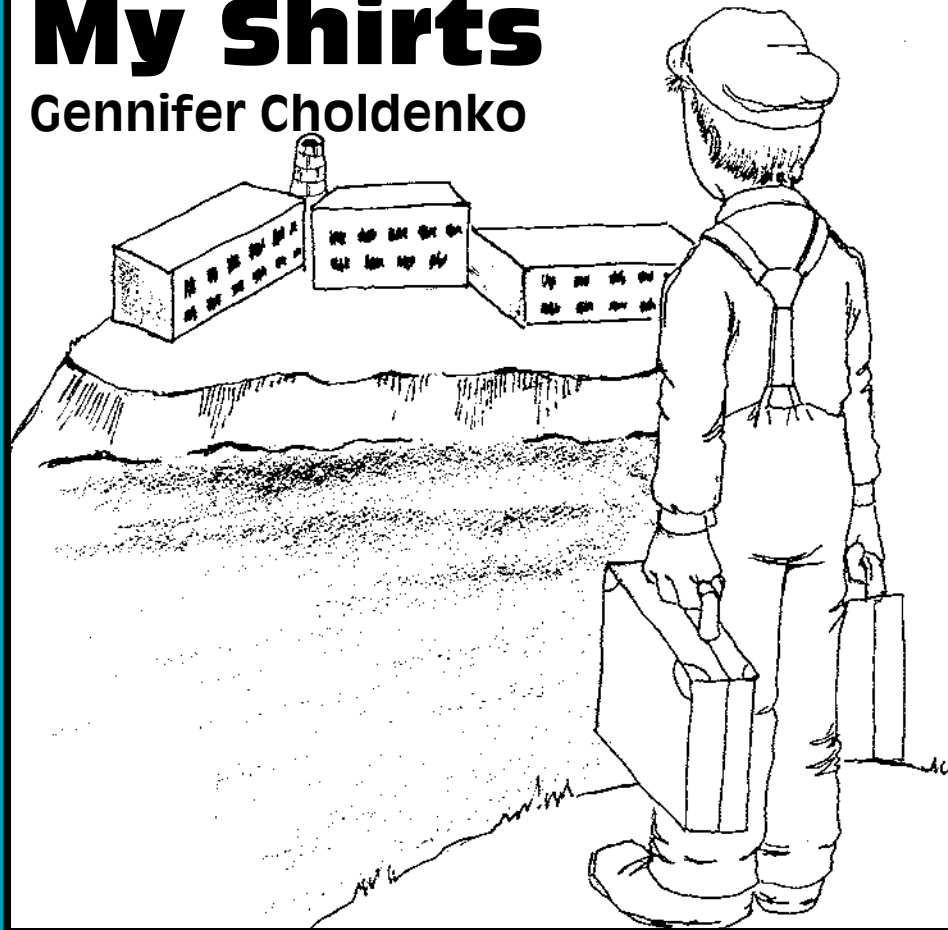


Novel·Ties

Al Capone Does My Shirts

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A Study Guide

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LEARNING LINKS

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For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide to use in conjunction with the novel *Al Capone Does My Shirts* consists of lessons for guided reading. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different novel at its own reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for reading development by distributing the novel and a folder to each child. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading a chapter; all other work should be done after the chapter has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging students' love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits, formed by practice in focusing on interpretive comprehension and literary techniques, will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

San Francisco

The city of San Francisco is located on the tip of the San Francisco Peninsula in Northern California. The city is famous for its forty-three hills, all of which are within city limits. Several islands are a part of the city, including Alcatraz Island and Treasure Island.

On the morning of April 18, 1906, a major earthquake struck San Francisco, destroying about three-quarters of the city. The citizens quickly rebuilt, however, celebrating the rebirth of their city at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915. In the years that followed, San Francisco established itself as a financial center. When the stock market crashed in 1929, not a single city-based bank failed. In fact, it was during the Great Depression that the city began two great engineering projects—the building of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge. It was also in this period, in August 1934, that the island of Alcatraz, a former military stockage, became a federal prison. During its twenty-nine years as a prison, the jail housed such notorious figures as Machine Gun Kelly, Robert Franklin Stroud (the Birdman of Alcatraz), and Al Capone. The facility also housed the prison staff and their families.

Al Capone

Alphonse Capone, better known as Al Capone or Scarface, was an infamous gangster who ruled over Chicago's organized crime during the second half of the 1920s. Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1899 to two Italian immigrants, young Al never responded well to authority. Facing a life of low-paying jobs, he joined a street gang and began a life of crime.

After moving to Chicago to avoid a murder charge, Capone eventually became the head of Chicago's crime families. With his mob at its prime, Capone bought off city officials and virtually ran the streets of Chicago. On February 14, 1929 he ordered the shooting of Bugs Moran, a rival gangster. In what is known as the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, Capone's men killed a group of seven people, but Moran was not in the group. The much-publicized event prompted law officials to renew efforts to tackle the problem of organized crime.

Unable to convict Capone on any mob-related criminal acts, the federal government began looking at other ways to convict him. The Internal Revenue Service gathered tax evasion information on Capone. On November 24, 1929, Capone was sentenced to eleven years in Federal prison for tax evasion. He was jailed at Alcatraz from 1934 to 1939. Capone's health was never the same after leaving jail. He died of a stroke and pneumonia on January 25, 1947.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Preview the book by reading the title and the author's name and by looking at the picture on the cover. What do you think the book is about? Will it be serious or humorous? When and where do you think it takes place?
2. Read the Background Information about the city of San Francisco, Alcatraz, and Al Capone on page three of this study guide. Then read the Author's Note at the back of the novel to find out more information. Make a list of any questions you have about the material. Then, as you read the novel, see if you can find the answers to these questions.
3. **Cooperative Learning Activity:** Learn about autism in the Background Information on page four in this study guide and the Author's Note at the back of the novel. Do some additional research on the topic. Then brainstorm with a small group of classmates to fill in the first two columns of a K-W-L chart, such as the one below. When you finish the book, return to the chart to complete the third column.

Autism		
What I Know -K-	What I Want to Learn -W-	What I Learned -L-

4. Imagine that you have a brother or sister with autism. What increased responsibilities might you have? How might this affect your everyday life? How would you feel about this? As you read the novel, compare your feelings with those of Moose.
5. Have you read any other books set in the United States in the 1930s? If so, when and where were these stories set? What types of problems did people in these books have to face?
6. As you read, use the diagram of Alcatraz Island at the beginning of the book to trace the action of the story.
7. **Cooperative Learning Activity:** Work with a small cooperative learning group to discuss the meaning of "responsibility." Make a list of the responsibilities you owe your family. Then make a list of the responsibilities you owe yourself. Do any of these conflict? What problems might this cause?
8. *Al Capone Does My Shirts* is a book of historical fiction—one that uses history as a background for imagined events. The characters in such a work may be fictional or historical or both. Discuss with your classmates other works of historical fiction they have read and the periods of history they covered. What do they enjoy about this type of book? What challenges does an author face when writing such a work?
9. With your classmates read the first three paragraphs of the story and respond to the following questions:
 - What do you learn about the character telling the story?
 - Where does the story take place?
 - How does the author grab the reader's attention?
 - What do you want to find out?