

## A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussions, library programs, or classroom activities.

Meet Ohio-born author Sharon Creech and learn about her many celebrated books for children and teens.

Select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading *The Boy on the Porch*.

Discover more novels, nonfiction titles, and websites to explore topics and themes in depth.

# The Boy on the Porch

By Sharon Creech

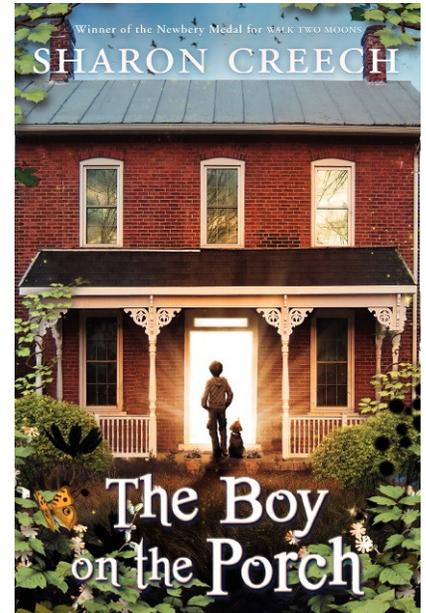


## About the Book

*When John and Marta found the boy on the porch, they were curious, naturally, as to why he was there—and they hadn't expected him to stay, not at first, but he did stay, day after day, until it seemed as if he belonged, running and smiling and laughing his silent laugh, tapping and patting on every surface as he made his music, and painting—with water, with paint, with mud—those swirly swirls and swings and trees.*

One day a young couple wakes to find a boy asleep on their porch. Unable to speak, the boy cannot explain his history. What kind of people would leave their child with strangers? All John and Marta know is that they have been chosen to care for this boy. As their connection to him grows, they embrace his exuberant spirit and talents. The three of them blossom into an unlikely family, but how long can their happiness last?

From Newbery Medal winner Sharon Creech comes a singular story that reminds us of the surprising connections that emerge when generosity prevails.



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## Book Details

*The Boy on the Porch* by Sharon Creech.

HarperCollins, 2013, ISBN 9780061892356. Ages 8-12. 680 Lexile.

<http://www.harpercollins.com/9780061892356/the-boy-on-the-porch>

Available as an ebook and digital audiobook through the Ohio Digital Library:

<http://ohdbks.lib.overdrive.com>

Enjoy this video of Sharon Creech reading the beginning of *The Boy on the Porch*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5RIDCwJspo>



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## About the Author

Sharon Creech is the author of the Newbery Medal winner **Walk Two Moons** (a Choose to Read Ohio selection), the Newbery Honor winner **The Wanderer**, and the Carnegie Medal winner **Ruby Holler**. Her other works include **The Great Unexpected**, **The Unfinished Angel**, **Hate That Cat**, **The Castle Corona**, **Replay**, **Heartbeat**, **Granny Torrelli Makes Soup**, **Love That Dog**, **Bloomability**, **Absolutely Normal Chaos**, **Chasing Redbird**, and **Pleasing the Ghost**, as well as three picture books: **A Fine, Fine School**; **Fishing in the Air**; and **Who's That Baby?** A native of South Euclid in the Cleveland area, Sharon Creech and her husband live in Camden, Maine.

## Author Resources

### Sharon Creech's official website

<http://www.sharoncreech.com/>

### Author page on HarperCollins website

<http://www.harpercollins.com/cr-100471/sharon-creech>

### Ohio Authors: Sharon Creech (Ohio Center for the Book)

<http://www.ohiocenterforthebook.org/OhioAuthors/CreechSharon.aspx>

### Sharon Creech speaks at the 2009 National Book Festival

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pm\\_wR5730Q8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pm_wR5730Q8)

### For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

Contact Stephanie Macy, School & Library Marketing,  
HarperCollins Children's Books:

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## Go Further

*Ideas for extending the experience of reading **The Boy on the Porch**.*

The ending of **The Boy on the Porch** challenges the reader to imagine the changes in Jacob's life from a few clues: his appearance and the things he carries. Write your own story of how and why Jacob arrived on the porch a second time, ending with the moment when Jacob wakes to see John, Marta, and Beagle. (W.3-7.3a-e; W.3-7.4)

Write an argument on "What Makes a Parent?" For a time, Marta and John care for Jacob. Eventually they care for other children as well. Consider definitions of "mother," "father," and "parents." Do Marta and John's actions make them parents? Develop a thesis statement that answers this

question. Then, using examples from the story, write an opinion essay in support of your thesis. (W.3-7.1a-e; W.3-7.4)

Pretend you are a reporter for the local paper. Using online resources available to students through INFOhio (<http://www.infohio.org/>) and to all Ohio residents through Ohio Web Library (<http://www.ohioweblibrary.org>), research how people in Ohio become foster parents, what their responsibilities are, and the good work they do for kids. Then write your report, making sure to integrate compelling quotations and facts to inform your readers about foster parenting. (W.3-7.2a-f; W.3-7.4; W.3-7.7)

**"The sight of his  
wife with the  
child in her lap  
made John feel  
peculiar.  
He felt joy and  
surprise and  
worry and fear  
all at once,  
in such a rush,  
making him  
dizzy."**

## Talk About It

Topics to share when discussing **The Boy on the Porch** with young readers.

*Educators:* Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's New Learning Standards (Common Core) English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Examples are listed below; other standards also apply. **Not a Drop to Drink** may also support standards in Science (Environmental Science: Global Environmental Problems and Issues) and Social Studies (World Geography: Movement).

*Librarians, parents, and others:* These discussion questions are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. They are included for teachers who want to use this book in school. For more information, see the Ohio Dept. of Education website, <http://education.ohio.gov>. Click on "Ohio's New Learning Standards" in the Teacher Resources section.

Who are this story's point-of-view characters, and what point of view is used to tell the story? How can you tell? Use examples. Do the point-of-view characters always interpret what's happening in the story the way you do? What are the similarities and differences? Why are there sometimes differences between your interpretation of events and the point-of-view characters' interpretations? (RL.3-6.6)

What do you know and infer about Jacob's parents from their action of leaving him on the porch and from the note Marta and John find? When you finally learned the truth about his parents, were you surprised? Why or why not? (RL.3-7.1)

On page 21, Marta says: "John, we should stop calling him 'boy.' It isn't right. It makes him sound—I don't know—unimportant." What does she mean by this? Do you agree or disagree? Why? (RL.3-6.4)

Is Jacob's music a language or is it simply sound he makes to express himself? Explain your answer. Do you think you would have an easy time communicating with him? Why or why not? (SL.3-7.1d)

On page 52, John asks Marta where Jacob comes up with the ideas for his paintings. Marta says, "I don't know. I think he's a genius." What does she mean by this? Do you agree or disagree? Why? What makes someone a genius and why? (RL.3-7.1, SL.3-7.1d)

Sharon Creech uses some great words to help tell her story, like "foundlings" and "glomming" on page 34, and "dilapidated," "abandoned," and "derelict" on page 92. What do these mean? How do they contribute to the tone of the story? (RL.3-6.4)

What do the shoes Jacob finds represent to him? What do they and the rest of the shoes represent to Marta and John? How do all the shoes contribute to the development of the characters and the overall storyline? (RL.4-7.1)

John and Marta eventually keep looking for the boy's parents. Are they right or wrong to do so? Why? Would you have done the same thing if you were one of them? Why or why not? (SL.3-7.1d)

What does the ending suggest about Jacob's life since John and Marta last saw him? Explain your answer. Why do you think Sharon Creech ends the story where she does? Before you read the end, what did you think would happen and why? (RL.3-7.1)

Discussion questions and activities courtesy HarperCollins, from **The Boy on the Porch Teaching Guide** (<http://645e533e2058e72657e9-f9758a43fb7c33cc8adda0fd36101899.r45.cf2.rackcdn.com/teaching-guides/TG-9780061892356.pdf>).

## Check It Out

Companion books for *The Boy on the Porch*.

Readers who like *The Boy on the Porch* may also enjoy:

**Bud, Not Buddy** by Christopher Paul Curtis (1999)

**Counting by 7s** by Holly Sloan (2014)

**Dacey's Song** by Cynthia Voight (1982)

**Hold Fast** by Blue Balliett (2013)

**Holding Up the Earth** by Dianne Gray (2006)

**Kinda Like Brothers** by Coe Booth (2014)

**A Long Walk to Water: Based on a True Story** by Linda Sue Park (2010)

**The Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place** by E. L. Konigsburg (2006)

**Pictures of Hollis Woods** by Patricia Reilly Giff (2004)

(This book was also the basis of a Hallmark Hall of Fame TV movie of the same title, which is available on DVD).

**Roxie and the Hooligans** by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor (2007)

**Ruby Holler** by Sharon Creech (2002)

**Touch Blue** by Cynthia Lord (2010)

**The Willoughbys** by Lois Lowry (2008)

Interested in learning more about foster care?

For adults, **To the End of June: The Intimate Life of American Foster Care** by Cris Beam (2014), an ALA Notable Book and *New York Times* Notable Book, explores the foster care system in depth and shines a light both on its challenges and brokenness, and on the hope and resiliency of children and families.

For children, **Maybe Days : A Book for Children in Foster Care** by Jennifer Wilgocki and Marcia Kahn Wright and illustrated by Alissa Imre Geis (2002) addresses children who are entering foster care situations, as the title indicates, but may be a good nonfiction option for other young readers as well.

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## Explore More

Additional ideas and resources to use with *The Boy on the Porch*.

### Kinder Art

<http://kinderart.org/>

If you're inspired by Jacob's artistic talent, plan some projects using this collection of freely accessible art lessons for home, school, and library/recreation programs.

### Rural Information Center

<http://ric.nal.usda.gov/>

The USDA's Rural Information Center provides services for rural communities, local officials, organizations, businesses and rural citizens working to maintain the vitality of America's rural areas. Do you live in a rural, urban, or suburban area? Is John and Marta's lifestyle familiar to you?

### Selective Mutism (from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association)

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/SelectiveMutism/>

Information on selective mutism, an anxiety disorder that causes a child to consistently not speak in certain situations. After visiting this website, discuss whether you think Jacob exhibits selective mutism in *The Boy on the Porch*.

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits:

<http://library.ohio.gov/ctro>.

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