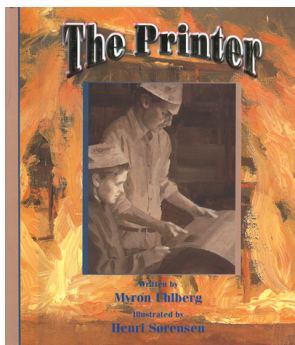


TEACHER'S GUIDE



The Printer

Written by Myron Uhlberg | Illustrated by Henri Sørensen

HC: 978-1-56145-221-7 | PB: 978-1-56145-483-9

Ages 4–8 | Historical Fiction

AR • RC • Lexile • F&P • GRL O; Gr 3

The Printer by Myron Uhlberg is a nostalgic and realistic look at the life of those who put the newspapers on the streets when newspapers were the major source of information for most people.

Because of the loudness of the presses and the attitude toward the deaf, many men who worked in the pressroom were deaf during this time. This story explores deafness not as a defect or disability, but as a fact of life for its main character. How this “disability” becomes an asset and saves lives reveals and changes the attitudes of hearing workers.

The following guide provides a variety of options. Please choose the ones appropriate to your students. How our society notices, understands, and connects to people who don't fit the perceived norm has changed over our history. Our empathy and understanding is still evolving. The purpose of this guide and your experience with *The Printer* is to enjoy an excellent story and expand you and your students' empathy level.

BEFORE YOU READ

- In whole class group or small (4–6 students) have students brainstorm physical disabilities and the accommodations made by the person or our society. Consider using a version of a KWL table.

The “Know” part could list the abilities we have—sight, hearing, mobility, taste, smell. The “Want to Know” section a description of the disability—blind for sight, deaf for hearing, taste and smell will need descriptive phrases. The “Learn” section would be the compensation we, as humans, make for the disabilities—seeing eye dogs, Braille, sign language, etc.

- There are some interesting ways for students to minimally experience disabilities. The purpose of these experiences is not to stress the disability, but for students to notice the responses of other students and themselves to a different way of operating in the world. With all of the following suggestions, please take plenty of discussion time up front and processing time afterwards. The focus is not on the disability but on the responses of others and how that affected the person in the disabled position.
 - Blacken a pair of sunglasses and ask two students—one as “protector” and one as blind to walk down the hall and report on the “blind” person's experience.
 - Try the same thing during a recess time with one student with ear plugs (be sure to have a “protector” for safety).
 - Taste and touch are a little harder. Touch can be done by having a student wear gloves and try to pick up small items.
 - Depending on the situation in your class, you may see if you can borrow a pair of crutches or a wheelchair. If you can (please be sensitive to any disabled students in your school), have a student move around in the halls when other students are around. Have them try to use the handicapped restroom stall.
 - Depending on the age and attitude of the students, have one or two students put two or three marshmallows in their mouths. Then ask them to respond to simple questions such as their names and addresses. A discussion of the results will help students understand the flexibility of the

- human body to meet challenges.
- The next question is a true challenge. Are there situations where having a disability can be an advantage? (e.g. taste—could take bad tasting medicine, smell—could work in smelly jobs (garbage handling, etc.) The purpose of this question is for students to be prepared to see how deafness is an advantage to the printer.
- Dealing with Deafness: What are some ways people deal with deafness:
 - Hearing aids, sign language, lip reading
 - Have students learn a modest vocabulary of sign language. In groups have them create a conversation to hold and ask others to “translate.”
 - Have students practice lip reading by talking silently to one another.
 - Discuss which method seems to allow the clearest communication.
- Printing and newspapers:
 - According to their grade level and ability, have students do research on the history of printing. Be sure they learn about Gutenberg, the rotary press, and the influence of newspapers before the Internet. (e.g. the abolitionist movement, war news, war casualties, weddings, funerals, etc.)
 - Creating a class or school newspaper and printing it can be a project to help students understand the process of getting a newspaper to the stands or front porch. This project can be as simple or as involved as you want to make it.

AS YOU READ

There are a variety of ways to respond to the following questions. There are a few ideas with each question. These strategies can be used in any way you think will work with your students.

- Reading pictures: What do students notice about how the pictures help tell the story? (Journal writing template – “In this picture I notice..... and I think this is important in the story because.....”) For students who are not writing yet, the template could be used for their oral responses.
- From the text and pictures what sort of emotions do students think the deaf printers are experiencing? Think-Pair-Share: Students take a minute to think, pair with another student, and share their thoughts. Several pairs can share with whole class.
- Before getting to the fire scene, be sure all the students know the signs the deaf printers would use. As the students read and realize the fire has started,

ask them to imagine what the message to the hearing printers should be? What would they say? How would they get the hearing attention? Students will realize in their discussion or further reading that the deaf needed to communicate to each other; that the hearing could not understand their communication. (Mind-streaming: Pair students up. One student is A, one is B. Student A talks for 15–30 seconds [you can best judge the length of time for your students]. Student B listens attentively. Then the students switch roles. They may repeat what they have heard as well as add to it.)

- Lead a discussion on the importance of the daily newspaper in the time frame of the story.
 - What kind of news did papers print?
 - What other sources of news might people have?
 - How would being a printer on a daily newspaper make a worker feel?
 - Would he or she find pride in work, feel a part of the whole news process, feel like a small part in the big picture?
 - Discuss the possible differences between the hearing and deaf printers.
 - How important is print news to hearing people or to deaf people? (Consider that the radio was the other prominent source of news during the time setting of the book.)

AFTER YOU READ

- A field trip to a standard printing press (especially a daily newspaper), would be an excellent activity.
- Consider the following ideas for discussion: Heroes are an important aspect of this story. Here the hero was unexpected, but he was also the only person that could have been a hero in this situation.
 - How was deafness an asset in this situation?
 - In what sorts of situations might a blind person be an asset? (Think of situations where hearing acuity would be vital.)
 - Could there be a situation in which a mobility challenged person could be a hero? (Think about how that person might know more about entrances and exits to buildings and areas.)
- Take this discussion to the next level:
 - How can we all be heroes?
 - What does it take to be a hero?
 - What are the common feelings and experiences that we share as humans that would bring out the hero in us? (Here might be a good place to discuss the common feelings of love we have for our families, the protection a mother or father

feels for a child, the coming together of people when a common threat is perceived.)

- Although this book is primarily for young children, depending on their ages, this could be a good place to discuss the heroism of September 11, 2001, and how people worked together to save each other from a common threat. The direction and impact of this discussion could even be carried on to a discussion of the effects of discrimination.
 - Why do we see the differences in each other?
 - Why do we give good qualities to people who resemble us and bad qualities to those whom we perceive as different?
 - Are differences important?
 - How do differences lend strength to us as a family, class, school, city, state, nation, and world?

REVIEWS

“A heartfelt tale of an ordinary person rising to meet an extraordinary challenge.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“The large, realistic paintings are enthralling, showing close up both the strong men at work with the pounding machinery and the boy’s bond with his brave, gentle father.” —*Booklist*

“The simplicity of the story gives the text its drama, and its message of caring for one’s fellow humans is powerful.” —*School Library Journal*

“Handsome paintings convey the story’s emotion.” —*Horn Book Guide*

AWARDS

- Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People (Selector’s Choice) —National Council for the Social Studies, Children’s Book Council
- Best Children’s Books of the Year —Bank Street College of Education
- Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities —IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People
- California Collections (Elementary) —California Readers
- Land of Enchantment Book Awards (Master List) —New Mexico Library Association, New Mexico Council of IRA
- Beehive Award (Nominee) —Children’s Literature Association of Utah
- Charlotte Award (Nominee) —New York State Reading Association

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Myron Uhlberg, a native of Brooklyn, New York, connects many of his texts with the neighborhood and city in which he grew up. He was born as a hearing child to two deaf parents and developed an early love for words and reading. As a young child, he lived without a television and instead read books and became an avid baseball fan. Later on his family did buy a television, but Myron still continued to nurture his love of reading and later writing. He has written many books for children, including *Flying Over Brooklyn*, *Lemuel the Fool*, *Mad Dog Mcgraw*, *The Printer* and *The Sound of All Things*. He continues to nurture his love of baseball and writes full time in California, where he lives with his wife, Karen.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Henri Sørensen has illustrated over twenty books for children, including *The Yellow Star*, *The Printer*, and *Christmas in the Trenches*. He is also the author-illustrator of two children’s books, *New Hope* and *Your First Step*. Sørensen lives in Denmark.

Peachtree Teacher’s Guide for
THE PRINTER
prepared by Kenyette Kilpatrick

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updated 3/13/17