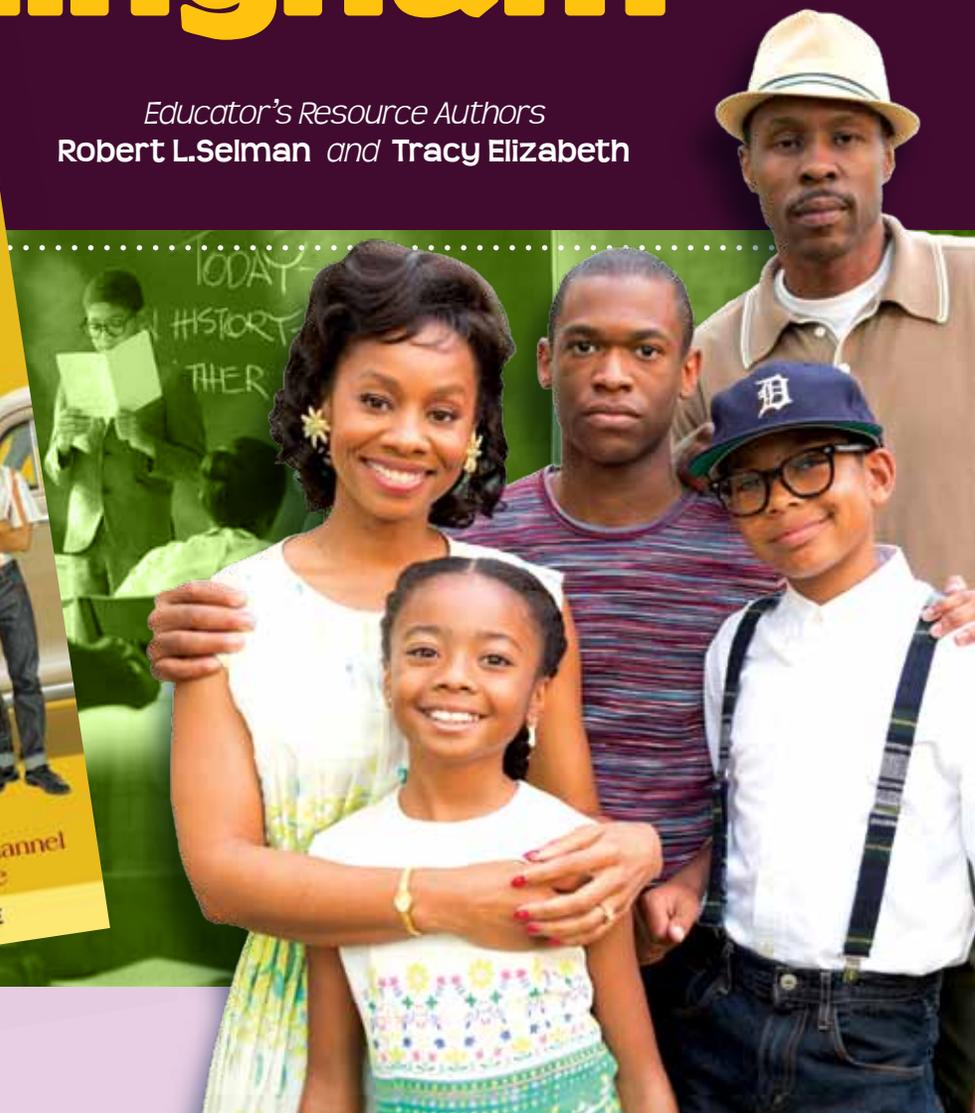
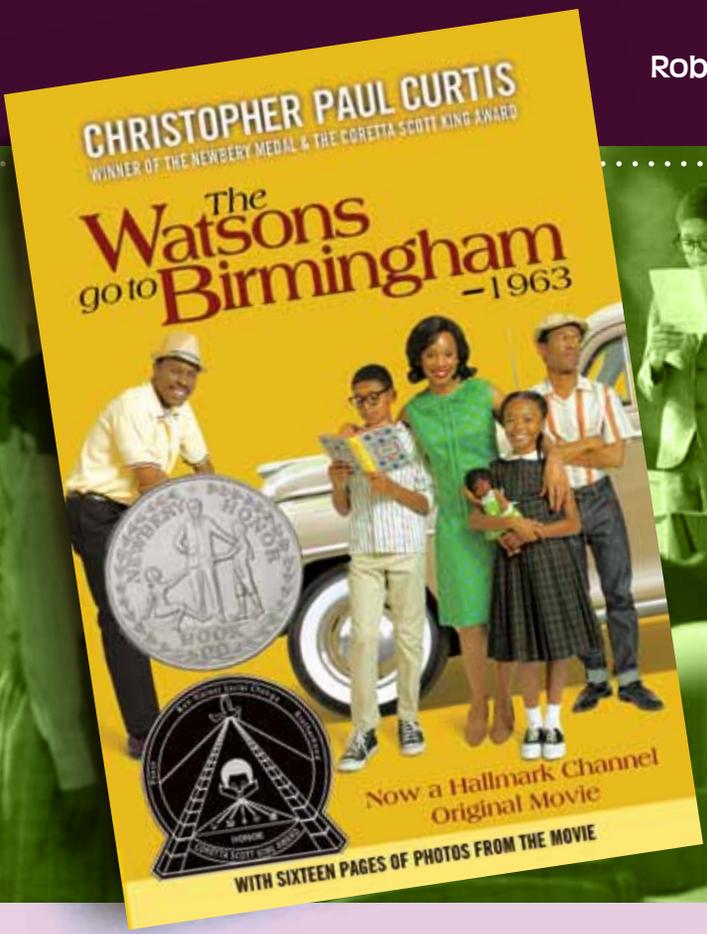




★ ★ ★ NOW A ★ ★ ★  
**FEATURE FILM**  
FROM **WALDEN MEDIA**

An Educator's Resource for  
**The Watsons go to Birmingham**

*Educator's Resource Authors*  
**Robert L. Selman and Tracy Elizabeth**





**ROBERT L. SELMAN** is the Roy E. Larsen Professor of Human Development and Education and Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry at Harvard University; 609 Larsen Hall, 14 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02478; email: [robert\\_selman@harvard.edu](mailto:robert_selman@harvard.edu).

He conducts research on social development and its integration with curriculum and instruction in elementary and secondary schools and with social media, including websites, social networking, and entertainment.

**TRACY ELIZABETH** is a doctoral student in the Human Development and Education program at Harvard University; 611 Larsen Hall, 14 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02478; email: [tracy\\_elizabeth@harvard.edu](mailto:tracy_elizabeth@harvard.edu).

Her research focuses on the promotion of children and adolescents' academic, social, and moral development through education curricula and entertainment media.

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[www.zaner-bloser.com](http://www.zaner-bloser.com)

**ZB Zaner-Bloser**

Coming this fall from Walden Family Theater,  
**The Watsons Go to Birmingham**  
*is the tale of a summer journey that leaves a family—  
and a nation—forever transformed.*

---

Starring Tony-winning and Grammy-nominated actress **Anika Noni Rose** and three-time Tony nominee **David Alan Grier**, the film is an adaptation of Christopher Paul Curtis' Newbery Honor and Coretta Scott King Honor Award winning book *The Watsons Go To Birmingham – 1963*. Skai Jackson, LaTanya Richardson, Wood Harris, Bryce Jenkins and Harrison Knight also star.

*Watsons* is faithfully adapted by acclaimed children's book author and screenwriter Tonya Lewis Lee. The film is produced by Ms. Lee and Nikki Silver and is directed by Tony Award nominee Kenny Leon.

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Produced by Walden Media, ARC Entertainment and Tonik Productions, LLC, in association with Walmart and P&G, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* premieres **September 20, 2013** on the Hallmark Channel.



**WALDEN MEDIA™**

An Educator's Resource for  
**The Watsons  
go to  
Birmingham**

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<sup>1</sup>This section is original material, copyright Selman and Elizabeth

<sup>2</sup>This section is original material, copyright Elizabeth



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**About Voices**  
**About the Book**  
**About The Educator's Resource**

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# About Voices

*The Voices approach to the promotion of literacy, self and social awareness.*

*Voices* uses theory and evidence based research (Selman, 2003<sup>3</sup>; Snow, 2009<sup>4</sup>) to develop resource guides for children's and young adult literature that encourages young people to develop their own voice. These innovative materials feature award-winning multicultural texts and comprehensive Educator Resources that integrate social and moral development, character education, violence prevention, social and emotional learning, literacy, reading comprehension, and writing.

## Voices & Literacy

### Reading Comprehension

In this guide, students learn, practice, and apply both simple and deep comprehension strategies that help deepen their understanding of the text. The instructional plan leads to the gradual transfer of responsibility from educator to student through these steps:

### Writing

The Educator's Resource suggests writing activities that encourage students to express their thoughts, opinions, and ideas across a range of writing genres and to demonstrate their understanding of the social development themes within the book.

### Academic Language & Literary Analysis

Students expand their vocabulary by relating vocabulary words to the mood, plot, characters, and setting of the story. This guide also features vocabulary words that give students a common understanding of academic language crucial for understanding and discussing the thematic social development concepts they encounter in the book.

<sup>3</sup>Selman, R. L. (2003). The promotion of social awareness: Powerful lessons from the partnership of developmental theory and classroom practice. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

<sup>4</sup>Snow, C., Lawrence, J., & White, C. (2009). Generating knowledge of academic language among urban middle school students. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 2(4), 325–344.

## Oral Language, Listening, & Fluency

Oral language development, or oral literacy, involves fluency in speaking and listening, and both are related to improved text comprehension. Through activities such as partner sharing, paired reading, reader's theater, classroom discussion and debate, and others, students deepen their understanding of themselves, of others, and of the text.

## Self and Social Development: Core Awareness, Skills, and Values

Six thematic concepts are embedded in this Special Edition Resource to help students develop self-understanding, enhance their social-emotional skills, value their family, friends, and community, and strengthen their understanding and appreciation of democracy.

### Personal & Cultural Identity Awareness

Students explore who they are and how to integrate the various parts of their lives into a healthy self-concept within the culture in which they are growing up.

### Perspective Taking & Coordination Skills

Students learn to express their own points of view and to take the perspectives of their peers and the characters from the literature they read.

### Social Conflict Resolution Skills

Building on Perspective Taking, students learn ways to resolve conflicts with their peers and in society.

### Family, Friends, & Community Values

Students gain insight into the nature of their relationships with friends, family members, and neighbors.

### Social & Civic Awareness

Students develop their awareness of social and civic realities, cultural differences, and injustices that need to be righted.

### Democracy: Freedom & Responsibility Values

Students reflect and act upon their social responsibilities in a democratic society.

## The Voices Instructional Plan For *The Watsons*

This Educator’s Resource is organized around a Central Theme related to the primary themes of the book. Each of the following five Instructional Formats promote the Central Theme of the story, while also promoting literacy skills, social and emotional learning, and civic awareness. In the resource, specific methods to implement these Instructional Formats are provided for each of the fifteen lessons that are aligned with each of the fifteen chapters of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*.

### Instructional Formats

#### Connect

This section suggests activities that introduce the students to the essential themes of the chapter, provides students with the social and historical context of the story, and gives students and the educator the opportunity to connect their own personal experiences to the issues raised in the book.

#### Read

This section of the lesson is critical to the students’ understanding of the story and how the story connects to their lives. It is up to the educator to determine the most appropriate reading format for the students. Appendix A offers a list of possible reading formats and their respective literacy benefits.

#### Discuss

This section suggests open-ended critical thinking questions and discussion-based activities designed to deepen students’ comprehension of the content and broaden their perspectives about social issues addressed in the text. For more information, please see Appendices B & C.

#### Write

This section suggests writing prompts that deepen students’ reflections on critical issues in the story and how those issues may be resolved or contemplated using prosocial strategies like empathy, self-awareness, and perspective taking.

#### Reflect

Through a variety of oral prompts, this section encourages students to develop their own reflective capacity by likening complicated events in the text to their own lives and greater community. The exercises encourage students to reflect upon the personal and social meaning of what they have read, heard, and discussed with their peers.

## Additional Resources in the Guide

Additional resources are available in the appendices of this guide. These include:

### Appendix A:

A list of possible reading formats and their respective literacy benefits.

### Appendix B:

Recommendations for possible discussion-based activities, with descriptions of how to conduct these discussions.

### Appendix C:

A list of strategies for how the educator can effectively facilitate and promote healthy classroom dialogue.

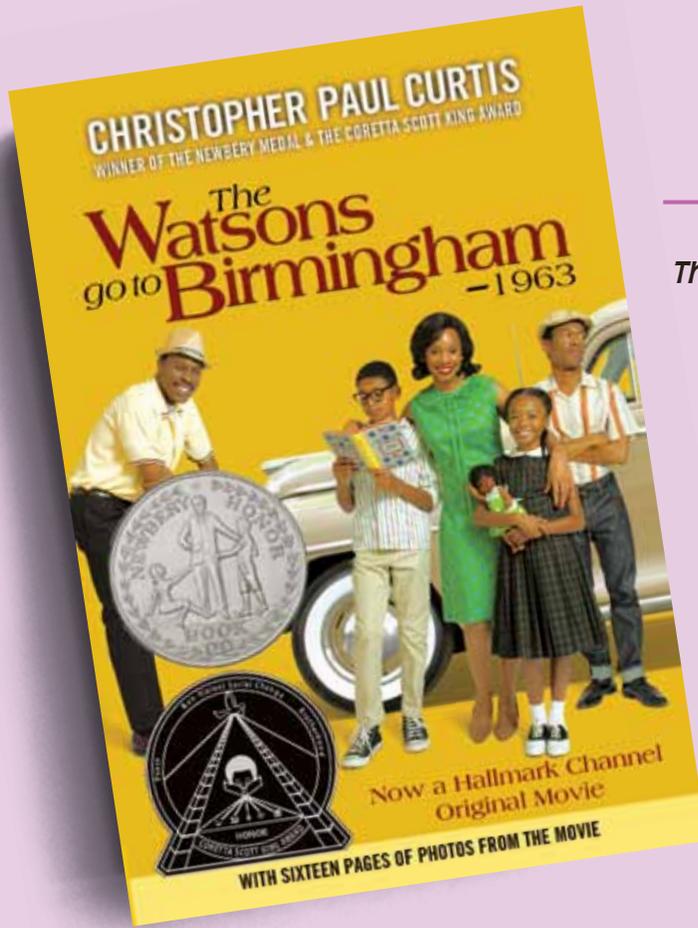
### Appendix D:

Optional connection video activity for older students. *Four Little Girls*.

### Appendix E:

A speech by Josephine Baker at the March on Washington, 1963.

# About The Book




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*The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*

*Author:* Christopher Paul Curtis

*Publisher:* Random House  
Children's Books

*Date:* 1995

*Length:* 210 pages

*ISBN:* 978-0-385-38294-6

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## Story Summary

The everyday routines and lifestyle of the Watsons, an African American family living in Flint, Michigan, are irrevocably changed after they decide to visit their grandma in Alabama in the sixties. The character of Kenny Watson, a smart, thoughtful and impressionable 10-year-old, tells the story. Kenny brings his family - Momma, Dad, little sister Joetta, and Byron, his 13-year-old "official juvenile delinquent" brother - to life as he walks us through some of their hilarious escapades. The Watsons set out for Birmingham for the main reason of dropping off Byron for the summer at his Grandma's house so that she can put some sense into him. It's 1963 and things in Birmingham are nothing like they are in Flint. The Watsons soon find themselves embroiled in the ugliness, violence and hatred brewing in Alabama. Ultimately, the trip changes the lives of the Watsons, especially Kenny and Byron, forever. This powerful story is comical, yet tragic at the same time. In the end Kenny finally understands what he needs to do in order to develop the strength to deal with the challenges he and his family face, and where these strengths can be found. They are inside him.

## About the Author

Christopher Paul Curtis won the Newbery Medal and the Coretta Scott King Award for his bestselling second novel, *Bud, Not Buddy*. His first novel, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, was also singled out for many awards, among them a Newbery Honor and a Coretta Scott King Honor and is now a Hallmark Channel Original Movie. His most recent novels for Random House include *The Mighty Miss Malone*, *Mr. Chickee's Messy Mission*, *Mr. Chickee's Funny Money*, and *Bucking the Sarge*.

Christopher Paul Curtis grew up in Flint, Michigan. After high school he began working on the assembly line at the Fisher Body Plant No. 1 while attending the Flint branch of the University of Michigan. He is now a full-time writer. He lives with his family in Detroit.

## Historical Context

It is critical that educators thoroughly read and familiarize themselves with the historical context provided in this section. This section is designed to offer educators a deep understanding of the significance of this book and how to bolster students' background knowledge surround issues that led up to the 1963 Birmingham bombings. A familiarity with the Civil Rights movement will also prepare teachers to answer tough questions that will be asked by students and will offer support when making text-to-world connections for students. Much of this content echoes what is introduced in the Epilogue of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*; this information is important to consider *before* reading the book to the students.



Discriminatory signage typical in heavily segregated Birmingham, AL.

Although the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments of the U.S. Constitution ended slavery and extended the rights and protected the citizenship of blacks, these changes did little to change the attitudes and behaviors of white Americans, especially those living in the South. From the 1930s through the early 1960s, where black people could go and what they could do was severely limited by segregation - a series of laws and customs that kept blacks and whites apart in many ways. Segregation meant different things in different places. In the South, blacks and whites often lived near one another. In the North, blacks and whites lived in completely separate neighborhoods. Southern communities and states passed segregation laws that allowed for discrimination in schooling, housing, and career opportunities. Segregation was enforced by creating separate facilities for blacks and whites. The worst sections of public facilities and accommodations were for "Coloreds Only." Whatever the specific laws were, white people were treated better than black people. In order to just live, it seemed that black people were expected to just learn to make the best of situations that were meant to hurt and insult them.



March to Washington, D.C. for Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech, August 1963.

Beginning in the 1950s a number of organizations began to crop up that strove to put an end to segregation and discrimination. Some of these were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Individuals such as Thurgood Marshall, Ralph Abernathy, and Dr. Martin Luther

King, Jr., along with many others worked along side these organizations to change the laws through nonviolent resistance. They adopted many of the nonviolent teachings and techniques that Mohandas K. Gandhi used to free the Indian people from the rule of the British.

In 1954 the first real step toward ending segregation in America happened in the form of the Supreme Court's ruling in the famous case called *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. In this ruling segregation in the public school system was deemed unconstitutional. *Brown* signaled to many people a hope that segregation might end soon. Southern lawmakers, who were all white because of Jim Crow laws that limited the number of black people eligible to vote, resisted desegregation. Jim Crow laws mandated racial segregation in all areas of public life. Blacks and whites had separate schools, trains, movie theaters, hotels, restaurants, parks, restrooms, and even water fountains. Public facilities for black people were often inferior and not as well maintained as those for white people.

In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to follow an Alabama law that required black passengers on city buses to give up their seats for white passengers. After she was arrested, Martin Luther King, Jr. helped to organize a boycott of city buses until they treated black and white passengers the same.

The sit-ins and boycotts that followed applied economic pressure where change was most needed. Freedom Riders - black and white Americans -



Bomb damage to Gaston Motel in Birmingham, AL, 1963. Birmingham was unofficially named "Bombingham" for the number of bombings taking place there.

took bus trips throughout the South to test federal laws that banned segregation. Black students enrolled in segregated schools. Protest marches and demonstrations continued to make headlines. Civil rights workers carried out programs for voter education and registrations. The goal to create tension and provoke confrontations peacefully in order to force the federal government to step in and enforce the laws was beginning to work. Inspired by these successes as well as others, more and more people believed the time was near when black Americans would be granted the civil rights they deserved as citizens of the United States, the rights other Americans took for granted. Even people who didn't agree had begun to pay attention to the growing numbers of those who were willing to protest against segregation.

Unfortunately, the goal of nonviolence was not always met. Gunshots, fires, and bombings often answered the trials and tribulations of the movement. These attacks were not only directed against the brave people who so heroically fought to achieve change. Despite the danger, the civil rights movement grew stronger, gaining support all over the country. On May 2, 1963, almost a thousand children joined what some called the Children's Crusade, a march from the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church into the center of Birmingham. The entire city was shocked, even the police, who were too surprised to do anything. Inspired by the success of the demonstration, the marchers returned the next day, but this time the police were ready for them. They came with their dogs, and the fire department came with their hoses. As the rest of the country turned on their televisions that night, they watched the police and their dogs abusing the blacks, they watched the dogs bite and chase the children. They watched as the water knocked down men, women, and children.



Demonstrators marching in the street holding signs during the March on Washington, 1963.



Many people who had never thought about civil rights before began to think about them. On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 people from all over the country marched on Washington, D.C. to pressure Congress to pass the Civil Rights Bill - to demand equal rights for black Americans. It was there, in front of the Lincoln Memorial, that Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech. However, the hatred and the evil continued. A few weeks later a black church in Birmingham was bombed and four little girls, ages eleven and fourteen, were killed. Then, finally, a little less than a year later, on July 2, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Bill.

Little Rock Nine- Elizabeth Eckford is being yelled at by segregationists as she walks to school, 1957.

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* begins in January, 1963, nine years after the Supreme Court ruled that “segregation is inherently unequal.” Unfortunately, life for many black people was still very different from life for many white people. Because of the long history of segregation in the South, many Southern black people moved in the early 20th century to industrial areas of the North where there were more manufacturing jobs, particularly in the automobile industry, and somewhat better treatment. Flint, Michigan was a very important automobile-manufacturing center in 1963. Thus, as a result of migration patterns, there were many Michigan families like the Watsons who had close relatives in the South.



Civil rights march  
to Washington, D.C.

# Awards & Honors

- A Newbery Honor Book
- A Coretta Scott King Honor Book
- An ALA Top Ten Best Book/Quick Pick
- An ALA Best Book for Young Adults
- An ALA Notable Book for Children
- A Booklist Top 25 Black History Picks for Youth
- An IRA Young Adult Choice
- An NCSS—CBC Notable Children’s Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies
- A Bank Street Child Study Association Children’s Book Award
- A New York Times Book Review Best Book
- A Publishers Weekly Best Book
- A Horn Book Fanfare
- A Bulletin Blue Ribbon
- A Golden Kite Award for Fiction
- A Publishers Weekly Flying Start Author
- A Notable Book for a Global Society
- California Young Reader Medal Winner
- Hawaii Nene Award
- Illinois Rebecca Caudill Award
- Indiana Department of Education Read-Aloud List
- Indiana Young Hoosier Book Award
- Kansas William Allen White Children’s Book Award
- Maine Student Book Award
- Michigan Reading Association Children’s Choice Award
- Minnesota Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award
- Missouri Mark Twain Award
- Nebraska Golden Sower Award
- Nevada Young Readers Award
- New Hampshire Great Stoneface Book Award
- New Mexico Land of Enchantment Reading List
- Oklahoma Sequoyah Young Adult Book Award
- Pacific Northwest Young Reader’s Choice Award
- Pennsylvania Young Reader’s Choice Award
- South Carolina Book Award
- Tennessee Volunteer State Award
- Texas Lone Star Reading List
- Vermont Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children’s Book Award
- Virginia Young Readers Program
- West Virginia Children’s Book Award
- Wisconsin Golden Archer Book Award

# About The Educator's Resource

## Exploring the Central Theme

*There's a strength in all of us that gives us the courage to deal with our problems.*

The Central Theme encourages children to explore conflict resolution by understanding themselves and others through multiple perspectives. By reading and discussing the book, students develop an understanding of why it is important to know yourself and to understand the points of view of others in order to successfully face and solve conflicts.

As students follow the growing sense of self-awareness, identity, and strength of character that Kenny realizes within himself, they gain insight into how they can look to themselves, their cultures and heritages, and others as a means to develop their own sense of self-awareness, identity, and inner strength. When the book begins, Kenny is involved in the more simplistic problems of his day-to-day existence. He feels as though he is a misfit who does not really fit in anywhere. However, when significant conflict surfaces, Kenny's simple life suddenly seems unimportant in the grand scheme of things. Kenny experiences a sort of breakdown when he is unable to come to terms with major trauma in his life. For a short while he chooses to withdraw, rather than deal with the terror he has encountered.

When Kenny realizes that inside of him there is a strength that affords him the courage to deal with the conflicts he has faced, he genuinely feels that he will be "alright." Kenny understands that if one looks deep enough inside, they will find the inner courage and strength necessary to face even the most insurmountable conflicts that arise in life.

## Developing Literacy Skills

### Literacy and Literature Appreciation Skills

- Making predictions and drawing inferences
- Understanding plot, character, setting, and theme
- Relating the message of the story to one's own life
- Identifying and understanding symbolism
- Using writing to express feelings
- Developing vocabulary and academic language skills
- Practicing exploratory and persuasive writing
- Using context clues to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words

## Promoting Self and Social Development

### Identity Development and Emotional Competencies

- Understanding and coping with one's feelings
- Understanding and expressing one's individuality
- Appreciating the values and support systems of family and community

### Perspective-Taking and Conflict Resolution Competencies

- Exploring characters' different points of view about a conflict
- Understanding cross-cultural relationships
- Understanding problems and coping with conflict
- Exploring resolution techniques

### Cultural and Social Awareness Competencies

- Appreciating racial pride, identity, and multiculturalism
- Exploring how cultural and historical roots shape personal identity
- Learning about the history of the Civil Rights Movement

## Unit Planner for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*

This Resource divides the book into fifteen lessons that align with each of the fifteen chapters of the book. Each lesson provides opportunities for connection, reading, discussion, writing, and reflection activities. Each activity within the lessons is estimated to take between 15 - 20 minutes. This format allows for the educators to pick and choose which activities they would like students to complete during any given lesson. Therefore, a lesson may range from one or two activities that take up 30 – 40 minutes of instructional time, or the lesson may include all six recommended activities for a full 90 – 120 literacy block.

Educators may want to consider the following factors when determining how to modify the lesson to best accommodate their students:

- The length of the class period or literacy block;
- The age or maturity of the students;
- The developmental competency of the students;
- The reading levels of the students; and
- Students' ability to complete reading and writing assignments as homework.

## Unit Planner

### *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*

Lesson 1	Chapter 1: Family Relationships
Lesson 2	Chapter 2: Accepting Differences
Lesson 3	Chapter 3: Friendship & Forgiving
Lesson 4	Chapter 4: Empathy & Conflict Resolution
Lesson 5	Chapter 5: Choices & Consequences
Lesson 6	Chapter 6: Empathy & Understanding
Lesson 7	Chapter 7: Choices & Consequences
Lesson 8	Chapter 8: Family Relationships
Lesson 9	Chapter 9: Culture & Conflict
Lesson 10	Chapter 10: Fears & Differences
Lesson 11	Chapter 11: Family Dynamics & Perspectives
Lesson 12	Chapter 12: Community & Culture
Lesson 13	Chapter 13: Risk & Identity
Lesson 14	Chapter 14: Acceptance & Adversity
Lesson 15	Chapter 15: Courage & Compromise

## Reader's Movie Theater

### *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*

Reader's Movie Theater 1	Text-to-Film Activity for Scene 11
Reader's Movie Theater 2	Text-to-Film Activity for Scenes 11-13
Reader's Movie Theater 3	Text-to-Film Activity for Scene 56
Reader's Movie Theater 4	Text-to-Film Activity for Scenes 58 & 59
Reader's Movie Theater 5	Text-to-Film Activity for Scene 66

## Academic Language for *The Watsons*

This guide specifically recommends the promotion of *academic language* words that students can expect to encounter frequently during their academic careers, rather than content specific *vocabulary terms* that have little relevance outside of the specific reading of the text. Students will work with academic language in relation to the mood, plot, characters, and setting of the story. Ideally, educators will introduce the targeted terms *before* exposing students to the text to ensure greater comprehension during the reading. Another way to ensure that students become familiar with these terms is to include them with your weekly word list or word-study lessons. While there are many challenging words within the text, focusing on *academic language* terms that are commonly used across a range of content areas will be most applicable to the development of students' academic *and* personal lives.

### Chapter 1

automatically  
delinquent  
hilarious

### Chapter 2

numb  
nervous  
punctual

### Chapter 3

desperate  
jabbering  
version

### Chapter 4

orbiting  
hypnotized  
disappear

### Chapter 5

glugging  
traitor  
parachute

### Chapter 6

peon  
mourning  
conscience

### Chapter 7

linoleum  
executioner  
tolerate

### Chapter 8

civilization  
vibrations  
interpretation

### Chapter 9

eavesdropped  
peninsula  
seniority

### Chapter 10

sanitation  
facilities  
amount

### Chapter 11

rabies  
surrendered  
pathetic

### Chapter 12

desire  
yakking  
interrupt

### Chapter 13

whirlpool  
electrocuted  
strange

### Chapter 14

familiar  
concrete  
investigate

### Chapter 15

automatically  
wonder  
embarrass