Rudy Rides the Rails:
A Depression Era Story

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Rudy Rides the Rails

Pre-reading and background building activities

Anticipatory questions:
Ask the following questions and discuss responses before reading Rudy Rides the Rails by Dandi Daley Mackall.

1. Does everyone have the right to a job?

2. What would happen if farmers left their crops in the field to rot?

3. What would happen to teachers if schools closed down?

4. What would happen to students if schools closed down?

5. What might be the consequences if banks ran out of money?

6. What would you do if there were no food for dinner?

7. What is a hobo?

Before reading Rudy Rides the Rails, read the author’s note to the class. Discuss.
Plural nouns can be formed in many ways. Some plurals add s to the word; some add es or ies, and some totally change form.

Make each of these nouns plural.

1. hobo ___________________________
2. family __________________________
3. brother __________________________
4. ox _______________________________
5. book _____________________________
6. mouse ____________________________
7. house _____________________________
8. box _______________________________
9. train _____________________________
10. child ____________________________

Add three plurals of your own to this list.
A simile compares two things using the words “like” or “as.” Example—
Her hair was like the golden sun.

Find 4 similes in Rudy Rides the Rails. Write the whole phrase.

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________
4. ____________________________________________

Write 3 similes of your own.

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________
The Great Depression Math

Rudy Rides the Rails

GROCERY PRICES DURING THE DEPRESSION

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BREAD</td>
<td>9 cents a loaf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILK</td>
<td>14 cents a quart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROUND STEAK</td>
<td>12 cents a pound</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHICKEN</td>
<td>10 cents a pound</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Rudy went to the store with a $1.00 bill. His mother told him to buy 1 loaf of bread, 2 quarts of milk, and 2 pounds of steak. How much change did he get back?

2. Anna, Eva, and Edna put their money together to buy 2 pounds of steak. Each girl paid 1/3 of the cost. How much did each girl pay?

3. How many pounds of chicken could Jim buy with $1.50?

4. Emily had $1.25 to spend for dinner for her family of four. Plan her menu. State what you will buy and the total cost.
Give each student a copy of the following cards related to the book *Rudy Rides the Rails*. Have students divide cards into three piles. Pile 1 should relate to people and items from the Depression. Pile 2 should contain items that you would only find now. Pile 3 should contain items that could be found both in the Depression era and now.

- Trains
- Hoover blanket
- Bread lines
- Cell phones
- Closed banks
- ATM machine
Time Travel *Continued* (2)

- President Herbert Hoover
- Diner
- Mulligan stew
- President George Bush
- Bread at 9 cents a loaf
- Hobo signs
Time Travel *Continued* (3)

Radio

Computers

Books

Add one item to each group
Throughout the book *Rudy Rides the Rails*, Rudy encounters many hoboes along the way. Many help Rudy make it through his trip. The hoboes are called by interesting nicknames.

Circle the names of the hoboes Rudy met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fishbones</th>
<th>Dog Paws</th>
<th>Moose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box Car Betty</td>
<td>Caboose Charlie</td>
<td>Elk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.I. Joe</td>
<td>Texas Slim</td>
<td>Big Bob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Pete</td>
<td>Drumming Dave</td>
<td>Banjo Bill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What would you choose as your name if you had the chance to be a hobo?

______________________________________________

Explain your choice ___________________________________________________
Rudy encountered many people on his journey across the United States during the Depression. Some people were helpful and understanding while others just chased him away.

Choose a person from the box below to complete each sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frisco Fred</th>
<th>Ma</th>
<th>Preacher Jones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fishbones</td>
<td>Shorty Sims</td>
<td>Bulls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Taught Rudy to read hobo signs __________________________

2. Chased Rudy off the train ________________________________

3. Taught Rudy to tie his bundle handkerchief over his eyes ____________

4. Told stories about mountain men ____________________________

5. Showed him how to tie a wet kerchief around his neck to keep cool ________________________________

6. Gave him cheese, bread, and $ 2.10 ___________________________

Which character was your favorite? _____________________________

Explain why ____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
Read the exciting book *Rudy Rides the Rails*. Can you imagine what life was like for Rudy and the 250,000 other teenagers who decided to ride the rails?

Number the sentences below in the order they happened.

_____ Rudy carves a hobo sign on his family’s porch.

_____ Pa lost his job.

_____ Rudy arrives in California.

_____ He meets Fishbone.

_____ Rudy catches an eastbound train.

_____ Rudy becomes “Ramblin’ Rudy.”

_____ Rudy decides to become a hobo to help his family.

Choose one of the above events and draw a picture of the people involved, showing how they felt.
Throughout Rudy Rides the Rails you will learn about the different jobs he did to earn money and keep himself alive.

Circle the jobs he held during his trip.

Picked fruit in California
Field work
Served ice cream
Swept a saloon
Painted a church
Cleaned railroad cars
Walked dogs
Washed windows
Unloaded fruit
Chopped wood
Could You Do It?

Think about what it was like for Rudy to leave his family behind and decide to become a hobo. Learn about his story in *Rudy Rides the Rails*.

Make a list of all of the personal qualities Rudy must have had to make the decision to hit the rails.
Example–brave

Do you think if you had been Rudy you would have made the choice to leave home and head to California? ______
Explain your answer.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________
Rudy makes a decision in *Rudy Rides the Rails* to leave home and try to make it in the world on his own. You’ll discover what he faced during his adventure.

In today’s world there are many homeless teenagers and adults.

Make a list comparing the difficulties homeless teenagers and homeless adults face.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEENAGERS</th>
<th>ADULTS</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Would it be easier or harder to be homeless today than it was in the 1920s? _________________
Explain ____________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Learn what life was like during the Great Depression that happened in the United States in *Rudy Rides the Rails*. This book gives you just one example of what happened to families during this difficult time.

Write the thoughts of Rudy, his mother, and his father about Rudy’s leaving home.

RUDY

MOTHER

FATHER
In *Rudy Rides the Rails* you will see what it might have been like to travel across the United States in a railroad car.

Survey 25 people to find their favorite forms of transportation.

**BICYCLE**  **CAR**  **TRAIN**  **AIRPLANE**

Use the data you collected to make a bar graph showing the results. Remember to label your graph. Make it colorful.
Make a rubber band guitar

Rudy and his friends got together many evenings to sing and play music. They didn’t have a radio or i-Pod; they had to make their own music.

Try making your own rubber band guitar and see if you can play a tune on it.

Materials
Five rubber bands of different lengths and thicknesses
An empty tissue box
2 pieces of wood, ½ inch square. Cut to the size of the box width.

Directions
1. Glue your pieces of wood on the short sides of your tissue box.
2. Stretch the rubber bands around the box and over the wood.
3. Experiment with the sounds you get with the different rubber bands.
4. Learn to play a tune on your guitar.

Try making a bass guitar using a bucket, a string, and a broomstick.
Rudy’s Journey

Does a railroad trip across the country sound like fun? Read about the trip that Rudy took and why he took it, in *Rudy Rides the Rails*.

Use the map of the United States below to show Rudy’s route to and from California. Print the names of the states and the cities Rudy visited on the map.

Use **RED** to show his route to California and **BLUE** to show his return to Ohio.
There were many songs written about the hard times people had during the Depression. One of the most popular songs was “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?”

Choose one of the following and write about life as a hobo riding the rails during the Depression.

SONG
POEM
RAP
What Happened Next?

Learn about life during the Depression in the book *Rudy Rides the Rails*. You will discover the story of one boy and his family and what they did to survive during this very difficult time.

Write a play about what happens to Rudy and his family after he returns.

Don’t forget to include: characters, setting, plot, and resolution. Have fun and be creative!
Discover the story of one of the 250,000 teenage boys who rode the railroads across the United States during the Depression. *Rudy Rides the Rails* is a wonderful story about one boy’s struggles and adventures.

Write a journal entry from the *point of view* of a teenage boy who is riding the rails in the 1930s. Why did you leave home? What experiences did you have? What are your fears? What are your hopes?

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The hoboes who rode the rails in *Rudy Rides the Rails* would often combine the food they were given into a big pot and make Mulligan Stew. Enjoy this version of Mulligan Stew.

### Mulligan Stew

- 1 lb. of hamburger, browned and drained
- 1 lb. of pork sausage, browned and drained
- 1 small chicken, cooked and diced
- 1 onion diced
- 1 can dark kidney beans with juice
- 1 package of small carrots
- 4 large diced potatoes
- 2 cans of whole tomatoes
- ½ stalk of celery, diced
- 1 quart of tomato juice
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in a large soup pot and simmer for 6 hours, stirring occasionally.

Take a big bowl and enjoy your hobo stew.
Rudy’s Story Map

Read and enjoy the story of Rudy and his adventures in *Rudy Rides the Rails*.

Construct a story map to show the setting, plot, conflict, and resolution of the story.

**Story Map**

Setting ____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

Plot ______________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

Conflict __________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

Resolution of conflict _____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________
Design a Symbol

How did the hoboes know where to ask for food on their trips cross-country? Learn the unique system they used in “Rudy Rides the Rails.”

Design your own symbol for each phrase.

1. Keep quiet
2. Good place for a handout
3. Camp here
4. Danger
5. Work available
6. Ill-tempered woman
7. Kindness here
8. Go this way
9. OK, all right

Add your own sign to the list.
**RUDY RIDES THE RAILS**
**ANSWER SHEET**

**Plurals** - 1) hoboes  2) families  3) brothers  4) oxen  5) books  6) mice  7) houses  
                      8) boxes  9) trains  10) children

**Similes** - 1) floor boards shook like chattering teeth  2) It shook him like dice in a cup  
                      3) Rudy took off running like lightning on fire  4) Inside the box car was as black as coal

**Math** - 1) 39 cents  2) 8 cents  3) 15 lbs.

**Time Travel** - 3- trains, homeless people, Mulligan stew, radio, diner, books  
                      1- Bread for 9 cents a loaf, hobo signs, Hoover blanket, bread lines, closed banks,  
                         President Herbert Hoover  
                      2- cell phones, ATM, President George Bush, computers

**Hobo Nicknames** - Fishbones, Box Car Betty, Moose, Texas Slim, Banjo Bill

**Who Did It** - 1) Fishbones  2) Bulls  3) Shorty Sims  4) Preacher Jones  5) Frisco Fred  
                      6) Ma

**Sequencing** - 7, 1, 4, 3, 6, 5, 2

**Rudy’s Jobs** - field work, swept a saloon, painted a church, washed windows, chopped wood, unloaded fruit