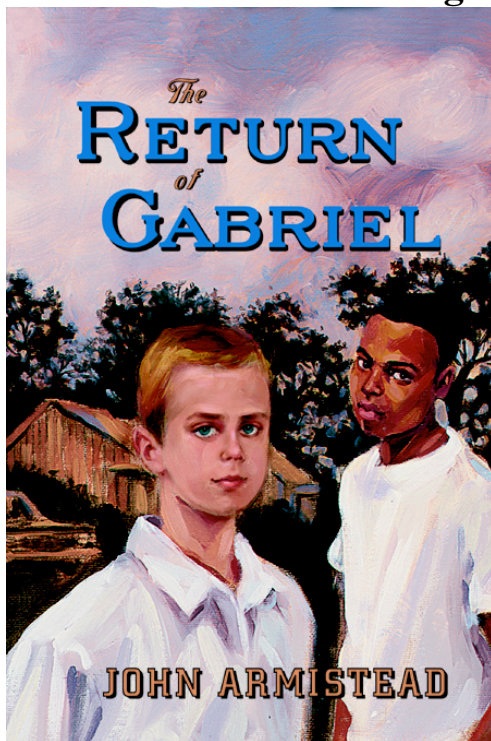


A Guide to Teaching

The Return of Gabriel
By John Armistead

MILKWEED EDITIONS
The Alliance for Reading



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Also by John Armistead
The \$66 Summer

This teaching guide to *The Return of Gabriel* by John Armistead was prepared by *Ginny Wheeler*. Milkweed Editions, www.milkweed.org. For further information, call 612-332-3192.

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Chapter 1-3 (pages 3-17)

Set in a small Mississippi town during the summer of 1964, this novel explores the fears and hopes of those who were transformed by the events of a summer that is now called “Freedom Summer.” As the tension escalates, Cooper Grant learns the meaning of loyalty and heroism.

Knowing the vocabulary of racism will help you discuss this story. *Racism* is the belief that a person’s character is determined by his or her race. There is no scientific evidence that race determines character. *Discrimination* is unfair treatment based on prejudices such as racism. A *stereotype* is a characteristic identified with a group of people that allows for no individuality; thus, every person who belongs to that group is thought to have the same character type. Stereotypes create a distorted view of society.

Literature Element: The **setting** in a novel is the time and location where the action takes place. The time includes not only the historical period, but also the year, the season, the time of day, and sometimes the weather. The place may be a specific country, community, neighborhood, or home. Details like dialects, clothing, customs, and modes of transportation are often used to establish setting. Look for clues the author uses to show you that the book is set in Mississippi in 1964 during the Civil Rights Movement.

Journal Writing: Have you ever felt excluded? Explain the situation and how you felt. Do you think the exclusion was based on prejudice or something else?

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **barbed wire:** A fence made of twisted wire and sharp thorns or “barbs” (p. 3).
- **machete:** a large, heavy, broad knife used for cutting brush (p.5).
- **Cushman Highlander:** A small motor scooter popular in the 1960s (p. 6).
- **water moccasin:** a very poisonous, aggressive snake found in Southern streams, wetlands, ponds, and swamps; sometimes confused with a harmless water snake

Mastery Word List: The **context** of a word consists of the words that surround it. When you see an unfamiliar word as you read, you can sometimes figure out its meaning by looking at its context. As you read this novel, try to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words based on their context. Here are two sentences using the first two vocabulary words. Try to figure out the meaning of each word *before* looking it up in the dictionary.

- **sapling:** *He brought the machete down hard, ripping clean through the trunk of the sapling and burying the blade into the dirt.* (p. 4)
- **camouflage:** *Green and brown. . . We gonna paint it camouflage.”* (p. 15)

Summary:

The summer of 1964 begins with thirteen-year-old Cooper Grant, who is white, and Jubal Harris, who is black, forming a secret society called the Scorpions to get back at the bully Reno McCarthy. Their motto is “All for one and one for all.” Cooper persuades Jubal to invite Squirrel Kogan, a Jewish friend, to join their club because he might be able to convince his father to give them lumber for their clubhouse.

While clearing a site for their clubhouse, Jubal tells Cooper about some lumber on the Montgomery place where his father grew up. Jubal's father Marcellus had committed suicide in jail four years ago.

Reading Check:

1. Whose motto is “All for one and one for all”? (Jubal and Cooper's secret society called the Scorpions.)
2. Why don't Jubal and Cooper like Reno McCarthy? (He's a bully.)
3. What three ethnic groups are represented by the three friends: Jubal, Cooper, and Squirrel? (White, black and Jewish.)
4. Where does Cooper plan to find lumber for their clubhouse? (He hopes Squirrel's father will let them have some of his lumber when Squirrel joins the club.)
5. What is Jubal's plan to find the lumber? (Take it from the Montgomery place.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. What clues does the author use to show you that the book is set in Mississippi in 1964 before Civil Rights? List the ways the author draws a picture of segregation.
2. In the opening chapters, the author draws vivid descriptions of the three friends. Describe each one.
3. What does the motto “All for one and one for all” mean? What might happen to test the Scorpions' motto?
4. What do we learn about Jubal's father?
5. Much of the conversation in the opening chapters focuses on skin color. Why do you think Cooper says: “I did feel a little uneasy when Reverend Graham made such a big ado over Jesus being colored, and secretly I hoped maybe I had a little colored blood in me” (p. 6).
6. At the end of chapter three, Jubal says, “Nobody ever gives you something for nothing” (p. 17). What do we learn about Jubal from this statement?

What Would You Do?

1. If a classmate purposely left someone out just to be mean, what might you do to make the situation better for everyone?

Class Activity: One of the setting details is the Cushman Highlander. Using the internet, find a photograph of this 1960s motor scooter. Discuss the importance of the use of historical details to establish setting. Suppose you are preparing a time capsule for someone to open fifty years from now. Brainstorm with the class the items you would include in your class time capsule to give students of the future a clear picture of the place and time you live in today.

Imagine a time capsule from Cooper's class that represents 1964 rural Mississippi. As you read each chapter of the book, place objects (drawings or cut-out pictures) in the imaginary time capsule. Begin with a picture of the Cushman Highlander. When you complete the book, you should have at least forty objects in your time capsule.

Chapter 4-7 (pages 18-37)

Fighting Racism: Knowing the vocabulary associated with fighting discrimination will help you discuss this story. This book poses the question: Are you part of the problem or part of the solution? After reading this section, complete the activity *Fighting Racism* to help students better understand this theme.

Ally: Someone who speaks out or takes actions on behalf of someone else.

Bystander: Someone who sees something happening and does not say or do anything.

Perpetrator: Someone who says or does something against another person.

Target: Someone who is the focus of mistreatment.

Literature Element: Characterization describes the ways an author develops character traits. The author may choose to use *direct characterization* by simply stating a character's personality directly: "Squirrel was hands down the smartest boy in our class at school but did his best to hide it" (p. 7). With *indirect characterization* the author shows a character's personality through what the character says and does, what others say about the character, and what the character looks like.

Journal Writing: Think about your circle of friends and why each person is your friend. If you were to choose an animal for a mascot to represent your group of friends, what would you choose and why?

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **A country mile:** a distance that is much longer than a measured mile, probably because of the winding roads (p. 18)
- **pinch-hit:** to bat in the place of a regular outfielder; to substitute for another in an emergency (p. 18)
- **turd tapper:** a regional expression used to refer to a person who is annoying, a nuisance (p. 19)
- **sharecropper:** a farmer who farms someone else's land and shares the incomes with the landowner (p. 23)
- **Hades:** the lord of the underworld; synonym for "hell" (p. 36)

Mastery Word List:

- **valor:** (*n.*) bravery (p. 23).
- **discretion:** (*n.*) the ability to act responsibly (p. 24).
- **dilapidated:** (*v.*) run-down (p.23).

Summary:

At a local ball game, Reno intimidates Cooper, calls him names, and threatens to hurt his friend Jubal. Cooper's father intervenes, pinch-hitting not only on the ball field, but for Cooper as well.

The next day Squirrel informs Jubal and Cooper that his father needs all of the lumber in their yard, so the boys go in search of lumber on the Montgomery place where Jubal's father once lived. After waking up Gideon Montgomery, the boys reveal their

purpose. Mr. Montgomery talks mostly to Jubal, gives him his bone-handled pocket knife, and asks the boys to come back the next morning. Jubal's mother Glory finds out where they were and warns them not to return.

Reading Check:

1. Who tries to pick a fight with Cooper at the ball game? (Reno McCarthy.)
2. Who comes to Cooper's rescue? (His father.)
3. Why do the boys go to the Montgomery place? (To find lumber for their clubhouse.)
4. What does Mr. Montgomery give Jubal? (A bone-handled pocket knife.)
5. What is the significance of the nickname "Tiger" that Coach Turner calls Cooper? (All of the coach's third-string football players are called Tiger.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. One of the ways Cooper reveals the character of his two best friends is *indirectly* through their words and actions. How would you describe Jubal? Squirrel?
2. The **names** we call others tell a great deal about how much respect we have for others. What attitudes are reflected in the following names:
 - a. Cooper calls Jubal's younger sister Alvina "Fly."
 - b. Jubal tells Squirrel the Scorpions don't want "chickens" in their club.
 - c. Jubal and Cooper call their friend "Squirrel."
 - d. Coach Turner calls Cooper "Tiger."
 - e. Reno calls Cooper "turd tapper."
3. Why do you think Reno *targets* Cooper to humiliate?
4. How does Poppa "pinch-hit" for his son at the ball game?
5. Jubal tells his friend "Nobody ever gives you something for nothing" (p. 17). Yet, Mr. Montgomery gives Jubal a bone pocket knife—apparently something for nothing. Why do you think he gives something of such value to Jubal?
6. Squirrel questions the wisdom of taking lumber from the Montgomery property. He says, "It's not a matter of valor. It's discretion" (p. 23). Do you think the boys acted with valor or discretion? Explain.
7. What three goals does Cooper set for the summer?

What Would You Do?

1. If you were confronted by a bully like Reno, what would you do?
2. What is the difference between prejudice and a legitimate reason for not liking someone? Give an example of each that shows how they differ.

Class Activity: Complete the *Racist Behavior Activity* after reading Chapter 4.

Chapters 8-11 (pages 38-59)

Literary Element: In a literary work, **FORESHADOWING** is the use of clues to suggest events that have yet to occur. An author will use foreshadowing to build expectations and to create suspense.

Journal Writing: Sometime people *target* others with ugly words or actions. Describe a time when someone's words or actions hurt you or your words or actions hurt someone else. How did you feel?

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **be on the up and up:** be completely honest (p. 38).
- **redeye gravy:** Gravy made from the juices of a cooked ham, thickened with flour and often containing black coffee (p. 39).
- **the devil to pay:** get in trouble as a result of a certain action (p. 45).
- **bream:** A common bluegill fish, similar to a crappie, found in more Alabama waters than any other fish. It measures 6 to 10 inches (p. 52).
- **Gabriel:** In the Bible, an angel who explained signs from God. Gabriel is considered the messenger of God and had the privilege of announcing the births of Jesus and John the Baptist. In Christian churches, Gabriel is depicted with a trumpet ready to proclaim the second coming of Christ (p. 57).

Mastery Word List:

- **hypocrite:** (*n.*) A person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings (p. 54)
- **riveted:** (*v.*) totally captivated, held one's attention (p. 58)

Summary:

Gideon Montgomery asks the boys to bring him to see Rachel (Jubal's grandmother) so that he can taste her biscuits and redeye gravy one last time before he dies. Although Rachel is a bit confused in her old age and no longer cooks, she agrees.

At Cooper's weekly art class at his Uncle Chicago's, he learns that civil rights workers will be coming to their community to help people register to vote. Uncle Chicago predicts someone will get killed. Later, when Jubal and Cooper go to collect Gideon Montgomery to bring to Rachel's cabin, they find him dead. That evening Cooper's father returns home from a "meeting" at Mr. Wrightson's, where he said the football coach was asking about Cooper.

Reading Check:

1. What does Mr. Montgomery ask the boys to do in return for the lumber? (Bring him to see Rachel so that he can taste her biscuits and gravy one last time before he dies.)
2. Why does Ike Montgomery order the boys off his land? (He found his father dead with the boys in the cabin.)
3. What weekly date does Cooper have with Bessie? (She brings him to Oak Grove Baptist Church, a negro church.)

4. Why do Cooper and Alvina visit Uncle Charlie every Saturday? (He teaches them art.)
5. What message did Gabriel have for the congregation at Oak Grove Baptist Church? (Brelove, a member of the congregation, was in danger.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. Why does Bessie, who is college educated, sometimes talk like a white person?
2. Why do you think that Gideon Montgomery is looking forward to his visit with Rachel?
3. Jubal Harris's and Cooper Grant's families have been linked for generations. List the ways their families are connected.
4. How are the McCarthys and the Montgomerys related?
5. There are several instances of *foreshadowing* in this section. What do you think each one may predict?
 - a. Civil Rights workers will be coming to the community to help register Black voters.
 - b. Coach Turner is asking about Cooper at the Klan meetings.
 - c. Reverend Graham, the voice of Gabriel, warns Brelove that he is in danger.

What Would You Do?

1. What would you do if you witnessed someone being bullied? (This would be a good time to talk about retaliation, tattling, and harassment policies the school has in place.)
2. Dressing up in special clothes is a sign of respect for others and for the occasion. Do you have special clothes reserved for special occasions? What are those occasions? How do you feel when you get all dressed up? (Answers will vary. Students may suggest dress-up clothes, uniforms, or special accessories.)

Activity: Dialect is a way of speaking found in a particular region or group. It usually differs from the standard language in grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation. Writers like John Armistead use dialect to place characters in a certain time and to give them local color. Rewrite the following sentences in Standard English:

1. Mr. Montgomery: "You ain't lost my knife, has you?"
2. Jubal: "She don't even have flour. . . . How she gonna make biscuits?"

List some expressions that are unique to people who live in your region or group.

Chapters 12-14 (pages 60-75)

Literary Element: The **point of view** refers to the position from which a writer tells a story. The point of view in *The Return of Gabriel* is called first-person narrative because the narrator is one of the characters in the book: Cooper. All the action and characters are only seen through Cooper's eyes; however, we, the readers, may understand more than he does.

Historical Background: The summer of 1964 in Mississippi is known as "Freedom Summer." That summer COFO (Council of Confederate Organizations, a group of civil rights organizations) used college student volunteers to help register Black voters and establish "Freedom Schools" to teach reading and math to Black children. On June 21, 1964, three civil rights volunteers (John Chaney, a Black Mississippi volunteer, and two white volunteers, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner) disappeared after being jailed for speeding. Their bodies were discovered on August 4. During the search for the missing workers, the FBI found the bodies of three lynched blacks who had been missing for a long time. These deaths did not get the same publicity as the deaths of the civil rights workers.

In 1964, only 6.7 percent of Mississippi voting-age Black people were registered to vote. By 1969, that number had risen to 66.5 percent. The Freedom Summer of 1964 demonstrates the importance of the youth volunteers in the Civil Rights struggle.

Journal Writing: Young people sometimes do jobs to earn money or to help others. Think of the jobs you have done. Describe one of those jobs. Who did you work for? What did you accomplish? How were you paid?

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **croker sack:** gunnysack; a bag made of burlap. The term was used in the Deep South. Croker derives from *crocus*, coarse, loosely woven material once worn by slaves and laborers (p. 63).
- **bootlegger:** a person who smuggled liquor. The word derives from smugglers who put bottles of liquor in the upper part of their boots (p. 63).
- **cottonmouth:** a water moccasin. The inside of its mouth is white (p. 64).
- **night rider:** a member of the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist organization. The night riders usually committed their crimes at night (p. 70).

Mastery Word List:

- **muffled:** (*v.*) muted, so soft that it is difficult to hear (p. 68).
- **implication:** (*n.*) a hint or suggestion based on a theory or evidence (p. 70).

Summary:

On Sunday afternoons Jubal and Cooper collect whiskey bottles along the Oak Grove Road where the bridge has gone out. On this particular day, Reno harasses them, pulls a gun on Jubal, and threatens both of them saying, "You gonna pay, both of you" (p. 65). That evening night riders come for Brelove Avery, only to find he has already left.

Meanwhile, Tamara Feinstein and Esther (from *The \$66 Summer*) Garrison, two COFO workers, visit the Harris family to invite them to the Freedom School. Alvina is upset with her mother Glory and step-father Jerome for not letting her attend the school.

Reading Check:

1. Who put a gun to Jubal's head? (Reno.)
2. What did Brelove do that angered the Ku Klux Klan members? (He asked to use the phone of a white family.)
3. What would you learn at the Freedom School? (How to register to vote and what your constitutional rights were)
4. What did the Scorpions decide to do the next day at nine? (Go to the Montgomery place for lumber.)
5. Why was Alvina so angry with her parents? (They wouldn't let her go to the Freedom School.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. How has Reno McCarthy become increasingly more threatening? Do you think he is becoming braver? Why or why not?
2. The author helps build suspense through his use of first-person narrative point of view because we readers know more than Cooper does. When both Bessie and Poppa forbid Cooper to visit Jubal in the quarters on Sunday night, we anticipate the worst. What do we know that Cooper doesn't?
3. At one time, discrimination in our country was based on a set of unwritten rules about the way Americans of color were supposed to behave. How are the members of the Black community in this story expected to behave around white people? Give examples.
4. While talking about his history teacher Brelove Avery, Jubal says, "For a smart man, he wasn't so smart" (p.70). What do you think he means?
5. Why do you think the COFO school is called the Freedom School? Why is the right to vote so important to freedom?
6. Why do you think the Harrises do not want to attend the school?

What Would You Do?

1. An *epithet* is a disparaging or abusive word about a person. When Reno McCarthy threatens Jubal, he says, "I didn't hear you answer me, boy." He uses the term *boy*, a term once used to refer to an African American man to put him down. Why do you think people use epithets? What would you do if you overheard a classmate use an epithet?

Activity: Since this story is written from Cooper's point of view, we don't get inside Jubal's mind. Imagine that Jubal keeps a diary. Write his diary entry for the day. Think about how Jubal would have felt. Make sure that Jubal refers to himself as "I" in his diary.

Chapters 15-17 (pages 76-94)

Literary Element: A **symbol** is an object that conveys an idea beyond itself. For example, the American flag is a symbol for democracy. A sunrise may be a symbol for a new beginning. A symbol is frequently used to express an idea in a concrete and memorable way. To identify a symbol in writing, think about the associations you make with the object. Consider the extra importance that the object may represent other than as itself.

Historical Background: The Ku Klux Klan is a secret white supremacist organization that has been particularly active at different times in American history: shortly after the Civil War, during and after World War I, and in the 1960s during the Civil Rights movement.

After the Civil War, the Klan spread throughout the South mostly in rural areas. They wore white robes and hoods to scare people and hide their identities. They terrorized black people and Northerners to keep them from voting. While not all southern whites were members of the Klan, many sympathized with their objectives and did not attempt to stop their actions. As a result, law enforcement was often ineffectual when dealing with Klansmen. A Federal law banned the KKK five years after it began.

Along with a rising tide of patriotism, the KKK resurfaced in 1915 after the release of a movie *The Birth of a Nation* that glorified the Klansmen. The KKK had spread to other states numbering three million. They targeted immigrants, Jews, Catholics, and African Americans. During this time the Klan became increasingly violent and they used burning crosses as a form of intimidation. Once a very powerful organization, the Klan's membership dropped dramatically during the Great Depression because of scandals among the leadership. Further laws were passed prohibiting the organization.

During the Civil Rights Movement, many Klan members tried to unite the various local organizations; however, by this time public opinion had strongly turned against the KKK, and the FBI was involved in monitoring the various groups. During this time, some groups resorted to violence against blacks as a way to silence the Civil Rights workers.

Today the Klan still exists, but its membership is in the low thousands. It has ties to other white supremacist organizations such as the Skinheads.

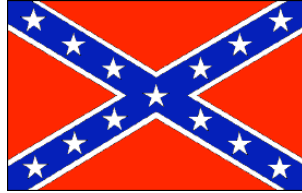
Go to <http://afroamhistory.about.com> for more information.

Journal Writing: Symbols such as the American flag have public, widely recognized meanings. But symbols may also have private and personal meanings. For example, a stuffed animal kept for years may serve as a symbol of a happy family vacation that has special meaning just for you. List three or four objects that have important meaning for you. Alongside each, write down the meaning—the memories—it holds for you.

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **calling card:** At one time, when people visited someone's home, they presented the butler with a visitor's card with their name engraved on it to announce their arrival (p. 82).

- **white trash:** A term meant to ridicule poor white people, implying that they are lazy and ignorant (p. 88).
- **Confederate flag:** The Confederate flag used during the Civil War, called the “Southern cross,” means different things to different people today. It may stand for a proud Southern heritage or for the segregation and discrimination promoted by racist groups like the KKK (p.90).



- **Beatnik:** A person who supported unconventional beliefs, including peace, artistic expression, and tolerance of diversity during the 1950s and 60s (p.93).

Mastery Word List:

- **incredible:** (*adj.*) unbelievable (p. 76).
- **brandishing:** (*v.*) to wave dramatically (p. 78).
- **cynical:** (*adj.*) skeptical about the motives of others (p. 82).
- **contemptuous:** (*adj.*) jeering laughter or ridicule (p. 94).

Summary:

The next day Cooper meets another Civil Rights worker, Ronald Ritter, who is taking pictures of the people in the black quarters and recording their names.

While talking to the three Civil Rights workers, Johnny Harris (Jubal’s older brother) and his friend Curtis Miller, who has a gun, harass Esther and Tamara. Reverend Graham breaks it up. Later that morning, a huge burning cross is placed in the yard of Squirrel Kogan’s parents. The sheriff says he thinks it is a joke, but Squirrel confides in Cooper that Mr. Wrightson is once again offering to buy his father’s store. He also believes that Reno McCarthy is one of the perpetrators.

To retaliate, Cooper writes a threatening note to Reno McCarthy signed “the Scorpions.” That evening Cooper attends a KKK meeting where Reno threatens to kill Jubal. Ike Montgomery comes to Cooper’s side.

Reading Check:

1. Who is Ronald Ritter? (A Civil Rights worker who is taking a lot of pictures.)
2. What do the two Black young people do to intimidate the civil rights workers? (They wave a gun in front of Tamara’s face.)
3. What hate crime is committed against Squirrel’s family? (A cross is burned in their front lawn.)
4. Who did the Grand Wizard say was behind the movement to mix races and defeat America? (The Communists.)
5. Who threatens to kill Jubal? (Reno McCarthy.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. Whose family has been targeted with a burning cross? Why do you think the night riders use a burning cross as a symbol of hate?

2. What do you think the mascot “Scorpions” symbolizes for Cooper, Jubal, and Squirrel?
3. List the references to “pay” the author has made so far in the story. (Some examples: Mr. Montgomery wants payment for the lumber. Reno says Cooper and Jubal are going to “pay” for challenging him. Cooper and Jubal collect bottles for money. The Freedom School is “free.” Mr. Wrightson offers to buy the Kogan’s store.) How might Cooper “pay the price” for his friendship with fellow Scorpions, Jubal and Squirrel?
4. Describe Ronald Ritter. Why do you think he is taking so many pictures?
5. The author often describes people as animals to help characterize the individual. What character traits do these descriptions suggest?
 - a. “[Curtis Miller] had beady little eyes that reminded me of a rattlesnake” (p. 78).
 - b. “[Ike Montgomery] had pale cloudy eyes that looked like a molting snake’s” (p.91).
6. *Scapegoating* is blaming an individual or group for something they are not really responsible for. Prejudices can lead to scapegoating. How does the KKK use scapegoating to rile up its members against minorities?
7. How does Uncle Chicago differ from the other adult role models in Cooper’s life?

What Would You Do?

1. The young volunteers helped bring Civil Rights to millions of Americans. Volunteers continue to help our communities in many ways. Have you ever volunteered in school, church, or your community? How have volunteers helped you, your school, or your neighborhood? Why do you think people volunteer to help others?

Activity: Using a small lunch bag create a hand puppet for one of the characters. The puppet should convey what you have learned about the character’s personality and background. Include an animal as well as other objects to symbolize your character’s personality. When you are done, hang your puppet on a clothes line. See if your classmates can guess which character you have represented.

Chapters 18-20 (pages 95-110)

Literary Element: Suspense is a feeling of uncertainty about what will happen next. An author creates suspense by raising questions in the minds of the readers or by allowing the reader to know more than the characters to heighten the feeling of anxiety. We wonder and worry about what will happen next.

Journal Writing: Think of the adults in your life. Who has been a positive role model for you? What has he or she said or done that has helped you become a better person?

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **wringer washer:** A wash tub with a roller attached above it. After scrubbing the clothes clean by hand, you would put them through the rollers to wring out the excess water (p.97).
- **NAACP:** National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (p.103).

Mastery Word List:

- **skeptical:** (*adj.*) doubtful (p. 98).
- **hoax:** (*n.*) fraud; an act of deception (p. 103).
- **oppressed:** (*v.*) kept down by force or unjust laws (p. 109).

Summary:

After the KKK rally, Cooper's father predicts that violence will break out and any black child who tries to go to a white school is signing his own death warrant. Later while Cooper is visiting Jubal in the quarters, Alvina, Jubal's sister, declares that she plans to attend the white school.

The next day Cooper attends a meeting with his father at Mr. Wrightson's store. His coach, Ike Montgomery, Reno and Toby McCarthy, and other white men gather to discuss the three missing Civil Rights workers and the COFO workers who they believe are stirring up trouble. During the meeting, Mr. Wrightson tells the group that he knows everything that is going on in the quarters and Reno threatens Jubal.

During the Sunday service, Tamara Feinstein and Esther Garrison explain why they became involved with COFO. After the service Johnny Harris and his friend Curtis try to intimidate Cooper. Bessie tells Cooper that the deacons are checking the church for dynamite.

Reading Check:

1. Who wants to attend the white school in the fall? (Jubal's sister Alvina.)
2. How did Marcellus die? (He hung himself.)
3. Who was like a brother to Marcellus when he was a boy? (Ike Montgomery.)
4. What did the men at Mr. Wrightson's store discuss? (The Civil Rights workers who disappeared and the ones who had come to their own town.)
5. Why did Tamara Feinstein, a New York Jewish college student, decide to help the Civil Rights movement in Mississippi? (Her father had been in a concentration camp in Germany during WWII so she wanted to help others who were being discriminated against.)

6. Why are the deacons looking underneath the church? (They are checking for dynamite.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. The author uses *foreshadowing* to help build *suspense*. How does the author lead us to believe that violence may erupt?
2. During the meeting at Mr. Wrightson's store, the men discuss how the Civil Rights Movement is affecting their own community. One man even calls the movement a "cancer." Why do you think the men are so afraid of giving the black community the same freedoms they enjoy?
3. The tensions between the Black community and the white community are escalating in these chapters. Give examples that show that the two communities distrust each other.
4. Why did Tamara Feinstein join COFO? Esther Garrison?
5. How is the friendship between Cooper and Jubal threatened?

What Would You Do?

1. Johnny and Curtis try to intimidate Cooper into not coming to church because he is white. What do you think he should do about the threat? What would you do if someone tried to keep you from joining a team or club because of your race?

Class Activity: On a large chart or blackboard, draw a triangle and divide it into five sections. Label it the *Pyramid of Hate*. Starting at the bottom of the pyramid, label each section as follows: Stereotyping and Prejudice; Discrimination; Scapegoating; Hate Crimes; Genocide. Ask students to think about how this pyramid can be used to show how hate escalates. Define each of the words on the pyramid. Have students cite examples for each section from the story or from real life. This pyramid is based on Gordon Allport's book, *The Nature of Prejudice*.

This activity will help the students understand the importance of the choices the characters face in the subsequent chapters as well as the nature of prejudice.

- A *stereotype* is a characteristic identified with a group of people that allows for no individuality; thus, every person who belongs to that group is thought to have the same character type. Stereotypes create a distorted view of society.
- *Prejudice* is prejudging a person or group of people without sufficient evidence. Prejudicial thinking is often based on stereotypes.
- *Discrimination* is unfair treatment based on prejudices such as racism.
- *Scapegoating* is blaming an individual or group for something they are not really responsible for. Prejudice and discrimination may lead to scapegoating.
- *Hate crimes* are acts of violence or intimidation against minorities.
- *Violence* is an emotional or physical act that harms someone else.
- *Genocide* is the planned mass murder of a group of people who belong to one nation, community, ethnic group, or religion.

After filling in the pyramid, discuss the escalation of hate that is brewing in the book.

1. Do you think that prejudice is often a result of judging a person or group on the basis of things over which they have no control?
2. Is it fair to judge people by such characteristics? If not, why do you think it happens so often?
3. What are some ways that people learn prejudices? Why do you think that prejudices are so difficult to “unlearn”?
4. What is the difference between prejudice and a legitimate reason for not liking someone? Give an example of each.
5. Do you think that there are people or groups of people in this school or community who feel excluded? Explain your answer.

Chapter 21-23 (pages 111-125)

Literature Element: An author creates **mood** by using specific details that allow you to “see” a place and feel its atmosphere. You might think of mood like the background music in a movie or a laugh track on a television sitcom. The music or laughter helps to create the mood. An author must do this through words and images.

Journal Writing: What is the meaning of the saying, “Actions speak louder than words”? Think of examples to support your ideas.

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **still life:** a painting of inanimate objects such as fruit and flowers (p. 114).
- **impasto:** applying paint in thick layers (p. 115).
- **trotline:** a fishing line with several smaller lines attached each with baited hooks (p.125).

Mastery Word List:

- **lair:** (*n.*) den or hideaway; a home of a wild animal (p. 114).
- **indecisive:** (*adj.*) unsure of how to act (p. 115).
- **accusatory:** (*adj.*) said in a way that suggests wrongdoing (p.125).

Summary:

On Monday, the three Scorpions begin tearing down the old Montgomery cabin for the lumber and tin when Ike Montgomery appears with a rifle. After hearing about the bargain between the boys and his father, Ike agrees to let the boys have the lumber. By the end of the week, their hideout is complete.

Saturday morning Uncle Chicago challenges Alvina and Cooper to a painting contest during their weekly painting lesson. Alvina gleefully tells Cooper that Jubal won't be going to the movies with him that afternoon as planned. At the movies, trouble breaks out when Alvina and other young black folks try to sit in the “white” section of the theater. Esther and Tamara are arrested. With Uncle Chicago's help, the COFO workers are released. Uncle Chicago warns Cooper to watch out for Ronald Ritter.

Reading Check:

1. Who pulls a rifle on the Scorpions while they are collecting lumber for their hideout? (Ike Montgomery)
2. What is the Scorpion's Lair? (the name the boys give their hideout)
3. What contest does Uncle Chicago have Alvina and Cooper participate in? (painting a still life to win grapes)
4. Why are Esther and Tamara arrested? (They staged a protest at the theater.)
5. How does Uncle Chicago get them out of jail? (He hires his lawyer.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. Notice the details the author uses to create a relaxed summer day at the beginning of Chapter 21. How does the author dramatically change the mood when Ike

- Montgomery shows up? How does the author change the mood from calmness to tension when Cooper goes to the movie theater? How do mood changes enhance the escalating tensions between the white and Black communities?
2. What clues do you have that Jubal and Alvina already know what the COFO workers are planning to do at the movie theater on Saturday afternoon? Why do you think Jubal chooses not to go to the movies that Saturday?
 3. Compare (show the ways things are the same) and contrast (show the ways things are different) the confrontation between the Scorpions and Ike Montgomery and the confrontation with the Klansmen at the movie theater.
 4. On the Pyramid of Hate, where would you place the unwritten rule that Black people must sit in the balcony at the movie theater? Where would you place the confrontation at the movie theater?
 5. Explain this passage: “[Alvina] looked at me as if she were looking right through me, just like she didn’t see me at all” (p. 121). How do you think Alvina made Cooper feel? Why is it important to “see” others, especially those who are different from us?
 6. Both the Klansmen and Reverend Graham appear to know what is going to happen before it occurs. Who might be the “Gabriel” for the Black community? Who might be the informer for the Klansmen? Why do you think so?

What Would You Do?

1. Uncle Chicago tells Cooper that staying out of the fight at the movie theater and informing him instead is the right thing to do. Do you agree? Why? If you ever witnessed a crime, what would be the safest thing to do?
2. What do you think is the difference between an “informer” and a “tattletale”? Explain.

Class Activity: Select a chapter from the book where the mood changes dramatically. Working in groups, students will create a sound track for the scenes. The sound track should include different sounds for the different moods in the scenes.

Chapter 24-26 (pages 126-142)

Literature Element: A fictional character is sometimes described as either a **round character** or a **flat character**. A *round character* is fully developed. The author reveals the character's background and personality traits, both good and bad. A *flat character*, on the other hand, is one-dimensional. The author reveals only one side of the character's personality.

Journal Writing: Every culture has its own foods. Describe an ethnic food you have enjoyed either at home or in someone else's home. Try to create word pictures to help the reader understand the meal. Think about colors, textures, smells, tastes, and sounds when you describe the food.

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **acetylene torch:** A torch lit with a highly flammable gas and used as a light. (p. 126).
- **catfish:** A scaleless fish with cat-like whiskers. Also called a *mud cat* or *bullhead*. (p. 131).
- **hushpuppies:** A side dish made with corn meal (p. 133).

Mastery Word List:

- **defiantly:** (*adv.*) boldly and stubbornly resisting (p. 135).
- **oscillating:** (*adj.*) a swinging action (p.139).
- **absentia:** (*n.*) while absent or not present (p. 142).

Summary:

While camping out in their Scorpion's Lair, Cooper and Jubal discover an unusual friendship between Ike Montgomery and Uncle Chicago. The next day, they find thirteen catfish on their *trotline* that Jubal takes home with him.

At home again, Cooper faces increasing pressure to give up attending the Oak Grove Church. At church Reverend Graham informs Curtis Miller that the angel Gabriel warns that Curtis will die, but Curtis says the warning doesn't scare him. That evening, Poppa refuses to let Cooper go to the quarters to have the catfish dinner with Jubal's family.

The next day Cooper learns that Curtis Miller is in the hospital after a brutal beating by the Klansmen. Later Squirrel tells Cooper that his family is moving because of the increasing violence against Jews and blacks. Cooper promises Squirrel that he will even the score for Squirrel and his family.

Reading Check:

1. What kind of fish do Cooper and Jubal catch in their trotline? (Catfish.)
2. Jubal and Cooper discover an unusual friendship between Uncle Chicago and what man? (Ike Montgomery.)
3. Who warns Curtis Miller that the Klansmen are planning to kill him next? (The angel Gabriel through Reverend Graham.)

4. What does Ike Montgomery do when he discovers Jubal has his father's pocket knife? (Nothing. He lets Jubal keep it.)
5. Why is Squirrel's family moving to Memphis? (They want to avoid the violence of the Klansmen.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. Curtis Miller and Ike Montgomery are both minor characters in the novel: one is a round character and the other is flat. Which one is a round character and which one is a flat character? Explain.
2. Ike Montgomery is an increasingly mysterious person. What new information do we learn about him? Does this information make him more or less menacing? Why or why not?
3. Jubal maintains that Cooper cannot understand what it is like always having to use the "back door." What does he mean by that? Do you think it is possible for those in the dominant culture to understand what it is like to be a minority? Explain.
4. Do you think our society still has "back doors" for minorities? If so, what are some of the "back doors" minorities face today? Explain.
5. Squirrel tells Cooper he will have to be a Scorpion in *abstentia*. Is it possible to fight discrimination without getting personally involved?
6. Both Curtis Miller and Squirrel's family have been targeted by the Klansmen. One stays and nearly loses his life; the other leaves to avoid the violence. How would you describe each one's actions? Are they brave, cowardly, responsible, or foolish? Explain.

What Would You Do?

1. List the ways someone could deal with a threatening situation such as being confronted by a mugger or kidnapper. Which ones might escalate the hostility? Which ones might help resolve the conflict? Which ones might avoid a confrontation?
2. What would you do if you discovered a classmate threatening another classmate?

Class Activity: Ike Montgomery is one of the most mysterious characters in this novel. Think of details from the story that contribute to his character and place those details on a web. What purpose do you think Ike Montgomery plays in this novel?

Chapter 27-29 (pages 143-157)

Literature Element: A **motivation** is a reason that explains a character's actions. If the character's motives are clear, the character's actions are believable. Usually a character is motivated by common human feelings such as love, greed, and fear.

Journal Writing: Think of a time when you purposely did not obey the wishes of a parent, coach, or teacher. Describe the situation and the reasons why you were disobedient. Looking back, was your choice foolish or responsible?

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **Masonite panel:** A thin fiberboard used for paintings (p. 144).
- **gessoing:** Applying a base coat applied to a canvas before it is used for a painting
- **Molotov cocktail:** A makeshift bomb made of a breakable container filled with gas. It is set on fire and thrown at the target to be set on fire (p. 146).
- **Ben Franklin:** The name of a dime store that had a soda fountain where people could sit up at a counter and be served sandwiches and ice cream. Before the Civil Rights Act, many restaurants and stores in the South would only serve white people (p. 154).

Mastery Word List:

- **unavenged:** (*adj.*) not penalized (p. 143).
- **grotesque:** (*adj.*) a bizarre style of painting, usually of monster-like figures (p.144).
- **agitated:** (*adj.*) disturbed and upset (p. 147).
- **endanger:** (*v.*) expose to danger or harm (p. 155).

Summary:

While Cooper and Alvina are painting a cow's skull, they learn that one of Uncle Chicago's friends is missing. Later, Auntie Rachel mistakes Jubal for his father Marcellus and implies that Toby, Marcellus, and Ike are all related. On Sunday, Reverend Graham informs the congregation that Gabriel is gone. This news brings a deep sadness over the congregation.

The next day Cooper figures out that Ike is Gabriel, and Uncle Chicago confirms his suspicions. He also clears up two other mysteries: Marcellus was hanged by the Klan and he was the son of Gideon Montgomery. This means Ike Montgomery is Jubal's uncle.

Nana, Cooper's grandmother, tells him about a racial incident at the Ben Franklin. His father tells him that he must attend a Klan meeting at Mr. Wrightson's store. Cooper realizes that the Klan will plan to retaliate for the incident at the Ben Franklin and volunteers to be Gabriel despite Uncle Chicago's protests.

Reading Check:

1. What does Alvina's painting of a cow's skull resemble? (A bloody Klansman.)
2. Who is Gabriel? (Ike Montgomery.)

3. How are Ike Montgomery and Marcellus Harris related? (Gideon Montgomery is their father, making them brothers.)
4. What happens at the Ben Franklin store that stirs up trouble? (Esther Garrison, the black COFO worker, tries to be served.)
5. Who volunteers to be the next Gabriel? (Cooper.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. Why is Cooper's latest Scorpion-signed note more dangerous than his previous notes?
2. Describe Alvina's painting of the cow's skull. What makes it "grotesque"?
3. Explain the relationships between the McCarthy, Harris, and Montgomery families. How does this information help Cooper understand Ike's behavior?
4. Explain how Gabriel's warnings got from the Klan meetings to Reverend Graham. How has that information chain been broken?
5. Until now, Cooper has been protected from the truth about Marcellus' death and the relationship between the Montgomery and Harris family. Why did Uncle Chicago hide the truth from Cooper? Do you think he is justified or do you think Cooper should have been told the truth? Explain
6. Now that Ike Montgomery's identity as "Gabriel" has been revealed, list the possible reasons he may have been motivated to help the Black community as their informant.
7. What do you think *motivates* Esther Garrison and Tamara Feinstien to stage a protest at the Ben Franklin? Do you think their protest is an "act of valor" or "discretion"? Explain.
8. What *motivates* Cooper to volunteer to be the next Gabriel?
9. So far, anyone who has challenged the authority of the Klan has been killed, beaten, or threatened with violence. Uncle Chicago feels it is too dangerous to have Cooper become the next Gabriel. Who do you think is the informant for the Klan? Explain.
10. How does the author show that the laws and practices before the Civil Rights Act were discriminatory?

What Would You Do?

1. When a racial confrontation breaks out between two different ethnic groups in a school setting or neighborhood, the bystanders have four options: try to stop the confrontation, become a "Gabriel" and tell someone in authority, jump into the fray, or ignore the confrontation. Which action do you think is the wisest? Why do you think so?

Activity: Imagine that you are a film director who is interviewing actors and actresses to play the characters in a movie based on this book. Create your cast of characters. Who will you choose to play each of the characters? You may use people you know including relatives, television or movie stars, famous people in the news today, or famous people throughout history.

Chapter 30-33 (pages 158-175)

Literature Element: An author uses **figurative language**, descriptive language that is not meant to be taken literally, to state ideas in vivid and imaginative ways as well as create word pictures in the readers' minds. A *simile* uses the word *like* or *as* to make a direct comparison between two unlike ideas. A *metaphor* directly compares two unlike things without the words *like* or *as*. *Personification* gives human characteristics to a non-human subject.

Journal Writing: Imagine a burning fire such as the cross burning on Squirrel's front yard. What human qualities does a fire have? Think about how a fire behaves, how it moves, what it sounds like, and what it is wearing. Imagine that the fire has feelings, or emotions, and thoughts just like humans. Free write about fire by giving it human characteristics.

Mastery Word List:

- **reluctant:** (*adj.*) unwilling (p. 159).
- **derisive:** (*adj.*) scoffing or mocking tone (p. 160).
- **giddy:** (*adj.*) dizzy, lightheaded feeling (p. 168).

Summary:

Cooper attends another Klan meeting and learns just how violent the Klansmen have been. Later, he learns that the Black community is staging a protest at the swimming pool by jumping in the pool on Saturday night, but the next day the community fills in the pool to avoid the protest. The Black community realizes that someone is spying on them.

Cooper warns Uncle Charlie that the Klan plans to get Johnny Harris. Poppa forces Cooper to go along with the Klan. When the Klansmen show up at the Harris's home, Poppa and Cooper stay in the car and watch. No one is home so the Klansmen set the home on fire. The Klansmen have figured out that someone is spying on them.

The next day Cooper watches as the FBI agents investigate the fire. He fears that someone may discover that he is Gabriel. Uncle Chicago tells him that he would understand if Cooper no longer wants to be Gabriel.

Reading Check:

1. How did the Klan take care of information leaks? (They killed Ike, the informer.)
2. How did the townspeople prevent the black people from staging a swim-in? (They filled in the pool.)
3. Who became the Klan's next target? (Johnny Harris.)
4. Where was Cooper on the night Jubal's home burned down? (With his dad in Moses Jackson's car watching the Klan torch the house.)
5. Who comes to investigate the fire at the Harris's home? (The FBI.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. How does Cooper learn that the Klan killed both Marcellus and Ike Montgomery?
2. At the Klan meeting, Mr. Wrightson says, "This is war, and you are soldiers of freedom" (p. 159). Why does Mr. Wrightson call the Klansmen soldiers?

3. Why do you think is Alvina so hostile toward Cooper?
4. Why do you think Poppa forces Cooper to go with him to the Klan meetings? What evidence suggests Poppa does not agree with what the Klan is doing?
5. How does the author create suspense in Chapter 32?
6. The author uses figurative language to heighten the escalating hatred between the white and Black communities. Identify the type of figurative language (simile, metaphor, or personification) in these passages and what is being compared. How does each of these figures of speech help to heighten the fear Cooper feels?
 - a. “There was acid in her tone” (p. 163).
 - b. “The mood in the car was like at deer camp. An almost giddy excitement” (p. 168).
 - c. “Waking or sleeping, roaring flames chased me, sucked at me, tormented me” (p. 171).
7. Review the acts of racism by the KKK using the Pyramid of Hate. (e.g., Burning the cross in the Kogan’s yard, killing Marcellus and Ike, assaulting Curtis Miller, burning down the Harris’s home.) Given the level of violence so far in the story, predict what the Klansmen plan to do that is something “really big.”

What Would You Do?

1. When Uncle Chicago learns that the Klan is planning something big, he tells Cooper: “I’m not going to ask you to go to any more meetings. You do whatever you feel comfortable with” (p.174). What would you do if you were Cooper? Explain.

Activity: Using your “Fighting Racism” chart, place the following actions on the chart. Show that both passive and active behaviors are racist if individuals are not directly trying to stop racism.

1. Poppa tells the Klan that he will talk to Glory about Johnny’s behavior.
2. The community fills in the swimming pool.
3. Cooper tells Uncle Chicago that the Klan plans to go after Johnny Harris that night.
4. The Klan burns down the Harris’s home.
5. The fire department does not come to put out the fire at the Harris’s home.
6. Poppa and Cooper wait in the car the night the Klan burns down the Harris’s home.

Answers:

Active Anti-Racist Behavior: 1 & 3

Active Racist Behavior: 2 & 4

Passive Racist Behavior: 5 & 6

At the end of Chapter 33, Cooper must make a decision about whether or not to be Gabriel. Where would his actions be on the chart if he continues as Gabriel? Where would his actions be if he chooses to do nothing about the next Klan activity? Is it possible to do nothing and still be anti-racist?

Chapter 34-36 (pages 176-193)

Literature Element: A **conflict** is the struggle between opposing forces. An *internal conflict* is one that takes place inside a character's mind. The struggle may be to overcome fear or make a difficult decision.

Journal Writing: Think of a time when you had to make a difficult decision. Describe the factors that led to your decision. Who influenced you? What were the deciding factors? If you had to make the same decision again, would you change your decision? Why or why not?

Historical Background: In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that laws enforcing segregated schools were unconstitutional and called for desegregation of all public schools. This ruling shocked people who believed in the separation of the races. Two years later the Mississippi Legislature responded with the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission that actively spied on civil rights workers and supported pro-segregation causes from 1956 to 1973.

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **sovereignty:** (*n.*) the complete independence of a state to have its own laws (p. 178).

Mastery Word List:

- **recipient:** (*n.*) a person who is the receiver (p. 178).
- **boycotting:** (*v.*) an act of protest when a group of people collectively do not buy or use certain items (p. 180).
- **vengeance:** (*n.*) punishment in return for a harmful or hurtful action; an act of getting even (p. 185).
- **dungarees:** (*n.*) denim blue jeans (p. 191).

Summary:

While delivering a letter to the post office for Nana, Cooper notices that Ronald Ritter is acting suspiciously. He discovers that the manila envelope Ronald claims to be a gift for his mother is really addressed to the MSSC. He later learns that the MSSC is a state agency that is spying on Civil Rights workers.

The news of the three missing COFO workers who were found dead worries Uncle Chicago because it may rile up the Klan. Meanwhile, Mr. Wrightson threatens people who might cooperate with the FBI or spy on the Klan. Moses Jackson, one of the Klan members, even suggests that Chicago may be the spy.

On Sunday, Cooper notices that Bessie drives unusually cautiously over the bridge on the way to church. After church, Reverend Graham asks Cooper to leave the church and never return because he thinks Cooper has been involved in the recent KKK activities.

Reading Check:

1. Who discovers that Ronald Ritter was a spy? (Cooper.)
2. Who does Ronald Ritter work for? (The MSSC, a government organization that spied on Civil Rights workers.)
3. Who is the only family member to support Cooper's desire to go to the all-Negro church? (Poppa.)
4. What is unusual about Bessie's drive to the church on Sunday? (She drives unusually slowly over the bridge.)
5. Although the Klan cannot figure out who the spy may be, whom do they begin to suspect? (Chicago Harrington.)
6. What does Reverend Graham ask Cooper to do? (Leave Oak Grove and never return.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. How does Cooper figure out the Ronald Ritter is up to something?
2. What clues do we have that the Black congregation is planning something "really big" also?
3. Spying is one of the themes in this story. List the people who have been spying on others. How does fear play a part in spying activities?
4. Cooper's loyalty is being tested when he is banished from the church by Reverend Graham. He has two choices: quit the Klan meetings or quit the church. What are the consequences of either choice?
5. Why does Cooper feel betrayed by Jubal?
6. What does Uncle Chicago mean when he says, "Sometimes one has to be for all even if the all desert him" (p. 193)?
7. List the conflicts in this book.

What Would You Do?

1. Cooper doesn't like the idea that the Oak Grove members think he is a traitor. If you were Cooper, what would you do? Explain.

Class Activity: Brainstorm the names of "spy" agencies. Students may recall government organizations or groups that they have seen on the news, in movies, on television, or in the comics. List the pros and cons for spying by government agencies.

Chapter 37-End (pages 194-218)

Literature Element: The **plot** is made up of a series of related events that include the conflict, the climax, and the resolution. The **conflict** is the struggle between two forces; sometimes within the character’s mind and sometimes between the character and another force or character. The **climax** is the highest dramatic moment of the story, the point at which the conflicts come to a head. The **resolution** is how the conflicts turn out in the end.

Journal Writing: What does “loyalty” mean to you? Have you ever been in a situation where your loyalty has been tested? Have you ever felt betrayed by a friend? Have you ever stood up for a friend when no one else did? Give an example from your own life that demonstrates the importance of loyalty.

Words and Phrases to Know:

- **dead to the world:** sound asleep (p. 195).
- **alma mater:** the school one has attended (p. 218).

Mastery Word List:

- **forlorn:** (*adj.*) sad or lonely; dejected (p. 195).
- **gurney:** (*n.*) stretcher used for transporting patients (p. 197).
- **lacerations:** (*n.*) jagged cuts (p. 197).
- **taut:** (*adj.*) pulled tight (p. 212).
- **enacted:** (*v.*) made into law (p. 217).

Summary:

Cooper is extremely upset that Bessie, the Reverend Graham, Jubal, and other members of Oak Grove Church think he is a traitor, but Uncle Chicago will still not allow him to tell anyone that he is Gabriel for fear that he may be harmed.

While driving home, Uncle Chicago is forced off the road and beaten up. Both Poppa and Mama are afraid that he has been beaten up because of his involvement with the Black community.

Poppa refuses to be a part of the Klan’s plan to blow up the Oak Grove Church with dynamite, but does nothing to stop them. Cooper, however, takes action by calling the FBI agent and warning the congregation. The members of Oak Grove trap the Klansmen at the bridge and turn them over to the FBI.

Although the Klansmen are never convicted of anything, they quit meeting at Mr. Wrightson’s store. Jubal, Alvina, and Cooper graduate from high school and go on to school.

Reading Check:

1. How do Mama and Nana explain Cooper’s unusual behavior? (They think he is in love.)
2. What happens to Uncle Chicago that lands him in the hospital? (He has a car accident when Klansmen force him off the road.)

3. What is Mr. Wrightson's "really big" plan? (To blow up the Oak Grove church during the congregation's revival.)
4. How does Cooper warn the congregation of the Klansmen's plan? (He rides his scooter to the bridge, wades across the river, and warns the congregation in person.)
5. What plan does the Oak Grove congregation set in motion once they learn the Klan is coming? (They trap the Klansmen in a circle of fire.)
6. What are the flour sacks used for? (The women of the congregation pull them over the heads of the Klansmen after they have surrendered.)

Getting Involved with the Story:

1. What is the price that Cooper pays for his loyalty to the members of Oak Grove?
2. The author uses the phrase "dead to the world" to describe Cooper's sleep. How might Cooper be "dead to the world" in terms of his real-life situation? What might his dream mean? (p. 195).
3. Describe the fantasies that Cooper has that place him in the role of a hero.
4. At the Klan meeting, Poppa protests blowing up the church with dynamite by saying, "Teaching a few young bucks their place is one thing. Killing children is something else" (p. 204). Where do you think blowing up the church would be placed on the Pyramid of Hate? Once someone's actions start moving up on the Pyramid of Hate do you think it's difficult to stop? Why or why not?
5. What do you think *motivates* Poppa to do nothing about the Klan's plan to blow up the church? What do you think *motivates* Cooper into action?
6. Events build up to a suspenseful *climax*. What is the climax of this book? How are each of the conflicts resolved?
7. This book demonstrates the importance of our freedoms like the freedom of assembly, the freedom of religion, and the freedom of speech. At the end of the book, Cooper reflects on how his role as the angel Gabriel has made him free forever. Explain.
8. Read the biographical sketch of the author John Armistead. How is his own life reflected in this book?

What Would You Do?

1. What is the cost to the individual who does not act to challenge hate? What is the cost to the targets of hate? What is the result for society? Given these costs, how might we stop prejudice from starting in the first place?
2. What are some ways that people learn prejudices? What are some reasons why prejudice is so difficult to "unlearn?" What would you do if you discovered someone judging others based on stereotypes rather than on merit?

Class Activity: Present a "What if . . .?" question about one of the events in the book to your classmates. When an author writes a book, we are reading about one set of circumstances. Imagine what could have happened instead by asking a "What if . . .?" question. Challenge your classmates to change the events in the story or the character's choices and create a new scenario. Share your "What if . . .?" answers with each other.

Class Activity: Show the students a picture of the sculpture by Atelier Yoyita that is dedicated to the three workers who died in Mississippi during the Freedom Summer of 1964. Give each student a square of construction paper. Ask each student to create a memorial to a specific person or group who has been hurt by hate. The memorial may be a drawing, painting, collage, poem, song, or whatever the student chooses. Ask the students to label their memorial and then hang them on the wall for all to see as a reminder of the importance of our freedoms.

Biography

John Armistead, an ordained minister, is an award-winning author, artist, and journalist. He holds degrees from Mississippi College, the University of Mississippi, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

"I have been writing fiction since high school," said Armistead, "and painting since childhood."

Armistead began formal studio training in Mobile when he was eight years old, working in pastels and oils. He continued art studies through college, and in recent years has participated in master's classes taught by Everett Raymond Kinstler at the Lyme Academy of Fine Art in Old Lyme, Connecticut, the Art Student's League of New York, and the National Academy of Design in New York City. The influence of Kinstler, the country's foremost painter of five U.S. presidents and over 50 cabinet members, is increasingly evident in his work.

Armistead, born in 1941, began publishing short stories and articles during the 1970s, but did not published his first novel until 1994.

"I have always loved stories," said Armistead. "Like every Southern writer of my generation, I remember sitting on the front porch and hearing my great-aunts and grandmother talk of people and events from long past days. I can also remember beginning to make up my own stories, daydreaming, as it were, when I was in grammar school. That's still the way I make up stories today."

Armistead is a member of the Mystery Writers of America, the Authors Guild, the National Association of Independent Artists, the Portrait Society of America, and the Harley Owners Group (HOG).

Armistead is the author of three mystery novels and two novels for teen-agers, and hundreds of his paintings hang in museums and homes throughout the country.

He lives with his family in Tupelo, Mississippi.

"There is a quote from Pliny cherished by both artists and writers, 'Nulla dies sine linea,'" said Armistead. "It means, 'Never a day without a line.' That's my credo too. For me, it applies to both writing and art."

This biography is found on www.johnarmistead.com

Racist Behavior

Anti-Racist Behavior

**A
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Fighting Racism

Fighting Racism:
You are either part of the problem or part of the solution.

Fighting Racism Activity Instructions: Chapter 4 Activity

1. Review the scene in Chapter 4 between Reno McCarthy and Cooper Grant. Label each of the five characters involved (Reno, Reno's friend Milton, Cooper, Cooper's sister Missy, and Cooper's father) as one of the following: perpetrator, bystander, target, and ally.
2. Explain that whenever we witness a racist act, we make choices. We can either be a part of the problem by joining in on the act (Active Racist Behavior) or we can be part of the solution by trying to stop it (Active Anti-Racist Behavior.) We may also choose to do nothing. This is Passive Racist Behavior because we allow the racism to continue and in time increase.
3. Place each of the people who witnessed the harassment of Cooper on this chart. Give a reason for why you put each person where. (See answers below.)
4. Notice that the Passive Anti-Racist Behavior box is empty. Explain that it is impossible to do nothing and be an anti-racist at the same time. If Missy had decided not to do anything, she would show Passive Racist Behavior because she would allow the racist behavior to continue.

Note: You will use this activity one more time at the end of the book to help students understand the choices that Cooper and others face as violence erupts in their community.

Meanwhile, you might want to bring in news articles that illustrate this theme.

Racist Behavior

Anti-Racist Behavior

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Reno = Perpetrator

Reno exhibits Active Racist Behavior because he calls Cooper names and insults him for befriending colored people.

Missy = Ally

When Missy sees that her brother is being harassed, she runs to her father for help. She takes matters into her own hands and actively helps to stop the problem.

Poppa = Ally

Like his daughter, Poppa steps in to stop the harassment. By doing so, he causes Reno and his friend to back down and leave.

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Milton = Bystander

By doing nothing to stop Reno, Milton shows Passive Racist Behavior. His lack of action shows acceptance of the racism of others, which in turn escalates the problem.

Fighting Racism

Scorpions

Scorpions are relatives of spiders and look somewhat like crayfish with long tails. They are active at night looking for insects, spiders, and other scorpions to eat. They often ambush their prey by lying in wait until they sense their approach. Then they capture them with their arms, called pedipalps, and paralyze them with venom. Larger scorpions may even feed on smaller lizards, snakes, and mice.



As well as being predators, scorpions are also prey. Many types of creatures, such as tarantulas, lizards, birds (especially owls), and bats hunt scorpions for food.

John Armistead draws a parallel between the behavior of a scorpion and the people who were caught up in the events of the Civil Rights Movement in the summer of 1964.

What kind of people behave like scorpions? (Answers will vary, but students may suggest bullies and people who resort to name calling. On the other hand, they may suggest soldiers who set a trap for the enemy or terrorists who attack an unsuspecting victim.)

Who are the scorpions? As you read this novel, think about the characteristics of the scorpion. Who are the scorpions in this novel? Why do you think so? (Answers will vary. At the beginning of the novel, the Klan members behave much like scorpions by attacking their victims at night. Will these scorpions continue to be the predators or become the prey?)

Information taken from http://www.desertusa.com/oct96/du_scorpion.html

Evaluating a Literary Work

An evaluation tells what you think is good or bad about a piece of literature. It is an opinion about the quality of the work. Before beginning a formal evaluation of a piece of literature, free write about why you liked or did not like the work. What elements did you like or dislike?

The following criteria will help you evaluate *The Return of Gabriel*.

1. **Originality:** An author may write about a topic in a new or imaginative way. In your opinion, does the author John Armistead bring originality to the topic of racism in the 1960s? Why or why not?
2. **Creativity:** An author's work is often judged by how well the author creates a special effect: a sad story, a suspenseful drama, a heartwarming tale, a tragedy, a comedy. Do you think John Armistead has successfully created a special effect in this novel? If so, what is that effect and how does he create it?
3. **Importance:** An author's work is judged by the seriousness of the topic. What is the main topic in *The Return of Gabriel*? Do you think this is a serious topic for today's readers? How would you rank the importance of this topic next to other topics you have read about in the past year?
4. **Theme:** The moral or ethical message of a literary work is its theme. Sometimes the reader evaluating a literary work agrees or disagrees with the message. What message does John Armistead convey in his novel? Do you agree or disagree with his message?

Writing an evaluation.

1. Gather examples from the novel to support your ideas. List them on note cards or on a chart.
2. Create an outline for your paper and then write your first draft. Make sure that your introductory paragraph clearly expresses your overall evaluation of the book and includes the name of the book and author.
3. Revise your draft, making sure that each sentence is clear. Check to see that you have specific examples to support your ideas.
4. Proofread carefully for spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Freedom Summer 1964 or Civil Rights



“This sculpture is dedicated to the Civil Rights Movement and three of its workers who died in Mississippi: James Earl Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. I wanted to portray them for what they lived for, the civil rights that we all have.”

“Chaney is speaking with his arms extended, symbolizing Freedom of Speech. Schwerner is carrying the Torah, symbolizing Freedom of Religion. Goodman has his hands over his friends’ shoulders, symbolizing Freedom of Assembly. There is also a locked ballot box, and in front there is a magnolia with an eternal flame.”

By Atelier Yoyita

This is taken from a page on <http://www.yoyita.com/civilrights.htm>.

Writing about a Personal Hero

Think about someone you know that you consider a hero. This person may have faced a difficult situation with courage, put the needs of others first, set a goal and achieved it, or overcome a major obstacle. Whatever the reason may be, this person is one of your personal heroes.

Steps to writing your theme:

Step 1: Gather the information you will need. Brainstorm about your hero and place your ideas on note cards or pieces of paper cut into fourths. Here are some things to think about:

5. **Appearance:** What does your hero look like? How old is he or she? What kinds of clothing does he or she typically wear? Does he or she have any distinguishing features?
6. **Personality:** List the person's character traits. For example, Cooper is cooperative, loyal, hard working, courageous, inquisitive, analytical, and creative.
7. **Motivation:** What motivates this person? What are his or her goals, dreams, or needs?
8. **Change:** Does your hero change because of what he or she has done? Does your hero make a difference in someone else's life? Does your hero cause you to change in some significant way?

Step 2: Organize your ideas by reading each note card and placing them in piles by character traits. Use the Theme Planning Sheet to help organize your theme.

Step 3: Write your draft using your Theme Planning Sheet. Start with your introduction, then transition to your first topic sentence. As you write your theme, remember to use the appositives for your hero so that you don't start every sentence with "he" or "she."

Step 4: Read your draft aloud to yourself or someone else. Revise your draft making sure that each sentence is clear. Make the necessary changes.

Step 5: Proofread carefully for spelling, punctuation, and grammar.