



Daniel Watson (Wood Harris, left) excitedly leads the family (left to right: Bryce Clyde Jenkins, Harrison Knight, Skai Jackson, Anika Noni Rose) to see the surprise addition to the Brown Bomber for their trip to Birmingham.

Lesson #8

Family Relationships

Lesson 8
Academic
Language

**civilization
vibrations
interpretation**

READ

Read Chapter 8, pages 100 - 120

It is up to the educator's discretion to determine the most appropriate reading strategy for the students. (Please refer to Appendix A for a list of possible reading formats and their respective literacy benefits.)

Overview of Chapter 8

In Chapter 8 the kids can't help but suspect that something is brewing. Dad has been doing anything and everything to fix up the Brown Bomber - he even bought a record player that he had mounted on the dashboard. It was a "True-Tone Ab-700 Model, the Ultra-Glide." The Watsons had a lot of fun testing the Ultra-Glide out - Kenny played "Yakety Yak" all four of his turns! The mystery was solved when Momma told the kids they were going to drive to Alabama and that Grandma Sands was going to keep Byron for the whole summer, and possible the next school year! All the kids could think about were the stories about how strict Grandma Sands was.

Chapter 8 introduces the Ultra-Glide, a car record player. Challenge students to research what the Ultra-Glide was, how it really worked, and what 45s were.

Objects from the 1960s:

<http://thebrownbombergoestobirmingham.wikispaces.com/Objects+from+the+1960's>

Chapter 8 also introduces the reader to a collection of songs that were popular during the Watsons' time. Allow students time to listen to a few of these songs:

Momma's Favorite Song – "Under the Boardwalk" by The Drifters:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyzCccndc2w>

Kenny's Favorite Song – "Yakety-Yak" by The Coasters:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtTC3pGBjs4>



Journaling

In just a few sentences, pretend you are Kenny and summarize what happened in Chapter 8. Focus on the main parts of this chapter.

(Sample response: Dad got a neat new in-car record player and the family got to listen to their favorite songs. The kids learn that they will visit Grandma Sands that summer and that Byron may stay with her for longer.)

DISCUSS

Check for Comprehension

Reinforce students' comprehension by asking the following questions. Be sure to follow up on student responses by asking *why* they formulated certain opinions and *which pages* in the text support their claims.

Identify Details

What is Kenny's favorite song to play on the Ultra Glide?

(Sample response: Yakety Yak.)

Using Evidence from the Text

Momma and Dad had threatened to send Byron to Grandma Sands' house many times, but the kids never believed it would really happen. Where in the book does Kenny list the three good reasons to believe that his parents were bluffing? What are the reasons?

(Sample response: On page 119, Kenny says it was way too far for Byron to take a bus. On page 119, it says that Momma and Dad were always threatening Byron with punishment that never happened. And on page 120, it says they heard stories that Grandma Sands was unimaginably strict.)

Where in the book does Momma give reasons for why Byron had to stay with Grandma Sands? What are those reasons?

(Sample response: On page 118: cutting school, lighting fires, taking money out of Momma's purse, fighting, torturing animals, straightening his hair, joining a gang, etc.)

Characters' Perspectives

When Dad first surprised the family with the new Ultra-Glide, what was Momma's reaction? And why did she react this way?

(Sample response: Momma was angry. On page 109 it says that Momma gave Dad a dirty look, then went back into the house. She was angry because she worried about money and did not think the family could afford to buy a car record player.)

Eventually, Momma changes her attitude and joins the family fun outside with the Ultra-Glide. What made her change her tune?

(Sample response: She saw how much fun the family was having and didn't want to miss out.)

Characters' Motivations

On page 119, Grandma Sands tells Momma that stuff on TV isn't happening near her and that it's safe and quiet in her neighborhood. Why would Grandma say this?

(Sample response: Grandma Sands wants to reassure Momma that she is safe and that it will be okay for the family to visit. She also doesn't want Momma to worry about her.)

Why would this matter so much to Momma?

(Sample response: Momma wants to take Byron to a place that will be good for him. She hopes Birmingham will be a healthier environment than Flint for Byron.)

Making Predictions

How do you think the Watson children will like Birmingham?

(Sample response: Grandma Sands and all the scary things that are happening in the news will intimidate them. Or, they will have fun seeing Grandma Sands and Kenny will be glad to get rid of Byron for a while.)

Deepen Comprehension

Whole Class Discussion

Pose the following prompt to the class:

Given what we know is happening in Alabama during the time that the Watsons decide to visit Birmingham, do you recommend that the family go? What advice would you give them about the trip?

Encourage students to talk to *each other*, rather than to you. Remind them to explain why they agree or disagree with each other, to support their claims with justifications from the book, and to ask each other questions about their ideas.

WRITE

Have students respond to this prompt:

Imagine you are Grandma Sands. Write a letter to Byron explaining how he will be expected to behave at her house in Birmingham. Describe how Birmingham will be different from Flint.

REFLECT

Talk about how Byron is facing serious personal problems, and at the same time the United States was facing tragic problems that affected lots of people. Encourage students to think about some of the problems that they have in their lives that they feel they have very little control over. Ask:

When you are faced with problems in your life, how does it make you feel? What do you do when you feel that you can't change your situation? Do you feel that there is anything that you are able to do to change your own situation, even if it is something small? Do you believe that there is any way that you, one person, could work to change some of the problems in your life? How?



In the movie, Kenny (Bryce Clyde Jenkins) reads Langston Hughes' poem, "Let America Be America Again" in front of a class of older kids. Kenny is so nervous that he's holding the book upside, and in doing so, the older kids suddenly realize in awe: Kenny's reciting the entire poem from memory.

Lesson #9

Culture & Conflict

Lesson 9
Academic
Language

eavesdrop
peninsula
seniority

READ

Read Chapter 9, pages 121 - 137

It is up to the educator's discretion to determine the most appropriate reading strategy for the students. (Please refer to Appendix A for a list of possible reading formats and their respective literacy benefits.)

Overview of Chapter 9

In Chapter 9 Kenny and Dad have a serious conversation about the way things are in the world. On television Kenny saw some white people being cruel to black children who were trying to go to school. He didn't really understand why or how the white people could hate some little kids so much. Dad told Kenny that, "a lot of times that's going to be the way of the world for you kids." He said that it was important for Byron to understand this and that spending some time down south would maybe open up Byron's eyes to the kind of place the world could be. When the family finally starts their trip, they discover that Momma has the whole trip planned in a notebook – including where and what they would eat, and where and for how long they would stop.

Journaling

In just a few sentences, pretend you are Kenny and summarize what happened in Chapter 9. Focus on the main parts of this chapter.

(Sample response: Kenny and Dad talk about how worried the parents are about Byron and they hope Alabama will help him grow up. Joetta does not like the angel Mrs. Davidson gives her because it has a white face. Momma has the whole trip to Birmingham planned out.)

DISCUSS

Check for Comprehension

Reinforce students' comprehension by asking the following questions. Be sure to follow up on student responses by asking *why* they formulated certain opinions and *which pages* in the text support their claims.

Make Inferences

Why did Momma and Dad make Byron sleep in their room the night before the big trip?

(Sample response: Probably because they suspected Byron might try to run away in the night.)

What would have given Momma and Dad the impression that Byron may try to run away?

(Sample response: Joetta told on Byron. She didn't want Byron to get into worse trouble.)

Characters' Perspectives

How does Kenny really feel about sending Byron to Grandma Sands' house for the summer?

(Sample response: Kenny doesn't really want Byron to go. He wants to scare him into behaving by just pretending to drive to Alabama.)

Why doesn't Joetta like the angel that Mrs. Davidson gives her?

(Sample response: The angel has a white face.)

Why would the color of the angel's face be a problem for Joetta?

(Sample response: Joetta does not identify with the doll because she has a different color skin. Also, Joetta has been hearing a lot of upsetting things in the news about white people and may be holding resentment for people with white skin.)

Characters' Motivations

Why did Momma have the whole trip to Birmingham planned?

(Sample response: She wanted to have a tight schedule so that they would avoid spending too much money and she wanted to prevent Dad from trying to drive too far while exhausted.)

Why would Momma and Dad decide that sending Byron to Birmingham for the summer is a good idea?

(Sample response: They think that exposing Byron to a less privileged environment will encourage him to grow up and stop making such childish choices.)

Deepen Comprehension

Small-Group Discussion

Divide students into small groups of 3-4. Remind them that there are strong themes of racial conflict in this story, and particularly in this chapter. Encourage students to consider page 132 where the kids asked why Dad couldn't just drive until he was tired. Dad replied in his best Southern-style voice: "Cuz boy this is the deep south.... Y'all colored folks cain't be jes' pullin' up tuh any ol' way-uh and be 'spectin' tuh get no room uh no food, huh her, boy? ...You thank this he-uh is Uhmurica?" Give each group 5 minutes to discuss the following:

Pretend that you are Kenny and Byron and respond to what Dad said. What questions would you have about the south? How would you react to Dad's joke?

Next, reconvene with the whole class and invite groups to share their reflections. Encourage students to take turns speaking, to explain why they agree or disagree with each other, and to support their claims with evidence from the text.

WRITE

Have students respond to this prompt:

Joetta put the angel that Mrs. Davidson gave her as a gift in her sock drawer because she didn't like it. Have you ever received a gift that you didn't like? How did you react and what did you do?

REFLECT

Invite students to share their writing prompt responses with the class. In this Chapter, we learn a lot more about how segregation in the 1960s affected both adults and children. Think about the idea of segregation. Ask:

How would you feel if you were separated from your peers or denied certain rights because of the way you looked or because of a set of beliefs you had? What are ways that diversity actually makes our lives better? Can you think of examples of how differences among people have improved a situation?



The Watsons travel in the Brown Bomber toward Birmingham.

Lesson #10

Fears & Differences

Lesson 10
Academic
Language

**sanitation
facilities
amount**

READ

Read Chapter 10, pages 138 - 148

It is up to the educator's discretion to determine the most appropriate reading strategy for the students. (Please refer to Appendix A for a list of possible reading formats and their respective literacy benefits.)

Overview of Chapter 10

In Chapter 10 we find out that Dad is going to upset Momma's notebook plans by driving straight through to Alabama from Ohio. When they finally stop at a rest area in Tennessee and see the Appalachian Mountains, the whole family gets affected by an eerie sort of feeling that may be caused by the higher altitude or just may have something to do with thinking about "crackers and rednecks...that ain't never seen no Negroes before."

Journaling

In just a few sentences, pretend you are Kenny and summarize what happened in Chapter 10. Focus on the main parts of this chapter.

(Sample response: The Watsons make it to Ohio where the children discover that the toilets are very different than what they're used to in Flint. Kenny slept through most of Kentucky and when he woke up they were in Tennessee. The sight of mountains frightened Kenny, and Byron scared his siblings by talking about "rednecks" and "hillbillies" who eat black people.)



Direct students to the map presented in the front of this resource. Show them Tennessee and point out the Appalachian Mountain Range. Challenge students to learn more about the Appalachian Mountains:

Map of the Appalachian Mountains:

<http://media.web.britannica.com/eb-media/43/89843-004-DBECEB58.gif>

DISCUSS

Check for Comprehension

Reinforce students' comprehension by asking the following questions. Be sure to follow up on student responses by asking *why* they formulated certain opinions and *which pages* in the text support their claims.

Drawing Conclusions

Kenny knows that once Momma falls asleep Dad plans to drive much further than her schedule would allow. How does Kenny figure this out?

(Sample response: Kenny remembers overhearing Dad ask the mechanic how many straight hours the Brown Bomber would be able to drive.)

Why are the Watson children frightened when the family stops in Tennessee?

(Sample response: Joetta and Kenny think the mountains are scary looking and Byron believes that hillbillies that want to hang and eat black people are in the woods.)

Context Clues

On page 144, Momma takes out her notebook and announces:

This is the Appalachia Mountains. We're over six thousand feet above sea level, this is higher than we've ever been before.

What does "sea level" mean and how is it relevant to Momma's point?

Characters' Motivations

Why doesn't Dad want to stick with Momma's plan to take several days to drive to Birmingham?

(Sample response: He knows the family can save money if they do not stop overnight.)

Characters' Perspectives

Why is Momma angry that Dad has not followed the driving schedule?

(Sample response: Because the family lost their opportunity to stay at a motel and would have to either sleep in the car or keep driving. Momma also worries that it is unsafe for Dad to drive long distances if he is tired.)

Why do you think that Byron was so nervous about being near the Appalachian Mountains, especially in the dark?

(Sample response: Because Byron knew that the family was in a southern state and feared that white people who don't like blacks would approach them. The unpleasant things he has heard on the news haunt him.)

Deepen Comprehension

Think-Pair-Share

Ask students the following question:

At this point in the story, with which character do you most closely identify? Why? What makes you similar to that character?

Allow students 3-5 minutes to talk about these questions with their partner. Encourage them to take turns listening, and then sharing out their ideas. After the pairs have had a few minutes to talk, return to the whole group and ask for a few volunteers to share *their partner's* ideas. Ask if others in the room had similar thoughts or if they have different points of view.

WRITE

The Watson family seemed to get some pretty weird feelings when they were near the Appalachian Mountains. They couldn't wait to get back on the road again. Have students respond to this prompt:

Write about a time that you were someplace that gave you a “creepy” feeling and you just couldn't wait to get away.

REFLECT

In this book, there are many references to regional differences between the north and the south. Some of the contrasts are true (e.g. the weather is different, people talk with different accents, the water tastes different, and the terrain is different), but other contrasts are simply negative stereotypes (e.g. Southern people love hillbilly music, count cows for fun, and eat black people). Talk with students about how stereotypes are assumptions about groups of people that do not necessarily reflect reality. Ask:

What are some unfair stereotypes that you can think of? Have you ever been stereotyped? How did that make you feel? How do stereotypes affect others? What are ways that we can avoid making stereotypes?

Emphasize for students that assigning groups with negative labels is a way of perpetuating prejudice among people.



Grandma Sands (LaTanya Richardson) gives her daughter Wilona (Anika Noni Rose) a hug, excited to be reunited after so many years. Wilona Watson exclaims, "Babies, we home!"

Lesson #11

Family Dynamics & Perspectives

Lesson 11
Academic
Language

rabies
surrender
pathetic

READ

Read Chapter 11, pages 149 - 161

It is up to the educator's discretion to determine the most appropriate reading strategy for the students. (Please refer to Appendix A for a list of possible reading formats and their respective literacy benefits.)

Overview of Chapter 11

In Chapter 11 we discover that Dad has been driving now for 18 hours straight and as a result is acting a little weirder than normal. The Ultra-Glide wasn't working right, so Dad has started listening to "hillbilly" music. The Watsons arrive in Alabama a day early and surprise Grandma Sands, but not as much as she surprises Kenny. She is nothing like what he expected. Kenny was also expecting a big confrontation between Grandma Sands and Byron, but instead Byron's behavior confuses Kenny once again. Kenny thought that all the "fight was already out of him... and they'd just been in Birmingham for a couple of minutes."

Journaling

In just a few sentences, pretend you are Kenny and summarize what happened in Chapter 11. Focus on the main parts of this chapter.

(Sample response: The family's long drive was finally over, and they made it to Grandma Sands' house a day early. Grandma Sands was smaller and older than Kenny expected, and Byron surprised Kenny by treating her respectfully. Grandma Sands had a very happy, and tearful reunion with her family.)

DISCUSS

Check for Comprehension

Reinforce students' comprehension by asking the following questions. Be sure to follow up on student responses by asking *why* they formulated certain opinions and *which pages* in the text support their claims.

Identify Details

What was so surprising to Kenny when he first saw Grandma Sands?

(Sample response: She was just a teeny-weeny old woman.)

Using Evidence from the Text

Dad was acting strangely towards the end of the Watson's drive. What evidence from the text lets us know that?

(Sample response: On page 149, he let the record player skip the same lyrics of the song for a long time. Page 151 tells us that Dad was listening to country music on the radio. On page 153, it tells us that Dad must have been really tired because he never talked that much.)

Characters' Actions

How did Momma act when the family first pulled up to Grandma Sands' house? Why would she behave this way?

(Sample response: Momma was so excited, she honked the car horn like crazy. Then she cried and ran to the porch to hug Grandma Sands. This was a special time for Momma because she did not get to see her own mother very often and probably missed her quite a bit.)

When Byron meets Grandma Sands, all of his sass is gone. Instead he smiles and speaks politely to Grandma Sands. This seems out of character for Byron. Why would he behave this way?

(Sample response: Byron is genuinely happy to see a grandparent who he has not visited in a long time. OR - Maybe Byron is playing his cards right. He knows that provoking Grandma Sands will get him into serious trouble. Maybe Byron is starting to learn that a bad attitude does not get him very far.)

Characters' Perspectives

How does Kenny feel about the way Byron addresses Grandma Sands?

(Sample response: He is disappointed in Byron and thinks Byron surrendered to Grandma Sands too easily.)

Why would Kenny feel this way? Why wouldn't he just be happy that Byron is behaving?

(Sample response: Kenny looks up to his older brother and admires his toughness. Even though Kenny does not like to get picked on by Byron, he still believes that his brother is cool.)

Making Predictions

Do you believe that spending time with Grandma Sands will improve Byron's juvenile delinquent behavior?

(Sample response: Yes, because he is already being polite to her and is learning that a bad attitude will get him nowhere. OR – No, because Byron is just waiting for his parents to leave so that he can act out. He is not afraid of old Grandma Sands.)

Deepen Comprehension

Small Group Discussion

Divide students into small groups of 3-4. Pose the following prompt:

Do you believe that Byron's respect for Grandma Sands is sincere, or is it just an act? Is it possible that Byron has learned from his past actions and is changing for the better?

Allow students 5-10 minutes to discuss their ideas within their groups. Remind them to accompany their opinions with reasoning and evidence. Encourage students to ask each other questions about their respective ideas.

Next, reconvene with the whole class and invite groups to share their reflections. Encourage students to take turns speaking, to explain why they agree or disagree with each other, and to support their claims with evidence from the text.

WRITE

Have students respond to this prompt:

Kenny was expecting Grandma Sands to look completely different from how she actually looked. Have you ever had a similar experience? How did that affect your impressions of that person? Explain.

REFLECT

In this chapter, Dad surprises the family by acting funny in the car, Grandma Sands surprises Kenny by seeming older and kinder than he had envisioned, and Byron surprises Kenny by treating Grandma Sands respectfully. Explain to students that:

Sometimes people surprise us. It is easy to make assumptions about people based on very little knowledge, or to cast judgments about people based on their prior actions... yet every now and then the ways people behave will surprise us. Is it possible for a bully to be kind, for a shy person to be confident, or for a goofy person to be serious? How have your assumptions of others been challenged and what did you learn from that experience?



Kenny, Byron and Joetta Watson (left to right: Bryce Clyde Jenkins, Harrison Knight, Skai Jackson) are shown around Birmingham by Mr. Robert (David Alan Grier, right).

Lesson #12

Community & Culture

Lesson 12
Academic
Language

desire
yakking
interrupt

READ

Read Chapter 12, pages 162 - 168

It is up to the educator's discretion to determine the most appropriate reading strategy for the students. (Please refer to Appendix A for a list of possible reading formats and their respective literacy benefits.)

Overview of Chapter 12

In Chapter 12 the Watson family gets acquainted and reacquainted with the town of Birmingham. The kids think that Birmingham is as hot as an oven! Grandma Sands' friend, Mr. Robert, tells an amazing story about saving his dog's life after the dog was drowned by a raccoon. Kenny becomes confused again by Byron's behavior when he finds him laughing and joking with Mr. Robert and Dad when they tell their "stupid" stories. It seemed to Kenny that Byron was actually having a good time! Momma and Grandma Sands just talked and talked, about everything!

Journaling

In just a few sentences, pretend you are Kenny and summarize what happened in Chapter 12. Focus on the main parts of this chapter.

(Sample response: The Watsons are not used to how hot it is in Alabama. Mr. Robert tells a story about saving his dog from a raccoon. Momma had a lot of questions for Grandma Sands about Birmingham, and she is not pleased that Mr. Robert lives with Grandma Sands.)

DISCUSS

Check for Comprehension

Reinforce students' comprehension by asking the following questions. Be sure to follow up on student responses by asking *why* they formulated certain opinions and *which pages* in the text support their claims.

Identify Details

After Mr. Robert tells his story about the raccoon that drowned his dog, what does Kenny think of him?

(Sample response: Kenny thinks Mr. Robert might be lying because it is improbable that an animal as small as a raccoon could drown a dog. Also, Kenny thinks it is cool that Mr. Robert would be willing to give a dog CPR.)

Making Inferences

Who is Mr. Robert in relation to Grandma Sands?

(Sample response: Mr. Robert is Grandma Sands' boyfriend.)

Context Clues

On page 162, Kenny says "Birmingham was *like an oven*. The first night I couldn't sleep at all, me and By had to share a bed and we were both *sweating like pigs*." What does Kenny mean by this?

(Sample response: The weather in Birmingham is very hot. It is warm enough to make the Watson brothers sweat a lot.)

Characters' Perspectives

Momma asks Grandma Sands lots of questions about Birmingham. Why is Momma feeling so curious?

(Sample response: Because that is the town that Momma was raised in, so small changes over time add up and seem especially huge to her. Also, Momma feels a connection to the town and the people in it, so she wants to learn about what has become of her old friends and neighbors.)

Why would Momma disapprove of Mr. Robert living with Grandma Sands?

(Sample response: Momma is suspicious of Mr. Robert because she has never met him before and does not know a lot about him.)

What do you think that Kenny thought about Byron when he heard him joking and laughing at Mr. Robert and Dad's jokes?

(Sample response: Kenny was jealous because he wanted Byron's attention and was not used to Byron getting positive attention from the adults. OR - Maybe he thought that Byron was putting on a show to be "good" because he wanted to fool the adults. OR - Maybe Byron was losing his edge and becoming less fun.)

Deepen Comprehension

Whole Class Discussion

Ask students to consider the following question:

Grandma Sands tells Momma that “things are different from what they were when you left. Nearly everything changes.” What does Grandma Sands mean by this? What has changed? How does this change affect the characters in the story?

Encourage them to take turns listening, and then sharing out their ideas. After the pairs have had a few minutes to talk, return to the whole group and ask for a few volunteers to share *their partner’s* ideas. Ask if others in the room had similar thoughts or if they have different points of view.

WRITE

The Watson family drove Byron to Birmingham as punishment for acting like a juvenile delinquent, but when they got there Byron acted happy and well behaved. This is surprising because only days before Byron was planning to run away so that he could avoid visiting Grandma Sands. Have students respond to this prompt:

Have you ever dreaded an experience so much that you wanted to run away, but when you got there it turned out to be fun? Write about a time that you expected the worst, but ended up having a good time.

REFLECT

In this chapter, we notice that Byron is acting more grown up and this confuses Kenny. Consider the idea of maturity. What does it mean to be mature? How can mature decisions affect circumstances both for ourselves and for others?



While Mr. Robert (David Alan Grier, standing) looks on, Kenny (Bryce Clyde Jenkins, left) and Byron (Harrison Knight, right) are shocked to discover that they cannot order food from the same lunch counter as everyone else. Byron exclaims, "He said to go round back? I want a hotdog right here, right now. What's the problem?"

Lesson #13

Risk & Identity

Lesson 13
Academic
Language

whirlpool
strange
electrocuted

READ

Read Chapter 13, pages 169 - 179

It is up to the educator's discretion to determine the most appropriate reading strategy for the students. (Please refer to Appendix A for a list of possible reading formats and their respective literacy benefits.)

Overview of Chapter 13

In Chapter 13, when the kids decide to go swimming, they are warned about staying away from Collier's Landing because of a dangerous whirlpool that has already claimed the lives of several people. To steer his siblings away from the danger, Byron makes up a fantastic story about the Wool Pooh, Winnie's evil twin, who hides under the water so that he can snatch up "stupid" little kids. In spite of all the warnings, Kenny defiantly heads directly for Collier's Landing instead of the public swimming area. Although at first a little reluctant to actually go in the water, Kenny gets lured in by a big green turtle and ends up getting pulled into the deeper water by the whirlpool. Kenny nearly drowns and imagines that the Wool Pooh is pulling him under the water, but it is really Byron who has jumped in to save his life.

Chapter 13 makes slightly ambiguous references to a whirlpool. Challenge students to learn more about what a whirlpool is and the science behind how one works.

Whirlpool Myths and Facts:

<http://www.spiralwishingwells.com/guide/whirlpools.html>

Twin Whirlpools in Australian Floodwaters:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ct_17xYGNz8

Scientist who swims into a whirlpool to share from under water what it looks like:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sU9JFUlfQ>



Journaling

In just a few sentences, pretend you are Kenny and summarize what happened in Chapter 10. Focus on the main parts of this chapter.

(Sample response: The Watson children are warned not to swim in Collier's Landing, but Kenny disobeys and swims there anyway. While swimming, Kenny gets sucked into the deeper part of the water and starts to drown. Byron shows how much he loves Kenny by rescuing him from drowning, then by hugging and kissing him a lot.)

DISCUSS

Check for Comprehension

Reinforce students' comprehension by asking the following questions. Be sure to follow up on student responses by asking *why* they formulated certain opinions and *which pages* in the text support their claims.

Identify Details

What really is the Wool Pooh that the children are warned about?

(Sample response: It is a whirlpool - a place in the water where currents collide and a funnel forms that can suck things under.)

Characters' Actions

Why does Byron make up a story about Winnie the Pooh's evil twin brother, the Wool Pooh?

(Sample response: Byron is trying to frighten his siblings into avoiding Collier's Landing. He does not want them to get hurt by swimming there.)

Why would Byron choose to go to Collier's Landing to check on Kenny?

(Sample response: Byron was concerned that Kenny would make a foolish choice – like swim in the dangerous water – so he wanted to check to make sure that his little brother was safe. Byron felt that it was his job to protect his siblings. Deep down, Byron loves Kenny very much.)

Characters' Perspectives

Kenny said that Byron was passing up an opportunity for another “Fantastic Adventure” when he chose to listen to a grown-up instead of going to Collier’s Landing. How do you think this made Kenny feel about Byron? How did Kenny feel about himself?

(Sample response: Kenny was probably confused by why Byron was not making his typical juvenile delinquent decisions. Kenny thought he would try to be brave and make daring choices the way Byron used to. Kenny probably thought he was acting cool and would impress Byron.)

When Kenny gets to Collier’s Landing, he decides it can’t be too dangerous. On page 173, Kenny says, “I figured if there really was anything dangerous Byron would have followed me here and stopped me from getting hurt, wouldn’t he?” Why does Kenny say this?

(Sample response: Kenny is accustomed to having his brother protect him from harm. Despite the ways Byron bullies him, Kenny knows that he can count on his big brother in times of trouble. Kenny hesitates and says, “wouldn’t he?” because Byron can be unpredictable and tough to read.)

Making Predictions

Now that Byron has shown Kenny how much he loves him (by saving his life and then crying over him), do you think the brothers’ relationship will change? How will things be different, if at all?

(Sample response: Now Byron will be nicer to Kenny and stop picking on him. OR – Like when Byron killed the dove, he will become embarrassed by showing his emotions and lash out at Kenny angrily.)

Deepen Comprehension

Small Group Discussion

Divide students into small groups of 3-4. Pose the following prompt:

Was Kenny's choice to go to Collier's Landing, instead of the public swimming area, typical of his behavior? Why do you think that Kenny chose to go to Collier's landing even though he was warned about the danger?

Allow students 5-10 minutes to discuss their ideas within their groups. Remind them to accompany their opinions with reasoning and evidence. Encourage students to ask each other questions about their respective ideas.

Next, reconvene with the whole class and invite groups to share their reflections. Encourage students to take turns speaking, to explain why they agree or disagree with each other, and to support their claims with evidence from the text.

WRITE

Have students respond to this prompt:

When Kenny was under the water struggling against the motion of the whirlpool he imagined that he saw Joetta dressed as an angel. She told him to swim to the surface, and then Byron saw him and was able to save him from drowning. How does this relate to the Central Theme of the book about finding courage to deal with our problems?

REFLECT

In this chapter, Kenny said that when you get into trouble it seems like you do it in steps. He also said that it "seems like the worse the trouble is that you get into the more steps it takes to get there. Sort of like you're getting a bunch of little warnings on the way; sort of like if you really wanted to you could turn around."

Do you agree or disagree with Kenny's analysis of the stages of trouble? Explain your response using some examples from experiences that you have had getting into trouble. What are strategies you could use to avoid trouble?



The Watson's cousins (Shameik Moore, Josephine Lawrence) and their classmates await permission from their teacher to join the Children's March. Their teacher tells them, "Students! When I turn my back, for those of you who want to leave I won't stop you. And since I didn't see you walk out, I won't be able to mark you absent."

Lesson #14

Acceptance & Adversity

Lesson 14
Academic
Language

familiar
concrete
investigate

READ

Read Chapter 14, pages 180 - 190

It is up to the educator's discretion to determine the most appropriate reading strategy for the students. (Please refer to Appendix A for a list of possible reading formats and their respective literacy benefits.)

Overview of Chapter 14

In Chapter 14 a bomb explodes in the church where Joetta was attending Sunday School. Kenny goes into the church and finds a shoe that he believes is Joetta's and then assumes that she is dead. In another imaginary struggle with the Wool Pooh, he somehow manages to gain the shoe and then returns home to Grandma Sands' house in a daze. Joetta arrives home a little later asking him where he went so fast. When he looks confused she explains that she left the church when he waved at her and chased him down the street! When Kenny finally looks at her he sees that she has both of her shoes. Confused, but understanding that Joetta is fine, he leaves the house to find his parents.

Journaling

In just a few sentences, pretend you are Kenny and summarize what happened in Chapter 14. Focus on the main parts of this chapter.

(Sample response: Kenny has been exhausted and recovering from almost drowning at Collier's Landing. Byron did not tell on Kenny for swimming in the forbidden water. Someone set a bomb off in Joetta's church and Kenny goes into the demolished building. Kenny sees lots of people crying and yelling, but he doesn't hear any sounds. After he takes a little girl's shoe away from the Wool Pooh, Kenny goes home. At home he finds Joetta – who he thinks is a ghost, but it turns out she is alive and well.)

Chapter 14 introduces an impactful narrative about a particularly tragic bombing that took place in Birmingham in 1963. To prepare students, educators can direct them towards this informative website:

"The Ballad of Birmingham":

<http://www.balladofbirmingham.org/>

To hear the poem "The Battle of Birmingham" sung aloud:

<http://www.balladofbirmingham.org/Balladsong.mp3>



DISCUSS

Check for Comprehension

Reinforce students' comprehension by asking the following questions. Be sure to follow up on student responses by asking *why* they formulated certain opinions and *which pages* in the text support their claims.

Cause and Effect

What caused Joetta to leave the church early?

(Sample response: She was feeling hot, so she left the building. Then she thought she saw Kenny, so she chased him.)

What effect did this choice have on Joetta? And on the entire Watson family?

(Sample response: Joetta was not harmed in the bombing. The Watsons were spared the tragedy of losing a loved one.)

Context Clues

Consider the following passage from page 182:

*If this had happened in Flint I would have **investigated** to find out what it was, but that horrible sun had sucked all the **curiosity** out of me.*

Ask students if they can use context clues to determine the meaning of the words *investigated* and *curiosity*.

Characters' Perspectives

When Kenny first learns that a bomb has exploded in the church where Joetta was supposed to be practicing her singing he just stands there looking stupid. Why would he react in this way?

(Sample response: The news was so scary and unimaginable that Kenny had difficulty believing it was true. It may have been hard for his mind to accept a truth so terrible. He was in shock.)

Why do you think that Kenny imagined that he was having a struggle with the Wool Pooh in the church when he was attempting to get the shiny black shoe?

(Sample response: Kenny viewed the Wool Pooh as something that brings tragedy, so he wanted to fight against the Wool Pooh because he did not want any harm to come on his little sister. It was important to Kenny to be brave and challenge the Wool Pooh so that he could protect Joetta.)

Characters' Motivations

What were some of the reasons that Kenny didn't want to look at Joetta when she came to him in his room after he returned from the church?

(Sample response: Kenny was frightened because he thought his sister was dead. He thought that the Wool Pooh was trying to trick him into looking at something that was not really Joetta.)

Making Inferences

Who was it that Joetta saw who waved to her and coaxed her away from the church by laughing and running and having her chase him?

(Sample response: It was a figment of Joetta's imagination—a fortunate one that saved her life. OR – It was an angel sent to save Joetta, OR - It also could have been somebody who looked a lot like Kenny.)

Making Predictions

Given the tragedy of the bombing, what do you think the Watson family will do next?

(Sample response: They will fight against the terrible people who planned the bombing. OR – They will leave town and go back to safe Flint.)

Deepen Comprehension

Whole Class Discussion

There are many references in the book to the racism, hatred and violence exhibited during the Civil Rights Movement in America. Specifically, Chapter 14 deals with a bombing at a church where several children are killed and others are hurt. Pose the following prompt to the class:

Imagine you are the president during the 1960's. How would you talk to the community as a whole about the terrible acts of violence and prejudice happening in the country? What would you say to the community? What are effective ways to eliminate violence and ensure peace?

Encourage students to talk to *each other*, rather than to you. Remind them to explain why they agree or disagree with each other, to support their claims with justifications from the book, and to ask each other questions about their ideas.

WRITE

Have students respond to this prompt:

Do you think that there is any kind of connection between Kenny seeing Joetta when he was in danger of drowning and Joetta seeing Kenny when she was in danger of being killed by the bomb? What is the significance of these siblings seeing each other during times of danger? Explain.

REFLECT

Talk about how hate crimes –like bombings and other physical attacks— occur every day in our world today. Encourage students to think about the root of hate and intolerance. Push them to consider:

If hateful acts bring nothing but tragedy, why do they happen so often? How does hate formulate and what can we do to prevent those types of attitudes in our environment?



Protesters march for equal rights and integrated schools in Birmingham.

Lesson #15

Courage & Compromise

Lesson 15
Academic
Language

automatically
wonder
embarrass

READ

Read Chapter 15, pages 191 - 206

It is up to the educator's discretion to determine the most appropriate reading strategy for the students. (Please refer to Appendix A for a list of possible reading formats and their respective literacy benefits.)

Overview of Chapter 15

In Chapter 15 we find the Watsons back in Flint. The family is extremely concerned about Kenny's state of mind. He has been disappearing for longer and longer periods of time behind the couch in the World-Famous Watson Pet Hospital. He was trying to come to terms with his experiences in Birmingham. As the weeks pass Byron finally succeeds in getting Kenny to face his problems by helping Kenny realize that he must reach inside of himself to find his inner strength and courage. Kenny learns that there is strength in all of us that gives us the courage to cope with even the most insurmountable obstacles in our lives.

Journaling

In just a few sentences, pretend you are Kenny and summarize what happened in Chapter 15. Focus on the main parts of this chapter.

(Sample response: The Watsons family went back to Flint, and Kenny spent several weeks huddled behind the couch in the living room. Momma and Daddy were very worried about Kenny's strange behavior. Byron figured out that Kenny was hiding, so he started bringing Kenny snacks and turning on the television. Byron even slept on the couch to keep Kenny company! Byron and Kenny finally have an important talk in the bathroom, where Byron tells Kenny "life ain't fair" and that Kenny has nothing to be ashamed of.)

DISCUSS

Check for Comprehension

Reinforce students' comprehension by asking the following questions. Be sure to follow up on student responses by asking *why* they formulated certain opinions and *which pages* in the text support their claims.

Drawing Conclusions

Why does Kenny think the back of the couch would be a safe place for him to hide?

(Sample response: Kenny has always viewed that spot as a place where his pets go to become well, so he thinks it would be a good place for him to get better too.)

Why do Momma and Dad start being careful about what they say, and then start saying really nice things about Kenny?

(Sample response: Because they knew Kenny was hiding behind the couch and they were trying to make him feel better. They are caring parents who are worried about Kenny's psychological health.)

Characters' Motivations

After returning to Flint, Kenny began disappearing for longer and longer periods of time behind the couch in the World-Famous Watson Pet Hospital. Why do you think he behaved this way?

(Sample response: Kenny was traumatized by what he saw in Birmingham. He was also ashamed of himself for not being braver in the face of the Wool Pooh. The quiet security behind the couch probably gave him a chance to heal from shock.)

Why would Byron make Kenny come to the bathroom to check out his facial hair? This seems uncharacteristic of him.

(Sample response: Byron was looking for a good opportunity to have a heartfelt talk with Kenny. He was very worried about Kenny and wanted to pull his little brother out of depression.)

Characters' Perspectives

Byron told Kenny that it wasn't fair that even though the cops in Birmingham might know who was responsible for the bombing that most likely nothing would ever happen to the men. He said that things "ain't ever gonna be fair," but that Kenny had to understand that that was just the way it is and that you had to "keep on steppin'." Why would Byron feel this way, and why would he tell this to Kenny?

(Sample response: Byron has grown up a bit and has accepted that life sometimes brings injustices. He tells Kenny this because he wants to prepare his little brother for the realities of the world, much like Momma and Dad wanted to do for Byron by taking him to Birmingham.)

Making Predictions

Do you think the experiences the Watsons had in the summer of 1963 shaped the rest of their lives?

(Sample response: The Watsons will always carry a sadness with them for what happened that scary day in Birmingham, as well as for all of the other unjust events that took place during the Civil Rights movement. They will be thankful that their family went unharmed and will be more keenly aware of how precious life is.)

Deepen Comprehension

Whole Class Discussion

Pose the following prompt to the class:

Byron told Kenny that he didn't think that the men who bombed the church were sick at all (like Momma thought), but that he thought "they just let hate eat them up and turn them into monsters." Do you agree or disagree? What do you think Momma meant by the word "sick." Explain.

Encourage students to talk to *each other*, rather than to you. Remind them to explain why they agree or disagree with each other, to support their claims with justifications from the book, and to ask each other questions about their ideas.

WRITE

Have students respond to this prompt:

Byron told Kenny that there was no such thing as magic powers, but Kenny felt that Byron was wrong. Kenny believed that they were real and could be found in the kindnesses in life, like having understanding parents and supportive siblings. What do you think that the author was trying to symbolize by the use of the Wool Pooh, Angels, and other magic powers?

REFLECT

In the final chapter, we learn that Byron and Kenny have differences in opinion about what the Wool Pooh is and its significance. It is common for people to have differences in beliefs, and that is okay. Ask students to:

Talk about a belief of yours that is different from another family member or friend's belief. Next, talk about a time you found yourself in strong disagreement with family, friends, or community.

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