***Sounder***

***Chapter 1***

***Summary:***

The book begins with the image of the father standing on the porch, petting Sounder. The boy, his son, asks the man how he got Sounder, and the father explains that Sounder came to him on the road as a pup. The boy loves Sounder, especially now that he does not go to school. The walk is too far—eight miles each way—and, in the winter, is much too cold. The boy thinks about what a great hunting dog Sounder is and how the dog could shake a possum dead from a tree without even puncturing its skin. Perhaps the most impressive quality about the dog is its bark, which echoes so loudly, even musically, that most of the neighbors can hear it.

The father tells the boy that if it is not too windy, they will go hunting that night. They go inside where the boy's mother is cooking corn mush for dinner. They all eat together, including the three younger children. The boy's father and mother talk about how the hunting will be better next year, and the boy thinks of all the empty sacks with which his father and Sounder have been coming home. It is windy after dinner, so the boy feeds Sounder and then his father leaves to hunt by himself. The boy's mother spends the night shelling kernels of walnuts for extra money. The boy wishes she would sing or tell a story to help abate the "night loneliness" he feels. The boy can hear Sounder underneath the porch and wonders where his father went alone.

The boy dreams that, just as in the Bible, there is a flood and all the houses are floating on water. When he wakes up, he smells ham bone, which is something he has only smelled twice in his life. The boy notices that his mother is humming, which happens usually when she is worried. They eat the ham, and, after breakfast, his mother mends a tear in his father's overalls. At night the boy is lonely and vows to learn to read so "he wouldn't be lonesome even if his mother didn't sing."

***Summary in detail:***

A tall man and his son stand on the rickety porch of their cabin this cold October; the boy rubs his hand on the top of his coon dog’s head. His father got Sounder as a pup many years ago; the dog is about the same age as the boy. Three small children peek out of the door and want to pet Sounder, but it is too cold outside. The boy is proud to be older. Their cabin is one of many Negro sharecroppers’ cabins scattered on the white man’s plantation. Sometimes the boy and his parents attend church, and the boy tries to attend school but it is too far and too cold for him to walk in the bitter weather between harvest and planting times. Since he is not in school, the boy gets to hunt with Sounder. The dog is aptly named, for his baying is louder and more distinct than any other dog in the county. His bark “fills up the night and makes music as though the branches of all the trees are being pulled across silver strings.” Sounder is a rather ugly mix between a Georgia redbone hound and a bulldog, but he is a magnificent hunter. During the winter, when no other money is coming in for this poor family, the money from animal hides is welcome. Tonight father promises to take the boy hunting if it is not windy. Inside, mother cooks a sparse dinner, for the hunting has not been good so far this year. Later, father leaves without Sounder or his son while the boy helps his mother shell walnuts while she tells him wonderful stories from the Bible. The boy finally sleeps, wondering where his father has gone. Everything outside looks the same in the morning except for the frost on the ground. It is cold and the boy warms himself a bit at the stove where he discovers pork sausages cooking in a skillet and a ham simmering in another pot. Pork sausage is usually only for Christmas, and the boy has only even smelled ham twice before in his life. Mother is humming, something she does when she is worried. The boy and the other children eat sausage and biscuits quietly as their father sleeps. When father gets up, he takes the ham from the pan and places it on an oak 3 plank to carve. Though it is cold, grey, and cheerless outside, the cabin windows are steamed up by the fragrant simmering meat. The boy feels good for once. Mother patches her husband’s torn overalls and then begins picking walnuts from their shells; later she will sell them. Tonight she tells no stories, just hums “That Lonesome Road.” The boy wishes one of his parents could read so they could read him stories. He vows that one day he will learn to read and own a book with stories in it. Then he will never be lonesome, even if his mother does not sing.