

Christopher Paul Curtis

AUTHOR STUDY

Gearing Up!

The unique personal story of Christopher Paul Curtis paired with his incredible writing craft makes him the perfect candidate for a classroom author study. His books make young readers feel the desperation of times like the Great Depression and the civil rights movement, while also including laugh-out-loud moments and characters they can relate to. Get to know Christopher Paul Curtis and use his books to discuss the important themes of hope, survival, coming-of-age, family, and racism.

About the Author

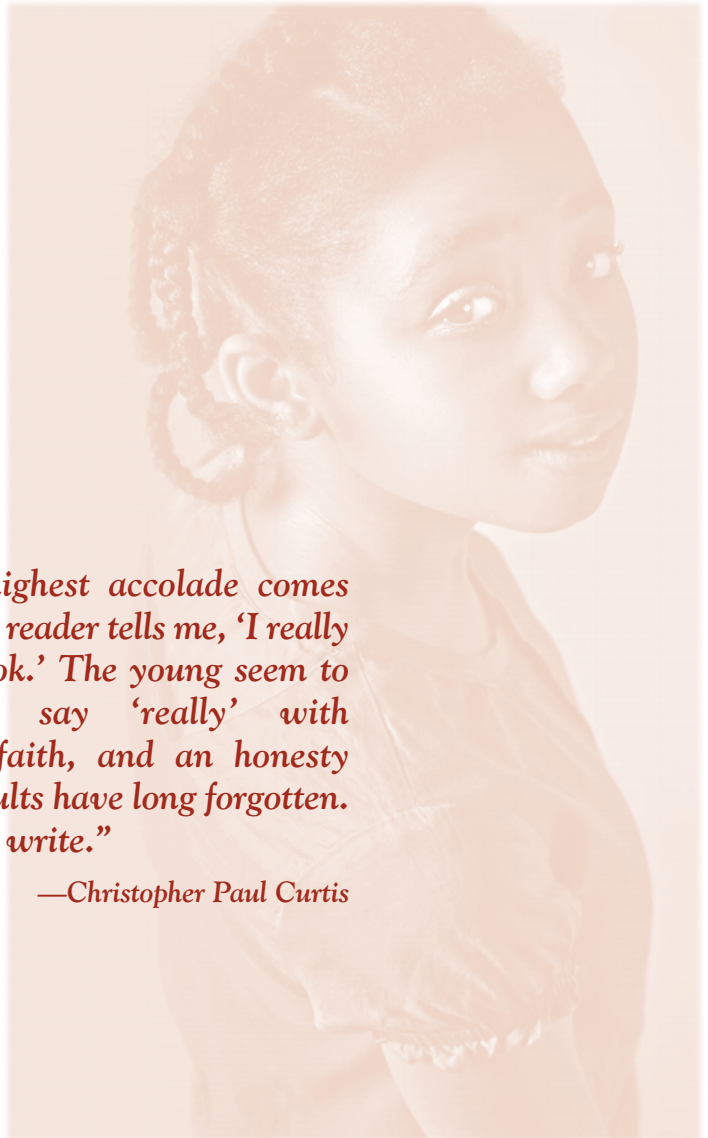
Christopher Paul Curtis was born in Flint, Michigan, the setting of many of his books. He was a great reader, but as a youth, he could not find books that “were about me.” After high school, Curtis spent 13 years on the assembly line of Flint’s historic Fisher Body plant, hanging 80-pound car doors on Buicks. This left him with an aversion to getting in and out of large automobiles—especially Buicks! He attended college at night and wrote during his breaks to escape the noise of the factory. He wrote his first book, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, in longhand in the children’s room of the Windsor Public Library. His son Steven typed his father’s drafts into their computer and served as first reader.

Curtis’s writing—and his dedication to it—has been greatly influenced by his family members. With grandfathers like Earl “Lefty” Lewis, a Negro Baseball League pitcher, and 1930s bandleader Herman E. Curtis, Sr., of Herman Curtis and the Dusky Devastators of the Depression, it is easy to see why Christopher Paul Curtis was destined to become an entertainer.

Curtis’s hobbies include playing basketball, collecting old record albums, and, of course, writing. His favorite books include anything by Toni Morrison, Kurt Vonnegut, or Zora Neale Hurston.

“To me the highest accolade comes when a young reader tells me, ‘I really liked your book.’ The young seem to be able to say ‘really’ with a clarity, a faith, and an honesty that we as adults have long forgotten. That is why I write.”

—Christopher Paul Curtis



Jacket photograph of 2011 copyright © by Eva Kolenko

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AUTHOR STUDY

Book List

Work with your school librarian to have Christopher Paul Curtis's books on display in your classroom for the author study. Encourage students to read the books during quiet time and discuss them with one another. Which books and characters are their favorites?



BUD, NOT BUDDY

Grades 4–7
Laurel-Leaf PB: 978-0-553-49410-5
Yearling PB: 978-0-440-41328-8
HC: 978-0-385-32306-2
EL: 978-0-385-72995-6

- A Newbery Medal Winner
- A Coretta Scott King Author Award Winner
- An ALA Best Books for Young Adults
- An ALA Notable Children's Book
- A *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year
- A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year
- A *New York Times* Notable Book
- An IRA Children's Book Award for Older Readers
- An NCSS–CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Book
- A Hawaii Nene Award Winner
- A Kansas William White Award Winner
- A Kentucky Bluegrass Award Winner
- A Pennsylvania Young Readers Choice Award Winner
- A South Dakota Prairie Pasque Award Winner
- A Tennessee Volunteer State Award Winner
- A Vermont Dorothy Canfield Fischer Book Award Winner

"There were times when I, as the author, was worried about Bud, but I always had the sneaking suspicion that with his wits and intelligence he'd get through. Once I started hearing Bud's voice, and once I knew what it was he was trying to say, this was a very easy, very fun story to write."



MR. CHICKEE'S FUNNY MONEY

Grades 3–7
PB: 978-0-440-22919-3
EL: 978-0-307-48845-9

- A Parents' Choice Gold Award Winner

 = Available on audio from 



THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM—1963

Grades 5 up
Yearling PB: 978-0-440-41412-4
Laurel-Leaf PB: 978-0-440-22800-4
HC: 978-0-385-32175-4
EL: 978-0-385-72985-7

- A Newbery Honor Book
- A Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book
- An ALA Best Books for Young Adults
- An ALA Notable Children's Book
- A *New York Times* Best Book of the Year
- A *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year
- A *Horn Book* Fanfare
- A *Bulletin* Blue Ribbon
- An NCSS–CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Book
- A Bank Street College Best Book of the Year
- An Arkansas Charlie May Simon Children's Book Award Winner
- A California Young Reader Medal Winner
- A Maine Student Book Award Winner
- A Massachusetts Children's Book Award Winner
- A New Mexico Land of Enchantment Book Award Winner
- A Texas Lonestar Reading List Title

"People tend to write about periods that were most vivid to them. I was around 10 years old when the civil rights movement was just beginning. My father was very active in it, and he did a lot of traveling with the UAW (United Auto Workers). That has been very vivid in my mind."



MR. CHICKEE'S MESSY MISSION

Grades 4–7
PB: 978-0-440-22922-3
EL: 978-0-307-48846-6



BUCKING THE SARGE

Grades 7 up
PB: 978-0-440-41331-8
EL: 978-0-307-56725-3

- An ALA Best Books for Young Adults
- An ALA Notable Children's Book
- A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year
- A *Publishers Weekly* Best Children's Book of the Year
- A *Booklist* Children's Editors' Choice
- A *USA Today* Best Young Adult Book
- A Great Lakes Book Award Winner
- A Texas TAYSHAS High School Reading List Title
- A Golden Kite Award for Fiction Winner

New!
Deza Malone from *Bud, Not Buddy* is back!



THE MIGHTY MISS MALONE

Grades 4–7
HC: 978-0-385-73491-2
GLB: 978-0-385-90487-2
EL: 978-0-375-89736-8

"I hope that Deza can serve as a voice for the estimated 15 million American children who are poor, who go to bed hungry, and whose parents struggle to make a dignified living to feed and care for them."

Christopher Paul Curtis

NAME: _____

AUTHOR STUDY

KWL Chart

Fill in the first two columns before your class begins the Christopher Paul Curtis Author Study.
Fill in the third column at the conclusion of the author study.

What I KNOW about Christopher Paul Curtis	What I WANT TO KNOW about Christopher Paul Curtis	What I LEARNED about Christopher Paul Curtis

Christopher Paul Curtis

NAME : _____

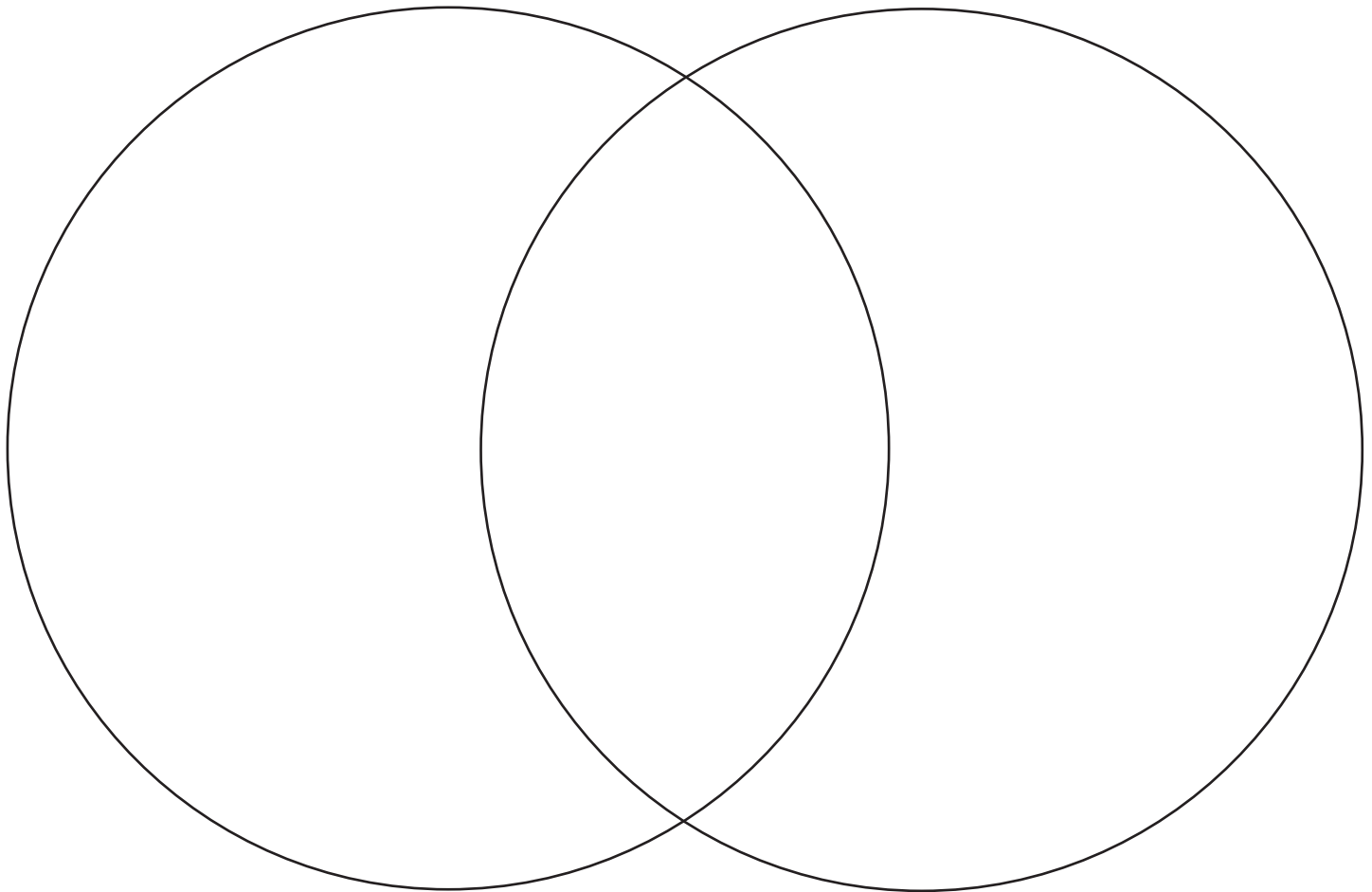
AUTHOR STUDY

Compare & Contrast

Read *Bud, Not Buddy* and *The Mighty Miss Malone*. Use the Venn diagram below to compare and contrast the two main characters, Bud and Deza.

BUD

DEZA



Christopher Paul Curtis

NAME: _____

AUTHOR STUDY

Setting

Christopher Paul Curtis said that “every city and town has a million untold, interesting stories. I think they just need a witness or novelist or storyteller to bring them out and tell them in the proper way.” Research your town’s past and present and write down four story ideas in the graphic organizer below.

