

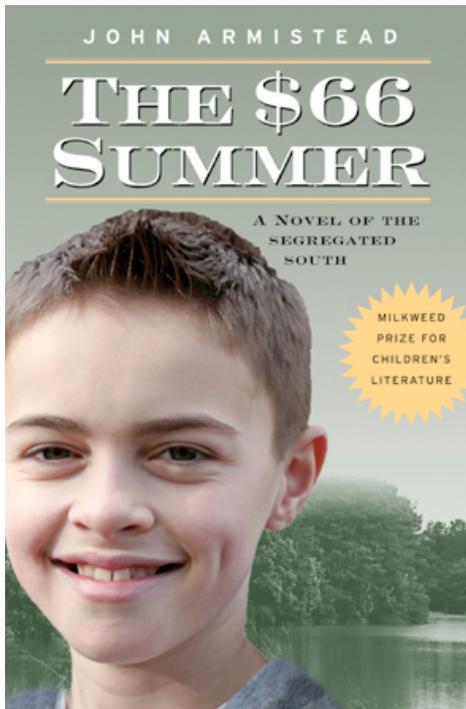
## **A Guide to Teaching**

### ***The \$66 Summer***

**By John Armistead**

**MILKWEED EDITIONS**

**The Alliance for Reading**



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**Also by John Armistead**

***The Return of Gabriel***

This teaching guide to *The \$66 Summer* by John Armistead was prepared by Ginny Wheeler. Milkweed Editions, [www.milkweed.org](http://www.milkweed.org). For further information, call 612-332-3192.

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## The Story of Esther

Summary of the story of Esther:

(<http://www.pcusa.org/pcusa/horizons/bsworkshop.htm>)

From *Esther's Feast: A Study of the Book of Esther* by Patricia K. Tull

When Queen Vashti refuses to break social custom and appear at a wild 180-day drinking party given by King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I of Persia in history), he demotes her and begins a four-year search for the most beautiful woman in the land. He chooses Esther, a Jewish orphan brought up by her soldier cousin, Mordecai. Esther does not reveal her identity as a member of the Jewish minority who has lived in Persia since the Exile. The king's chief minister, Haman, plots first to destroy Mordecai and then to destroy all Jews in Persia. He picks the dates for the pogrom by casting lots (Purim). Esther finds out and decides to warn the king, even though to address him unbidden and to identify with her people means certain death. But because of Esther's courage in approaching him, the king orders that Haman be hanged on the gallows built for Mordecai, whom he makes his chief minister. He also allows the Jews to defend themselves against their enemies on the day of the planned Jewish massacre. To this day, in the Festival of Purim, Jews celebrate God's power to deliver.

John Armistead draws a parallel between the Book of Esther and the plight of African Americans in the 1950s before the Civil Rights Movement.

**Who would be our contemporary Esther?** (Answers will vary, but Martin Luther King would be an obvious choice since he risked his life for Civil Rights.)

**Who epitomizes the ideals of Esther in *The \$66 Summer*?** (Answers will vary. Grandma Tilly risked public ridicule and thus her livelihood and her life by taking a black family into her home. The question raised at the end of Chapter 10 is whether or not God speaks through us, asking us to do good works and help those less fortunate. Esther, a brave young woman, may see herself as a true disciple of the Lord after the Esther service. Will she behave differently after this?)

## The Coming of Age Story

*The \$66 Summer* presents a picture of rural Alabama forty-five years ago with its unwritten code of segregation that looms so large that it nearly becomes a villainous character. The characters, both white and black, are steeped in the traditions of racism that defined the times just before the Civil Rights Movement.

As a coming-of-age story, this novel takes George on a journey to Obadiah, the home of his maternal grandmother. The book may be explored on a literary level with the following plot elements:

**Hero:** George, the youthful and innocent hero, embarks on a quest to earn money for a Harley-Davidson of his own, the symbol of adulthood for him. Like many heroes in literature, George's early ambitions are purely selfish, but he changes as the result of the adventures on his journey. Instead of keeping the \$66.00 he has earned, he chooses to give his savings to Esther so that she can further her education.

**God-teacher:** Heroes often have help. George's maternal grandmother, Tilly, becomes George's teacher. Her compassionate nature and her sense of fairness become evident more through her actions than her words. Grandma Tilly provides an education in generosity and kindness.

**Sidekicks:** Heroes seldom work alone. Esther and Bennett Garrison, George's two friends, set out with George on a treasure-hunting scheme. Esther is the character that prods the reluctant hero to rise to every occasion. Her attitude toward George changes as the story progresses. Bennett remains the unwilling partner, but surprisingly he is the first on the scene of the fire and boldly rescues his mother.

**Doorway:** As in other children's books, the hero, along with his sidekicks, embarks on a journey by stepping across a threshold from the relative security and safety of home to a dark and scary place filled with unknown terrors. The threshold in this story is Mr. Vorhise's barbed-wire fence. Once the children cross onto his property, the dark woods along with their own wild imaginations paint a picture of terror.

**Into the woods:** The first leg in the journey brings the children to Mr. Vorhise's pond to fish. They eventually discover the remains of Staple Garrison's body and clothing in a pine grove nearby. Notice the description of the property. The imagery creates fear with word-pictures like "hills thick with tall oaks," "cluster of low-hanging vines," "dim light inside," "a figure suddenly loomed up," "touched by the devil," and "dusk." The children's fear of Mr. Vorhise's dogs and Auntie Drusilla also help create suspense. It is here that they come face-to-face with death for the first time.

**Overcoming fear:** Through the journey, George learns the results of a culture of racism: the revengeful burning of the Garrison home, the unjust treatment of the police, and the murder of Staple Garrison. Faced with the truth about his own father, George decides to do what is morally and ethically right. He encourages his Grandma to make a home for Elizabeth and her family even if it means risking their own lives. He also unselfishly contributes to Esther's

education. Even though George's actions don't change the outcomes, his actions reveal that he himself has changed. Readers may draw a parallel between what is in someone's heart and what is revealed by their actions.

**Monsters:** The real monster in this book is racism as personified through the actions of people like Mr. Vorhise, LeRoy McInnis, and the sheriff. The mysterious Auntie Drusilla is finally revealed as the "angel" that saved Grandma Tilly's life, not the "devil" that haunts the children's imaginations. When Grandma Tilly musters the courage to defy the times and protect her friend Elizabeth by giving her family a place to live, George recognizes the power of individual acts of kindness and generosity.

**The return home:** The return home is never easy. George must face his father's wrath once he returns home. The reader is left wondering if George will continue to live with his folks or return to Obadiah to live with his Grandmother. Like all coming-of-age stories, George's journey is transformative.

## 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 \$66 Summer*.

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 1950s? 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 \$66 Summer*? 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. Make sure you have specific examples to support your ideas.
4. Proofread carefully for spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

## HOW TO WRITE A BIO POEM

Line 1: The character's name

Line 2: Four adjectives that describe the person

Line 3: A relationship (i.e., Daughter of . . . , Student of . . . )

Line 4: Loves . . . (three things, ideas, people)

Line 5: Feels . . . (three feelings the character experienced)

Line 6: Needs . . . (three things the character wanted or needed)

Line 7: Gives . . . (three things or ideas)

Line 8: Fears . . . (three fears the character experienced)

Line 9: Would like to see . . . (three things the character wanted to see happen or wanted to experience)

Line 10: Resident of . . . (where the character lives)

Line 11: The character's name (You may choose first name on line 1 and last name on line 11 or nickname on line 1 and formal name on line 11)

## MOTIVATION CHART

<b>Desire or Goal</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Resulting Action</b>
George wants a motor scooter like his best friend's.	\$66.00	Works for his grandmother all summer.
Grandma Tilly wants George to spend the summer in Obadiah.	\$1.00	George agrees to go to Obadiah.
Esther wants to go to high school.	Room and board	Works three jobs.
Grandma Tilly wants to teach her grandson to tithe.	\$.60	George gives 10 percent of his earnings to the church.
Grandma Tilly wants to host a fish fry for the church's homecoming.	\$.05	Pays 5 cents for every fish.
Esther wants Bennett and George to help her find a treasure.	A reward for finding \$10,000.	George, Bennett, and Esther trespass and take fish from Mr. Vorhise's pond.
Winston wants to buy a car.	\$95.00	Winston steals the money from his employer.
Esther wants her mother's approval.	Her entire savings and her dream of going to high school.	Esther gives up going to high school to make her mother happy.

## *The \$66 Summer*

### Chapter 1-2 (pages 3-17)

Set in rural Alabama, this novel explores racism during the 1950s and the devastating effects of discrimination. 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 Alabama in 1955 before the Civil Rights Amendment.

**Journal Writing:** Think of a time when you felt you were being treated unfairly. Write about your feelings and how you dealt with the situation.

#### **Words and Phrases to Know:**

- **Cushman Eagle:** A small motor scooter popular in the 1950s (p. 4).
- **grits:** A common Southern side dish (p. 5).
- **high yellow:** A derogatory name for a light-skinned black person (p. 5).
- **as black as the ace of spades:** A cliché for a very dark-skinned African American (p. 9).
- **the lash of the rain:** rain driven by a strong wind that seems like a whip (p. 12).

**Mastery Word List:** The **context** of a word consists of the words that surround it. 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.

- **surge:** *The waves were **surging** higher now, lifting the bow of the boat and dropping it back into the water with a thud* (p. 11).
- **squall:** *Had a man get knocked down and drowned last summer when one of those quick **squalls** hit* (p. 8).

#### **Summary:**

In a matter-of-fact tone, George Harrison opens his story with an ominous revelation about a lie his father told that may have saved George's life but that killed something deep inside him (p. 11, paragraph 5). George's story takes us back to Mobile, Alabama, in 1955 to learn the truth about that lie.

One Saturday twelve-year-old George and his father go fishing as usual in Mobile Bay. George hints at owning his own motor scooter while his father gets drunk and tells George a dark story about a black man who was killed for drinking from a white family's water dipper. A squall suddenly flings them both into the bay where they are rescued by nearby fishermen. As George and his father leave the pier, the owner of the boat demands that George's father take responsibility for losing the rented boat. Instead, George's father speeds away mumbling that the boat owner ought to pay him for his lost gear.

Once home, George's parents fight about the boating accident. George's mother disapproves of George buying a motorcycle.

**Reading Check:**

1. What is a Cushman Eagle? (A motor scooter.)
2. Why is George's father upset with the waitress? (Although she's Black, she looks white.)
3. George's father tells George a story about a friend who killed a Black man. Why does the man kill him? (The Black man drank from the same dipper his family used.)
4. While fishing with his father, who pulled George out of the water when the boat capsized? (A fisherman.)
5. Why is George's mother so angry with his father? (She blames his drunkenness for the boating accident and thinks that he's an idiot to let George have a Harley.)

**Getting Involved with the Story:**

1. What clues does the author use to show you that the book is set in Alabama in 1955 before Civil Rights?
2. The first two paragraphs of this novel set a very serious tone. Based on these opening paragraphs, what do you predict we will learn from George's story?
3. In the opening chapters, George is determined to get a motor scooter of his own. How does his father react to his son's goal? His mother? Do you think his goal is realistic? Why or why not?
4. George's father tells George about a friend who killed a black man. What was the reason he gave for the killing? Why do you think George's father decided to tell George this story?
5. George's father shows that he is racist through his words and actions. Explain how his words in the following passages illustrate common stereotypes prevalent in the 1950s.
  - a. "... the people in the South won't stand for [Civil Rights.] It's not our way. It's not God's way" (p. 6).
  - b. "... there are still certain lines that Elizabeth won't cross. She knows her place" (p. 6).
  - c. "They [African Americans] just aren't responsible like white people" (p. 7).
  - d. "That's just the trouble with coloreds. They don't really want to work" (p. 11).

**What Would You Do?**

1. If a relative or friend expressed racist ideas like those expressed by George's father, what would you do?
2. What advice would you give George regarding his desire to buy a motorcycle?

**Activity:** Using the internet, find photographs of motor scooters from the 1950s.

## Chapter 3-4 (pages 18-34)

**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: "She was so shy she never said more than yessum and no'm" (p. 20). 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:** List all of the names you have been called, such as your formal names and nicknames given to you by others. Which name do you like the least? The best? Explain.

### Words and Phrases to Know:

- **chamber pot:** a ceramic pot used as a toilet. Many of the poorer neighborhoods and rural communities in the 1950s had no indoor plumbing (p. 29).
- **a stone's throw from her house:** as far away as one could throw a stone (p. 29).
- **blue plate special:** a hot meal served at a reduced price (p. 30).
- **Georgie Porgie:** a character in a nursery rhyme: "Georgie Porgie, pudding and pie/Kissed the girls and made them cry/When the boys came out to play/Georgie Porgie ran away" (p. 32).

### Word Master List:

- **callus:** (*n.*) skin toughened by use (p. 24)
- **hex:** (*n.*) superstitious spell (p. 25)
- **nepotism:** (*n.*) favoritism shown to relatives (p. 32)

### Summary:

George is invited to spend the summer in Obadiah working in his Grandma Tilly's store to earn money for his motor scooter. Also helping out in the store are Elizabeth Garrison, a Black woman whose husband Staples has mysteriously disappeared; her fourteen-year-old daughter Esther, who wants to earn money to attend the county's colored high school in the fall; and her youngest son Bennett, who also works for Mr. Vorhise, a surly neighbor who raises fighting dogs. On the first day, a former friend of George's father stops in the store, and George notices that his grandma's normally friendly tone of voice grows cold.

### Reading Check:

1. How much money will George earn for each day's work? (\$1.00)
2. According to Grandma Tilly, who saved George from drowning in Mobile Bay? (An angel.)
3. What does Grandma Tilly hire Mr. Vorhise, her unfriendly neighbor, to do? (Tend her cows.)
4. What happened to Esther and Bennett's father? (He disappeared mysteriously.)
5. What does Grandma call her pet dog? (Dog.)
6. Why does Esther want to save money? (To go to a colored county high school.)

### Getting Involved with the Story:

1. Describe Grandma Tilly. Do you think she is a good role model for George? Why or why not?
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. Monroe, George's father, doesn't call Grandma Tilly anything at all (p. 22).
  - b. Grandma Tilly hasn't named her dog, she just calls him "Dog" (p. 23).
  - c. Bennett calls his sister "Midnight Face" (p. 31).

- d. Esther calls George “Georgie Porgie” (p. 32).
  - e. Bennett and George call Esther “Queen Esther” (p. 32).
3. Why do you think George is so afraid of the rooster?

**What Would You Do?**

1. We have a window into two families: the Garrisons and the Harringtons. Describe these two families. What does *family* mean to you?
2. If people are unhappy with their family life, can they do anything to improve it? If so, what?

**Activity:** Make a list of the qualities that you especially like in your friends. What characteristics make your friends special or outstanding? Point out to students that these qualities are character traits.

## Chapters 5-6 (pages 35-49)

**Literary Element: Suspense** is the quality of a story that makes you want to keep reading until you learn how the events turn out. The word *suspense* comes from the Latin word meaning “uncertain.” You keep reading because you are uncertain about the outcome. Danger is another key ingredient in creating suspense. Danger does not always have to be a matter of life or death. It could be the danger of losing a friend or failing a test.

**Journal Writing:** If you were described as an object or animal, what would it be and why?

### Words or Phrases to Know:

- **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. 39).

### Mastery Word List:

- **contemptuous:** (*adj.*) showing scorn or disdain; showing a snobbish attitude (p. 41).
- **tether:** (*v.*) tie up with a rope (p. 43).
- **din:** (*n.*) loud, continuous noise (p. 47).

### Summary:

George learns what life is like for African Americans in rural Alabama from two stories Grandma Tilly tells him: one about LeRoy McInnis and Elizabeth and the other about Esther’s desire to go to high school. George and Bennett are fishing when Esther shows up to taunt them. George learns that Esther believes her father’s disappearance can be explained and she wants to find him.

By the end of Chapter 6, we have met all of the principle characters including Elizabeth’s son Winston and Mr. Vorhise. Winston is portrayed as someone who cannot be trusted. Mr. Vorhise teases George by suggesting that Dog fight his fighting dogs.

### Reading Check:

1. Why does Grandma Tilly dislike LeRoy McInnis? (He beat up Staples and got away with it.)
2. Which character was a straight A student, valedictorian, and basketball star? (Esther.)
3. According to Grandma, who saved her from a burning house when she was just a baby? (An angel.)
4. Who is Winston? (Elizabeth’s oldest son.)
5. Why does Elizabeth worry about Bennett working for Mr. Vorhise? (She’s afraid he may get hurt by the fighting dogs.)

### Getting Involved with the Story:

1. What did the sheriff do after learning that LeRoy McInnis and his friends beat up Staples? What do you learn about the laws in the 1950s?
2. Why must Esther earn money for high school? What do you learn about schools in the 1950s?
3. What images do you associate with angels? With snakes? Who is described as an angel? A rattlesnake? Do images like these help or hinder our understanding of others?
4. How does the author build suspense in these two chapters?

**What Would You Do?**

1. One of the ingredients of a good friendship is loyalty. George is often caught between befriending Bennett and showing respect for Bennett's sister Esther. What advice would you give George?
2. Do you know anyone personally or someone in the news that you would describe as an angel? A snake?
3. Young people are told to respect their elders, but George and Bennett are treated with contempt by Mr. Vorhise. What would you do if you were George?

**Activity:** Create a hand puppet for one of the characters using a small lunch bag. The puppet should convey what you have learned about the character's personality and background. When you are done, hang your puppet on a clothes line. See if your classmates can guess which character you have represented.

## Chapters 7-11 (pages 50-75)

### Literary Element:

A **flat character** is created around one dominant character trait. Identify the flat characters in this book. What is their single quality or character trait?

A **round character** is fully developed and shows many sides to his/her character. We discover more and more about round characters as the story progresses, just as we do as we get to know real people. Identify the round characters in this book. What qualities and traits do they possess?

**Journal Writing:** Describe the most important gift you have ever received. Who gave you the gift and what made it so special?

### Words or Phrases to Know:

- **squirreled it away:** saved it in a safe place (p. 51).
- ***Blackboard Jungle*:** the shocking and disturbing 1955 film about juvenile delinquency set in a multi-racial high school in New York City. It was banned in many cities probably because of its multi-racial content or the fear that it would spark violence (p. 62).

**Mastery Word List:** Sometimes an author will directly state the meaning of a word in its context. When Grandma Tilly says to George, “That’s your tithe. Ten percent,” the meaning of the word *tithe* is established within the text itself.

- **escapade:** (*n.*) a prank or reckless adventure (p. 51)
- **tithe:** (*v.*) one tenth of one’s income paid as a contribution to a church (p. 58)
- **serenity:** (*n.*) peacefulness (p. 72)

### Summary:

Esther enlists both Bennett and George in an escapade to find lost bank robbery money in a cave near Mr. Vorhise’s property, where they encounter Aunt Drusilla. At the end of George’s first work week, his grandmother gives him a \$.60 bonus for his tithe and slips it into a church collection envelope. George continues to be haunted by the appearances and disappearances of Aunt Drusilla.

Grandma Tilly presents George with his grandfather’s Barlow knife for his thirteenth birthday. She also treats him, Bennett, and Esther to the Saturday matinee of *Blackboard Jungle*. However, Bennett and Esther have to sit in the balcony, which is the colored section. On the way home, LeRoy McInnis taunts George for befriending Bennett and Esther. Before they arrive home, they are caught in a sudden rainstorm. Esther surprises George by proclaiming she is speaking to the Lord and then crumbling to the ground in distress.

The following week Grandma Tilly and George attend Mount Nebo Baptist Church, where the Garrisons attend, for the Esther Service. On the Sunday before the Fourth of July, everyone named Esther is invited to sit in the front of the church. During the loud and boisterous service, Esther goes into a deep trance-like state as if she has heard the voice of God. For the second time in a week, George wonders if God is speaking to Esther, and if he is, what he is saying.

### Reading Check:

1. Why did Esther, Bennett, and George visit the cave near Mr. Vorhise’s property? (They are looking for the money hidden by bank robbers related to Mr. Vorhise.)
2. Why does Grandma Tilly give George a 10 percent bonus at the end of the first week? (It’s his tithe for the church.)

3. What did Grandma give George for his thirteenth birthday? (His grandfather's knife and a matinee with Esther and Bennett.)
4. How can George, Esther, and Bennett earn extra money? (By catching fish for a fish fry.)

**Getting Involved with the Story:**

1. In what ways does Aunt Drusilla remind George of the rooster? Why is George so frightened of Aunt Drusilla?
2. Why did Esther try to convince George that her balcony seats were better than George's main floor seats? What does this tell you about her character?
3. Describe Esther's two encounters with the Lord. How are they similar?
4. One of the most menacing characters so far is LeRoy McInnis. Is he a flat or round character? Explain.
5. Based on the story so far, what do you think may have happened to Dog?

**What Would You Do?**

1. An *epithet* is a disparaging or abusive word about a person. When LeRoy McInnis calls out to George, he says, "I wish your father could see you now, boy." He uses the term *boy*, a term white folks commonly used to refer to an African American man to put him down. George simply ignores him. Do you think this is the right response when someone calls you a disparaging name? Why do you think people use epithets? What would you do if you overheard a classmate use an epithet?

**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.

## Chapters 12-16 (pages 76-102)

**Literary Element:** The **point of view** refers to the position from which a writer tells a story. The point of view in *The \$66 Summer* is called first-person narrative because the narrator is one of the characters in the book, George. All of the action and the characters are only seen through George's eyes. However, we, the readers, may understand more than he does.

**Journal Writing:** Imagine a situation where you have been caught doing something wrong and you are about to "face the music." Describe your feelings.

### Words or Phrases to Know:

- **barbed wire:** a wire fence twisted with sharp barbs that is commonly used to pen in farm animals (p. 85).

### Mastery Word List:

- **shroud:** (*v.*) to hide from view; cover; screen (p. 77).
- **dislodge:** (*v.*) to force out (p. 87).
- **summit:** (*n.*) the highest part (p. 91).

### Summary:

Grandma Tilly announces that she will pay Esther, Bennett, and George a nickel for every fish they catch for the church's fish fry in late August. Without any fanfare, Esther has now started calling George by name instead of Georgie Porgie. Grandma also allows Aunt Drusilla to pick up groceries at her store without paying.

After hearing about the eighty-five fish Winston and his friend Jonathan supposedly caught at Mr. Vorhise's pond, George, Bennett and Esther decide to risk the "lunatic" and Mr. Vorhise's wild dogs for more fish. After Grandma Tilly's pond becomes fished out, Esther persuades Bennett and George to go with her to Mr. Vorhise's pond.

They soon discover that the fishing hole is as productive as Winston claimed, and the "lunatic" is actually Jimmy, Mr. Vorhise's mentally handicapped son whom Esther befriends. After several days the fish stop biting. Esther prompts them into going to the other side of the pond near a cool pine grove. Jimmy becomes scared and runs home. Mr. Vorhise discovers their fishing hole and chases them off with his shotgun. George accidentally leaves his knife, goes back to find it with Esther's help, but discovers it is missing. Just as he reaches home, Grandma tells him he has a visitor, Mr. Vorhise.

### Comprehension Check:

1. How does Aunt Drusilla pay for her groceries? (She doesn't; however, Grandma claims she does.)
2. How does Grandma Tilly encourage her three young workers to earn more money? (She will give them a nickel for every fish they catch.)
3. Who becomes Esther's new friend? (Jimmy Vorhise.)
4. How many fish does Winston claim to have caught at Mr. Vorhise's pond? (Eighty-five.)
5. What causes Jimmy to become scared and go home crying? (Going near the pine grove.)

### Getting Involved with the Story:

1. Describe Aunt Drusilla. What do you think Grandma Tilly means when she says that Aunt Drusilla always pays for her groceries?

2. Vivid details help create atmosphere, a feeling a place awakens in the reader. What mood does the author create as he describes Mr. Vorhise's property with phrases like *thickets of brambles* and *the stream snaked back and forth*?
3. Since this story is told from George's point of view, we often learn about others through conversations. What do we learn about Mr. Vorhise and his son from Grandma Tilly?
4. As George tells his story, he refrains from judging others; yet, as readers we are free to do so. Which characters do you like the most? The least? Explain.
5. Why do you think Mr. Vorhise acted the way he did?

**What Would You Do?**

1. George knows that he has been caught trespassing on Mr. Vorhise's property and taking fish from his pond. Now that he is about to face Mr. Vorhise, what advice would you give him?

**Activity:** Aunt Drusilla is one of the most interesting and mysterious characters. (Think of as many details from the story that contribute to her character and place those details on the web.) Be sure to include the reactions other characters have to Aunt Drusilla. What purpose do you think Aunt Drusilla plays in this novel?

## Chapters 17-23 (pages 103-132)

**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:** Sometimes we learn something the hard way. Sometimes we realize too late that we have made a mistake, made the wrong decision, or made an error in judgment. Describe a time when you learned a lesson the hard way.

### Mastery Word List:

- **jaunty:** (*adj.*) carefree, having an easy-going attitude (p. 117).
- **tartly:** (*adv.*) with a cutting edge to one's voice (p. 131).
- **cynical:** (*adj.*) believing others are motivated only by self interests (p. 132).

### Summary:

After George apologizes to Mr. Vorhise, Mr. Vorhise returns the knife. The very next day Esther presents her case for going back to the pine grove to search for the robber's money. Barking dogs scare them off before they find anything except a piece of cloth and a tin can. While running, George catches a glimpse of Aunt Drusilla.

The next day Winston shows up driving a beat-up 1939 Dodge that cost him \$95.00 and takes Esther and his friend Jonathan for a ride only to end up in an accident. After Grandma Tilly and Elizabeth bring Winston and Esther home, Winston simply walks off without a word of thanks. Esther, who has only a few bruises, is angry with her brother because he could have ruined her chances of going to high school.

Before long, Mr. Mayes, the owner of the sawmill where Winston and Jonathan work, accuses Winston of stealing \$95.00. If the money isn't paid back, he will turn Winston over to the sheriff. That will mean he will go to prison. Elizabeth is distraught because she doesn't have enough money to rescue Winston. At the same time, everyone else agrees that it is about time that Winston pays for his own mistakes.

One day Elizabeth comes to work very happy because she has paid most of the \$95.00 back. George later learns that the money came from Esther's savings. He is perplexed by Esther's act of kindness, but she sets him straight. She says she did it for her mother, not Winston.

### Comprehension Check:

1. Why did Esther want to go back to the pine grove? (To search for the robber's missing money.)
2. Why was Esther so angry about the accident? (She may lose her chance to go to high school.)
3. Where did Winston get the \$95.00 to buy his car? (He stole it from his employer.)
4. What does Winston do after he gets home from the accident? (He walks off without a word.)
5. Whose money pays off Winston's debt? (Esther's.)

### Getting Involved with the Story:

1. How does Esther motivate George into going along with her scheme to go back to the pine grove?
2. Upon arriving at the hospital in Toshkey, a nearby town, everyone is ushered into the "colored waiting room" and Jonathan is taken to another hospital where there is a "colored unit." What other evidence of segregation have you encountered in this story?
3. Describe how Winston treats his mother.

4. This story is about telling the truth. What lies have family members told each other so far? What has happened as a result of these lies?
5. At the end of Chapter 21, George “had a sinking feeling that the rest of us were going to get sucked into [Winston’s] troubles.” What might this foreshadow?
6. Esther says her mother “sure don’t care about me.” Do you think that’s true?

**What Would You Do?**

1. If you were in Esther’s shoes, would you help Winston stay out of prison? Why or why not?
2. When people make mistakes, should they be given a warning or second chance? Why or why not? Are there any situations where you think a second chance is one chance too many?

**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.

## Chapters 24-28 (pages 133-156)

**Literary Element:** In stories as in life, people do things because they have reasons or motives for doing them. **Motivation** refers to the reasons behind actions. The word motivation contains the root *mot*, meaning to move. Motivation moves a person forward, causing him or her to do something, to pursue some goal. Another word with the root *mot* is emotion. A powerful emotion that causes a person to behave in certain ways can be a strong motivation.

**Journal Writing:** Who has made a difference in your life? How has he or she influenced you to be the best that you can be? Describe the importance of this individual in your life.

### Words or Phrases to Know:

- **ice box:** a refrigerator was once called an ice box because ice was used to keep food cool (p. 136).
- **five-and-dime:** store that sold inexpensive soft goods, much like a Wal-Mart or Target (p. 133).

**Mastery Word List:** Sometimes an unfamiliar word can be broken down into its word parts. For example, *expectantly*, the adverb, derives from the adjective *expectant*, which derives from the verb *expect*. If you know what *expect* means, you may be able to figure out the meaning of *expectantly*.

- **lulled:** (*v.*) to calm or soothe by a gentle sound or motion (p. 133).
- **expectantly:** (*adv.*) with anticipation (p. 146).
- **immense:** (*adj.*) extremely large, huge (p. 149).

### Summary:

George's mother is unable to come for a visit because she has taken a job at a five-and-dime. Esther distances herself from George and Bennett until the day she discovers that George accepted a job to help Mrs. Eastwood. Grandma Tilly tells George that the day Staple disappeared he had been raking leaves for Mrs. Eastwood. Esther asks George to ask Mrs. Eastwood questions about her father to see if he can learn anything of value.

George learns that Mr. Vorhise had stopped to talk to Staple that day. Esther figures out that her father must have gone to work for Mr. Vorhise, and the best person to reveal whether or not he had is Jimmy. She coaxes George into going with her to talk to Jimmy. Jimmy recognizes Staple from a photograph and calls him a "bad man."

While discussing what to do next, Bennett describes the "tin can" he saw at the pond as a "water dipper." At that moment, George puts it all together, and finally knows the fate of Staple Garrison.

### Comprehension Check:

1. Why don't George's mother and brother come to Obadiah for a visit? (She has gone to work at a five-and-dime.)
2. What is so significant about George working for Marigold Eastwood for a day? (She is the last known person to see Staple.)
3. What does Esther ask George to do while working for Mrs. Eastwood? (Asks her about Staple.)
4. What new information does George learn about Staple? (He talked to Mr. Vorhise on the day he never returned home.)
5. Who identifies Staple from a photograph? (Jimmy.)

**Getting Involved with the Story:**

1. George knows more than he reveals in this narrative. What does he suspect from his mother's phone call?
2. Why does George describe a phone call from Mrs. Eastwood as "the event that knocked the breath out of all of us"?
3. Why do you think Staple's disappearance wasn't given more attention?
4. Why do you think George went along with Esther's scheme once again even knowing he could get into trouble?
5. A *dynamic* character is one that changes as a result of the events in the story. Esther would be considered a dynamic character. How has she changed? What do you think has contributed to her changes? How has George's attitude toward Esther changed?

**What Would You Do?**

1. At the end of Chapter 28, George suddenly puts the whole story of Staple's disappearance together. Describe what happened on that fateful day. Now that George knows what happened to Staple, what do you think he should do?

**Activity:** Money is a topic of discussion from the very beginning of this story when George learns that he would need \$66.00 to buy a motor scooter. List the ways money has been used to motivate people into action. Create a chart listing the desire, the cost, and the resulting action. How does money motivate you and people in your life? (See the Motivation Chart as a model.)

## Chapters 29-34 (pages 157-183)

**Literary Elements:** 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 to create word pictures in the readers' minds.

**Journal Activity:** What is the most difficult decision you have ever made? Did anyone advise you? What feelings did you experience? What factors did you weigh before making your decision? What were the pros, the cons? In the end, do you think you made the right decision? Why or why not?

### Words or Phrases to Know:

- **honky-tonks:** a cheap, disreputable bar that plays loud country music (p. 175).

### Mastery Word List:

- **unbearable:** (*adj.*) too burdensome to suffer through (p. 163).
- **skepticism:** (*n.*) an attitude filled with seriously doubts or questions (p. 165).
- **furrowed:** (*v.*) deeply wrinkled (p. 180).
- **taut:** (*adj.*) very tight (p. 180).

### Summary:

George lies awake most of the night wondering whether or not to tell his friends what he knows about Staple's disappearance. During the night he peers out the window and sees Aunt Drusilla disappearing around the barn. The next morning he pumps Grandma Tilly for details about his father's relationship with Mr. Vorhise and learns that they knew each other and even hunted together as recently as a year ago. He finally tells his friends the story his father told him about a man being killed because of a water dipper, but he doesn't tell them that his father is the person who told him the story.

The night they go in search of Staple's body, it is raining and lightning. Although Mr. Vorhise is expected to be at a dog fight, he and his dogs are home. The dogs' barking brings Mr. Vorhise outside, and soon he is armed with his shotgun and heading toward them. George runs to the pine grove to find Bennett and Esther hovering over some bones. He practically drags Esther home as they narrowly escape.

Back at home, Esther reveals her father's belt buckle. Both Elizabeth and Grandma Tilly immediately recognize that the children have found the body of Staple. However, Grandma Tilly has less success convincing the sheriff, who obviously is not interested in finding the truth. In fact, George realizes that something is wrong when the sheriff mentions the pond before anyone has told him where they found the body.

George leads the sheriff, his deputy, Mr. Vorhise, and Grandma to the site where he, Esther, and Bennett found the bones and dipper. There is nothing there but loose dirt.

### Reading Check:

1. Who does George suspect may have killed Staple? (Vorhise.)
2. On what condition did Bennett agree to go back to the pine grove? (Vorhise and his dogs would not be home.)
3. What did Esther find at the pine grove (Her father's belt buckle and bones.)
4. When the sheriff mentions the pond, George knows something is wrong. Why is that? (Grandma did not tell the sheriff where they found the body.)
5. Why doesn't the sheriff consider the belt buckle adequate evidence that the bones belong to Staple? (He says the belt buckle is a dime a dozen.)

**Getting Involved with the Story:**

1. As George tells his friends about the man killed because of a water dipper, he feels immense shame. Why do you think he feels ashamed for something he himself didn't do?
2. Describe the night that George and his friends go back to the pine grove. This is not the first night when thunder rolled and lightning lit up the sky. What other nights were stormy? How does the weather add drama to these scenes?
3. *Figurative language* is one way an author conveys deep emotion. Describe the emotions George is feeling in this passage: "It was as if a tight net of razor-sharp hurting was enclosing me, squeezing me in" (p. 173).
4. What evidence do the children have that Mr. Vorhise has killed Staple? How does the sheriff dismiss each piece of evidence?

**What Would You Do?**

1. Civil Rights laws protect citizens from discrimination today. How did you react when you realized that the sheriff and his deputy were not going to help find out the truth about Staple's disappearance?
2. If you felt you were being treated unfairly, who would you turn to first?
3. Do you trust the police to help you if you were ever in trouble? Why or why not?

**Activity:** Write a bio poem about one of the characters. Share your poem with your classmates. You and your classmates may want to divide up the characters among you.

## Chapters 35-39 (pages 184-end)

**Literary Element:** The **plot** is the sequence of events in a story. In many stories, the events follow a pattern you can recognize. *The \$66 Summer* is a “coming-of-age novel” because the main character embarks on a transformative journey. The plot goes something like this: the main character leaves home, embarks on a quest that transports the hero into an unfamiliar world inhabited by dangerous elements, overcomes obstacles, and returns home a hero with a better understanding of self and society.

1. What was George’s initial quest? When did his quest change?
2. What dangerous elements did George face?
3. What obstacles including his own fears did he overcome?
4. What does George learn about the society he lives in? About himself?
5. How does he change?

**Journal Writing:** Think of the first time you met someone whom you know really well, such as a friend, a teacher or coach, a relative. Describe the day you met. What was your first impression? As you learned more about this person, how did your understanding of the person change?

### Words or Phrases to Know:

- **putting on airs:** pretending to be better than others (p. 205).
- **cottonmouth:** a water moccasin (snake) named for the whitish interior of its mouth (p. 206).
- **the mark of Cain:** a person’s sinful nature. According to the Book of Genesis, God rejected Cain's grain offering while accepting the animal offering of his brother Abel. Out of jealousy, Cain murdered his brother and was compelled by God to wander the earth as a fugitive. God marked Cain, the murderer, so that everyone would know him (p. 207).

### Mastery Word List:

- **scandalized** (*adj.*) shocked with moral outrage (p. 204).
- **assent** (*n.*) agreement (p. 207).
- **investment** (*n.*) money given with the expectation of some kind of benefit later on (p. 209).

### Summary:

After uncovering nothing but dirt at the pond, Grandma Tilly realizes that the sheriff and Mr. Vorhise have conspired to hide Staple’s body. She threatens to take an ad out in the local newspaper and Esther threatens to kill the sheriff. Later that day the Reverend Mann reminds Esther of the Biblical story of Esther and suggests that she leave punishment to God.

That evening, three men in a truck set fire to the Garrison home and then nearly run George, Bennett, and Esther off the road. Bennett rescues his mother from the flames. During the commotion, George once again notices the ghostly figure of Aunt Drusilla disappearing into the night just as the fire truck drives up. Reverend Mann warns Grandma that somebody is sending her a warning.

After returning from the hospital, George and Grandma agree that Elizabeth, Bennett, and Esther should stay with them, even though it would mean placing them all in danger. Meanwhile, Esther rakes through the debris and finds her father’s belt buckle.

At church Grandma Tilly asks the congregation not to think that she is putting on airs hiring Elizabeth’s family as her “live-in help.” On the last day of summer, Grandma gives an anonymous “investment” of \$100.00 to Esther for her schooling. This is the money George has saved as well as some from Grandma. On that same day, George discovers that Aunt Drusilla has Dog and she is the “angel” that once saved Grandma’s life.

**Comprehension Check:**

1. Why doesn't the sheriff allow Bennett to act as a witness in these events? (He's Black so he "don't count.")
2. The sheriff threatens to charge Esther and Bennett with a crime. What crime? (Trespassing.)
3. Where does Elizabeth seek refuge after her home burns down? (With Grandma Tilly.)
4. Who provides the money for Elizabeth to go to high school? (Grandma and George.)
5. Where does George find Dog? (With Aunt Drusilla.)

**Getting Involved with the Story:**

1. Why do you think George's father lied to the sheriff?
2. Reverend Mann suggests that the fire was a warning to Grandma Tilly. What is she being warned to do or not to do?
3. How do the Garrisons and Grandma conspire to make sure the folks of Obadiah think of them as "live-in help"? Why is it so important for them to be considered hired help rather than friends?
4. Throughout the book images of snakes and angels appear. When is the last time we hear about a snake? An angel?
5. What does George learn about the value of money? Why do you think John Armistead titled his book *The \$66 Summer*?
6. What purpose does the character of Aunt Drusilla serve in this story?
7. The real villain in this story is racism. How has George dealt a swift blow to racism?

**What Would You Do?**

1. At the end of the book, George will be going back to Mobile where he will face his father's wrath and perhaps a divorce. Before he leaves, his Grandma invites him to return if he chooses. We are left wondering if George will continue to live with his folks or return to Obadiah to live with his Grandmother. What would you do? Why?

**Activity:** Like George, we all face "monsters" in our lives. These monsters come in the shape of fears like the fear of failing or obstacles like the obstacle of learning another language. List the monsters you must overcome on your journey growing up. How can you overcome each monster in your life?