

***Chapter Summaries,
Objective Tests,
Thinking and Writing Prompts,
and
Graphic Organizers
for***

***The Watsons Go to
Birmingham—1963***

By Christopher Paul Curtis



A Novel Teaching Pack

by Margaret Whisnant

ISBN 978-1-934538-29-6

Copyright © 2009 Margaret Whisnant
All rights reserved by author.
Permission to duplicate for classroom use only.

Taking Grades Publishing Company
Conover, NC 28613

Table of Contents

Chapter Summaries	Page(s) 1-20
--------------------------------	------------------------

Objective Tests

Chapter Tests

1. <i>And You Wonder Why we Get Called the Weird Watsons</i>	21-22
2. <i>Give My Regards to Clark, Poindexter</i>	23
3. <i>The World's Greatest Dinosaur War Ever</i>	24-25
4. <i>Froze-Up Southern Folks</i>	26
5. <i>Nazi Parachutes Attack America and Get Shot Down over the Flint River by Captain Byron Watson and his Flamethrower of Death</i>	27-28
6. <i>Swedish Cremes and Welfare Cheese</i>	29-30
7. <i>Every Chihuahua in America Lines Up to Take a Bite Out of Byron</i>	31
8. <i>The Ultra-Glide</i>	32-33
9. <i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963</i>	34-35
10. <i>Tangled up in God's Beard</i>	36-37
11. <i>Bobo Brazil Meets the Sheik</i>	38-39
12. <i>That Dog Won't Hunt No More</i>	40
13. <i>I Meet Winnie's Evil Twin Brother, the Wool Pooh</i>	421
14. <i>Every Bird and Bug in Birmingham Stops and Wonders</i>	42-43
15. <i>The World-Famous Watson Pet Hospital</i>	44-45
16. <i>Epilogue</i>	46-47

Whole Book Test	48-51
------------------------------	-------

Something to Think About . . .

Something to Write About . . .

Chapter-by-Chapter	52-65
Whole Book	66-69

Table of Contents—*continued*

Graphic Organizers

Despicable Duds 70
What Was He Thinking? 71
More about Mrs. Davidson 72
Grandma Sands: The Human Dynamo 73
Byron's Metamorphosis 74
Hanging Out with Kenny 75
The Weird Watsons Family Superlatives 76

Keys 77-79

About Your Novel Teaching Pack 80-82

Chapter Summaries

1. And You Wonder Why We Get Called the Weird Watsons

- On a super-duper-cold Saturday, the Watsons sit close together on the couch huddled together under a blanket. The thermostat is turned up, the furnace is making loud noises, but it's freezing in the house.
- On the couch are Kenny, his little sister, Joetta, Momma, Dad, and Byron.
- Momma is on the outside. She is the only Watson who wasn't born in Flint, and the cold bothers her the most. She blames Dad for bringing her from Alabama to Michigan, which she calls a giant icebox. She shoots bad looks at him.
- Byron sits beside Dad, but there is a little space between them. At thirteen, Byron is an official teenage juvenile delinquent. He doesn't want to touch anybody or be touched.
- Dad turns on the TV to try to help the family forget how cold it is, but a forecast of temperatures in the mid-seventies in Atlanta, Georgia, gets him in trouble. Atlanta is a hundred and fifty miles from Momma's home.
- Momma says she should have listened to Moses Henderson.
- The Watson children want to hear about Moses. Momma says Dad should make sure he gets all the facts right. Joey and Kenny start smiling. Byron tries to look cool and bored. The Watson children know their dad is about to cut up.
- Dad says the children came close to having Hambone Henderson for a daddy. The man's head was lumpy and shaped like a hambone, and he had proposed to their mother about the same time Dad did. Instead of being a little cool, they could have gone through life as Hambonettes.
- Momma puts her hand over her mouth, something she does to cover the gap between her teeth when she is about to smile. The whole family is cracking up.
- Dad talks Southern-style to imitate Hambone's warnings to Momma about moving to Flint, where people live in igloos. There are no colored people. Almost everybody is Chinese.
- Momma says if she had listened to Moses the children might have had lumpy heads, but they would have been warm in Birmingham. Life is slower there and the people are friendlier.
- Dad reminds everyone about the "Coloreds Only" bathroom in downtown Birmingham.
- Momma knows things aren't perfect there, but people are honest about the way they feel. She looks at Byron and adds that folks in Birmingham know how to respect their parents.
- Dad calls the landlord again, but the phone is still busy. It will be too cold for the family to stay in the house through the night. The family cheers when Dad calls Aunt Cydney, and she tells them to hurry over. She has a new furnace.
- Dad goes out to start the Brown Bomber, the family's 1948 Plymouth. He returns, smiles, and pulls two ice scrapers out of his pocket. Kenny and Byron moan and groan, but they go outside to scrape the Brown Bomber's windows.
- Kenny knows Byron is going to try to get out of doing his share of the work, and he warns his brother that he is not going to do all the work. He begins scraping the passenger side window. He doesn't hear any sound coming from the other side of the car. He calls out to warn Byron that he is going to do only half the windshield.
- Byron tells his brother to shut his stupid mouth. He has something more important to do.
- Kenny peeks around the car. Byron has scraped the rearview mirror, and he is looking at himself. Seeing Kenny, he declares that he must be adopted. There is no way people as ugly as Kenny's parents could have had someone as sharp as him.
- Kenny goes back to work on his side of the car. When he stops for a rest, he hears Byron mumbling his name, but Kenny knows it is a trick. It is going to be How to Survive a Blizzard, Part Two.
- Kenny had learned the game of How to Survive a Blizzard the night before when he was outside playing in the snow. Byron and his buddy, Buphead, who has been a juvenile

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

By Christopher Paul Curtis

1. *And You Wonder Why We Get Called the Weird Watsons* Pages 1-19

Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. It was so cold on Saturday, the Watsons (A) sat huddled together under a blanket on the couch, (B) thought about closing the house and going to a hotel, (C) were not able to crank their car.
- _____ 2. Momma felt the cold the most because she (A) was really thin, (B) was from Alabama, (C) didn't have a heavy sweater.
- _____ 3. Kenny and his family lived in (A) St. Paul, Minnesota, (B) Dayton, Ohio, (C) Flint, Michigan.
- _____ 4. Joetta was Kenny's (A) little sister, (B) older sister, (C) first cousin, who had been adopted by the Watsons.
- _____ 5. According to Kenny, which of the following was **not** true of his older brother Byron? He (A) tried to make Momma laugh all the time, (B) didn't want to touch anyone or be touched, (C) was an official teenage juvenile delinquent.



- _____ 6. The weatherman said the temperature in Atlanta, Georgia, (A) was a chilly twenty-eight degrees, (B) was several degrees above freezing, (C) would reach the mid-seventies.
- _____ 7. Dad told Kenny, Byron, and Joetta they were lucky not to be the children of one of Momma's old boyfriends named (A) Hambone Henderson, (B) Lucky Henderson, (C) Clown Henderson.
- _____ 8. When she was about to laugh, Momma put her hand over her mouth because she (A) had several teeth missing, (B) had a big gap between her front teeth, (C) had a loud laugh.
- _____ 9. Which of the following was **not** a warning Moses Henderson gave Momma about Flint? (A) It was colder than the inside of an icebox, and people lived in igloos. (B) Most of the people were Chinese, and there wasn't one colored person in the whole city. (C) Because it was so cold, babies were born with lumpy heads.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

By Christopher Paul Curtis

2. Give My Regards to Clark, Poindexter Pages 20-31

Write either **True** or **False** in the blank before each statement.

- _____ 1. Larry Dunn was kindergarten to fourth grade king at Clark Elementary because he was super smart.
- _____ 2. Byron, who had flunked some grade at least once, was in sixth grade and a god at Clark Elementary.
- _____ 3. For Kenny, there were no advantages to having a older brother who was a god.
- _____ 4. Teachers started treating Kenny differently in first grade because he loved to read and they thought he was smart.
- _____ 5. Demonstrating his reading ability to other classes made Kenny one of the most popular students at Clark.
- _____ 6. On the day in second grade when he was asked to read from a Langston Hughes book, Kenny was horrified to see that Buphead and Byron were in the class where his teacher had taken him.
- _____ 7. To make Kenny read slower, Miss Henry had him hold the book upside down.
- _____ 8. Kenny suspected that Byron was ashamed of having a little brother who was smart.
- _____ 9. Kenny had been born with a lazy eye that wanted to rest in the corner next to his nose, and nothing he had tried made it better.
- _____ 10. Byron suggested that Kenny look at people sideways so his eyes would appear to be straight.
- _____ 11. Even with Byron as a brother, Kenny still got teased and beat up sometimes, and he worried about what was going to happen if Byron ever got out of sixth grade and went to junior high school.
- _____ 12. "Give my regards to Clark, Poindexter," was what Byron said when he didn't get on the bus and skipped school.
- _____ 13. Even in Byron's absence, Kenny felt safe from bullies when he was on the bus.
- _____ 14. The bus driver always waited for late students when he saw them running to catch the bus.
- _____ 15. At Sunday school, Kenny had learned that God sent people to protect and help another person when it was needed.
- _____ 16. Kenny knew the big boy who got on the bus and spoke with the down-South accent was his personal saver sent from God.
- _____ 17. The two new kids were well-dressed, muscular, and unfriendly looking.
- _____ 18. The students on the bus were instantly afraid of the two new boys and no one dared tease them.
- _____ 19. The bus driver was really angry about the way Larry Dunn and the other passengers behaved toward the new boys.
- _____ 20. The bus driver told the new students to sit next to Poindexter—meaning Kenny.



The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

By Christopher Paul Curtis

3. The World's Greatest Dinosaur War Ever Pages 32-46

Rufus Fry
Poindexter
Kenny
his eyes
laughing

Arkansas
squirrels
shot a gun
radioactiveness
"Ready, aim, fire!"

American and Nazi
LJ Jones
Momma
Kenny's plastic dinosaurs
Cody

nasty magazines
his clothes
Larry Dunn
blue jeans
different

From the list above, choose the name, word, or phrase that fits each of the clues below and write it in the blank. **All** answers will be used **at least once**. **Some** answers will be used **more than once**.

- _____ 1. This person started coming to Kenny's house and following him around at school.
- _____ 2. Rufus said the ones in Michigan were worth two of them where he came from.
- _____ 3. Byron had borrowed a lot of these from Buphead's library.
- _____ 4. She helped Kenny get his friends back.
- _____ 5. One of the things wrong with Rufus was the way he talked, and this was the other thing wrong with him.
- _____ 6. Kenny couldn't believe it when the principal put this person in Mrs. Cordell's fourth grade.
- _____ 7. She didn't trust LJ Jones because he was a little too sneaky for her taste.
- _____ 8. Rufus Fry was from here.
- _____ 9. These were the two sides in the dinosaur wars.



- _____ 10. He didn't want Rufus close to him because it meant both of them would be picked on twice as much.
- _____ 11. LJ convinced Kenny they should bury the dead dinosaurs because this condition made them dangerous.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

by Christopher Paul Curtis

4. Froze-Up Southern Folks Pages 47-63

Write either **True** or **False** in the blank before each statement.

- _____ 1. Momma had lived in Flint only three years and still wasn't used to the cold.
- _____ 2. Joey and Kenny were the warmest kids at Clark Elementary School because Momma made them wear layer upon layer of clothing.
- _____ 3. All the kids at Clark Elementary School dressed like Kenny and Joey during cold weather.
- _____ 4. Kenny didn't mind helping Joey unwrap because she smelled nice.
- _____ 5. Byron treated his little sister the same as he treated Kenny and any other kid.
- _____ 6. Momma said the cold was really dangerous, and it killed people all the time.
- _____ 7. When Kenny was younger, Byron had helped him get out of his layers of clothes.
- _____ 8. Byron told Kenny and Joey that garbage trucks came by on cold mornings to pick up dead, frozen people who were left lying or standing on the streets.
- _____ 9. Byron said people from the South froze quicker than northerners because they had thin, down-home blood.
- _____ 10. Byron's story and warnings not to look inside the special garbage trucks frightened Joey and made her cry.
- _____ 11. Joey continued to complain and whine about her layers of winter clothes, even after she heard Byron's story.
- _____ 12. One advantage of Momma's fear of the cold was that the Watsons got to wear real leather gloves.
- _____ 13. Kenny told Momma he lost his first pair of gloves in order for Rufus to have a complete pair.
- _____ 14. Momma made her children wear their second pair of gloves pinned to their coats kindergarten-style so that they dangled from their coat sleeves when they were removed.
- _____ 15. Kenny lost his second pair of gloves in a snowball fight with Rufus.
- _____ 16. Larry Dunn was wearing leather gloves when he gave everybody, including Kenny and Rufus, Super Maytag washes in the snow.
- _____ 17. Because Larry's gloves were black, Kenny knew they couldn't possibly be his missing pair.
- _____ 18. With Byron yelling and slapping the side of his head, Larry Dunn cried and handed over the gloves.
- _____ 19. Byron hit his brother in the stomach for not popping Larry Dunn hard enough.
- _____ 20. Watching Byron make Larry Dunn do the *Great Carp Escape* against the fence around Clark Elementary School, Kenny wished he had never told his brother about his gloves.



The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

By Christopher Paul Curtis

WHOLE BOOK TEST

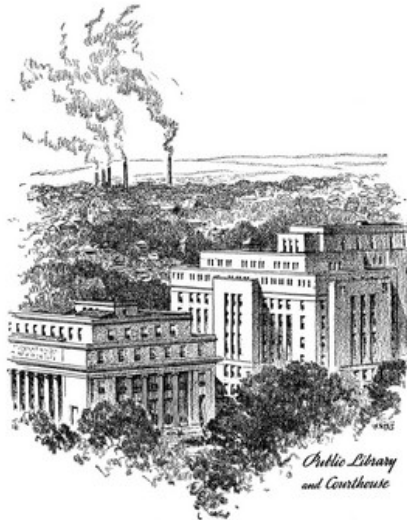


Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. The Watsons lived in (A) Chicago, Illinois, (B) St. Paul, Minnesota, (C) Flint, Michigan.
- _____ 2. The Watson who suffered most from the cold weather was (A) Momma, (B) Joetta, (C) Kenny.
- _____ 3. Byron was Kenny's older brother and (A) the oldest student at Clark Elementary School, (B) an official teenage juvenile delinquent, (C) also his hero.
- _____ 4. The Brown Bomber was (A) the name of Dad's favorite football player, (B) the family's 1948 Plymouth, (C) a book that Kenny especially liked.
- _____ 5. Momma had moved North from Alabama (A) when she married Dad, (B) to look for work, (C) to escape the terrible discrimination in the South.
- _____ 6. Both Byron and his friend Buphead were (A) bullies, (B) good students, but discipline problems for their teachers, (C) high school freshmen.
- _____ 7. Byron's lips froze and stuck to the Watson car's rearview mirror because he (A) tried to play a trick on Kenny, (B) was trying to decide which one of his parents he resembled, (C) kissed his own reflection.
- _____ 8. The two things that caused Kenny to get picked on at school were his lazy eye and the fact that he (A) loved to read, so everyone thought he was really smart, (B) was the shortest kid in fourth grade, (C) never told when he was being bullied.
- _____ 9. Byron suggested that Kenny could solve the problem of his lazy eye by (A) wearing glasses, (B) turning sideways when he talked to people, (C) learning to fight.
- _____ 10. One person who bullied Kenny was (A) Clark Poindexter, (B) Miss Henry, (C) Byron.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

by Christopher Paul Curtis



Something to Think About. . . ***Something to Write About. . .*** (Chapter Activities)

1. And You Wonder Why We Get Called the Weird Watsons

When the guy on TV said the forecast for Atlanta, Georgia, was a temperature in the mid-seventies, Kenny thought the man might as well have tied Dad to a tree and said, “Ready, aim, fire!”

- Explain how the TV guy’s words made Kenny’s dad a target.
- Who would be doing the shooting? What was the motivation?
- What diversionary tactic did Dad use? Did it work?

What evidence can you find in this chapter to prove that the Watson children enjoyed their father’s sense of humor?

Kenny’s Momma was the only Watson not born in Flint, and she felt the cold more than the rest of the family. She always blamed Dad for bringing her from Alabama to the giant icebox of Michigan.

- What reasons can you give for Momma’s decision to leave Alabama and go to Michigan with Dad? Why do you think she married Daniel Watson instead of Moses Henderson?
- Why would Daniel Watson chose Flint, Michigan, as the place for his family to live? Why didn’t he care for Alabama?
- Write the story of how you imagine Daniel and Wilona Watson met. (Hint: Does it seem that Daniel Watson is from the South or does he seem to be a native of Michigan?)
- How do you know that Momma enjoyed Dad’s story about Hambone Henderson? What does her behavior tell you about her feelings for Dad?

During their conversation about how things were in the South, Momma turned to Byron and said, “. . . and folks there do know how to respect their parents.” Later, when Aunt Cydney told the Watsons to hurry on over before they froze to death, everyone except Byron cheered.

- What explanation can you offer for Momma’s words to Byron?
- From his reaction, how did Byron feel about Aunt Cydney? Speculate as to the reason(s) for his attitude.

Something to Think About . . .
Something to Write About . . .
(Whole Book Activities)

Find definitions for **perfectionism, phobia, stupor, caution, paranoia, and prevention**. Use the information you gathered to answer the following questions:

- Which of the word(s) do you think applies to Momma's ideas about cold weather?
 - Which definition(s) connect with Momma's determination to keep her children from playing with matches?
 - What term(s) would you apply to Dad's habit of hiding his toothbrush?
 - Which term(s) best applies to Momma and Dad's decision to make Byron live with Grandma Sands for the summer?
 - How would you characterize Dad's decision to buy the Ultra-Glide for the Brown Bomber so he wouldn't get hooked on hillbilly music?
 - What word describes Momma's very detailed notebook of plans for the family's trip to Birmingham?
 - Which word would be a good explanation for Dad's behavior—his grin, not noticing that the Ultra-Glide was stuck, his chatty mood, etc.—during the last phase of the long drive to Birmingham?
-

When the Wool Pooh was drowning Kenny, an angel that looked like Joetta told him to swim to the surface again, making it possible for Byron to find him and pull him free. Later, it was an apparition of Kenny that enticed Joetta to move away from the church so that she was safe when the bomb exploded.

The author does not explain either of these phenomena. What is your interpretation? Was Kenny's experience only a hallucination brought on by panic? Did Joetta simply see someone who looked like Kenny? Are there logical explanations, or are the occurrences inexplicable?

Some of the things that Kenny and Rufus did as friends were *sharing food, playing dinosaur games, using the same pair of gloves, working on the Brown Bomber, and surviving a breach of trust*.

- How is your relationship with your best friend(s) like the friendship between Kenny and Rufus? Have you shared some of the same experiences?
 - If you had the chance, what would you tell Rufus and Kenny about the many changes since 1963? How would they feel about the new attitude toward bullies?
-

Use events and conversations from the story to prove that Momma and Dad Watson had a happy, close relationship.

At times when things seemed to be destined to turn out wrong, Kenny thought he or someone else might as well be tied to a tree waiting for someone to say, "*Ready, aim, fire!*"

Write a narrative about an experience you have had that would probably lead Kenny to use the "*Ready, aim, fire!*" analogy.

Despicable Duds

[**despicable** adj. (*děs.pĩk'.ə.bə*) Awful; disgraceful; pitiful; loathsome; wretched; lousy.]

[**duds** n. (*dũdz*) Informal term for clothing.]

Even after thirteen years in Flint, Kenny's Alabama Momma still thought cold weather could kill you. She wrapped her children in so many layers of clothing they couldn't bend their arms. To other kids, they were the Weird Watsons doing their Mummy imitations. Joetta was soaked with sweat by the time she got to school.

Like the Watsons, most youngsters eventually find themselves in disagreement with an adult over attire. Sometimes it's about the weather, and sometimes it's not.

What is the most awful outfit you have ever been forced to wear? Organize the details of the event below and then write a narrative about your encounter with **Despicable Duds**. A photograph of the awful apparel with you in it would be a plus.

Who chose the outfit and forced you to wear it?

When were you subjected to this terrible experience? How old were you?

Why was the outfit necessary? Was it for a social event such as a wedding? Was it a costume? Were you visiting relatives or going shopping? Was the weather involved?

Describe the outfit. Don't skip even one disgusting detail.

How did you feel wearing the outfit? Did you protest and try to save yourself? How did others react to your ensemble? Did someone say you were cute?

What was the fate of the offending garb? Do you still have it or were you able to dispose of it?

What is your plan of action should you again be faced with a similar situation?



About Your Novel Teaching Pack

Summaries

Written in present tense, the chapter-by-chapter summaries are more detailed than those found in most teachers' guides or other sources. Important points of the plot, character motivation and development, and story clues are all included. For quick reference, the summaries are presented in bulleted format. These synopses are a valuable resource for

quickly becoming familiar with a title when time is limited
managing a reading program that involves multiple titles/reading groups
facilitating independent study
refreshing memory when using a novel from year to year.

Objective Tests

The objective tests have multiple functions. In addition to their obvious application, they also serve as tools that can *improve **comprehension skills** by providing practice in understanding plot structure and recognizing important story elements.*

Rationale:

Focus on the Plot. . .

Whether they are aware of their ability or not, all good readers sense the **rhythm** of the **connected** events that compose the plot of a novel, and consequently **comprehend** the story. They are in tune with cause and effect, behavior and consequence, sequence—the heartbeat of the narrative.

This “plot rhythm” forms the framework for the objective tests. The chain of events that tell the story have been pulled from the novel and reformatted into a series of sequential questions, none of which require **interpretation**. They are intended to **draw student attention to the fact that something happened**, not to what the incident means. That comes later.

In addition to their testing function, teachers may use the pages to strengthen their students' ability to **Summarize**: With only the questions as a guide, have students write a summary of the chapter. For a set of ten questions, limit the number of sentences they may write to seven or fewer. When they work with twenty or more questions, allow no more than twelve sentences.

Report the News: Ask your students to write a newspaper article based on the events identified in a set of questions and the *who, what, when, where, why* elements. Some information needed to complete this assignment may be located in previous chapters.

Twist the Plot: Choose one or two questions from each chapter and change its answer—true to false, no to yes, etc.—to demonstrate how changing a single (or several) events would (or would not) change the story. This process can be used to help students become proficient in distinguishing major plot movers from minor story details.

The Characters. . .

Too often, when they are asked to describe a story character's personality, the only answer many students can muster is “nice.” This portion of the Novel Teaching Pack, coupled with related activities from ***Something to Think About, Something to Write About***, is a smorgasbord of opportunities for those teachers who wish to eradicate “nice” from their students' vocabularies!

Questions that identify a character's personality and/or motivation are purposely and carefully included with the plot movers. Again, the questions do not require **interpretation**. They simply establish that someone did or said something—knowledge that is invaluable when character analysis is required.

Implied Meaning and Story Clues. . .

The objective tests include items that establish the existence of story components carrying **implied meaning**. **Story clues** that tantalize the reader with hints of future events also appear as question. At this point in the novel study, as before, **interpretation** is not the goal. **Awareness** of the **facts** is the target.

Developing/Improving Listening Skills. . .

Listening skills are rightfully included on every list of state competency requirements. Rather than always requiring students to answer test questions on a printed page, why not surprise them occasionally by doing the test orally and meeting competency goals at the same time?

Discussion Guide Capability. . .

The objective tests are helpful discussion guides. Use individual items on these pages to draw student attention to sequence, cause and effect, story clues (foreshadowing), character traits, recognizing and interpreting implied meanings, etc. These “thinking out loud” sessions are an **important building block** for the next learning phase.

Something to Think About. . . Something to Write About. . .

In this section, students pack up what they already know about the novel and go exploring into its every nook and cranny. Some activities require the simplest interpretation or application, while others will challenge the most proficient thinkers. There is a high probability that young scholars, even reluctant ones, will label some of the selections as **fun**.

Rationale:

Guidelines. . .

Most of the items in this section are based on the skills presented in the **Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom’s Taxonomy)**. There are two reasons for this choice. First, it mirrors the Novel Teaching Pack’s primary purpose of building a variety of sophisticated thinking skills on a foundation of basic knowledge. Second, in following the taxonomy guidelines, activities that correlate with many state educational standards emerge automatically.

Organization. . .

Chapter-specific activities are grouped and presented according to their corresponding sets of **Objective Test** page(s). Having led students through the basics for each chapter (or selected section), teachers may shop in this section for activities to optimize student understanding and interest. Armed with a firm grasp of each successive chapter, students are more likely to anticipate, embrace, and enjoy the next section. By repeating the process, students are also mastering concepts and intricacies connected to the **whole** novel

The **Whole Book Activities**, as their name indicates, require a grasp of the theme(s), characters, implications, etc. as they apply to the full novel. These pages offer a variety of culminating possibilities.

Levels of Difficulty. . .

A broad spectrum of **difficulty levels** to accommodate the needs of individual students, including the gifted, is an integral part of this component. However, **all** items from this section are intended to **challenge** and **sharpen** thinking abilities.

Activities. . .

Something to Think About/Something to Write About includes activities that require students to choose and use precise, appropriate, and meaningful **vocabulary**. These exercises involve choosing a word or a group of words to describe a character’s personality or behavior. The following example is from **Because of Winn-Dixie**.

Opal comforted Winn-Dixie during thunderstorms, holding on to him tight so that he wouldn’t run away. She decided that the best way to comfort Gloria was to read a book to her, loud enough to keep the ghosts away.

From the list of words below, all of which can correctly describe Opal’s behavior, which *two* do you think are the best? Cite facts from the story and the words’ definitions to support your choices.

<i>empathetic</i>	<i>compassionate</i>	<i>nurturing</i>	<i>warmhearted</i>
<i>sympathetic</i>	<i>loving</i>	<i>devoted</i>	<i>benevolent</i>
<i>unselfish</i>	<i>generous</i>	<i>thoughtful</i>	<i>considerate</i>

In each case students work with a given collection of terms, all of which can be correctly applied to the character(s) in question. However, the individual words have varying strengths of meaning. It is the student’s task to analyze both the character’s behavior and the words, make choices, and then cite events from the story to support his/her selection.

Teachers may opt to narrow the choices to fewer words, choose words for individual students, divide the class into groups and offer a specific set of words to each group, or use the assignment as it is written. Whatever the technique, it is here that the word *nice* can be knocked off the shelf, shattered on the floor, and swept out the door. No longer necessary. Useless. Gone!

Other items in this section challenge students to . . .

*create drawings, diagrams, photos, maps,
form opinions and theories
cite "evidence" from the story to support their
explanations and opinions
connect personal experience to story situations
become familiar with and identify literary elements
analyze story characters and events*

*make predictions
understand point of view
imagine
categorize
engage in research and data gathering
recognize and perceive story theme(s)*

Note: Inclusion of activities will vary with each novel title.

Options, options, and more options. . .

Something to Think About, Something to Write About is purposely jam-packed to give teachers **pick-and-choose options** for

*individualizing assignments
group work
whole class activities
capitalizing on student interest*

*homework
short-term and long-term projects
differentiating assignments for two or more classes*

Graphic Organizers

Ideas for the graphic organizers are pulled from the chapter or whole book activities and expanded into a writing assignment. Priority is given to those topics that allow a student to relate personal experiences, make choices, empathize with a story character, and/or imagine.

Structure. . .

The organizers do not repeat a set pattern of circles, squares, lines, etc., prescribed for a particular type of writing. Each one is tailored to a **specific idea** pulled from the novel. **Structured directions** for **organizing** the topic support the student at this stage of the process so that **writing** is the major focus.

Final Note

The Novel Teaching Packs are designed for use as supplementary material that supports a total reading program. It is my goal to provide busy teachers with a classroom-ready, practical resource loaded with motivational and learning opportunities for their students. It is my hope that your purchase will prove to be a hard-working instructional component for years to come. Thanks for choosing one of my products for your classroom.



Margaret Whisnant, Author