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Al Capone Does My Shirts

by *Gennifer Choldenko*

Teacher's Guide
for the unabridged audiobook

Introductory Material

Summary:

Moose is a young boy who moves to Alcatraz Island with his parents and his disabled sister. He has to endure many struggles. His father, a guard and electrician for the prison, is very busy and hardly ever home. His mother is constantly preoccupied with getting his sister into a special school in San Francisco. Moose meets several other children on the island, including the warden's daughter Piper. Moose can't decide whether to like Piper, or to stay away from her when she starts to cause trouble for him. During all this, Moose's main focus is protecting and helping his sister in a major and surprising way.

Themes:

Alcatraz Island; Autism; Family Problems

About the Author: Gennifer Choldenko

Gennifer Choldenko was born in Santa Monica, California in 1957. She was the youngest child in a large family. Gennifer went into advertising before she decided that what she really wanted to be was a writer. Her first book was a picture book called *Moonstruck: The True Story of the Cow Who Jumped Over the Moon*, which received several awards. Gennifer Choldenko lives in Tiburon, California with her husband and two children, and her dog Lucy.

Objectives:

By the conclusion of this book, students should be able to:

1. Identify the setting of a story and discuss the impact of the setting on the characters and plot.
2. Define a character using evidence from conversations, tone of voice, physical descriptions, and actions.
3. Establish cause and effect relationships between characters.
4. Recognize how a narrator's voice pitch, speed, and tone affect the meaning of a story.
5. List the conflicts in a story as revealed in a dramatic narration.

Preparation Questions

Warm Up Questions:

Use before beginning the tapes.

1. Have you ever had responsibility for someone, such as a sibling? How did you care for this person? Why were you given this responsibility?
2. Have you ever known anyone with autism, or heard anything about it? How does it make the person who has it different from most people?
3. Have you ever had to move when you really didn't want to? Where did you live before you moved? What things or people helped you to adapt to your new home?

Establishing a Purpose for Listening:

Present before each chapter; students should be alert for answers as they listen. Remember to discuss these higher order questions after listening to the chapter.

Chapters 1–8

Why does Moose Flanagan move to Alcatraz Island? Why is Moose's family trying to get Natalie into a special school? What tall-tale does Mo Fose tell his new seventh grade class about what he did during his vacation?

Chapters 9–16

Whose mother is about to have a baby? Why does Natalie have to be picked up from her new school? What scheme does Piper hatch to make some money?

Chapters 17–24

Why does Moose have to change the day on which he is supposed to play baseball with Scout? Who does Piper ask for help to divide the money she's about to hand out? Who do the children sneak onto the ferry to see?

Chapters 25–32

Who is Natalie with when Moose realizes she's missing? What significance does the number 105 have to Natalie? Why does Natalie have a huge tantrum in the apartment?

Chapters 33–40

Who comes over to celebrate Natalie's birthday? Whose idea is it to reveal Natalie's real age? How does Natalie end up getting into the Esther P. Marinoff School?

Extending the Lesson:

Use these cross-curricular activities for individual assignments, collaborative work in pairs and groups, or the entire class.

1. **Multi-Media:** Research Alcatraz and find out what it was like when it was an active prison. When did it open? When did it close as a prison and why? What is the island currently used for? What was life like on the island for the families of people who worked there, when it was open? Create a presentation based on your findings.
2. **Art:** Have students draw a picture of what they think the cell-house at Alcatraz looks like. You can create a map, a diorama, a painting, or any other project you feel will show the cell-house.
3. **English:** Research and report on Al Capone. Who was he? What did he go to prison for? How long was he there and what was his fate? Write a biographical sketch of Al Capone.
4. **History:** Has anyone ever escaped from Alcatraz? Research and find out, then write a report on your findings.

Name: _____

Date: _____ Period: _____

After Listening:

Chapters 1–8

1. How many children live on the island of Alcatraz, not including Moose and Natalie?

2. Who is the first child Moose meets on the island?

3. What does Moose talk about in his speech about his Christmas vacation?

Chapters 9–16

1. Why doesn't Theresa want Moose to meet her brother?

2. What does Natalie do at her new school to make Mr. Purdy kick her out?

3. Whose idea is it to charge classmates to have their clothes laundered by Al Capone?

Chapters 17–24

1. When does Moose play baseball with Scout?

2. What does the warden tell the children will happen if they get in trouble again?

3. Who calms the baby on the ferry?

Chapters 25–32

1. Who does Natalie sit with while Moose searches for baseballs?

2. How does Moose finally get a convict baseball?

3. Why does Moose start keeping Natalie inside when she's under his care?

Chapters 33–40

1. What does Moose give Natalie for her birthday?

2. How old is Natalie?

3. How does Moose know that it was Al Capone who helped Natalie?

Name: _____

Date: _____ Period: _____

General Questions:

Use after listening to the entire book.

1. **Making Judgments:** Was it good for Natalie to be out with Moose all the time? Do you think it helped her to interact with the other kids every day? Why or why not?

2. **Understanding Character Behavior:** Why did Natalie want to be around Convict #105 so badly? How do you think he made her feel?

3. **Drawing Conclusions:** Do you think the Esther P. Marinoff School will change Natalie in any way? Do you think they can help her or do you think she'll always be the same?

Name: _____

Date: _____ Period: _____

Comprehension Quiz

1. Not including Moose and Natalie, how many children lived on the Island of Alcatraz?
 - a. sixteen
 - b. twenty-three
 - c. thirty
2. Who was the first child Moose met when he moved to Alcatraz?
 - a. Theresa
 - b. Jimmy
 - c. Piper
3. What did Moose talk about in his speech about Christmas vacation?
 - a. his old home
 - b. Alcatraz
 - c. his sister
4. Why didn't Theresa want Moose to meet her brother?
 - a. She was afraid Moose wouldn't like him.
 - b. She was embarrassed by him.
 - c. She was afraid Moose would play with him instead of herself.
5. What did Natalie do at her new school to make Mr. Purdy kick her out?
 - a. She screamed early in the morning.
 - b. She bit someone.
 - c. She didn't make any progress.
6. Whose idea was it to charge classmates to have their clothes laundered by Al Capone?
 - a. Piper's
 - b. Moose's
 - c. Theresa's
7. When did Moose play baseball with Scout?
 - a. after school
 - b. before school
 - c. at lunchtime
8. What did the warden tell the children would happen if they got in trouble again?
 - a. They would be kicked out of school.
 - b. Their fathers would be fired without severance.
 - c. They would be kicked off the island.
9. Who calmed the baby down on the ferry?
 - a. Mrs. Capone
 - b. Piper
 - c. Theresa
10. Who did Natalie sit with while Moose searched for convict baseballs?
 - a. Theresa
 - b. a convict
 - c. her mother
11. How did Moose finally obtain a convict baseball?
 - a. Piper gave him one.
 - b. He found one by the fence.
 - c. A convict gave him one.
12. Why did Moose start keeping Natalie inside while she was under his care?
 - a. to keep her from seeing her convict friend
 - b. so she wouldn't have tantrums outside
 - c. He was embarrassed to have her playing with his friends.
13. What did Moose give Natalie for her birthday?
 - a. a box of buttons
 - b. a new encyclopedia
 - c. a math workbook
14. How old did Natalie turn on her birthday?
 - a. ten
 - b. sixteen
 - c. seventeen
15. How did Moose know that it was Al Capone that helped Natalie?
 - a. He got a letter from him.
 - b. He found a note in his laundered shirt.
 - c. His father told him.

Answer column

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

Answer Key:

After Listening:

Chapters 1–8:

1. twenty-three
2. Theresa
3. Alcatraz

Chapters 9–16:

1. She fears Moose will play with him instead of her.
2. She screams early in the morning.
3. Piper's

Chapters 17–24:

1. at lunchtime
2. Their fathers will be fired without severance pay.
3. Mrs. Capone

Chapters 25–32:

1. a convict
2. A convict gives him one.
3. so she can't see her convict friend

Chapters 33–40:

1. a math workbook
2. sixteen
3. He gets a note in his laundered shirt.

Student Worksheet

1. B
2. A
3. B
4. C
5. A
6. A
7. C
8. B
9. A
10. B
11. C
12. A
13. C
14. B
15. B