

# Knots on a Counting Rope

Bill Martin and John Archambault  
1987  
New York: Henry Holt

## HOPE

U.S.A./Disability  
Fiction  
Reading Time: 11 minutes

### CONCEPTS

Hope  
Courage  
Loyalty  
Honesty  
Love

### SUMMARY

In this poignant intergenerational tale, a blind boy learns about hope, courage, loyalty, and love. With Grandfather's support and honest words, **Boy-Strength-of-Blue-Horses** gains the confidence he needs to race the darkness and win. Ted Rand's rich illustrations add life and feeling to this touching story.

### OBJECTIVES

The student will identify, define, and discuss hope, courage, loyalty, honesty, and love as they apply to the story. The student will explore ways to give encouragement and hope to others.

## Interdisciplinary Ideas

### LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Find examples of similes and metaphors in the story. Write some of your own.
2. Write "Back in the night when I was born" poems.\*
3. Write a sequel to the story. Tell what happens as the boy grows up.

\* Visit [www.heartwoodethics.org](http://www.heartwoodethics.org) and choose Teaching Heartwood, Intermediate Activities, for the "Hope Pot" bulletin board, biography notes, and "Back in the Night When I Was Born" poem instructions. Culture Keys offer important cultural information on this book.

### MATH

Make a counting rope to help a younger student work addition and subtraction facts. Tie knots in a piece of yarn at two-inch intervals and use this manipulative in tutoring sessions.

### SOCIAL STUDIES

1. In small groups investigate the Braille alphabet. (Keyword: Braille alphabet) Learn how to write your name in Braille.
2. With a partner, investigate ways to help someone in your class or community who is visually impaired. (Keyword: help kids visually impaired) Report findings to the class.

### ART

1. Paint or color a picture in different shades of blue.
2. Look at the illustrations in the book to see how the artist uses light to illuminate the characters' faces. Draw a nighttime scene and color it to show light coming from a single source, such as a campfire or the moon.

# After the Story

## Knots on a Counting Rope

### DISCUSSION

1. Talk about why it is important to the boy to hear over and over the story of his birth. What does the retelling do for the boy?
2. Why does the boy need hope? How does Grandfather's love and encouragement give him hope? Who gives you encouragement and support?
3. Discuss courage and the significance of dark mountains. Does everyone have to cross dark mountains?
4. How does the boy 'see'?
5. Discuss Grandfather's honest responses to the boy's questions. How is honesty related to trust in the story? In your life?
6. Talk about loyalty in the story. How does having a loyal friend or relative give a person hope?

### ACTIVITIES

1. Locate the U.S.A. on the world map. Which part is the Southwest? Which states are in the Southwest?
2. Create a "Hope Pot" bulletin board.\* On strips of paper, write hopes for yourself, your family, and the world. On the back of the strips write actions you can take to help realize your hopes. Post on the bulletin board and read each others' hopes.
3. Create oral reports about people who have shown courage in living with disabilities. Together brainstorm a list of people. With a partner, choose a name from the list and investigate to find out about the person's life and people who gave him or her encouragement. (Keyword: *person's name*, biography) Take notes,\* practice your report, and present to the class.
4. Bring scarves from home for a "Trust Walk." In pairs, blindfold one partner and sit quietly to feel any changes in sensations. Then lead the blindfolded students for brief walks. Go slowly and be careful not to trip or bump into things. Switch partners and repeat. Share impressions with the class.

### EXTENSION

1. With your family, write hopes for the coming year and ways to make your hopes come to fruition.
2. Ask if anyone in your family has overcome a disability or helped someone cope with one. With permission, share with the class.

### WRAP-UP

1. In *My Heartwood Journal*, write examples of three or more Heartwood attributes in the story.
2. With partners, read the story to another class. Choose parts of Boy and Grandfather, and have each partner group read one page of the story. If possible use a large format copy of *Knots on a Counting Rope* (Henry Holt Big Books) to show illustrations during this presentation.

### VOCABULARY

**hogan**  
**canyon**

**shallow**  
**foal**