

Story Squares #2 for Grades 5-6

Multiple Learning Styles for Reading Comprehension

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Grades Five/Six

Crash

by Jerry Spinelli

Everybody knows the characters in this book from their own school experiences. Crash is the typical jock, bully, and best-at-everything braggart. Penn is the exact opposite – kind of wimpy, good-natured, and picked on for being himself. Sound familiar?

Crash and Penn meet each other at a very young age, and even though they are so young, Crash immediately decides that Penn is not good friend material. For the next seven years, Crash has two things on his mind: how to put Penn down, and being the best at sports – no matter what the cost.

As the story moves along, a new character enters. Scooter, Crash's grandfather, comes to live with his family. This happy occasion begins to show a softer side of Crash. Then the unthinkable happens. Scooter has a stroke, leaving him a shell of his former self. This life-changing event changes Crash in many ways, but most importantly he begins to see that there is more to life than being the best. His attitude toward winning and picking on those weaker than him completely changes by the end. He and Penn become head-to-head competitors in a final, heart-warming climax.

This book is recommended for fifth- and sixth-grade students, depending on their ability levels, as well as their levels of compassion. This is a terrific book for boys and girls, all of whom could learn important lessons from the characters.

The Cay

by Theodore Taylor

Phillip and his parents live on the island of Curacao in the 1940s. Germany has just invaded their island home, and Phillip's mother insists that he accompany her back to the safety of the United States. The freighter carrying Phillip and his mother is unexpectedly hit by a German torpedo. Phillip is not only separated from his mother, but awakens to find himself floating on a small raft with a cat and an old West Indian named Timothy.

An injury leaves Phillip blind and dependent on Timothy as they become castaways on a small island. Though Phillip fights it in the beginning, Timothy teaches him how to survive despite his blindness. Thanks to Timothy's wise teaching, Phillip is able to survive for months and is ultimately rescued and reunited with his parents.

This book is recommended for fifth- and sixth-grade students. Due to Timothy's dialect, struggling readers may benefit from small group or paired reading.

Crash

by Jerry Spinelli

Choose _____ from each square.

1

- 1 Penn does not have many toys. In fact, his prized possession is a jar of mud. How would you use his mud?
- 2 Make a list of all the button and poster slogans you find in the story. Explain for what each stands.
- 3 Scooter has a stroke during the story. What is a stroke, and how does it affect him?
- 4 Now that Crash's mom is only working part-time, how do you think this will change their family life? List 15 ways.
- 5 Write an imperative and interrogative sentence for each of the following terms: dinky, vegetarian, infantry, stampede, hazardous, scrumptious, Achilles, smirking.

2

- 1 Write two eight-line *triangle poems*, one for Penn and one for Crash.
- 2 Think of a time you felt like Penn or Crash. Write a journal entry about it. Be sure to explain why you felt like that character. Use ideas and details from the story to explain your thoughts.
- 3 Research the Penn Relays. Write a report on what you learned. Give an oral report to the class.
- 4 For most of the story, Crash is a bully. In a two-page essay, describe your feelings about bullies. Use examples from your own experiences and the story.
- 5 We are always taught to do our best at things. Why do you think Crash takes this to the extreme?

3

- 1 Make an illustrated, labeled timeline of the important events in Crash's life. Include at least ten events.
- 2 Crash keeps trying to impress Jane Forbes. Why do you think she chooses to befriend Penn instead?
- 3 Crash would never admit it, but he is a bit jealous of Penn. What of Penn's characteristics would he possibly want?
- 4 Create a *Venn diagram* comparing and contrasting Crash and Penn. Include at least seven items in each section.
- 5 Write a one- to two-page essay about the friendship between Crash and Deluca. Be sure to include how it changes throughout the story.

4

- 1 Create your own poster or button designed to stop the formation of the new mall.
- 2 Choose a chapter to act out with a partner. Write a script to hand in with your project.
- 3 If the story were to continue into eighth grade, how do you think the other students would react to the new friendship between Penn and Crash? Write an *epilogue* describing the situation.
- 4 Create a *diorama* of the backyard habitat Abby built. Use story details in your diorama.
- 5 Penn and his friends are trying to stop the building of a new mall. List ten realistic ways they could protest it.

The Cay

by Theodore Taylor

Choose _____ from each square.

1

- 1 Timothy's speech is hard to understand. Make a list of 20 words that Timothy says. Include each word's correct spelling.
- 2 How did Phillip's experience on the island change him?
- 3 Make a list of 15 adjectives from the story and the nouns they describe. Include the pages on which they are found.
- 4 Research at least six birds and/or sea creatures mentioned. Make a booklet telling about and showing each one.
- 5 Define the following words and use each in an interrogative sentence: cay, dike, ale, mutiny, ballast, distill, sextant, calypso, squall, torpedo.

2

- 1 If you were Phillip, would you have wanted to stay in Curacao or return to the United States? Explain your answer.
- 2 At the end of chapter four, Phillip is blind. Explain how you would feel if you were him. Would you blame anyone for your condition? Why or why not?
- 3 Keep a reading journal. At the end of each chapter, record your thoughts and feelings about what you have read.
- 4 Write three *acrostic poems* using the words Timothy, Phillip, and Devil's Mouth.
- 5 Timothy helped Phillip in countless ways. What were the five most important things he did for Phillip?

3

- 1 Pretend you are a newspaper reporter. Write an article about Phillip's rescue. Include an interview with Phillip.
- 2 Phillip and Timothy's relationship changes in chapter nine. What causes the change? What are its effects?
- 3 After reading the book, reread the dedication page. Explain how the dedication applies to this story.
- 4 At the end of the book, Phillip says Henrik vanBoven seems very young. Why is this?
- 5 Design a plan to help Timothy and Phillip get rescued from the island.

4

- 1 Using what you learned from the story, create a survival guide for someone stranded on an island.
- 2 Using descriptions from the story, create a map of the island. Be sure to include symbols and a map key.
- 3 Predict what Phillip's occupation will be when he grows up. Explain your prediction.
- 4 How would the story have changed if Phillip had never lost his eyesight?
- 5 Create a title for each of the book's 19 chapters.

Walk Two Moons

by Sharon Creech

Choose _____ from each square.

1

- 1 Make a timeline of important events in Phoebe's story. Include at least ten events and illustrations.
- 2 Make a list of ten character traits for a main character. Based on story details, explain why you believe each trait describes him or her.
- 3 Using context clues, write your own definition for each of the following words: elbowed, pandemonium, lunatic, anonymous, embedded, colossal, mournful, impulse, plunging, quizzical. Don't use a dictionary at first; you can check your definitions for accuracy after they're finished.
- 4 Find ten new words from the story other than the ones listed in number three. Write a riddle for each, with the new word being the answer. Be sure to give an answer key.
- 5 Find 15 different prepositional phrases in the story. Copy them and underline the preposition in each. List the page on which you found them.

2

- 1 Choose your favorite character from the story. Describe that character in one paragraph, and write another telling why that person is your favorite.
- 2 List five advantages and five disadvantages to taking a trip across the country with grandparents (or people who are like grandparents).
- 3 Write an eight-line *two-word poem* for any three characters in the story.
- 4 With a partner or small group, write a script and perform a favorite scene from the story.
- 5 Sal had to deal with her mother leaving without warning. Tell about a time when you thought somebody important to you was gone.

3

- 1 Compare and contrast Sal and Phoebe in a *Venn diagram*. Give at least seven details in each section.
- 2 Now that Phoebe has a new family member, what ten questions do you think she would ask him?
- 3 After every four chapters, write a one-page summary that details major plot developments.
- 4 In chapter 29, Sergeant Bickle reads four messages. What does each message mean to you?
- 5 Do you think Sal did a good job telling Phoebe's story? Explain why or why not.

4

- 1 Illustrate the scene that was the most important to you. Write a caption for your work.
- 2 If Mike did not turn out to be who he really is, what do you think would have happened? Write a new ending based on this idea.
- 3 How do you think Salamanca's life would have been different if her mother would have gone to California instead of Idaho? Write a new ending in which she travels to California.
- 4 Make a travel guide detailing all the places to which Sal traveled.
- 5 There are many life-changing events throughout this story. Choose one and create a *pyramid scene* and description for it.