter to a Friend

1. Review the elements of plot in *Cottonmouth Creek* with students.
2. Have students retell the story in the form of a letter to a friend as either Samantha or Timothy (page 8).
3. In the letter, they will describe Samantha's ordeal, including the story elements (setting, rising action, climax, resolution), from the point of view of the characters they have chosen.
4. If time allows, have students share their letters with their classmates.

Science Connection
Snake Trading Card

1. Prepare a list of snakes from which students can choose.
2. Have each student research one snake and create a trading card about it (page 9).
3. If time allows, have students share their cards with their classmates.

Assessment Opportunity
Use the Comprehension Assessment (page 12) to assess students' abilities to understand the story.

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Kit Components

Book Trios

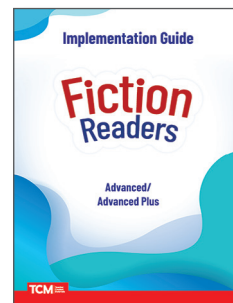
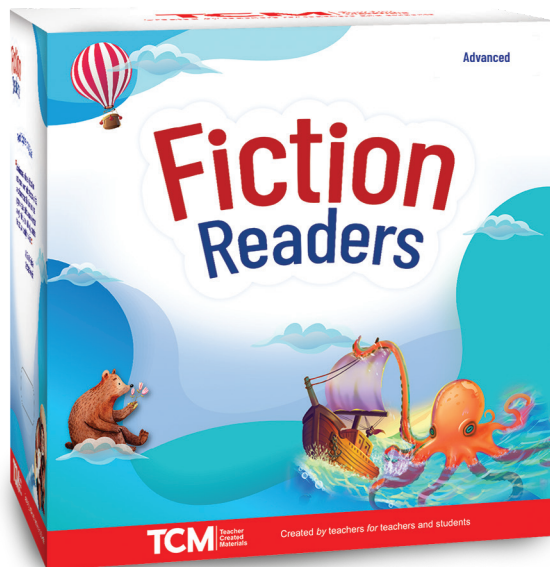
Each trio of full-color books offers different stories based on a common theme.



Advanced

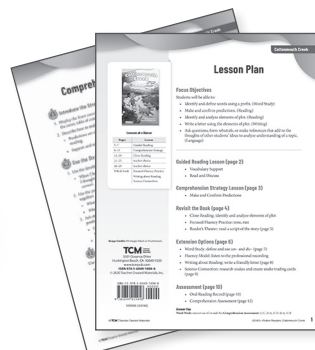


Advanced Plus



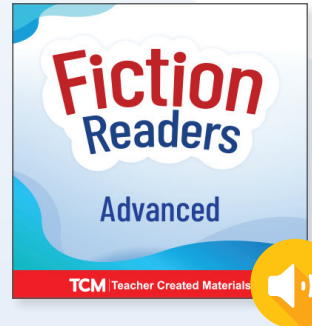
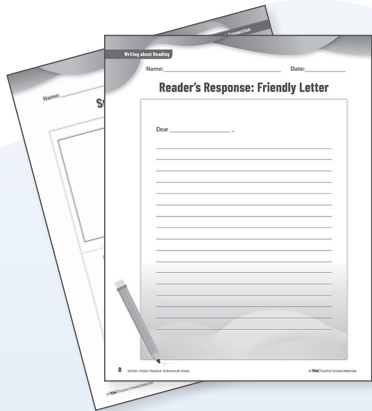
Implementation Guide

This teacher resource supports best practices for literacy instruction.



Lesson Plan

The 12-page Lesson Plan provides a consistent lesson format for every book. Plans include the lesson, assessments, extension options, and student activity pages.



Digital Resources

The following digital resources are available via digital download:

Books

- Audiobooks
- eBooks
- read-along eBooks

Teacher Resources

- lesson plans with student pages
- additional resources
- Family Tips booklet
- Scope and Sequence
- Reader's Theater Script Cover

Assessment Options

Informal Assessments

Every lesson includes opportunities for teachers to observe students' reading behaviors. With every book, students read aloud, discuss their reading and thinking, and complete activity pages that require them to return to the ideas they read.

Diagnostic and Summative Assessments

The **Diagnostic Assessment** can be used to prioritize instruction for specific student groups by documenting their successful use of comprehension strategies. The **Summative Assessment** can be used to document increased successes after instruction. These also provide practice with standardized test formats. After completion, they can be stored in students' portfolios if desired. See pages 39–40 for details on administering the tests.

Formative Assessments

An **Oral Reading Record** form is included in the lesson for each book. This assessment documents students' reading behaviors as they read a text aloud. It can be used before students are introduced to the book (a cold read) to measure students' performance, or it can be used after students have become familiar with the book to measure the effectiveness of the lesson. You will not likely administer the oral reading records for each book but will choose points at which you need data to make instructional decisions for specific students. See pages 41–44 and 46 and 48 for data charts and details about administering the assessment.

A **comprehension assessment** is included in the lesson for each book. This assessment measures students' comprehension of the story and use of comprehension strategies. It can be used as a formal formative assessment or as a guided activity. Depending on the instructional needs, you may not have students complete every assessment. Details about administering the assessment are included in each lesson. See pages 45 and 47 for data charts.

Oral Reading Record

Name: _____ Date: _____

Cottonmouth Creek

| Total Word Count | | Codes | | | | |
|------------------|---|------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|
| 113 | | E = errors | SC = self-corrections | M = meaning | S = structure | V = vocal |
| Word Count | Text | E | SC | Codes Used | | |
| 8 | Talking to Tim had taken all of her energy. | | | M | S | V |
| 17 | Samantha closed her eyes. She heard Tim tell | | | M | S | V |
| 26 | Hickory to stop with her and then the sound | | | M | S | V |
| 31 | of her brother running away. The dog lay | | | M | S | V |
| 42 | next to the sick girl. Samantha reached out | | | M | S | V |
| 49 | her arm and wrapped it around Hickory's | | | M | S | V |
| 52 | warm, trembling body. | | | M | S | V |
| 59 | What happened next was a blur. Samantha | | | M | S | V |
| 66 | remembered being lifted by her father and | | | M | S | V |
| 73 | carried home. An ambulance was waiting in | | | M | S | V |
| 75 | her driveway. | | | M | S | V |
| 83 | At the hospital, she was rushed into an | | | M | S | V |
| 90 | operating room. A team of doctors and | | | M | S | V |
| 96 | nurses gathered around her. Sometimes, she | | | M | S | V |
| 104 | could see her mom or dad's faces behind | | | M | S | V |
| 113 | the medical team. Then, she fell into a long, | | | M | S | V |
| | deep sleep. | | | M | S | V |

Error Rate: Self-Correction Rate: Accuracy Percentage: Time:

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Comprehension Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____

Cottonmouth Creek

Directions: Read each question and choose the best answer.

- Which sentence helps the reader predict that Hickory goes to get help?
 - Hickory "was jumping up and down, spinning in circles, and rolling around."
 - "Hickory liked being part of the family."
 - "Hickory was really gone this time."
 - Hickory "kept going back and forth, whining."
- Which best describes the setting of the book?
 - present-day, rural area
 - long ago, rural area
 - present-day, urban area
 - long ago, urban area
- To which base word can you add both prefixes *un-* and *dis-*?
 - oism
 - wrap
 - taste
 - able
- Which is the best summary of when they return to the creek in Chapter 6?
 - Samantha is fully recovered and knows how to make sure that it doesn't happen again.
 - Samantha stays by the shore until everyone is ready to leave.
 - Tim and Hickory run ahead; Samantha gets upset, so they go home.
 - Samantha is too scared to go and tells Tim she'll go tomorrow.
- The author includes Dr. Asper in the book most likely to
 - tell people to stay away from Cottonmouth Creek.
 - explain the snake's behavior.
 - describe a cottonmouth snake.
 - share information about snakes.

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Using the Oral Reading Record

Administering the Assessment

Timing

Teachers may choose to use the records at the first reading and/or after students are familiar with the book. There are two schools of thought regarding oral reading records. Some say that they should be used only with books that students have never read. Others say that they are best used with books with which students are familiar. Use your discretion to determine the best use for students.

Frequency

Oral reading records may be used with any or all of the books in this kit. Traditional use suggests a selection of one book from each reading level to use as a marker for that level as a whole. Reading records are most commonly used every two to six weeks. Of course, teachers may use them when and how they feel will best serve their classroom needs.

The image shows two pages from an oral reading record kit. The left page is the text of the story "Cottonmouth Creek" with a small coding chart at the bottom. The right page is the full coding chart for "Cottonmouth Creek" with a grid for marking errors and a section for student information.

Text from the left page:

Cottonmouth Creek

Talking to Tim had taken all of her energy. Samantha closed her eyes. She heard Tim tell Hickory to stay with her and then the sound of her brother running away. The dog lay next to the sick girl. Samantha reached out her arm and wrapped it around Hickory's warm, comforting body.

What happened next was a blur. Samantha remembered being lifted by her father and carried home. An ambulance was waiting in her driveway.

At the hospital, she was rushed into an operating room. A team of doctors and nurses gathered around her. Sometimes, she could see her mom or dad's faces behind the medical team. Then, she fell into a long, deep sleep.

Table from the right page:

| Word Count | Text | Class Mark | | | |
|------------|--|------------|----|---|----|
| | | R | SC | E | SC |
| 9 | Talking to Tim had taken all of her energy. | | | | |
| 10 | Samantha closed her eyes. She heard Tim tell | | | | |
| 11 | Hickory to stay with her and then the sound of | | | | |
| 12 | her brother running away. The dog lay | | | | |
| 13 | next to the sick girl. Samantha reached out | | | | |
| 14 | her arm and wrapped it around Hickory's | | | | |
| 15 | warm, comforting body. | | | | |
| 16 | What happened next was a blur. Samantha | | | | |
| 17 | remembered being lifted by her father and | | | | |
| 18 | carried home. An ambulance was waiting in | | | | |
| 19 | her driveway. | | | | |
| 20 | At the hospital, she was rushed into an | | | | |
| 21 | operating room. A team of doctors and | | | | |
| 22 | nurses gathered around her. Sometimes, she | | | | |
| 23 | could see her mom or dad's faces behind | | | | |
| 24 | the medical team. Then, she fell into a long, | | | | |
| 25 | deep sleep. | | | | |

Form elements on the right page:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Cottonmouth Creek

Word Count: 115 Codes: R = error, SC = self-correction, E = missing, SC = structure, V = visual

Errors: None Self-Correction Accuracy Fluency

Administration Tips

When taking an oral reading record, it may be useful to employ some or all of the following tips:

- Position yourself next to the student in such a way that you can hear the student easily, see the text clearly, and watch the student's eye and finger movements while he or she is reading.
- As the student reads, mark the oral reading record form with the conventions on the included coding chart on page 43.
- Use a stopwatch that is easy to read and reset to time the student.
- If the student begins to read too quickly for you to follow, simply ask him or her to pause for a moment while you catch up with the record.
- Interrupt and intervene as needed to create the truest record of reading behaviors.
- Wait several seconds when a student gets stuck before reading a word aloud for the student.
- If a student misreads a word, be sure to write the word he or she said above the correct word on the record form.



► **Meaning, Structure, and Visual Cues**

- **Meaning:** When the reader uses background knowledge and the context to identify words, he or she is using meaning (or semantic) cues. On the Oral Reading Record, mark these cues with an *M*.
- **Structure:** When the reader applies knowledge of language structure in order to identify words, he or she is using structure (or syntax) cues. On the Oral Reading Record, mark these cues with an *S*.
- **Visual:** When the reader applies knowledge of letter and sound correspondence, including the look of the letter, letters, and the word itself, he or she is using visual (or graphophonic) cues. On the Oral Reading Record, mark these cues with a *V*.

Using the Oral Reading Record *(cont.)*

Scoring an Oral Reading Record

Use the information gathered while observing the student and marking the record in order to calculate rates of accuracy, error, and self-correction.

After or while marking the oral reading record, tally errors and self-corrections in the columns to the right of the text. Then, circle whether those errors and self-corrections are in the area of meaning (*M*), structure (*S*), or visual (*V*) cues.

Use any of the following data calculations as appropriate:

- Calculate the rate of error. Add the total number of words read. Divide the number of errors made by that number. (**Note:** When the reader self-corrects, the original error is not scored as an error.)
For example, if the text has 96 words and 8 errors were made, the ratio is 1:12 (one error for every 12 words read).
- Calculate the rate of self-correction. Add both the number of errors and self-corrections. Then, divide the number of self-corrections by that number.
For example, 8 errors and 6 self-corrections make 14 total. Divide the number of self-corrections (6) by 14. This gives a ratio of 1:2.3 or, rounded, 1:2. This is interpreted as one self-correction for every two errors.
- Calculate a percentage for accuracy. Convert the error rate to judge the difficulty of the text. Use the information in the chart below to inform text selections for students.
For example, in a 1:12 error rate, divide 1 by 12 to get 0.08 (round to the nearest hundredth) or 8%. Subtract 8% from 100% to get 92%. This is the accuracy percentage.

Use the information below to determine test difficulty.

| Accuracy Percentage | Difficulty of Text for Student |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 96% or higher | Easy |
| 91%–95% | Instructional Level |
| 90% or lower | Challenging |

Note: If you do not wish to assess with this level of detail, simply calculate the percentage of words read correctly and the number of words read correctly per minute.

Marking Conventions Chart

| Behavior | Marking Convention | Example |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Accurate reading | checkmark above each word read | ✓ ✓ ✓ This is big. |
| Substitution | word read above actual word | ✓ ✓ <i>-bag</i> This is big. |
| Omission | — (long dash) | ✓ — ✓ This is big. |
| Insertion | ^ and the inserted word | <i>very</i> This is ^ big. |
| Repetition of word (no error) | <i>R</i> (one repetition) <i>R2</i> (two repetitions) | <i>R</i> This is big. |
| Repetition of phrase (no error) | <i>R</i> with line and arrow at point where reader returned | → <i>R</i> This is big. |
| Self-correction (no error) | <i>SC</i> after error | <i>bag/SC</i> This is big. |
| Appeal (Student appeals for help, either verbally or nonverbally.) | <i>A</i> over word where appeal occurred | <i>A</i> This is big. |
| Told (Student is asked to try again but ultimately must be told the word.) | <i>T</i> over word student was told | <i>T</i> This is big. |
| Beginning sound read separately and then word read correctly | beginning sound above word, followed by mark for correct | <i>b/✓</i> This is big. |

Balanced-Reading Program Elements

Learning Centers and Independent Practice

One of the challenges of a guided reading program is making sure students who are not in the small instructional group you are currently working with are constructively engaged. Each lesson provides suggestions for extension and writing activities that can be completed in centers with adult assistance.

Additional suggestions for using the books and lesson content to create centers are listed below:

- Make a “wanted” poster for a villain or troublemaker from the story. Include the characteristics of the character that are pertinent.
- Create a job application for a character.
- Work with a group to create a poster or mural of the story’s theme.
- Make a time line of the events of the book using Google Docs or Tiki-Toki.
- Create a comic strip for your favorite part of the story.
- Write a blog post or tweet a review about the book.
- Add yourself to the story. Write, act out, or make an audio or video recording of a passage from the book with you as a new character.
- Create a bookmark for the story. Use your own illustrations, the title of the book, and important words or a short summary of the book.



Balanced-Reading Program Elements *(cont.)*

Writing

The lesson plan for each book includes a specific writing activity. Additionally, writing is integrated into each of the activity sheets. Depending on the level of the kit, the writing activities vary from students completing sentence frames or writing simple sentences to writing short stories or letters as a way to apply the new skills they learn to show comprehension of the story.

Additional suggestions for using the books and lesson content to prompt writing follow:

- Create “copycat books.” Students copy the features, topics, or styles of the books as they create their own books.
- Write a sequel to a story.
- Write notes to a character from the story or to the author of the story.
- Plan a vacation for a character. Write the itinerary for the trip, and make a packing list.
- Create a resume for a character.
- Plan a birthday party for a character. Make guest, food, and gifts lists.

Independent Reading

The books from *Fiction Readers* provide quality, high-interest, easy-to-read content. As such, they can be added to classroom libraries for use as independent reading selections. Read-along eBooks can be made available to students via classroom devices. Many readers will want to return to previously studied books on their own.





Lessons at a Glance

| Time | Activity |
|---------|-------------------------------|
| 20 min. | Guided Reading Lesson |
| 20 min. | Comprehension Strategy Lesson |
| 15 min. | Close Reading Activity |
| 15 min. | Focused Fluency Activity |
| 15 min. | Reader's Theater Activity |

Lesson Plan

Focus Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify and define words using a prefix. (Word Study)
- Make and confirm predictions. (Reading)
- Identify and analyze elements of plot. (Reading)
- Write a letter using the elements of plot. (Writing)
- Ask questions, form rebuttals, or make inferences that add to the thoughts of other students' ideas to analyze understanding of a topic. (Language)

Activity Sequence

Guided Reading Lesson (page 2)

- Vocabulary Support
- Read and Discuss

Comprehension Strategy Lesson (page 3)

- Make and Confirm Predictions

Revisit the Book (page 4)

- Close Reading Activity: identify and analyze elements of fiction: plot
- Focused Fluency Activity: tone, rate
- Reader's Theater Activity: read a script of the story

Extension Options (page 6)

- Word Study: define and use *un-* and *dis-*
- Fluency Model: listen to the professional recording
- Writing about Reading: write a friendly letter
- Science Connection: research snakes and create snake trading cards

Assessment (page 10)

- Oral Reading Record
- Comprehension Assessment

Answer Key

Word Study: correct use of *un-* and *dis-*; **Comprehension Assessment:** 1) C, 2) A, 3) D, 4) A, 5) B

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Guided Reading Lesson



Introduce the Text

1. Display the front cover of the book. Read the title, author name, and illustrator name.
2. Let students know that this book is a story about surviving in the wilderness.
3. Remind students that readers look at the cover and table of contents; review the images from page to page; and think, talk, and ask questions about what they read.



Read the Text

1. Have each student read aloud pages 5–7 independently. Direct students to whisper read. As they read, observe each student’s reading successes, struggles, and strategies.
2. Ask students to tell you about the passage. Encourage them to refer to the chapter titles, words, and illustrations.
3. Ask students to tell you specifically about the words in the story. Acknowledge the words or word parts students were able to recognize accurately. Use the following idea to address a word that may have caused struggle or inaccuracies:
 - **DODGING**—Say, “This word has a *d* and *g* in the middle of it. I know the sounds that these letters make individually. But, in this word, *d* and *g* blend together to make a /j/ sound. Let’s think of other words with these two letters that make the blended sound.” (*lodging, gadget, budget*)



Discuss the Text

Use the following prompts to discuss the words and pictures that tell the story:

- *Where does the book begin?*
(less support) *Describe the opening setting.*
(more support) *Describe where and when the book begins.*
- *What happens at the end of pages 5–7? Why is this important to the story?*
(less support) *How does the author start to build suspense?*
(more support) *What happens to Samantha on page 7? What does she see?*

Note: Have students complete the book before teaching the Comprehension Strategy Lesson.

Comprehension Strategy Lesson



Introduce the Strategy

1. Display the front cover of the book. You may wish to review the title, author name, and illustrator name. Look at the cover, table of contents, and images.
2. Describe how to make, correct, and confirm predictions:
 - Predictions are educated guesses about what you're going to read. They help set a purpose for reading.
 - Readers support and refine predictions with evidence from the text.



Use the Strategy

1. Use the details below to model making, correcting, and confirming predictions as you read page 9 together:
 - When I began reading Chapter Two on page 9, I was shocked to learn it was a snake in the creek. I thought it was going to be a fish, so my prediction at the end of the previous chapter wasn't correct.
2. Use the prompts below to guide students to make, correct, and confirm predictions as you read pages 10–11 together:
 - *What do you think is going to happen based on the picture on page 11?*
 - *What do you think Hickory is going to do? Why?*
3. Ask students to make, correct, and confirm predictions after reading pages 12–13. Consider the sample prediction below:
 - I think Hickory goes for help. It says on page 13 that he comes back the first time, but at the end of the chapter, he is gone.
 - Then, have students continue reading to confirm their predictions or make changes.



Discuss the Strategy

Use the following prompts to discuss the comprehension strategy:

- We used the strategy of making, correcting, and confirming predictions to make connections between the text and our prior knowledge.
- Talk to a partner about predictions you made and whether they happened in the chapter.
- Any time you read or listen to a story, think about making, correcting, and confirming predictions.

Revisit the Book



Close Reading Activity

Identify and Analyze Elements of Fiction: Plot

1. After reading the book, tell students they will reread a portion of it. Use the prompt below to explain that complex text often requires multiple reads:
 - Rereading a short excerpt very closely can help the reader notice more details and tools the author used to make the reader understand, feel, or wonder.
2. Discuss identifying and analyzing plot. Say, “Today, we’re going to read closely to look for the climax of this story. The climax is the most exciting part or the turning point in a story.”
3. Have students reread pages 14–20 and think about identifying the turning point.
4. Have students share their first thoughts about the climax of the story. Guide students to justify their ideas by explaining how the moment signals a turning point. Use the example, if needed:
 - I think the turning point is on page 18—before the line “That’s when she heard the bark.” Samantha hits her lowest point and starts crying. Then, the rescue begins. I think this is the climax.
5. Provide three to five sticky notes to each student. Have students work in pairs to read the pages before and after the turning point. Direct them to find examples of the author increasing suspense before the turning point and then de-escalating it. Use these prompts, if needed:
 - *What sensory details does the author include? What effect does that have on the reader?*
 - *What do you notice about the length of the sentences? What do you notice about the punctuation?*
6. Discuss the climax of the story and the tools the author used to make the reader understand, feel, and wonder. Encourage students to read small excerpts aloud to illustrate the turning point.



Focused Fluency Activity

1. Remind students that a character’s tone and expression should change according to what is happening in the story. Have students describe the emotions they would feel if they were Samantha.
2. Have student pairs select passages that are 100 or more words to practice reading fluently with expression and varying the rate at which they read. Encourage them to find passages where Samantha is thinking or speaking.



Reader’s Theater Activity

- Have students read through the script on page 5.
- Switch roles for repeated readings.

Assessment Opportunity

The Oral Reading Record (pages 10–11) assesses students’ abilities to read fluently and accurately.

Cottonmouth Creek

Samantha: After I was bitten by a cottonmouth, I thought it would be smart to have Dr. Asper come talk. He's an expert on snakes.

Timothy: Thank you for coming, Dr. Asper! He'll be teaching all of us how to be safe outside.

Dr. Asper: I am excited to share what I know about snakes. Does anyone have a question for me?

Friend: I do! How can we tell the difference between a cottonmouth and a harmless water snake?

Dr. Asper: Great question! First, a cottonmouth has a thick heavy body, and a water snake is long and slender.

Timothy: I never knew that! Do they always attack humans?

Dr. Asper: No, snakes normally try not to bite humans. They only do so if they feel threatened.

Samantha: So, what are some ways to be safe from snakes out here?

Dr. Asper: First, when you are hiking, always watch your step.

Timothy: I know what else we can do! We should leave any snake we see alone!

Friend: Something else we can do is wear jeans and boots when walking through tall grass.

Samantha: Yes, or if you're wading in the creek. I learned that lesson the hard way. I will definitely be wearing the right clothes from now on.

All children: Thank you, Dr. Asper, for coming today to speak to us.

Extension Options

Word Study

1. Explain that a prefix is added to the beginning of a base word to change its meaning.
 - The prefixes *un-* and *dis-* both mean “not” or “opposite of.”
 - Have students look at the word *unpacked* on page 6 in the book. Ask them to define the word using the base word and the meaning of the prefix (e.g., *unpacked* = the opposite of *packed*).
 - Repeat with the word *disappear* on page 7 in the book.
 - Explain that words like *uncle* start with the same letters, but the letters *un* do not function as prefixes. They do not change the meaning of a base word.
2. Have students search for other *un-* and *dis-* words in the book.
 - Record the words on the board or on chart paper.
 - Have students define the words using the base word and meaning of the prefix.
3. Use the activity on page 7 to practice sorting the prefixes *un-* and *dis-*. If needed, provide a list of base words for students to make words using the two prefixes.

Fluency Model

- Have students listen to the professional recording of the book (provided in the Digital Resources).

Writing about Reading

Letter to a Friend

1. Review the elements of plot in *Cottonmouth Creek* with students.
2. Have each student retell the story in the form of a letter to a friend as either Samantha or Timothy (page 8).
3. In the letter, they will describe Samantha’s ordeal, including the story elements (setting, rising action, climax, resolution), from the point of view of the character they have chosen.
4. If time allows, have students share their letters with their classmates.

Science Connection

Snake Trading Card

1. Prepare a list of snakes from which students can choose.
2. Have students research one snake and create a trading card about it (page 9).
3. If time allows, have students share their cards with their classmates.

Assessment Opportunity

Use the Comprehension Assessment (page 12) to assess students’ abilities to understand the story.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Prefixes *un-* and *dis-*

Directions: Cut out the rectangle along the outside solid lines. Fold it in half vertically on the dotted line. Cut along the solid line to separate the two prefixes. Open your booklet, and write as many *un-* and *dis-* words as you can from the bases your teacher provides.

un-

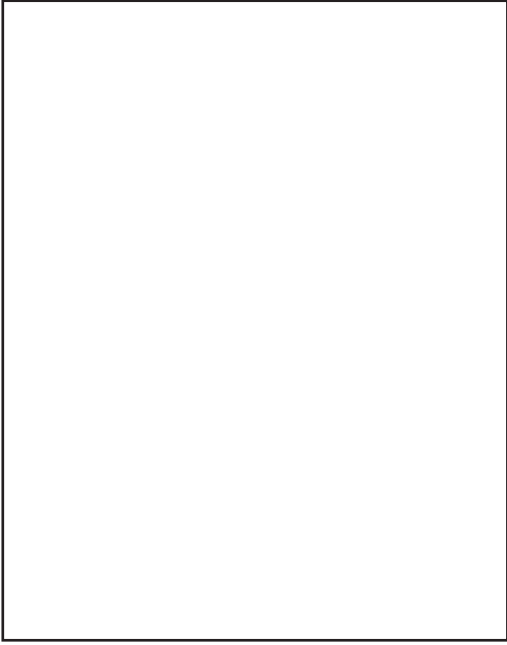
dis-

Name: _____

Date: _____

Snake Trading Card

Directions: Fill in your snake trading card with the name of the snake you researched, its physical description, adaptations, country or countries where it is found, habitat, diet, and any other interesting facts you learned.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------------|-------|-------|
|  | Name of snake: _____ | Physical description: _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | Adaptations: _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | | | | | |
| | Country/countries found: _____ | _____ | _____ | Description of habitat: _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | Diet: _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | Interesting facts: _____ | _____ | _____ |

Cottonmouth Creek

Talking to Tim had taken all of her energy. Samantha closed her eyes. She heard Tim tell Hickory to stay with her and then the sound of her brother running away. The dog lay next to the sick girl. Samantha reached out her arm and wrapped it around Hickory's warm, comforting body.

What happened next was a blur. Samantha remembered being lifted by her father and carried home. An ambulance was waiting in her driveway.

At the hospital, she was rushed into an operating room. A team of doctors and nurses gathered around her. Sometimes, she could see her mom or dad's face behind the medical team. Then, she fell into a long, deep sleep.



This passage was taken from pages 21–23 of the book.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Cottonmouth Creek

| Total Word Count | Codes | | | | |
|------------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| 115 | E = errors | SC = self-corrections | M = meaning | S = structure | V = visual |

| Word Count | Text | E | SC | Cues Used | |
|------------|--|---|----|-----------|-------|
| | | | | E | SC |
| 9 | Talking to Tim had taken all of her energy. | | | M S V | M S V |
| 17 | Samantha closed her eyes. She heard Tim tell | | | M S V | M S V |
| 26 | Hickory to stay with her and then the sound | | | M S V | M S V |
| 35 | of her brother running away. The dog lay next | | | M S V | M S V |
| 43 | to the sick girl. Samantha reached out her | | | M S V | M S V |
| 50 | arm and wrapped it around Hickory's warm, | | | M S V | M S V |
| 52 | comforting body. | | | M S V | M S V |
| 59 | What happened next was a blur. Samantha | | | M S V | M S V |
| 66 | remembered being lifted by her father and | | | M S V | M S V |
| 73 | carried home. An ambulance was waiting in | | | M S V | M S V |
| 75 | her driveway. | | | M S V | M S V |
| 83 | At the hospital, she was rushed into an | | | M S V | M S V |
| 90 | operating room. A team of doctors and | | | M S V | M S V |
| 96 | nurses gathered around her. Sometimes, she | | | M S V | M S V |
| 105 | could see her mom or dad's face behind the | | | M S V | M S V |
| 114 | medical team. Then, she fell into a long, deep | | | M S V | M S V |
| 115 | sleep. | | | M S V | M S V |

Error Rate:
Self-Correction Rate:
Accuracy Percentage:
Time:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Cottonmouth Creek

Directions: Read each question, and choose the best answer.

- Which sentence helps the reader predict that Hickory went to get help?
 - Hickory “was jumping up and down, spinning in circles, and rolling around.”
 - “Hickory liked being part of the family.”
 - “Hickory was really gone this time.”
 - Hickory “kept going back and forth, whining.”
- Which of the following best describes the setting of the book?
 - present-day, rural area
 - long ago, rural area
 - present-day, urban area
 - long ago, urban area
- To which of the following bases can you add both prefixes: *un-* and *dis-*?
 - own
 - wrap
 - taste
 - able
- Which is the best summary of Chapter Six?
 - Everyone returns to the creek. Samantha is recovered from the bite and knows how to be careful so she isn't bitten again.
 - Everyone returns to the creek. Samantha is unsure of going in the water, so she stays by the shore.
 - Everyone returns to the creek. Tim and Hickory run ahead; Samantha gets upset, so they go home.
 - Tim and Hickory return to the creek. Samantha is too scared, so she says she'll go tomorrow.
- The author includes Dr. Asper in the book most likely to _____.
 - persuade people to stay away from Cottonmouth Creek
 - explain the snake's behavior
 - describe what a cottonmouth snake looks like
 - share information about snakes

cottonmouth Creek



By Ben Nussbaum
Illustrated by Chris Jones

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CHAPTER ONE



Runaway Hickory

“Hickory, come back!”

Samantha Peterson chased after the dog.

Hickory was a new member of the family. The Petersons—Mom, Dad, Samantha, and her little brother, Tim—had recently moved into a big house in the country. It was near big, open

fields. Woods full of tall trees were also close by.

Samantha and her brother had always wanted a dog. Their parents had always said that their apartment was too small. But in the country, the kids could get their pet.

After unpacking all of their boxes, the family had driven to a dog rescue center. They fell in love with Hickory right away. He had brown curly hair, long legs, and floppy ears. His silly grin made the kids laugh.

Hickory liked being part of the family. He never stopped wagging his tail. And he had more energy than any dog they had ever met.

But now, he was running through the woods, his leash trailing behind him. Samantha did her best to keep up, running through bushes and dodging trees.

Samantha could see a creek up ahead. The day before, she had walked here with Hickory. He loved the water.

That's where Hickory was headed!

Finally, Samantha caught up with him. He was jumping up and down, spinning in circles, and rolling around.

"You're a funny dog," she said as she walked into the knee-deep water. "But you can't run away like that."

Samantha kept her eyes on Hickory. She wanted to be sure he didn't bolt before she could grab his leash.

She was just a few feet away from Hickory when it happened. She felt a sudden pain on her ankle. Looking down, she saw a dark flash disappear in the water.



CHAPTER TWO



Hickory, Bring Back Help!

Samantha stumbled out of the creek and fell onto the ground.

She tried to think through what had happened. The dark flash that had disappeared in the water must have been a snake! Based on how terrible she felt, it must have been a poisonous snake.

She rolled over on her stomach and threw up. She heard Hickory next to her, yipping and howling in confusion.

I have to get home, she thought. Samantha stood up and staggered forward a few steps, and then her eyes closed and she collapsed with a thump.

When she woke up, Hickory was nuzzling her face and whimpering quietly. “It’s okay, Hickory,” Samantha whispered. “I must have passed out. I think I got bitten by a poisonous snake in the creek.”

Hickory darted a few steps away and then darted back to Samantha. He kept going back and forth, whining. “You want me to follow you home, don’t you? I’ll try, Hickory.”

Samantha crawled after the dog, which ran ahead through the forest, came back to Samantha, and ran ahead again. She did not want to stand up in case she fainted again.

The pain from the bite was spreading through her leg. It was worse



than any pain she had ever felt before. Then, a sudden wave of sickness came over her, and she threw up again.

“I don’t know if I can make it home, Hickory,” Samantha said. “I can’t keep crawling like this.”

Samantha leaned against a tree trunk and slowly stood up. Her legs felt weak and wobbly, and her head felt like it was spinning in circles. Another wave of sickness came over her, but she fought back the urge to throw up.

Her legs gave out, and Samantha slumped back down to the ground, her back against the tree. “Hickory, you have to get help,” she said. The dog barked loudly at her. “Go home, Hickory, and bring back help!” Samantha said again.

“You need to go home and get Tim, or Mom, or Dad,” she murmured to the confused dog before closing her eyes. When she opened them again, Hickory was gone. “Good boy!” she whispered.

But then, she heard a rustling sound

behind her, and Hickory appeared carrying a stick in his mouth. He dropped it at her feet.

“That’s not what I need right now, Hickory. I need someone to come here and help me.” Hickory leaned in like he was listening to every word, but instead of running home, he licked her nose.

Samantha closed her eyes. She wasn’t sure whether she fainted again or not, but when she opened her eyes, Hickory was out of sight once more. “Hickory?” she said quietly. There was no response. She waited a minute and then called for the dog again. Hickory was really gone this time.



CHAPTER THREE



Alone in the Woods

Samantha lay on her back and looked up at the leaves. The pain in her leg remained excruciating. It felt like she had been stung by a thousand bees or like her leg was on fire.

In addition to the pain and the constant urge to throw up, she felt confused. It was hard to keep track of

time. Sometimes, it felt like she had been alone in the woods for hours, but other times it felt like it had just been a few minutes.

Her ankle and calf were swollen and turning black. She untied her shoe and took off her sock. The bite was still bleeding.

Why did this have to happen? she thought. *I hope Mom and Dad don't blame Hickory. It's not his fault.*

I wonder if he's actually getting help, Samantha thought. She pictured Hickory lost in the woods or happily splashing around in a different part of the creek.

Hickory was a sweet dog, but he was still learning how to behave. Sometimes, he was too happy for his own good. He was always jumping on chairs and tables and people. The Petersons were watching videos about how to train him, but they hadn't gotten very far.

Samantha tried to keep thinking

about the dog so that she would not have to think about her situation. She pictured how Hickory sometimes tried to climb into her lap. Then, the pain grew so strong that it jumbled all her thoughts.

She looked at her leg again. The swelling had increased. *I don't think I can just stay here and wait,* she thought to herself. *I need to try to get home.*

Samantha saw a long branch a few feet away that would make a good walking stick. She crawled toward it and grabbed it with both hands.

Using the walking stick, Samantha propped herself up. She was so dizzy and disoriented that she almost fainted, but she closed her eyes and waited for her head to stop spinning.

One step at a time, she thought. She took one slow step toward home, leaning on the stick. Then, she took another shaky, hesitant step. Her legs were weak and unsteady. She took a few more steps, then stopped to rest

against a tree.

“I think I can do this,” she muttered. Another step, then another, then another. She felt a wave of nausea again, but this one she could not fight back. She leaned on her walking stick and threw up. She stumbled a few more steps, and then the stick snapped in two, throwing Samantha face down on the ground.

For the first time in her ordeal, Samantha started to cry.

That’s when she heard the bark.

It was far away and hard to hear, but it was definitely a bark.

After a few seconds, she heard another one. Then, a third.

The barks seemed to be getting closer.

That’s Hickory, she thought. I hope he brought help!

Now, she could hear the dog approaching, tearing through bushes and barking the whole time. She lifted her head and saw him bounding toward



her. Behind Hickory, a small figure was barely visible coming through the woods. It was Tim! Samantha had never been so happy to see her brother.

After a few moments, Tim was standing next to her, panting to catch his breath.

“Samantha, what happened?” he asked with a terrified look on his face.

“I got bit by a poisonous snake. You need to get Mom or Dad, and I need to go to a hospital.”

CHAPTER FOUR



Saving Samantha

Talking to Tim had taken all of her energy. Samantha closed her eyes. She heard Tim tell Hickory to stay with her and then the sound of her brother running away. The dog lay next to the sick girl. Samantha reached out her arm and wrapped it around Hickory’s warm, comforting body.



What happened next was a blur. Samantha remembered being lifted by her father and carried home. An ambulance was waiting in her driveway. At the hospital, she was rushed into an operating room. A team of doctors and nurses gathered around her. Sometimes, she could see her mom's or dad's face behind the medical team. Then, she fell into a long, deep sleep.

When she woke up, she was in a different room. She didn't know how much time had passed. It could have been five minutes. It could have been five hours. Her mom was holding her hand and looking concerned.

"Samantha? Are you awake?" her mom asked. "You're going to be fine. We're all here for you."

Samantha lay in bed, enjoying the sunshine from the big window. She felt warm and comfortable. Her mom continued to talk to her gently. Soon, her brother and dad entered the room. Their arms were full of flowers.

The family was full of questions. Samantha explained what had happened. She took lots of long pauses to rest.

A nurse came in and was surprised to see Samantha awake. He called in a doctor. Soon, the little room was crowded with family, nurses, and doctors. Everyone looked down at the girl in the bed.

One doctor explained what had happened to Samantha. The snake that had bitten her was called a cottonmouth. The snake venom made it impossible for her blood to coagulate. The doctor explained that this meant her blood kept flowing from the wound instead of forming a scab.

The doctor said that the venom did a lot of other bad things, too. “People are still studying venom to see how it works,” she said. “There might be a hundred different ingredients in venom that all impact the body in different ways.”

“I’m glad that your dog was there for

you and that your brother came right away,” she added.

“You’re going to recover and be as healthy as you were before the bite,” she continued. “But it will take time.”

The doctor told Samantha that she would be in the hospital for at least a week. Her body needed more antivenom—the medicine that fought the poison from the snake’s bite.



CHAPTER FIVE



No Next Time

When the doctor left, Samantha looked at her mom and dad. “Please don’t be mad at Hickory,” she said. “He’s a good dog. He’ll learn to be better. I promise to work really hard to train him.”

“It’s okay,” her mom said with a smile. “Don’t worry about Hickory.”

The next day, a snake expert came to see her and her family. Dr. Asper wanted to know everything about Samantha's bite. He said that the information would help keep people safe in the future.

He explained that what had happened to Samantha was very rare. "Snakes normally try hard not to bite humans. They need a long time to create their poison." He said that if they use it to defend themselves, they might not be able to hunt for weeks afterward.

"I think the cottonmouth that bit you was focused on Hickory," Dr. Asper said. "Then, you stepped right next to it. That's why it attacked."

"Watching where you step is the main way to stay safe," Dr. Asper added. "Wearing jeans and boots can also help if you're going to be walking through tall grass."

"What if we see a snake we think is a cottonmouth?" Tim asked.

"Just leave it alone," Dr. Asper said.

CHAPTER SIX



Runaway Tim

"Tim, come back!" Samantha called to her brother, who was far ahead of her in the woods. Hickory ran next to the girl, safely secured on a leash.

She could hear Tim laugh. "I'll get there first!" he yelled.

By the time Samantha got to the creek, Tim was already in the water

with his pants rolled up to his ankles. Samantha waded in with Hickory, watching each step.

Samantha unclipped Hickory's leash. The dog joyfully danced through the water, exploring, and then coming back to Samantha.

She would never forget the snakebite. And she would never like snakes. But Samantha knew she was safe as long as she was careful.

All three of them played in the creek until they were wet and tired.

"Hickory, it's time to head home," Samantha said. "We'll come back to Cottonmouth Creek tomorrow!"



About Us

The Author

Ben Nussbaum lives with his family near Washington, DC. He has written many books for children and edited many books for adults.

Ben once encountered a rattlesnake while hiking in the woods. It was in the middle of the trail. He carefully walked very far around it.

The Illustrator

Chris Jones has been illustrating for children for over 10 years. He has a passion for visual storytelling, and his work can be found in picture books, graphic novels, and magazines. He lives in Toronto, Canada and reads books with his two children as often as possible.

Book Club Questions

1. What does Hickory look like? How does he help Samantha?
2. How does the snakebite impact Samantha's body?
3. Describe how Samantha shows perseverance in the story.
4. Explain how Samantha gets from the creek to the hospital.
5. What role does Tim play in Samantha's rescue?
6. What is the worst pain you've ever experienced? How do you think it compares to the bite described in the story?