MR. BAWKY AND THE CHICKS TRAVEL AMERICA

Book 1: Texas

Free Teacher Guide for Grades 3–5

by Robert Hyslop

Chapter-by-chapter summaries and vocabulary

Comprehension and discussion questions

Geography, history, math, writing, and art activities

Answer key

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About This Guide

Book: *Mr. Bawky and the Chicks Travel America: Texas* by Robert Hyslop (Bawky Books) **Best for:** grades 3–5, read-aloud or independent reading, whole class, small group, or book club **Length:** a prologue, nine short chapters, and a "Did You Know?" facts page

The story in one paragraph. Mr. Bawky, a big, loud, hat-loving rooster who usually holds the map upside down, takes three chicks on a trip across Texas: Peep, the fact-finder; Pip, the bundle of clumsy energy; and Poppy, the quiet artist. Their guide is Tex, a kind nine-banded armadillo. Together they visit the San Antonio River Walk and the Alamo, the State Capitol and the bats of Austin, the dinosaur tracks of Glen Rose, a rodeo in Fort Worth, the desert and dark skies of Big Bend, and Space Center Houston. Each chick has a goal for the trip. Peep wants to see the Alamo and real dinosaur footprints, Pip wants to find "the biggest thing in Texas," and Poppy wants to find out if the sky really is bigger there.

Big ideas to watch for

- Remembering the past ("Remembering is a way of saying thank you.")
- Size and perspective: small things can matter as much as big ones ("all the sizes of Texas")
- Leaving a mark ("We leave tracks too.")
- Imagination and effort ("Big things start as ideas.")
- Friendship (the Texas state motto)

How to use this guide. Each chapter section has a short summary, vocabulary, comprehension questions, and discussion questions. Cross-curricular activities follow, and the answer key is at the end. Pick and choose: nothing here has to be done in order.

A note on standards. The "Supports" notes show grade 3–5 skills these activities can help practice (Common Core ELA and Math, the C3 Framework for Social Studies, and NGSS). They are suggestions only. This guide has not been officially aligned to or reviewed against any set of standards.

Before Reading

1. Find Texas on a United States map. What states and what country border it? What body of water is on its southeast side?
2. Make a class K-W-L chart: What do we **know** about Texas? What do we **want** to know? (Fill in what we **learned** after reading.)
3. Look at the cover and the chapter titles. Predict: what places will the flock visit? Which chapter sounds the funniest? Which sounds the most serious?
4. Mr. Bawky packs eleven hats. If you were going on a trip, what three things would you pack, and why?

Chapter by Chapter

Prologue and Chapter 1: Packing Problems

Summary. The prologue introduces the flock. In Chapter 1, Mr. Bawky announces a trip to Texas. Peep shares facts (Texas is the second-largest state, it was once its own country, and its name comes from a Caddo word meaning "friends"). Packing is chaos until Poppy suggests doing "one thing at a time." Each traveler shares a goal: Peep wants to see the Alamo and dinosaur footprints, Pip wants to see the biggest thing in Texas, and Poppy wants to see the sky. Mr. Bawky wants "to see the three of you see things." On the train, Poppy draws a horizon line and leaves the sky blank.

Vocabulary: enthusiastic, perspective, category, essentials, supervised, horizon

Comprehension questions

1. What three things does Mr. Bawky pull from his backpack to "research" the trip?
2. How does Poppy help the others finish packing?
3. What does each chick want to see in Texas?

Discussion questions

- Mr. Bawky says his upside-down map gives a "fresh perspective." What does *perspective* mean? Is there ever a good reason to look at something a different way?
- Why do you think Poppy leaves the sky blank in her drawing?

Chapter 2: Hats, Maps, and Mayhem

Summary. In San Antonio, the flock explores the River Walk, which sits one story below the street along the San Antonio River. Pip waves at a tour boat, falls onto a sinking lily pad, and is rescued by Tex, a nine-banded armadillo who becomes their guide. Peep shares that armadillos can hold their breath for about six minutes. Mr. Bawky's big crow is beaten by a great-tailed grackle. Poppy decides the city sky is "not yet" the big sky she is looking for.

Vocabulary: ambled, drawled, morale, likeness, obliged, cypress

Comprehension questions

1. How does Pip end up in the river, and how is he rescued?
2. Why does the River Walk stay cooler than the sidewalks above it?
3. What happens when Mr. Bawky tries to prove he is the loudest bird?

Discussion questions

- Tex says armadillos are "a big deal for being kind of a small deal." What does he mean?
- Poppy tells Tex, "You only have good sides." How does Tex react? What does that show about him?

Chapter 3: Remember the Alamo

Summary. The Alamo is smaller than Pip expected. Peep explains that it began as Mission San Antonio de Valero in 1718. In 1836, when Texas was part of Mexico, a small group of defenders held it for thirteen days before the Mexican army, led by General Santa Anna, attacked, and almost all of the defenders died. Weeks later, the Texan army won at San Jacinto, shouting "Remember the Alamo!", and Texas became the Republic of Texas. Mr. Bawky says, "Remembering is a way of saying thank you." Later, Pip sneezes on a model of the Alamo made of sunflower seeds, and the flock helps rebuild it.

Vocabulary: mission, defenders, independent, republic, plaque, colonial, heritage

Comprehension questions

1. What was the Alamo before the battle?
2. How long did the defenders hold the Alamo?
3. How does Pip fix his mistake at the craft fair?

Discussion questions

- Pip asks, "Why do people come here if it's sad?" How would you answer him?
- Poppy says, "It's small because it's old. Everything got bigger around it." What do you think she means?
- When Pip breaks the model, Tex hands him a broom instead of scolding him. What does Pip learn?

Chapter 4: Bats Over Austin

Summary. In Austin, the capital, the flock visits the Texas State Capitol. It is made of "sunset red" granite and is taller than the U.S. Capitol. Everyone lies on the floor to look up at the star in the dome. At Barton Springs they learn about a tiny salamander that lives nowhere else on Earth. At sunset, up to about 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats pour out from under the Congress Avenue Bridge. Mr. Bawky hides inside his hat until Peep explains that the bats eat insects and are helpers.

Vocabulary: capital, capitol, rotunda, granite, colony, dignity

Comprehension questions

1. What is special about the Texas State Capitol building?
2. Why does everyone have to be careful with the water at Barton Springs?
3. Why are the bats helpful to people?

Discussion questions

- Poppy draws a tiny salamander and says, "Now it's somewhere else too." What does she mean?
- Mr. Bawky is scared of the bats at first. How does learning facts change how he feels?

Chapter 5: Dinosaur Footprints

Summary. Tex takes the flock to Dinosaur Valley State Park in Glen Rose. Peep explains that about 113 million years ago the area was near the edge of an ancient sea, and dinosaur footprints pressed into mud later hardened into rock. They see three-toed tracks from a meat-eater that walked on two legs, and round tracks from a long-necked sauropod. Peep says birds are the living descendants of dinosaurs. Pip tries to walk in the giant footsteps and lands in a "dinosaur bath." Peep writes, *We leave tracks too.*

Vocabulary: ancient, descendants, sauropod, hardened, considered

Comprehension questions

1. How did the dinosaur footprints become rock?
2. What two kinds of tracks does the flock see, and what made them?
3. What can scientists learn from how far apart the footprints are?

Discussion questions

- Peep thinks the footprints' message is "I was here." What tracks, real or not, do people leave behind?
- Is Mr. Bawky really "possibly related" to dinosaurs? Use a fact from the chapter.

Chapter 6: Rodeo Rooster

Summary. At the Fort Worth Stockyards, longhorn cattle walk down the street (their horns can stretch more than six feet). At the rodeo, the official state sport of Texas, the flock watches barrel racing, roping, and trick riding, and learns that rodeo clowns help keep riders safe. Mr. Bawky rides the slow practice barrel, bows, somersaults into the hay, and declares it "all part of the performance." Pip wins a *Best Cheerer* ribbon.

Vocabulary: arena, announcer, buckaroo, cloverleaf, performance, legend

Comprehension questions

1. What do rodeo clowns do besides make people laugh?
2. How did rodeos begin?
3. What does the crowd do when Mr. Bawky falls into the hay, and why?

Discussion questions

- The riders say their skills took "lots and lots of practice." What is something you got better at by practicing?
- Poppy says rodeo "started as a job and turned into a party." Can you think of another job that became a sport or a game?

Chapter 7: Cactus Catastrophe

Summary. The flock drives west to Big Bend National Park in the Chihuahuan Desert, named for a giant bend in the Rio Grande, which forms the border with Mexico. Mr. Bawky calls the cactus "mighty saguaros," but Peep explains that saguaros grow in the Sonoran Desert, not Texas. These are prickly pear (the state plant), ocotillo, and lechuguilla. Pip chases a roadrunner straight into a prickly pear patch, Mr. Bawky gets stuck rescuing him, and Tex leads them out. That night the sky fills with stars and the Milky Way, and Poppy finally begins to fill in her sky.

Vocabulary: catastrophe, landscape, emergency, spines, galaxy

Comprehension questions

1. What mistake does Mr. Bawky make about the cactus, and how does Peep correct him?
2. Why is Big Bend one of the best places to see stars?
3. Why can Tex walk into the prickly pear patch without getting hurt?

Discussion questions

- Mr. Bawky says, "I was testing you." Why do you think he says that? Is it hard to admit a mistake?
- Pip asks if the sky is the biggest thing in Texas. Poppy says, "It's not only Texas's." What does she mean?

Chapter 8: Houston, We Have a Rocket

Summary. In Houston, the biggest city in Texas and the fourth-biggest in the United States, Tex takes the flock to Space Center Houston. They touch a moon rock, visit the historic Mission Control, and learn that in 1969 one of the first things said from the moon was "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The *Eagle* has landed." Pip bounces in a moon-gravity exhibit. Then Tex shows them a Saturn V rocket, about 363 feet long, and Pip declares it the biggest thing in Texas. Peep writes, *Big things start as ideas.*

Vocabulary: humid, historic, technically, astronaut, mission

Comprehension questions

1. What was Mission Control's job during Apollo 11?
2. On the moon, how much would you weigh compared with on Earth?
3. How does Pip decide the Saturn V is the biggest thing in Texas?

Discussion questions

- Mr. Bawky says people "had to imagine it first. Then they built something big enough to get there." What is something big you would like to imagine and build?
- Why does nobody laugh when Pip says he will go to space someday?

Chapter 9: Farewell to Texas

Summary. On their last morning, Tex gives the flock a hand-painted sign that says *Honorary Texans*, plus a piece of pink granite for Peep, a tin star for Pip, and a roadrunner feather for Poppy. Peep remembers that the state motto is "Friendship," from the Caddo word *taysha*. Poppy thanks Tex for showing them "all the sizes of Texas": the small Alamo, the many bats, the old dinosaurs, the huge sky, the biggest rocket, and Tex, who was "just right." Peep notices the life lessons she wrote between her facts. On the train, Mr. Bawky reveals the next stop: New York.

Vocabulary: honorary, souvenir, motto, formally

Comprehension questions

1. What gift does Tex give each member of the flock?
2. What is the state motto of Texas, and where does it come from?
3. What clue tells the flock where they are going next?

Discussion questions

- Poppy lists "all the sizes of Texas." Make your own list of "all the sizes" of your town or school.
- How have Peep and Mr. Bawky changed since Chapter 1? Look at what happens with the map at the end.

Cross-Curricular Activities

Geography and Map Skills

1. Plot the route. Give students an outline map of Texas. Have them mark and label San Antonio, Austin, Glen Rose, Fort Worth, Big Bend National Park, and Houston. Number the stops in story order, connect them with arrows, and add a compass rose. Then ask: which stop is farthest west? Which two stops are closest together? *Supports: C3 D2.Geo.2.3-5 (use maps to explain relationships between places).*

2. Right side up. Mr. Bawky reads the map upside down ("The Gulf of Mexico is at the top"). Give pairs a Texas map turned upside down and have them find which way north is, then answer three direction questions (for example, "Is Houston east or west of San Antonio?"). Discuss why most maps put north at the top.

3. Borders and regions. Find the Rio Grande and Mexico, the Gulf of Mexico, and the neighboring states. Compare the landscapes in the story: river city (San Antonio), hills and springs (Austin), desert (Big Bend), and coastal city (Houston). How does each place's environment show up in the story?

History and Social Studies

1. Texas timeline. Have students build a timeline from the story using these dates: 1718 (Mission San Antonio de Valero founded), 1836 (Battle of the Alamo, 13 days; Battle of San Jacinto), 1836–1845 (Republic of Texas), 1845 (Texas becomes the 28th state), 1883 (Pecos says it held the world's first rodeo), 1969 (Apollo 11 lands on the moon). *Supports: C3 D2.His.1.3-5 (chronological sequence of related events).*

2. Many perspectives. The book tells the Alamo story briefly and gently. For older students, explain that people saw the conflict differently. Texans of Mexican descent (Tejanos) fought on both sides, and Mexico saw the fight as a rebellion inside its own country. Ask: why might two groups remember the same event in different ways? *Supports: C3 D2.His.4.3-5 (why people in the same time period had different perspectives).*

3. "Remembering is a way of saying thank you." Have students choose a place, monument, or tradition in your community that helps people remember something. Have them write or draw what it helps us remember, and why that matters.

4. State symbols. Use the book's facts to make a Texas symbols poster: state small mammal (nine-banded armadillo), state plant (prickly pear cactus), state flower (bluebonnet), state sport (rodeo), state dinosaur (*Sauroposeidon proteles*), and state motto ("Friendship"). Then research your own state's symbols.

Math

Use these story-based word problems (answers in the key):

1. The Alamo began as a mission in 1718. The battle was in 1836. How many years apart are those dates?
2. Texas was the Republic of Texas from 1836 to 1845. How many years is that?
3. The Saturn V rocket is about 363 feet long. A football field is 360 feet long, counting both end zones. How much longer is the rocket?
4. An armadillo can hold its breath for about 6 minutes. How many seconds is that? Time how long the class can stay silent, and compare.
5. On the moon, you weigh about one-sixth of what you weigh on Earth. If a backpack weighs 12 pounds on Earth, about how much would it weigh on the moon? What about a 30-pound dog?
6. Mr. Bawky packed 11 hats and later brought home 3 new hats. If he had kept every hat, how many would he have? (Challenge: if each hat cost $4, how much would 3 new hats cost?)
7. Up to about 1,500,000 bats live under the Congress Avenue Bridge. Write that number in words and in expanded form.

Measurement lab: Footprint detectives. Scientists measure the space between dinosaur footprints to estimate how fast the dinosaur moved. Have students walk normally, then run, across a measured space, and record the length of three steps each time. Graph the results. What happens to step length when you move faster? *Supports: 3.NBT.A.2 and 4.NBT.B.4 (add and subtract within 1,000 and multi-digit numbers), 4.MD.A.1 and 4.MD.A.2 (measurement conversions and word problems), 3.NF.A.1 (understanding fractions such as one-sixth), 3.MD.B.3 and 3.MD.B.4 (represent data).*

Writing

1. **Opinion: What is the biggest thing in Texas?** Pip picks the Saturn V. Poppy thinks it might be the sky. Have students write an opinion paragraph naming their choice from the book, with at least two reasons and details from the text. *Supports: W.3.1 / W.4.1 / W.5.1.*
2. **Peep's notebook.** Peep writes life lessons between her facts: *Remembering is a way of saying thank you. We leave tracks too. Big things start as ideas.* Have students choose one, explain what it means, and connect it to their own life. *Supports: RL.4.2 / RL.5.2 (theme).*
3. **Postcard from Texas.** Have students write a postcard from one member of the flock to a friend back at the coop, describing one stop in that character's voice (Pip's excitement, Peep's facts, Poppy's quiet noticing, or Mr. Bawky's grand announcements). *Supports: W.3.3 (narrative), RL.3.3 (character traits).*
4. **Pip's next big idea.** Pip's ideas are "both wonderful and dangerous." Have students write a new short scene for one stop in which Pip has a Pip idea, with a beginning, middle, and end.

Art

1. **Poppy's horizon.** Draw a long, flat horizon line across a page. Below it, draw a Texas landscape from the story. Above it, fill in the sky the way Poppy finally does at Big Bend, with stars and the Milky Way, or with the bats over Austin.
2. **Dome from underneath.** Poppy draws the Capitol dome from below as "a circle inside a circle inside a circle, with the star in the middle." Use a compass or traced lids to make a radial design with a star at the center.
3. **All the sizes of Texas.** Fold paper into six panels. Illustrate Poppy's list: the Alamo (small), the bats (many), the dinosaurs (old), the sky (huge), the rocket (biggest), and Tex (just right).
4. **Design a hat.** Mr. Bawky changes hats for every mood. Design a hat for one stop in the story, and label what it is made of and why it fits that place.

Science Connections (Bonus)

- **Bats as helpers:** Mexican free-tailed bats eat moths, beetles, and mosquitoes. Discuss how animals help people and ecosystems.
- **Deserts are different:** Saguaros grow in the Sonoran Desert, not the Chihuahuan Desert of Big Bend. Compare plants that live in each.
- **Tracks as clues:** Footprints in rock tell us what lived in a place and what that place was like long ago (an ancient shoreline). *Supports: NGSS 3-LS4-1 and 4-ESS1-1.*

Vocabulary Glossary

Kid-friendly meanings, as the words are used in the story.

Chapter	Word	Meaning
1	enthusiastic	full of excitement and eagerness
1	perspective	a way of looking at or thinking about something
1	category	a group of things that are alike
1	essentials	things you really need
1	supervised	watched over others to make sure things were done
1	horizon	the line where the land seems to meet the sky
2	ambled	walked slowly and easily
2	drawled	spoke slowly, stretching out the sounds
2	morale	how cheerful and confident a group feels
2	likeness	a picture that looks like someone
2	obliged	thankful (“Much obliged” means “Thank you very much”)
2	cypress	a tall tree that grows near water, with knobby roots
3	mission	a settlement built around a church, where people lived, worked, and prayed
3	defenders	people who protect a place from attack
3	independent	free; not ruled by another country
3	republic	a country where people choose their leaders
3	plaque	a flat sign, often metal, that tells about a place
3	colonial	from the time when a country ruled land far from home
3	heritage	important things handed down from the past
4	capital	the city where a state’s or country’s government meets
4	capitol	the building where lawmakers meet
4	rotunda	a round room under a dome
4	granite	a very hard, speckled rock
4	colony	a large group of the same animal living together
4	dignity	a calm, proud way of acting
5	ancient	very, very old
5	descendants	living things that come from earlier ones, like children and grandchildren
5	sauropod	a huge, long-necked, plant-eating dinosaur
5	hardened	became hard
5	considered	thought carefully about

Chapter	Word	Meaning
6	arena	a large open space with seats around it for shows and sports
6	announcer	the person who tells the crowd what is happening
6	buckaroo	a cowboy (a playful word)
6	cloverleaf	a path shaped like a clover, with three loops
6	performance	a show for an audience
6	legend	someone famous and admired
7	catastrophe	a big disaster (here, a funny one)
7	landscape	the land you can see in an area
7	emergency	a sudden problem that needs help right away
7	spines	sharp, needle-like points on a cactus
7	galaxy	a huge group of billions of stars, like our Milky Way
8	humid	hot and damp
8	historic	important in history
8	technically	when you look at the exact facts
8	astronaut	a person trained to travel in space
8	mission	a special trip or job, like a trip to space
9	honorary	given as an honor, as a special thank-you
9	souvenir	something you keep to remember a place
9	motto	a short saying that tells what a group believes
9	formally	in a polite, proper way

Answer Key

Comprehension Questions

Chapter 1. (1) A postcard of a cowboy boot, a paper napkin from a barbecue restaurant, and a map (upside down). (2) She suggests doing "one thing at a time": Pip holds up one item and Poppy says yes or no. (3) Peep: the Alamo and real dinosaur footprints. Pip: the biggest thing in Texas. Poppy: the sky.

Chapter 2. (1) He waves so hard at a tour boat that he walks off the path onto a lily pad, which starts to sink. Tex pulls him out with a long stick. (2) It sits one story below the street, so it stays cooler and shadier. (3) A great-tailed grackle makes an even louder sound, and Mr. Bawky admits he is "second-loudest."

Chapter 3. (1) A Spanish mission, Mission San Antonio de Valero, founded in 1718. (2) Thirteen days. (3) He apologizes, sweeps up, and helps glue the seeds back. He works hardest of all and adds a tiny sunflower-seed chick on top.

Chapter 4. (1) It is made of pinkish "sunset red" granite and is taller than the U.S. Capitol. (2) A tiny salamander lives only in those springs and nowhere else on Earth. (3) They eat insects such as moths, beetles, and mosquitoes, so fewer bugs bite people.

Chapter 5. (1) About 113 million years ago, dinosaurs walked through soft mud near an ancient sea. The mud hardened into rock and kept the footprints. (2) Three-toed tracks made by a meat-eating dinosaur that walked on two legs, and big round tracks made by a long-necked sauropod. (3) How fast the dinosaur was walking and how big it was.

Chapter 6. (1) They help keep the riders safe. (2) With real ranch work: cowboys held contests to see who was best at roping and riding, and the contests became a sport. (3) They roar and cheer, because he is having the best day of his life and the crowd likes cheering for that (and because the hay pile says, "All part of the performance!").

Chapter 7. (1) He calls them "mighty saguaros." Peep explains that saguaros grow only in the Sonoran Desert (mostly Arizona and Mexico), and that these plants are prickly pear, ocotillo, and lechuguilla. (2) It is very far from city lights, so it is one of the darkest places in the country. (3) His tough, armored shell doesn't mind the spines.

Chapter 8. (1) People there helped guide the astronauts all the way to the moon. (2) About one-sixth as much. (3) He walks the whole length of the rocket, from one end to the tip, and looks back at it.

Chapter 9. (1) Mr. Bawky: a hand-painted *Honorary Texans* sign (for the flock). Peep: a piece of pink granite like the Capitol's stone. Pip: a tiny tin star badge. Poppy: a gray roadrunner feather from Big Bend. (2) "Friendship," from the Caddo word *taysha*, meaning "friends." (3) Mr. Bawky's postcard of a tall green statue holding a torch in a harbor with skyscrapers behind it (the Statue of Liberty), and he announces New York.

Discussion questions are open-ended. Accept answers supported by details from the text.

Math

1. 1836 − 1718 = **118 years**.
2. 1845 − 1836 = **9 years** (the book says “almost ten years”).
3. 363 − 360 = **3 feet** longer.
4. 6 × 60 = **360 seconds**.
5. 12 ÷ 6 = **2 pounds**. 30 ÷ 6 = **5 pounds**.
6. 11 + 3 = **14 hats**. Challenge: 3 × $4 = **$12**.
7. **One million, five hundred thousand**. 1,000,000 + 500,000.

Geography

Story order: San Antonio → Austin → Glen Rose (Dinosaur Valley State Park) → Fort Worth → Big Bend National Park → Houston. Farthest west: **Big Bend**. Houston is **east** of San Antonio. Texas borders New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and the country of **Mexico** (along the Rio Grande), and the **Gulf of Mexico** is on its southeast side.

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