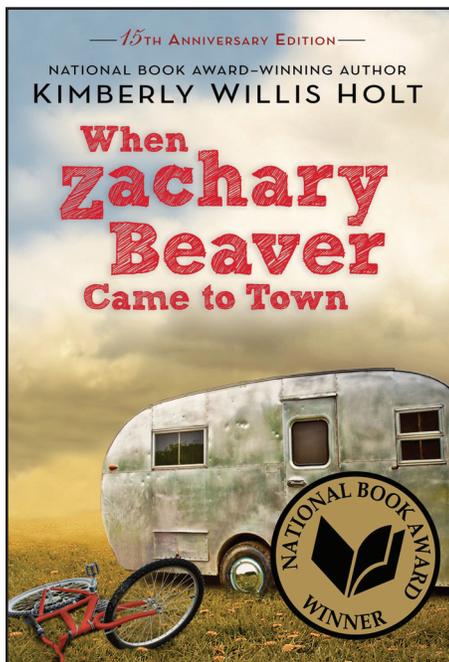


# A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

# When Zachary Beaver Came to Town

FOR  
USE WITH  
COMMON CORE  
STATE  
STANDARDS



Ages 10-14 • Grades 4 to 8

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## About the Book

With understated elegance, Kimberly Willis Holt tells a compelling coming-of-age story about a thirteen-year-old boy struggling to find himself in an imperfect world. At turns passionate and humorous, this extraordinary novel deals sensitively and candidly with obesity, war, and the true power of friendship.

*When Zachary Beaver Came to Town* is the winner of the 1999 National Book Award for Young People's Literature.

## About the Author

KIMBERLY WILLIS HOLT is the author of many award-winning novels for young adults and children, including *The Water Seeker*, *My Louisiana Sky*, and *Keeper of the Night*. She is also the author of the bestselling Piper Reed series of chapter books and of picture books that include *Waiting for Gregory* and *Skinny Brown Dog*. *When Zachary Beaver Came to*



*Town* was her third book and won a National Book Award for Young People's Literature. Holt was born in Pensacola, Florida, and has lived all over the world—from Paris to Norfolk to Guam to New Orleans. She long dreamed of being a writer, but first worked as a radio news director, a promoter for a water park, and an interior decorator, among other jobs. She resides in Texas with her family.

To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!



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## Pre-Reading Activity

Take a good look at the cover and title of the book. Make predictions about the story and where it might take place.

## Discussion Questions

1. (Chapter 2) In chapter 2 Toby and Cal see Zachary for the first time. What if you were Zachary? How would you feel having people pay money to gawk at you?
2. (Chapter 3) Toby's mom is away for a while and the men have to do all the cooking and household chores. Do you think it is important for boys and men to know how to do "women's work"? Explain.
3. (Chapter 4) Toby is an only child and Cal has brothers and sisters. Which type of family would you prefer to live in and why?
4. (Chapter 7) Zachary has a chance to rat on Cal and Toby for breaking the window in his trailer. Why do you think Zachary kept quiet and didn't say anything to the sheriff?
5. (Chapter 8) Toby's mom didn't win the singing contest in Nashville and has decided not to come home for a while. How would you feel if your mother did something like this?
6. (Chapter 18) Scarlett is rather disgusted with Juan because he doesn't seem to know how to treat a girl. Write some tips for Juan on how to act around girls and some of the nice things a girl would like for a young man to do.
7. (Chapter 19) Toby's dad tells him, "You are a lucky person if you go through life and have one person need you." He was referring to Cal needing Toby to help him get through losing his brother, Wayne. Do you have a person in your life who needs you? Explain.
8. (Chapter 20) Zachary has never had the opportunity to be baptized. Why do you think it is important to him that he fulfills this goal?

**CCSS: SL4.1.A, SL4.1.C, SL5.1.A, SL5.1.C, SL6.1.A, SL6.1.C, SL7.1.A, SL7.1.C**

## Common Core Activities

✂ Read the first line aloud: "Nothing ever happens in Antler, Texas." Look at a map of Texas and find an area where Antler could be located. Discuss the meaning of the "panhandle" of Texas.

**CCSS: RL4.4, RL5.4, RL5.5, RL6.4, RL6.5**

✂ (Chapter 3) Using a Venn diagram, compare/contrast yourself to the main character, Toby. This will give you a better insight into him.

**CCSS: RL5.3**



✂ (Chapter 6) Cal never writes his brother, Wayne, who is in Vietnam. Write a letter to Wayne from Cal and describe to him what is going on in Antler this summer.

**CCSS: RL4.1, RL5.1, RL6.1, RL7.1; W4.3, W5.3, W6.3, W7.3**

✂ (Chapter 7) Toby and Cal realize that Zachary has been left behind by the guy in the Thunderbird. Make a list of ways they can help Zachary, who is a stranger in town.

**CCSS: W4.1, W5.1, W6.1, W7.1**

✂ (Chapter 13) Cal and Toby take Zachary on an adventure to the drive-in. Since Zachary doesn't get out much, he is amazed at the sights he sees. Write a descriptive paragraph of what Zachary sees on the way to the drive-in. This can be illustrated also.

**CCSS: SL4.5, SL5.5, SL6.5, SL7.5; W4.3, W5.3, W6.3, W7.3**

✂ (Chapter 16) Zachary hasn't actually been to all the places he talks about. He has visited these places through books. Have a collection of travel brochures available for the students. Let them "travel" to different countries and cities by reading the brochures. After their visit, have them write and illustrate a postcard to someone back home telling all about the wonderful place they visited.

**CCSS: W4.3, W4.7, W5.3, W5.7, W6.3, W6.7, W7.3, W7.7**

✂ (Chapter 17) After Wayne's death Toby doesn't know what to say to his best friend, Cal. Maybe it would be easier to write down his thoughts. Write a letter to Cal, as if you are Toby, expressing your heartfelt sorrow about Wayne's death. You may have lost a loved one and can relate to the feelings that Toby is having at this time.

**CCSS: RL4.3, RL6.3, RL7.3; W4.3, W5.3, W6.3, W7.3**

✂ The Ladybug Waltz is an important event in Antler. Select some classical music, preferably Mozart, to listen to while drawing your version of what the Ladybug Waltz looked like. On a large sheet of white paper, draw the cotton field with all the residents of Antler standing in the middle of it with paper bags full of ladybugs. Don't forget that Zachary was also there to experience this wonderful adventure.

**CCSS: SL4.5, SL5.5, SL6.5, SL7.5**

✂ Miss Myrtie Mae, the photographer, is very proud of the photos she has taken this summer. Ferris hangs them on the wall of the café for all to see. Your students can make a class photo album of their own. On 5x6 index card, have the students illustrate their favorite part of the book. Glue the "photos" on construction paper and bind them together for an album. What a great way to remember all that happened in the town of Antler that summer of '71!

**CCSS: SL4.5, SL5.5, SL6.5, SL7.5**



✂ Friendship is a very important issue in this book. In your own words, explain what it means to you to have friends and, most important, to be a friend.

CCSS: W4.2, W5.2, W6.2, W7.2

## Activities for Outside the Classroom

✂ (Chapter 8) Scarlett tells Toby that he is “Great!” This made Toby feel wonderful. Pick one of your friends or someone you don’t know very well who may need a little boost in self-esteem. Do something nice today to make that person feel “great”.

Suggestions: Give a compliment. Write a note expressing your appreciation for this person being your friend. Ask this person to join you at recess or lunch. Offer to help this person with homework or a class project.

✂ (Chapter 18) We find out that Juan comes from the “Mexican” part of town, which seems to be a poor area. Juan is embarrassed to attend a function with Scarlett because he doesn’t have the proper attire. This would be a wonderful opportunity to have a discussion with the class about people who are less fortunate than they are. Most students have clothing at home that they have outgrown. Have them collect unwanted clothing to share with those who are less fortunate in the neighborhood, the community, or even at the school.

Original questions and activities written by Patti Roberts, a teacher at University Elementary School in Shreveport, Louisiana.



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