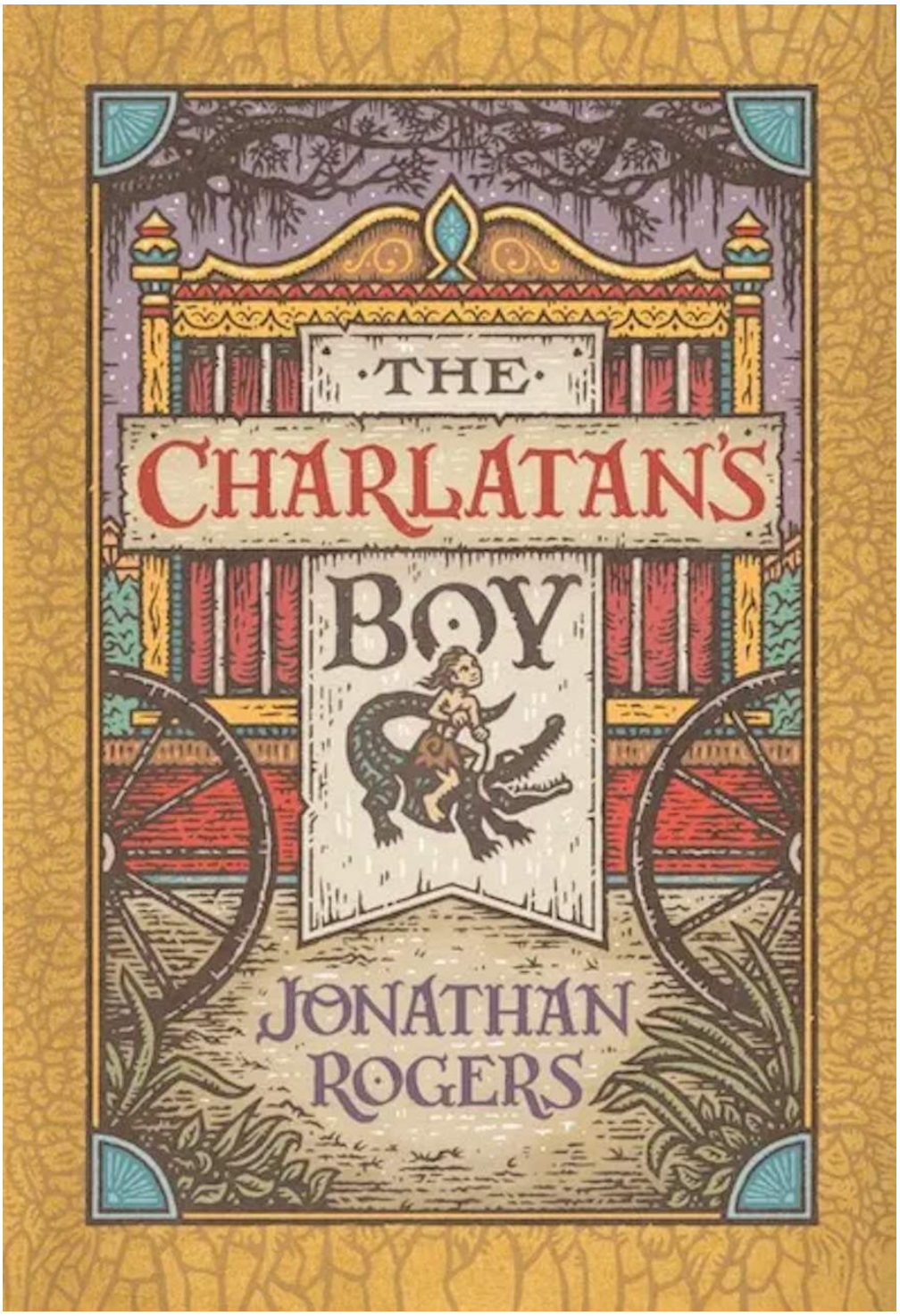
Educator's Guide



MIDDLE GRADE, AGE 8 - 12

RABBIT ROOM
PRESS

ABOUT THE BOOK

As far back as he can remember, young Grady has tramped from village to village in the company of a huckster named Floyd. The pair make a scant living by perpetrating hoaxes on the good citizens of the Corenwald frontier–all at Grady's expense. After all, Floyd never gave a moment's consideration to Grady's feelings about being exhibited as "The Ugliest Boy in the World."

But when Floyd stages an elaborate plot to revive Corenwalders' belief in mythical swampdwellers known as the feechiefolk, he overshoots the mark: what starts as "The Great Feechie Scare" quickly becomes a widespread panic that threatens the whole countryside. Yet amid all the chaos, Grady discovers a truth that has evaded him all his life—and it will change his path forever.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jonathan Rogers received an undergraduate degree from Furman University and holds a PhD in seventeenth-century English literature from Vanderbilt University. He is a lifelong devotee of the vernacular storytelling traditions of the American South, the author of the popular Wilderking Trilogy, The World According to Narnia, and The Terrible Speed of Mercy: A Spiritual Biography of Flannery O'Connor. When he is not writing his own stories, Jonathan is shepherding the stories of others as the host of The Habit—a podcast and an online hub for writers at TheHabit.co.

VOCABULARY WORDS

	DEFINITION
huckster	
flabbergasted	
scrupulous	
greenhorn	
aggravation	
phrenology	
auger	
flint	
drover	
rassle	
sympathizer	
tomfoolery	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How does Grady feel about being called ugly?

Fronie says just because he's ugly "doesn't mean he's not lovable." Does Grady agree? Do you agree?

Why does Grady decline Fromie's offer to stay with her?

Grady believes what Floyd says—why do you think that is?

What does Grady want at the beginning of the story?

Why does he think he's not good enough to be a villager?

Grady feels like he and Floyd are actors in a show. Do you agree that they're showmen, or would you call them something else? Why?

Do you like the chapter titles? Why or why not?

What is their definition of "saps," and why do saps give Grady hope?

How did Floyd and Grady set people up to believe the feechie folk attack story? Could this kind of strategy happen in the world today? Give an example.

Barbary sees and gives Grady a name: friend. Why does it make Grady so upset?

Why does no one in the village notice that Grady and Floyd are buying strange and suspicious supplies?

Why does Grady say the Feechie scare is the best he's had with Floyd?

What was your favorite part of the story?

Floyd betrays Grady, which puts Grady in danger. Were you surprised that Barbary saved him? What was Grady thinking and feeling during this incident?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Who is the other boy in the cage? What clues tell Grady that the feechies are real and he is one of them?

How did you feel when you read this? “I belong, Barbary. I belong with them.” How is Grady feeling?

At the end, Grady says that he will miss Floyd. Why do you think he says this?

Did you like the ending? Why or why not?

Grady’s belief about himself changes from the beginning to the end of the story. What does he believe about himself for most of the book? What changes at the end?

ART ACTIVITIES

On a separate piece of paper, draw what you think Grady looks like from the way he is described in the book.

On a separate piece of paper, draw what you think the wind-powered roaring machine looked like.

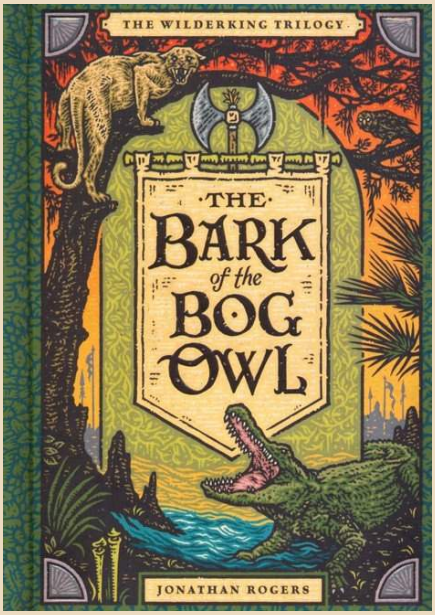


AUTHOR STUDY

“It was terrible to hear. And yet it was a comfort too. It sounded like the truth.”

Jonathan Rogers is the author of *The Charlatan’s Boy* and The Wilderking Trilogy. Read the first book in the Wilderking series, *The Bark of the Bog Owl*.

Compare and contrast *The Bark of the Bog Owl* with T*he Charlatan’s Boy*. How are the stories similar? How are they different? You can use a Venn Diagram or a t-chart.





Make a list of questions you want to ask the author, Dr. Jonathan Rogers.

Write a letter sharing what you thought of the book, T*he Charlatan’s Boy*. Include your top three questions in a fan letter. Mail the letter to Dr. Jonathan Rogers, c/o The Rabbit Room Press, 3321 Stephens Hill Ln, Antioch, TN 37013, United States.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Folklore & the Telephone Game

Folktales are rooted in oral storytelling, passed on from one generation to the next.
Read a Brer Rabbit or a Paul Bunyan folktale.
Then, whisper a summary of the story you read to a friend or family member. Have that person whisper it to another person. Try to pass the story to at least 4 people. The last person shares it out loud with the group. How did the story change? What stayed the same? What does this tell you about oral storytelling?

Snake Oil Research & Marketing

Research the meaning and history of “snake oil salesman”.
Research the meaning and history of the term “huckster.”
Which do you think Grady and Floyd were, snake oil salesmen or hucksters?
Pretend you are either a huckster or a snake oil salesman. You have a fake product that solves a problem people have. What is your product, and what does it promise to do? Write an advertisement for this product to convince people to buy it. Be sure to give it a catchy name.

What Happens Next? Writing Activity

Imagine Grady’s life at the end of the book with his feechie family. Imagine the setting with all five senses. Write about the smells, sights, tastes, sounds, and sensations. Then describe what Grady does during the day and how Grady feels in his new home.

Who Am I? Reflection

Grady believes he’s ugly. He believes what Floyd tells him. What do you believe about yourself? Do you believe something other people have told you, or that you are telling yourself? Are these beliefs really true? How do you know what is true? Write your thoughts down in a journal entry.

Educator’s Guide Created by Melissa Taylor