

# The Chalk Box Kid

by Clyde Robert Bulla

## Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Beth Campbell & Jeanny Gilpin

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### SYNOPSIS

**Chap. 1** Gregory's ninth birthday was turning out to be his worst ever. After Daddy lost his factory job, the family had to move to a smaller house. Gregory had spent his entire birthday with Aunt Grace because Mother and Daddy had to finish moving. When Gregory arrived at his new house that evening, he saw it was small and needed paint, but it had something he had always wanted—a room of his own. Maybe this was the best birthday after all.

**Chap. 2** When Gregory painted a few pictures and put them up, they made his new bedroom seem more like his own. But when Gregory heard Uncle Max was coming by, he wanted to leave. Uncle Max seemed to think he was the only one that was important and Gregory hoped he would be gone by the time he returned from exploring in town. As luck would have it, Uncle Max was moving into Gregory's room for a while. That was the worst news Gregory could imagine.

**Chap. 3** Gregory found himself in Miss Perry's room in Dover Street School. Vance misunderstood Gregory and thought he was bragging. That did not help him make any friends the first day. To make matters worse, when he returned home, he found Uncle Max had put huge posters up in his room over his paintings. Gregory was so mad he had to go outside. While on his walk, Gregory found an abandoned building. It felt peaceful there. Gregory found he was not as upset now—he had a new place of his own.

**Chap. 4** Things seemed about the same at school and at home. Uncle Max was still there, but Gregory did not seem to mind since he had another place to go after school. He found lots of chalk in the burned-out chalk factory and drew pictures on the walls. His mother did not care. She just wanted him to stay clean and to be on time for dinner.

**Chap. 5** Ivy won the school art show and Gregory couldn't believe her grand prize—an art case with almost everything an artist could ever want inside. Gregory had not made any new friends and really did not feel like he belonged in his school.

**Chap. 6** When Mr. Hiller visited Gregory's class and talked about the plants he had in his nursery, Gregory knew he wanted to grow a garden. Mother soon reminded him, however, the yard wasn't very big and there was only concrete around their small house. Gregory took some chalk and drew his own garden on the walls of the burned-out building.

**Chap. 7** Gregory worked in his chalk garden every day. He asked his parents to come and see, but they did not. As he de-

scribed his garden to Miss Perry and his classmates, they seemed impressed, especially since Gregory said he was putting in a fountain.

**Chap. 8** As Gregory went out after school to work on his garden, he had some unexpected visitors—his classmates, led by Vance. They left when seeing his garden was nothing but a burned-out building. Gregory felt bad. He didn't have an appetite that evening and shared his troubles with his mother.

**Chap. 9** Miss Perry was very puzzled when Ivy presented her art supplies to Gregory. Miss Perry and Miss Cartright, the art teacher, were thrilled when they dropped by to see the garden that Ivy spoke of. Mother and Daddy decided to take a look when nursery owner Mr. Hiller came by to see the garden. Uncle Max gave Gregory a new nickname and returned Gregory's pictures to his bedroom wall. As Gregory continued to work in his garden, Ivy brought her younger brother, Richard, by to see Gregory's creation.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Clyde Robert Bulla is an outstanding children's book author. He has written and published more than seventy books for children. Mr. Bulla did not always write for children. He began his writing career by writing magazine stories and novels working for his hometown newspaper in King City, Missouri. Bulla was born on a farm in Missouri and went to school in a one-room building. By the time he was seven years old, Bulla knew he wanted to be a writer. His favorite subjects were writing and reading. Today Bulla lives in Los Angeles, California, and continues to divide his time between writing and traveling.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

*The Chalk Box Kid* is a story about a boy coping with the stress of moving to a new school. It was selected in 1991-1992 as Iowa's Children's Choice Award. Author Clyde Robert Bulla stated that he was even apt to "get off on the wrong foot when in new surroundings." Bulla gave Gregory, the main character, something he always wished for—a big, blank wall to cover with pictures to release stress by drawing. This heart felt story is ideal for class discussion on feelings and for those who have ever had to "start over" in unfamiliar situations. If you enjoyed Gregory creating his first work of art in *The Chalk Box Kid*, read the sequel, *The Paint Brush Kid* and watch the imagination keep growing.

### OTHER BOOKS BY CLYDE ROBERT BULLA

*Almost a Hero*  
*The Beast of Lor*  
*Benito*

*The Cardboard Crown*  
*Charlie's House*  
*The Christmas Coat*  
*Daniel's Duck*  
*Eagle Feather*  
*Ghost Town Treasure*  
*Last Look*  
*A Lion to Guard Us*  
*The Paint Brush Kid*  
*Pirate's Promise*  
*A Place for Angels*  
*Pocahontas and the Strangers*  
*The Poppy Seeds*  
*The Secret Valley*  
*Shoeshine Girl*  
*Singing Sam*  
*Squanto, Friend of the Pilgrims*  
*The Story of Valentine's Day*  
*The Sword in the Tree*  
*Three Dollar Mule*  
*What Makes a Shadow?*  
*White Bird*

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*Something about the Author*. Vol. 91. Detroit: Gale, 1997.  
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#### CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

##### Fiction

Ann Cameron, *Julian's Glorious Summer*  
 Beverly Cleary, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*  
 Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*  
 Patricia Reilly Giff, *Lazy Lions, Lucky Lambs*  
 Mary Hoffman, *Amazing Grace*  
 Kate McMullen, *New Kid at School*

##### Nonfiction

Paige Henson, *Drawing With Charcoal and Pastels*  
 Jude Welton, *Drawing: A Young Artists Guide*

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

##### Chap. 1 The Room

1. Why had this been Gregory's worst birthday?
2. How old is Gregory today?
3. Why couldn't he be with his parents?
4. Where was he staying?
5. Why did the family have to move?
6. Describe their new house.
7. What was the only thing Gregory got for his birthday?
8. How did the birthday change from the worst to the best?

##### Chap. 2 Uncle Max

1. What was the first thing Gregory did when he woke up?
2. Describe the picture he painted.
3. What did Gregory do to his room that made it look like it was really his?

4. Where did Gregory go exploring?
5. Who was coming over soon?
6. Describe Uncle Max.
7. What are two nicknames Uncle Max had for Gregory?
8. How did Gregory feel about Uncle Max? Why?
9. Where would Uncle Max be staying?
10. How did Gregory feel about this?
11. What did Gregory find all around the house?

##### Chap. 3 The New School

1. Where did Gregory's Mother and Daddy work?
2. Had Gregory ever moved to a new school? What did he say to let us know this?
3. Compare Gregory's old and new schools.
4. Who was the biggest boy in Gregory's class?
5. What did Vance say Gregory was doing?
6. How did Gregory get along with the others on his first day at the new school?
7. What had Uncle Max done with Gregory's pictures?
8. What did Gregory find on the other side of the gate?

##### Chap. 4 The Burned Building

1. Who in Gregory's class could also make pretty pictures?
2. How were things going at home now?
3. What were three things Uncle Max was always doing?
4. Where did Gregory go every day after school?
5. What was he doing in the burned-out building?
6. What had the abandoned building been at one time?
7. What did Gregory find inside?
8. How did Gregory decorate the walls of the building?
9. Was his mother interested in what Gregory was doing? How do we know?

##### Chap. 5 A Party

1. Why did Gregory's class have a party?
2. What was the grand prize?
3. Did Gregory feel as if he belonged in the new school now?

##### Chap. 6 Mr. Hiller

1. Who was the guest speaker in Room 3?
2. What kind of work did the guest speaker do?
3. What did he draw on the blackboard?
4. What did Gregory plan to have?
5. What was his biggest problem with his new project?
6. What did he do about it?
7. What did Gregory tell Miss Perry he already had? Was he telling the truth?

##### Chap. 7 Gregory's Garden

1. What did Gregory want Mother and Daddy to do?
2. Why did he not ask Uncle Max to come and see his garden?
3. Why did Gregory need a ladder?
4. Describe things in Gregory's garden?
5. What did Vance think about Gregory's garden in which he was always working?

##### Chap. 8 "Nothing At All"

1. How do we know Gregory liked to change things?
2. Who showed up unexpectedly to see Gregory's garden?
3. How did Gregory feel about them viewing his garden?
4. What did Vance say about Gregory's garden?
5. Why did not Gregory eat that evening?

## Chap. 9 Ivy and Richard

1. Why did Gregory take so long getting to school the next morning?
2. Why did Gregory feel as if everyone was looking at him?
3. What special gift did Ivy give to Gregory? Why?
4. What was Miss Perry's reaction?
5. What did Miss Perry request of Gregory?
6. Who came to see Gregory's garden?
7. Had Mother and Daddy seen Gregory's garden yet?
8. What new nickname did Uncle Max have for Gregory?
9. How did Uncle Max show he thought Gregory's garden was good?
10. How did things change at school?
11. Did Vance change? How?
12. Who did Ivy finally bring to see the garden?
13. What did Mr. Hiller think of the garden?

### ACTIVITIES

1. Reread page 41 and create a diorama. Paint the inside of a shoe box black and use chalk to create Gregory's imaginary garden.
2. Share/write about your favorite birthday memory.
3. Illustrate your greatest birthday ever. Have students bind their writings into a book called *The Ultimate Birthday*.
4. Develop a booklet for new students entering your school.
5. Discuss emotions through journal writings.
6. Create pictures using chalk or go outside and create your class garden on the pavement using sidewalk chalk.
7. Construct a mobile including the characters and setting.
8. Create a colorful collage using paints, magazines, paper or fabric scraps ironed flowers. Make the collage 3-dimensional by adding fake flower to create Gregory's wonderful garden. Write a poem to accompany the collage.
9. Write a letter from Gregory to his uncle. Write the letter based on the way Gregory felt at a specific time in the story.
10. ART CONTEST—Have students write a descriptive paper or outline form about an art contest. Have the students set up the contests' rules, prizes, and advertising for an art contest. Have the students participate in their own art contest.
11. Ask a gardener to speak to the class or take a field trip to a local nursery to learn more about plants. Plant different kinds of seeds and watch them grow. Experiment with light to see what happens. Adopt a spot at school to grow a small plant or vegetable garden.
12. Have students create chalk drawings on the sidewalk around the school.
13. Ask the students the number of times the children in the class have moved. Discuss reasons why people move and the feelings about leaving a familiar surrounding.
14. Make a class quilt choosing scenes from the story. Have each child create a square for the quilt using construction paper or fabric and markers.
15. Create a photo album for Gregory including friends and family. Add descriptions of the characters. Label who the characters are and draw pictures of the characters using the descriptions in the book. Use construction paper or organize work using an accordion book.
16. Create a comic strip showing the plot of the story. This is a good way to work on sequencing.
17. Have the students study to be a critic of a book. The students can learn to express their opinion by writing a review of the story. After writing their own ideas down, they can submit their writings to share with adults and students around the world at Kid Views (<[www.eduplace.com/kids/rdg/grade3.html](http://www.eduplace.com/kids/rdg/grade3.html)>). They can also see what other kids their own age thought about the book.
18. Mr. Hiller inspired Gregory to create an imaginary garden. Who has inspired you to be a better person? Write a letter to the person telling how or what they have done to inspire you.
19. It's all in a name? Uncle Max kept giving Gregory nicknames like the "Chalk Box Kid" and "The Paint Brush Kid." Write down your nickname or make up a nickname and tell why the name describes your personality.
20. Gregory got his best birthday gift ever: a bedroom all to himself. What is the best gift or birthday gift you have received? Make a poem using your five senses. Place the poem on a balloon or birthday cake for an easy display.

## VOCABULARY TEST

Choose the correct answer from the list below and write it in the blank provided. You will have answers left over when you finish.

bare  
brag  
concrete

midnight  
neighborhood  
paintbrush

porch  
prize  
shone

tablet  
vine  
whispers

1. His \_\_\_\_\_ and paints and brushes were out on the table, but he didn't feel like painting.
2. He saw \_\_\_\_\_ walls.
3. The light \_\_\_\_\_ on a house.
4. "It used to be a \_\_\_\_\_. We had a wall put in and the window."
5. Gregory knew his birthday was over when he heard the clock strike \_\_\_\_\_.
6. "Don't you want to see the \_\_\_\_\_?"
7. The floor in there was \_\_\_\_\_, too.
8. "First he was the \_\_\_\_\_ Kid. Now he's the Chalk Box Kid."
9. He drew a sweet pea \_\_\_\_\_ on a pole.
10. "It's part of your \_\_\_\_\_, and your name is on it."

## COMPREHENSION TEST

### Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Choose the correct answer to each question and write the letter in the blank provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Why is the title of the book and Gregory's nickname "The Chalk Box Kid"?
  - A. Gregory's friends gave him the name.
  - B. Gregory's teacher gave him some chalk.
  - C. Gregory always bought chalk at the store.
  - D. Gregory's uncle gave him the nickname.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Why did Gregory move to a new home?
  - A. His parents got a better job.
  - B. His father lost his job at the factory.
  - C. His uncle wanted to teach Gregory guitar lessons.
  - D. His family wanted to move closer into town.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. With whom did Gregory share his room?
  - A. His Uncle Max
  - B. His sister Suzy
  - C. His parents
  - D. His little brother Vance
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The main character in the story was a (an) \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. Musician
  - B. Animal trainer
  - C. Factory worker
  - D. Artist
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What did Max do with Gregory's picture?
  - A. He threw it away.
  - B. He framed it.
  - C. He put his poster over it.
  - D. He gave it away.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Why was there a party at school?
  - A. Gregory was moving back to his old school.
  - B. It was the last day of school.
  - C. Ivy won the grand prize for an art contest.
  - D. They were celebrating Gregory's birthday.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Where did the guest speaker, Mr. Hiller, work?
  - A. He worked as a principal in a school nearby.
  - B. He worked with plants in a nursery.
  - C. He cooked at a local restaurant.
  - D. He was a local artist.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What was not in the burned building?
  - A. Table and chairs
  - B. School kids
  - C. Chalk
  - D. Flowers and fountains

- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What did Ivy give Gregory?  
A. Money  
B. Candy  
C. Her book  
D. A paint set
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Who did Ivy bring to the garden?  
A. Her friend  
B. Her mom  
C. Her brother  
D. Her dog
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Which two characters did not get along with Gregory?  
A. Vance and Uncle Max  
B. Mr. Hiller and Ivy  
C. His teacher, Miss Perry and Uncle Max  
D. His mom and dad
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. What was the name of the new school Gregory attended?  
A. Dover Street School  
B. Fort Lewis Nursery School  
C. North Lake School  
D. Glenvar Elementary
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Who won the art contest?  
A. Gregory  
B. Max  
C. Vance  
D. Ivy
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Which instrument did Uncle Max play?  
A. Drums  
B. Flute  
C. Guitar  
D. Trumpet
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Who inspired Gregory to draw on the wall?  
A. Miss Cartright  
B. Miss Perry  
C. Mr. Hiller  
D. Vance

**Part II: Character Identification (20 points)**

Identify the speaker of each of the following quotations. Write the name in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I just saw Gregory's garden. You must be proud.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. We'll have to get new clothes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. First he was the Paintbrush Kid. Now he's the Chalk Box Kid.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The pictures he did in art were nice, but nothing like this!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Maybe this isn't for me. I mean there could be somebody better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. There's a picture of your garden down at the nursery. Why don't you go see it?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Maybe I was pretending—a little—but I wasn't bragging.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. This is yours, Ivy. It's part of your prize, and your name is on it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. You know I don't like that burned building. Can't you find a better place to play?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Don't you like my posters?

**Part III: True/False (20 points)**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Ivy saw that Gregory could draw very well.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Mrs. Black was Gregory's teacher.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Mr. Hiller worked in the plant nursery.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Gregory planted vegetable seeds in his garden.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Vance became Gregory's friend at the end of the story.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Gregory made many new friends the first day of school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Ivy did not like Gregory at first.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Gregory's father worked as cook in a restaurant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Uncle Max covered Gregory's pictures with posters of race cars.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Vance became Gregory's best friend.

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. How did Ivy show that she was a good friend to Gregory?
- 2. How had Gregory's feelings toward his uncle changed by the end of the story?
- 3. What made Vance change his opinion of Gregory?

## ANSWER KEY

### VOCABULARY TEST

- |             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. tablet   | 6. neighborhood |
| 2. bare     | 7. concrete     |
| 3. shone    | 8. paintbrush   |
| 4. porch    | 9. vine         |
| 5. midnight | 10. prize       |

### COMPREHENSION TEST

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

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

#### Part II: Character Identification (20 points)

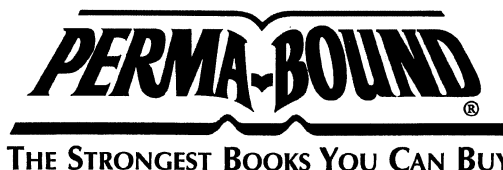
- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Mr. Hiller     | 6. Ivy        |
| 2. Miss Perry     | 7. Vance      |
| 3. Miss Cartright | 8. Gregory    |
| 4. Uncle Max      | 9. Dad        |
| 5. Mom            | 10. Uncle Max |

#### Part III: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F  |
| 2. F | 7. F  |
| 3. T | 8. F  |
| 4. F | 9. T  |
| 5. T | 10. F |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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