

SAG-AFTRA FOUNDATION PRESENTS

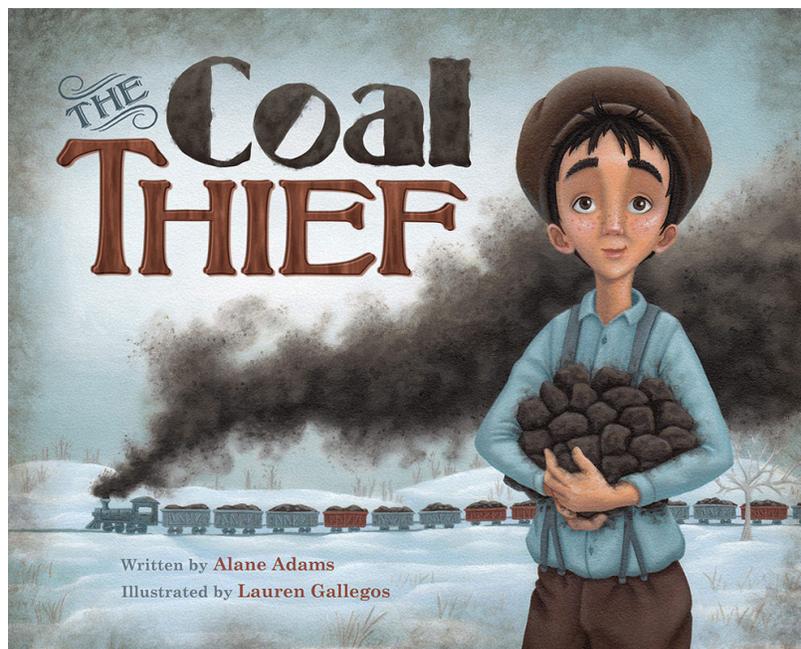
Storyline Online

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ACTIVITY GUIDE

ACTIVITIES RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN AGES 7-9



THE COAL THIEF

WRITTEN BY ALANE ADAMS

ILLUSTRATED BY LAUREN GALLEGOS

Watch the video of actor
Christian Slater
reading this story at
storylineonline.net



ABOUT THIS STORY

SYNOPSIS

Brrr! Georgie wakes up to a freezing morning in 1920's Pennsylvania and gets the bad news that there is no coal to heat the farmhouse—and he knows there is no money to buy more, either. Just after he finds this out, along comes his friend Harley, who drags him off on an adventure to find some mysterious “black gold.” Before Georgie can catch his breath, he’s in a pile of trouble—all the way up to his ears! Take a trip back in time and join Georgie in this heartwarming tale of mischief made and lessons learned in America’s storied past.

THEMES IN THE STORY

Compassion, Poverty, Peer Pressure, Generosity, Family, Life Lessons

TALK IT UP!

Use the following questions to discuss the themes of the story:

- Harley convinced Georgie to steal “black gold” from the steam engine arriving from Virginia. Georgie knew it was stealing, but he and his family were very cold. Would you steal something if you knew it would help your family?
- Think about a time that you felt pressured by a friend to do something that you did not want to do. How did that make you feel? If you were in the situation again, what would you do differently?
- Instead of returning the coal, Papa and Georgie give the coal away to the neighbors. Papa tells Georgie to leave the coal by Widow Kolbach’s house. He says, “...knock twice and run on back here.” Why do you think “Georgie’s heart felt so warm it sent tingles right down to his toes?”
- When Georgie and Papa arrive at the Children’s Home, Georgie gives a boy his coat and walks home in the cold. Would you be willing to give away your coat, shoes, food, or toys to someone that did not have any? What about your video games, phone or tablet?
- When they bring home the last piece of coal to Georgie’s mother, do you think she gets angry with Georgie for giving away his coat?

CREATIVE ARTS

SCRATCH ART

The story takes place in the winter during the 1920's in a small rural town in Pennsylvania. Re-create scenes from the story using Scratch Art.

MATERIALS —

Crayons or oil pastels, tempera paint, dish soap, shallow bottom bowl, sponge, brush or roller brush, tag board or white paper/cardstock, toothpicks or chopsticks

PREPARATION TIME —

5 minutes

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY —

15-20 minutes per picture

DIRECTIONS FOR ACTIVITY —

Step 1: Cover the surface you are working on – this is a messy project!

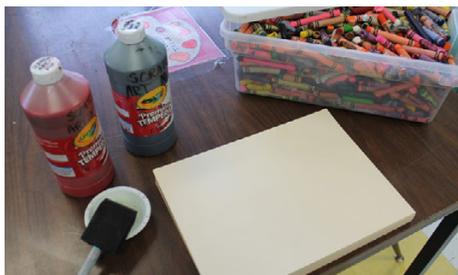
Step 2: Mix the paint in shallow bottom bowl using 1:1 ratio of tempera paint and dish soap.

Step 3: Choose your colors for your scratch board. The more colors you use, the more interesting your design!

Step 4: Press **HARD** on the tag board with your colors. Make sure you cover the entire paper with heavy, shiny coat of crayon.

Step 5: Use the sponge brush to paint a single layer over the crayon. Be sure to use long, even strokes across the paper. After it dries, add another coat.

Step 6: Using a toothpick, scratch/draw landscapes, scenes and characters from the story. For example, you can draw a freight train (don't forget the smoke!) on railroad tracks riding in a prairie full of snow. Or, you may draw Georgie and Papa with a wheelbarrow full of coal. Or, you can draw the little boy wearing Georgie's coat.



WRITING ACTIVITY: MESSAGE JOURNAL

Papa loves Georgie unconditionally. Instead of scolding Georgie for stealing the coal, Papa taught him a lesson about compassion and generosity. Use the Message Journal as a tool for exchanging experiences, lessons and feelings.

MATERIALS —

Booklet, notebook or tablet to be used as a journal or writing tool

PREPARATION TIME —

None

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY —

30 minutes

DIRECTIONS FOR ACTIVITY —

Adult and child will use notebook/booklet/tablet to print/type messages back and forth about the book. Letter format optional, example below.

Dear Dad,

I think The Coal Thief is a great story! The illustrations are really cool. Harley is not a very good friend, though. What do you think about the book?

Love,
Your little coal thief

WRITING PROMPT 1 —

“Tell me about your favorite part of the story. Explain why this part is your favorite.” Adult will respond to child’s answer.

WRITING PROMPT 2 —

Georgie and Papa are very similar. Both characters are honest, kind, helpful, smart and hard working. “In what ways are we the same? How are we different?” Adult will respond to child’s answer.

WRITING PROMPT 3 —

The story takes place in winter. “Tell me about your favorite season. What activities do you like to do in this season?” Adult will respond to child’s answer.

COOKING ACTIVITY: FLITCH (GERMAN, OLD-FASHIONED POTATO CANDY)

The Anthracite Coal Region of Pennsylvania is made up of Schuylkill, Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Northumberland, Columbia, plus the northernmost reaches of Dauphin counties. The Coal Region owes its heritage to the varied cultures of the people who settled there.

 **Google It:** Find these places on a map.

 **Google It:** Discover which cultures settled in the coal mining region of Pennsylvania.

Use this recipe for Flitch to get a “taste” of the region!

INGREDIENTS —

1 potato (about the size of an egg)
1 pound 4X Confectioner's sugar (Domino)
Vanilla extract (optional)
Peanut Butter
Wax paper

DIRECTIONS —

Peel and boil the potato. Then, in a dish, mash potato smooth with a fork. Next, slowly add confectioner's sugar. Continue adding the sugar and mixing until the mixture is the consistency of dough. If desired, add a few drops of vanilla extract.

When the dough is ready, sprinkle a little 4X sugar on a cutting board. Using wax paper, spread the mixture to a 1/4 inch thickness. Spread peanut butter atop. Roll the mixture, loosening it from the board with a knife as you roll. Cut into slices and serve.

Add a little math to your recipe:

- Use a ruler to measure $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. How many $\frac{1}{4}$ inches do you need to make a 2 inches?
- Estimate how many potatoes you will need for a dozen cookies.
- Estimate how much 4X confectioner's sugar was used for 1 potato? How much sugar would you need to use for 6 potatoes?

EXPERIMENT

Coal is called a fossil fuel because it was formed from the remains of vegetation that grew as long as 400 million years ago. Coal formation is a continuing process. What will you observe and learn about the conditions under which coal is formed?

MATERIALS —

2 liter soda bottle with the top cut off, water, fine to medium grain sand, fern fronds (leaves), twigs, plant leaves, screen or sifter, fine silt or mud

PREPARATION TIME —

15 minutes

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY —

15 minutes to start procedure; 4-6 weeks to complete process

PROCEDURE FOR EXPERIMENT —

Step 1: Pour water into container to a depth of four to six inches.

Step 2: Spread about two inches of sand on the bottom.

Step 3: Drop small leaves, sticks and pieces of fern on sand. Let it stand for about two weeks.

Step 4: Observe

- Did you notice any change in color?
- Did decomposition happen? ( **Google It: Decomposition**)

Step 5: Gently sift fine silt or mud on top of the plant layer to the depth of two inches. Wait two weeks.

Step 6: Observe – What changes have you noticed?

Step 7: Drain any water remaining and let it sit and dry for another week or two.

Step 8: Try breaking the simulated coal gently in layers to discover a fossil imprint from the plant leaves.

Tip: If you line your container with plastic wrap before you begin, you can lift the whole formation out when it is dry.

Note: This is a smelly activity! Find a location to store experiment that will not affect your sense of smell.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

In the story, coal is used in a potbellied stove to heat up homes. Luckily, we do not need coal to warm up our bodies. We can use movement, instead!

What are some activities that you can do inside when it is cold outside to warm up your body?

“FREEZE” DANCE

MATERIALS —

Music

PREPARATION TIME —

None

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY —

10 minutes

DIRECTIONS FOR ACTIVITY —

One person plays music (DJ), while the other person (dancer) moves to the beat. When the DJ stops the music, the dancer has to FREEZE in that position. If the DJ sees the dancer move, they switch roles.

COLD, WARM, HOT...COAL!

MATERIALS —

“coal” (small object for hiding)

PREPARATION TIME —

None

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY —

15 minutes

DIRECTIONS FOR ACTIVITY —

One person leaves the room, while the other person hides the “coal”. When the person returns to the room, the hider gives hints by shouting “cold”, “warmer”, “hot”, “burning up” and the like, depending on how close the person is to the hidden “coal”.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are a great way to make a real world connection to the story.

- **All Aboard!** Plan a family trip by train. Trains offer a spectacular view of rolling prairies, snow-capped mountains, expansive national parks and bustling cities.
- **Visit a museum** and explore how technology has changed since the 1920’s. Can you find a potbellied stove?
- **Do Something:** Did you know that coal generates 44% of our electricity and is the single biggest air polluter in the United States? Burning coal causes smog, soot, acid rain, global warming, and toxic air emissions. Do one thing that will help fight air pollution in your community. 🔍 Google It.

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ABOUT US

ABOUT STORYLINE ONLINE

The SAG-AFTRA Foundation's children's literacy website *Storyline Online* streams imaginatively produced videos featuring celebrated actors to help inspire a love of reading. Storyline Online receives millions of views every month in hundreds of countries. Visit Storyline Online at storylineonline.net.

ABOUT THE SAG-AFTRA FOUNDATION

The SAG-AFTRA Foundation provides vital assistance and educational programming to the professionals of SAG-AFTRA while serving the public at large through its signature children's literacy programs. Founded in 1985, the Foundation is a national non-profit organization, independent from SAG-AFTRA, and relies solely on support from grants, corporate sponsorships, and individual contributions to maintain our programs and create new ones. Visit sagaftra.foundation.

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