

The Watsons Go to Birmingham -1963

Christopher Paul Curtis

**This book explores a family unit and their awareness of
and their link to the Civil Rights movement.**

**This book would be used in late fifth grade, more for
the content of the book, than the reading level. The level
of this book is 5.2.**

Kathy L. Frye

Language Arts

Competency Goal 1 The learner will apply enabling strategies and skills to read and write.

1.02 Select key vocabulary critical to the text and apply appropriate meanings as necessary for comprehension.

1.03 Increase reading and writing vocabulary through:

- wide reading.
- word study.
- word reference materials.
- content area study.
- writing process elements.
- writing as a tool.
- debate.
- discussions.
- seminars.
- examining the author's craft.

1.04 Use word reference materials (e.g., glossary, dictionary, thesaurus, on-line reference tools) to identify and comprehend unknown words.

Competency Goal 2 The learner will apply strategies and skills to comprehend text that is read, heard and viewed.

2.01 Use metacognitive strategies independently and flexibly to monitor comprehension and extend vocabulary (e.g., skim, scan, reread the text, consult other sources, ask for help, summarize, paraphrase, question).

2.02 Interact with the text before, during, and after reading, listening, and viewing by:

- making predictions.
- formulating questions.
- supporting answers from textual information, previous experience, and/or other sources.
- drawing on personal literary, and cultural understanding.
- seeking additional information.

2.04 Identify elements of fiction and nonfiction and support by referencing the text to determine the:

- plot development.
- author's choice of words.
- effectiveness of figurative language (e.g., personification, flashback).

2.08 Explain and evaluate relationships that are:

- causal.

- hierarchical.
- temporal.
- problem-solution.

2.09 Listen actively and critically by:

- asking questions.
- delving deeper into the topic.
- elaborating in the information and ideas presented.
- evaluating information and ideas.
- making inferences and drawing conclusions.
- making judgments.

2.10 Identify strategies used by a speaker or writer to inform, entertain, or influence an audience.

Competency Goal 3 The learner will make connections through the use of oral language, written language, and media and technology.

3.01 Respond to fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama using interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes by:

- analyzing word choice content.
- examining reasons for a character's actions taking into account the situation and basic motivation of the character.
- creating and presenting a product that effectively demonstrates a personal response to a selection or experience.
- examining alternative perspectives.

3.02 Make connections between texts by recognizing similarities and differences based on a common lesson, theme, or message.

3.06 Conduct research (with assistance) from a variety of sources for assigned or self-selected projects (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people, libraries, databases, computer networks).

Competency Goal 4 The learner will apply strategies and skills to create oral, written and visual texts.

4.09 Produce work that follows the conventions of particular genres (e.g., clarification, essay, feature story, business letter).

4.10 Use technology as a tool to enhance and/or publish a product.

Competency Goal 5 The learner will apply grammar and language conventions to communicate effectively.

5.01 Consistently use correct capitalization (e.g., names of magazines, newspapers, organizations) and punctuation (e.g., colon to introduce a list, commas in apposition, commas used in compound sentences).

5.04 Determine the impact of word choice on written and spoken language.

5.05 Spell most commonly used words accurately using a multi-strategy approach to the learning of new spellings.

5.06 Proofread for accuracy of spelling using appropriate strategies to confirm spelling and to correct errors.

5.07 Edit final product for grammar, language conventions, and format.

5.08 Create readable documents through legible handwriting and word processing.

Social Studies

Competency Goal 12

The learner will trace developments in the history of the United States and assess their impact on the lives of people today.

12.2 Associate an event or phenomenon in the history of the United States with a current situation or practice.

Information Skills

Competency Goal 1

The learner will EXPLORE sources and formats for reading, listening and viewing purposes.

1.01 Participate in read-aloud, storytelling, book talking, silent and voluntary reading experiences.

1.02 Demonstrate competence and self motivation as a reader.

1.03 Demonstrate appropriate care of resources.

1.04 Acknowledge ownership of ideas.

1.05 Identify elements of composition.

1.06 Identify characteristics of various genres.

1.07 Follow acceptable use policy (AUP/IUP) for electronic resources.

1.08 Select and use independently, both within and outside the school, a variety of resources (print, non-print, electronic) and formats (print, graphical, audio, video, multimedia).

1.11 Explore primary secondary sources.

Competency Goal 2

The learner will IDENTIFY and USE criteria for excellence to evaluate information and formats.

2.03 Recognize the diversity of ideas and thoughts by exploring a variety of resources (print, non-print, electronic) and formats (print, graphical, audio, video, multimedia, web-based).

Competency Goal 3

The learner will RELATE ideas and information to life experiences.

3.02 Collect and compare information about diverse cultures, environments, and peoples.

3.03 Identify bias and stereotypes.

3.05 Describe how information and ideas are influenced by prior knowledge, personal experience, and social, cultural, political, economic and historical events.

Competency Goal 4 The learner will EXPLORE and USE research processes to meet information needs.

4.05 Gather information.

4.06 Comply with Copyright Law (P. L. 94-553).

4.07 Organize and use information.

4.08 Credit sources of information.

4.09 Present information in a variety of formats (print, graphical, audio, video, multimedia).

Competency Goal 5 The learner will COMMUNICATE reading, listening, and viewing experiences.

5.01 Respond to reading, listening, viewing experiences orally, artistically, dramatically, through various formats (e.g., print, multimedia).

5.02 Produce media in various formats (print, graphical, audio, video, multimedia) appropriate to audience and purpose.

5.04 Credit sources in all print, non-print, and products.

5.05 Apply fair use copyright guidelines (Copyright Law, P. L. 94-553) in all projects.

Computer/Technology Skills

Competency Goal 2 The learner will demonstrate knowledge and skills in the use of computer and other technologies.

2.1 Use technology tools to collect, analyze, and display data. (SI)

2.4 Use a word processing application to create and format a document. (KU/WP/DTP)

Competency Goal 3 The learner will use a variety of technologies to access, analyze, interpret, synthesize, apply, and communicate information.

3.3 Select search strategies to obtain information.

3.7 Evaluate information found via telecommunications for appropriateness, content, and usefulness.

Launch activity

We would begin with an activity where the students would have either an orange square or purple square of construction paper. There will be more orange squares than purple squares. Those with orange squares will be allowed to do things that those with purple squares wouldn't be allowed to do, for example, the orange squares could sharpen their pencils at any time, but those with purple would have to ask, or the oranges can move around freely, while the purples have to stay in their seats. This would continue for a few minutes, then we would discuss how both groups felt as the activity was going on. I would then read a book to them entitled, *Goin' Somewhere Special*, by Patricia C. McKissack. We would discuss how the young girl in the story felt, and how her grandmother's words helped her out.

The Watsons Go To Birmingham-1963
p. 1-19

CHARACTER SKETCHER

Your job is to sketch Dad.

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

Your job is to ask 6 questions, record the answers to your questions, and the p. and par. where the answers are found (if possible). Be sure to ask questions that really make your group think!!! You need to ask the following types of questions:

- 1 Problem/Solution
- 1 Opinion
- 1 Characterization
- 1 Cause/Effect
- 1 Thinking
- 1 Setting

What was the problem in this section? How was it solved?

It was so cold in the Watsons' house, and the furnace wasn't working. (p.1, par.3) The landlord's phone was still busy after Dad had tried calling him over and over. (p.6, par. 4) The problem was solved by Dad calling Aunt Cydney and making sure they could come over to her house to stay.

Why do you think they were called "the weird Watsons"?

Maybe because it seems they are always doing strange things or getting into trouble. People might think they are weird because their mom is from Alabama. (p.2, par.2)

What in Byron's character shows that he thinks he is above everyone in his family?

He didn't think it was "cool" to touch anybody or let anyone touch him, even if it meant he froze to death. (p.2, par.2)

What happened to By while he and Kenny were scraping the car windows?

When By scraped the ice off the mirror, he ended up with his lips frozen to it, because he was trying to kiss himself. (p.14, par.4)

Do you think that the Watson family gets along? Why?

Overall, they get along well. Even Byron chuckles at Dad when he's supposed to be "cool". (p.4, par. 2) Though he tries to act like he doesn't need them, by the end of this section, he needs his family. (p.12, par.4)

What do we know about where this section of the story takes place?

This part of the story takes place at the Watson's house. It is winter and very cold in the part of Michigan where they live. (p.1, par.3), (p.2, par.1)

PASSAGE PICKER

Pick 4 passages that exhibit the following:

- 1 Surprising
 - 1 Descriptive
 - 1 Informative
 - 1 Funny
-

WORD WIZARD

Your job is to complete your role sheet for 4 of the following words:

- generate p.1, last line
 - bundled p.2, 1st full par.
 - nonsense p.4, 1st line
 - slew p.5, 1st full par.
 - juvenile p.8, 4th par.
 - delinquent p.8, 4th par.
-

SUMMARIZER

Your job is to provide a brief summary of the events that occurred during

this section. You should highlight any major developments in the plot, any new characters that are introduced, and the main flow of action of this section.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963
p.20-46

CHARACTER SKETCHER

Your job is to sketch Rufus.

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

Your job is to ask 6 questions, record the answers to your questions, and the p. and par. where the answers are found (if possible). Be sure you ask questions that really make your group think!!! You need to ask the following types of questions:

- 1 Problem/Solution
- 1 Cause/Effect
- 1 Main Idea
- 1 Point of view
- 1 Characterization
- 1 Prediction

PASSAGE PICKER

Pick 4 passages that exhibit the following:

- 1 Funny
- 1 Sad
- 1 Surprising
- 1 Descriptive

WORD WIZARD

Your job is to complete your role sheet for 4 of the following words:

- Occasions p.23, par.1
- Incapable p.24, par.2
- Emulate p.24, par.3
- squinched p.26, par.1 (1st full)
- panning p.30, par.4
- radioactive p. 39, par.7

CONNECTOR

Your job is to connect the book to the outside world. Write a paragraph connecting one of the following passages of the book to your life or someone you know.

p.27, 1st full par. “The worst part ...on me.”

p.41, par.3 “After I’d sneaked...real stupid.”

p.43, par.3 “Maybe it was...laugh down.”

p.45, par.4 “How’s school...Rufus’ feelings.”

p.45, par.4

I can remember doing something wrong that really bothered me when I was younger. The only thing was, I didn’t know how to set things right again, or how to talk to my parents about it. I worried and fretted over it, not realizing that it was obvious to everyone around me that I WAS worried about something! When my mom finally set me down and asked me if anything was wrong, a flood of tears started flowing that I didn’t know was ready to come out. We talked everything out, and I ended up feeling relieved and happy again. I understand how Kenny felt in this passage!

The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963
p.47-74

CHARACTER SKETCHER

Your job is to sketch Momma.

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

Your job is to ask 6 questions, record the answers to your questions, and the p. and par. where the answers are found (if possible). Be sure to ask questions that really make your group think!!! You need to ask the following types of questions:

1 Thinking

1 MCEOG

1 Effect/Cause

1 Problem/Solution

1 Main Idea

1 Moral/Theme

PASSAGE PICKER

Your job is to pick out 4 passages that exhibit the following:

- 1 scary
- 1 amusing
- 1 descriptive
- 1 dialect

WORD WIZARD

Your job is complete your role sheet for 4 of the following words:

- pomade p.48, par.2
- orbiting p.51, par.4
- hypnotized p.54, par.3
- scrunch p.55, last par.
- director p.62, par.7
- slitty p.67, par.2

pomade page 48, par. 2

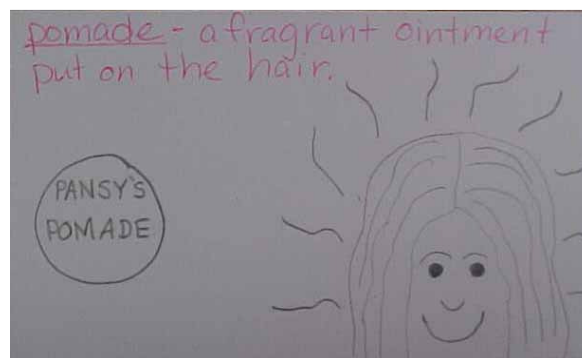
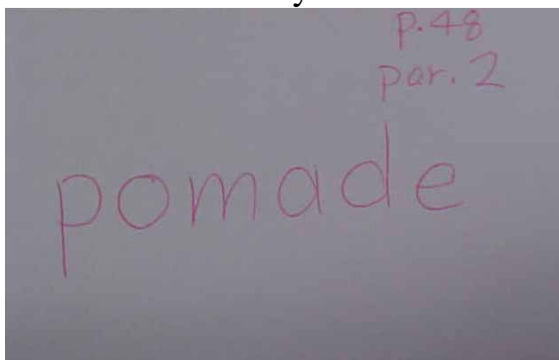
“When that last scarf came off there was always a real nice smell, like Joey was a little oven and inside all these clothes she’d baked up her own special perfume, with the smell of shampoo and soap and the pomade Momma put in her hair.”

Definition-a fragrant ointment put on the hair

Noun

Question-Why do you think Kenny doesn’t mind this part of helping Joey out of all her snow clothes?

Answer-Because he loves all the smells that he can smell when he gets the last scarf off of Joey.



ARTFUL ARTIST

Your job is to create a visual representation of what Joey and Kenny looked like as they went to school in the winter. Use p. 46-47 to help you.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963 p. 75-99

CHARACTER SKETCHER

Your job is to sketch Byron.

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

Your job is to ask 6 questions, record the answers to your questions, and the p. and par. where the answers are found (if possible). Be sure you ask questions that really make your group think!!! You need to ask the following types of questions:

- 1 Point of view
 - 1 Setting
 - 1 Sequence
 - 1 Cause/Effect
 - 1 Main Idea
 - 1 Prediction
-

PASSAGE PICKER

Your job is to pick out 4 passages that exhibit the following:

- 1 step by step
 - 1 surprising
 - 1 cause/Effect
 - 1 descriptive
-

WORD WIZARD

Your job is to complete your role sheet for 4 of the following words:

- welfare p.76, par.9
- crumpled p.81, par.5
- mourning p.82, par.6
- linoleum p.87, par.2

challenged p.92, par.1
tolerate p.95, par.12

SUMMARIZER

Your job is to provide a brief summary of the events that occurred during this section. You should highlight any major developments in the plot, any new characters that are introduced, and the main flow of action of this section.

Byron and Kenny go to the market. Byron is convinced that they are on welfare, but when he finds out they are able to buy things on credit, he charges cookies to the family's account.

By throws an apple at a dove and kills it. Kenny is puzzled when By is upset by this, and even more bewildered when he finds that Byron made a grave for the bird. He doesn't understand how Byron can be so mean to people, but care so much about a bird.

Byron also gets his hair straightened without permission from his parents, but that doesn't last long, since their dad ends up shaving By's hair off!

The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963
p. 100-120

CHARACTER SKETCHER

Your job is to sketch Kenny.

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

Your job is to ask 6 questions, record the answers to your questions, and the p. and par. where the answers are found (if possible). Be sure you ask questions that really make your group think!!! You need to ask the following types of questions:

- 1 Opinion
 - 1 Characterization
 - 1 Thinking
 - 1 Main Idea
 - 1 Mood
 - 1 Moral/Theme
-

PASSAGE PICKER

Your job is to pick out 4 passages that exhibit the following:

- 1 informative
- 1 humorous
- 1 persuasive
- 1 informative

p. 110-111, par. 4

First two words, “Well, well, well...”, last two words, “...the record.”

This passage is a persuasive passage, because Dad is mimicking the salesman who sold him the Ultra Glide.

Why do you think that Dad was doing this with Joey and Kenny?

He knew that the two of them would appreciate the Ultra Glide, and that they would go along with him cutting up.

Christopher Paul Curtis included this in the story to show us a little more of Dad’s character and the way his family interacts with him.

WORD WIZARD

Your job is to complete your role sheet for 4 of the following words:

pinnacle p.103, par.11

seniority p.106, par.6

ultimate p.110, par.5

dispersal p.110, par.7

haphazardly p.112, par.9

maestro p.115, par.3

CONNECTOR

Your job is to connect the book to the outside world. Write a paragraph connecting one of the following passages of the book to your life or someone you know.

p.103, next to the last par. “But Dad...soap smells.”

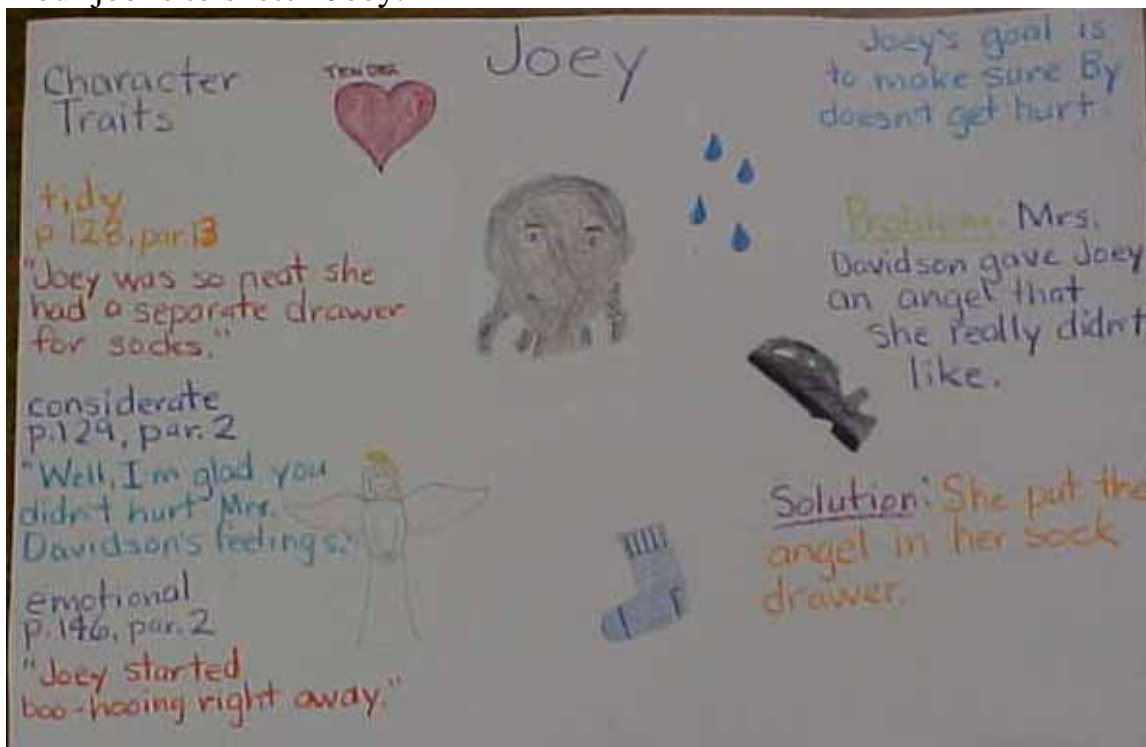
p.111, par.2 “First she...going on.”

p.117, par.6 “Dad said...has hair.”

The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963
p. 121-148

CHARACTER SKETCHER

Your job is to sketch Joey.



DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

Your job is to ask 6 questions, record the answers to your questions, and the p. and par. where the answers are found (if possible). Be sure you ask questions that really make your group think!!! You need to ask the following types of questions:

- 1 MCEOG
- 1 Sequence
- 1 Prediction
- 1 Setting
- 1 Thinking
- 1 Point of view

PASSAGE PICKER

Your job is to pick out 4 passages that exhibit the following:

1 dialect
1 simile
1 surprising
1 informative

WORD WIZARD

Your job is to complete your role sheet for 4 of the following words:

jive p.122, par.5
bound p.123, par. 6
accustomed p.126, par.1
expressway p.131, par.1
sanitation p.140, par.7
facilities p.140, par.8

SUMMARIZER

Your job is to provide a brief summary of the events that occurred during this section. You should highlight any major developments in the plot, any new characters that are introduced, and the main flow of action of this section.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963
p. 149-179

CHARACTER SKETCHER

Your job is to sketch Grandma Sands.

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

Your job is to ask 6 questions, record the answers to your questions, and the p. and par. where the answers are found (if possible). Be sure you ask questions that really make your group think!!! You need to ask the following types of questions:

- 1 Opinion
 - 1 Problem/Solution
 - 1 Cause/Effect
 - 1 Mood
 - 1 Characterization
 - 1 Sequence
-

PASSAGE PICKER

Your job is to pick out 4 passages that exhibit the following:

- 1 simile
- 1 step-by-step
- 1 descriptive
- 1 scary

WORD WIZARD

Your job is to complete your role sheet for 4 of the following words:

- vittles p.152, par.1
 - pathetic p.153, par.2
 - dispositioned p.153, par.2
 - blubbering p.156, par.7
 - wilier p.163, last line
 - whirlpool p.169, par.1
-

ARTFUL ARTIST

Your job is to give a visual representation of how you think the “wool pooh” looked to Kenny. Go back to p. 176-178 for help.



The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963
p. 180-206

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

Your job is to ask 6 questions, record the answers to your questions, and the p. and par. where the answers are found (if possible). Be sure you ask questions that really make your group think!!! You need to ask the following types of questions:

- 1 Thinking
- 1 MCEOG
- 1 Main idea
- 1 Mood
- 1 Point of view
- 1 Moral/Theme

PASSAGE PICKER

Your job is to pick out 4 passages that exhibit the following:

- 1 important
- 1 sad
- 1 descriptive
- 1 scary

WORD WIZARD

Your job is to complete your role sheet for 4 of the following words:

- sonic p.182, par.8
- wrestle p.183, par.4
- clomped p.189, 2nd line from bottom
- snitch p.195, 3rd line from bottom
- reputation p.196, 2nd line from bottom
- eavesdropping p.204, par.2

SUMMARIZER

Your job is to provide a brief summary of the events that occurred during this section. You should highlight any major developments in the plot, any new characters that are introduced, and the main flow of action of this section.

CONNECTOR

Your job is to connect the book to the outside world. Write a paragraph connecting one of the following passages of the book to your life or someone you know.

- p.181, par.3 “It was too...me already.”
 - p.183, par.7 “Some of the...Alabama mud.”
 - p.199, par.3 “Maybe it was...hundred hours.”
-

Culminating Activities

All these activities will be whole group activities.

TRAVEL TRACER

Now that the Watsons' traveling is over, create a map that traces their route from Flint, MI to Birmingham, AL. Use the book to help you decide the route they took and the places that they stopped. Be creative with how you portray this.

INTERNET INVESTIGATOR

The following websites have something to do with Christopher Paul Curtis or the church bombing in Birmingham. Please investigate them and find out 3 facts about Christopher Paul Curtis that you didn't know, and 3 facts about the church bombing/civil rights movement that you found interesting.

[www.yahooligans.com/School_Bell/Language Arts/Authors/Curtis Christopher Paul/summerreading.nypl.org/read2002/chats/curtis_txt.html](http://www.yahooligans.com/School_Bell/Language_Arts/Authors/Curtis_Christopher_Paul/summerreading.nypl.org/read2002/chats/curtis_txt.html)

www.eduscapes.com/newbery/96c.html

www.fsu.edu/~Candl/ENGLISH/webquests/watsons5.htm

www.useekufind.com/peace/

Read *The Other Side*, by Jacqueline Woodson out loud to the class. Discuss the feelings that the students have at the end of this story. Is it different from the feelings they had from *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*? How? What do they think about the way that these girls found a way to be friends? Are things different in the world today? How do they see things in their own time and place?

BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCES

Curtis, C. (1995). *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963*. New York: Random House.

McKissack, P. (2001). *Goin' Someplace Special*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Woodson, J. (2001). *The Other Side*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

[www.yahooligans.com/School_Bell/Language Arts/Authors/Curtis Christopher Paul/summerreading.nypl.org/read2002/chats/curtis_txt.html](http://www.yahooligans.com/School_Bell/Language_Arts/Authors/Curtis_Christopher_Paul/summerreading.nypl.org/read2002/chats/curtis_txt.html)

www.eduscapes.com/newbery/96c.html

www.fsu.edu/~Candl/ENGLISH/webquests/watsons5.htm

www.useekufind.com/peace/
