

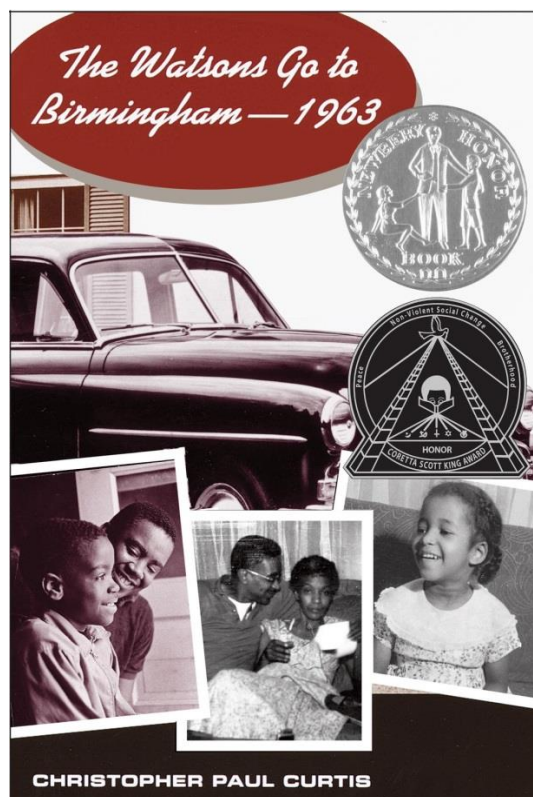
# *The Watsons Go To Birmingham - 1963*

**By Christopher Paul Curtis**

## **NOVEL PACKET**

*Name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Class:* \_\_\_\_\_



## *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Anticipation Guide

**Directions:** Rate the following statements before you read the story. After you have completed the novel, revisit the ratings again in light of the story.

Strongly Agree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6 Strongly Disagree

Before Reading...	<u>STATEMENT</u>	After Reading...
	1. All Americans have freedom.	
	2. One event can change your life.	
	3. You can judge a person based on the way they look.	
	4. In a loving family, family members should always agree.	
	5. Being an adult is easier than being a child.	
	6. Parents always know how to discipline their children correctly.	
	7. Older brothers and sisters should protect their younger siblings.	
	8. Serious family problems can be humorous.	
	9. The world is a fair and just place.	
	10. The decisions I make affect other people.	
	11. Birmingham, Alabama was a peaceful place in 1963.	
	12. People who look different than the majority are always less intelligent.	
	13. Sometimes it is okay to bully another individual.	
	14. Where you grow up influences your beliefs.	
	15. People who hurt others are always punished for their actions.	
	16. People are threatened by the unknown.	
	17. Not understanding a culture can be dangerous.	
	18. One event can change your entire life.	
	19. True heroes are those that see something is wrong and are not afraid to stand up and ask, "Why can't we change this?"	
	20. A secret should ALWAYS be kept.	

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 1 Guided Reading Questions  
Please answer in complete sentences.

1. Why is the Watson family huddled on the couch together?
2. How does Momma feel about Birmingham, Alabama? How does the reader know how Momma feels? How does Dad feel about Birmingham, Alabama? How does the reader know how Dad feels?
3. What is “The Brown Bomber”?
4. How does Byron get himself stuck to the car mirror? How do they separate Byron from the mirror?
5. How does Dad react to Byron being stuck? What does this reveal about his character?
6. How does Hambone Henderson try to discourage Wilona from marrying Mr. Watson? What do you think Mr. Watson thinks of Hambone? How can you tell?
7. What kind of relationship does Kenny have with his brother, Byron?

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 2 Guided Reading Questions

Please answer in complete sentences.

1. Who is Larry Dunn?
2. What grade is Kenny in?
3. Why do you think Kenny is afraid when he realizes that the reading he has been chosen to do will be for Byron's class? What happens after the reading that surprises Kenny?
4. Why does Mr. Alums believe it is vital for his students to be able to read well? (Page 23)
5. What do we learn about Kenny's physical appearance?
6. Generally, who prevents people from teasing Kenny in school?
7. According to Kenny, what is a "personal saver"? (Page 28) Why does Kenny believe that the new kid is his "personal saver"?
8. Describe the new kid and his little brother who both ride on Kenny's bus. What do they wear? How do they talk? What can we tell about their personalities?

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 3 Guided Reading Questions

Please answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe Rufus Fry.
2. Why doesn't Kenny want Rufus to sit next to him in school?
3. Why do you think Rufus and his brother, Cody, always eat Kenny's second sandwich during lunch?
4. Who is LJ Jones? Why do you think Kenny is friends with LJ, even though LJ isn't nice to him?
5. How does LJ trick Kenny at the end of *The World's Greatest Dinosaur War Ever*?
6. Kenny says that people stop teasing him and begin to target Rufus because there are two things wrong with him. What are these two things?
7. Why does Rufus stop hanging out with Kenny?
8. How does Kenny feel about what he did to Rufus?
9. What makes Rufus decide to hang out with Kenny again? Why does Kenny end up thinking that Rufus is a better friend than LJ?

***The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 4 Guided Reading Questions**  
**Please answer in complete sentences**

1. What does Byron remind Kenny of when he complains about having to take care of Joetta?
2. What does Byron tell Joetta in order to make her stop whining about the amount of clothes she has to wear outside?
3. What is special about Kenny's gloves?
4. What trick does Kenny pull on Momma in order to help Rufus? How does his plan backfire?
5. Who does Kenny believe stole his pair of leather gloves?
6. What does Byron try to get Kenny to do to Larry?
7. Why does Kenny regret telling Byron about the stolen gloves?
8. What kind of relationship does Kenny have with Joetta? Provide examples of things that happen between them that show their relationship.
9. Why do you think Byron stops Larry Dunn from giving Kenny a "Super Maytag" when Byron often plays similar tricks on Kenny himself?
10. How does the author make the reader sympathize with Larry Dunn?

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 5 Guided Reading Questions

Please answer in complete sentences.

1. Why is Momma so sensitive to the idea of Byron playing with matches?
2. How do you think Joetta and Kenny feel when Momma tells them to get matches so that she can burn Byron? Why?
3. Why didn't Byron run away when Kenny told him to?
4. Even though he feels bad for Byron, Kenny thinks he deserves to be punished. Why?
5. What is Joetta told that makes her think that Momma does have to burn Byron?
6. Do you think Momma's punishment would have been a fair consequence for Byron's actions? Why or why not?
7. Why do you think Mrs. Watson speaks "Southern-style" when she gets angry?

***The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 6 Guided Reading Questions**  
**Please answer in complete sentences.**

1. Why do you think Byron was in such a good mood on the walk home from the store?
2. Why does Kenny claim he can't tell on Byron for signing for the cookies?
3. How did Byron ruin the perfect day?
4. What is Byron's reaction to the bird he killed? How does the author show that Byron is not as tough as he pretends to be?
5. What does his reaction reveal about his character?
6. Does Kenny think he understands Byron by the end of the chapter?



*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 7 Guided Reading Questions

**Please answer in complete sentences.**

1. On page 87, Kenny realizes that Momma is angry when he says “Uh-oh.” How does he know Momma is not happy?
2. What does Byron decide to do that upsets Momma?
3. How does Joetta react when she sees Byron’s hair and thinks about what might happen to him?
4. How does Kenny react to the situation? How does this differ from Joetta’s reaction?
5. Does Byron think about what might happen to him before he makes a decision?
6. What is the consequence to Byron’s decision? Do you think it was fair?
7. Why do you think Momma and Dad call Grandma Sands at the end of the chapter?

***The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 8 Guided Reading Questions**

**Please answer in complete sentences.**

1. Why do you think Kenny is so eager to have a real mustache like his dad's?
2. Why do the Watsons think sending Byron to Alabama will help him to behave better? Do you think it will work?
3. What is an ultra-glide? Draw an advertisement below for one. Use the entire space and be sure to add color!

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 9 Guided Reading Questions

Please answer in complete sentences.

1. According to Dad, why does Byron have to go to Alabama?
2. What has been on the news lately? What were the “Negro kids” trying to do?
3. What does Byron have to be ready for?
4. Does Kenny think Momma and Dad are good parents for sending Byron to Alabama? Why does he think so?
5. What does Dad claim being a grownup is like?
6. What gift does Mrs. Davidson give to Joetta? How come Joetta doesn’t like the gift?
7. Why does Byron have to sleep in his parent’s room on his last night in Flint?
8. In what cities do the Watsons plan on stopping in order to sleep?
9. Why can’t the Watsons just drive until they are tired and find a place to sleep wherever they are?
10. What is Byron’s plan for payback during the car ride? Does he stick to his plan?

***The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 10 Guided Reading Questions**  
**Please answer in complete sentences.**

1. What is different between Michigan toilets and Ohio toilets?
2. What plan of Dad's does Kenny overhear?
3. What is Kenny referring to when he sees "the scariest things" he's ever seen? Describe them.
4. What is different about the sky in Tennessee as compared to Michigan?
5. What does Byron believe "the rednecks" could do to them?
6. Describe what the Watson family is doing when Dad says, "I think we've got our fingers in God's beard and as we drive along we're tickling him."
7. Why does Kenny ask for a second serving of Kool-Aid, even though it tastes bad to him?

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 11 Guided Reading Questions

Please answer in complete sentences.

1. How is Birmingham like Flint? How is it different?
2. How did Dad make the family go to sleep?
3. What does Kenny think Birmingham looks like?
4. What did Kenny expect Grandma Sands to look like?
5. What does Grandma Sands really look like?
6. What does Joey do when she meets Grandma Sands?
7. How does Byron act when he meets Grandma Sands? What reason does Byron give for the way he acts?
8. Who do you think Mr. Robert is?

***The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 12 Guided Reading Questions**  
**Please answer in complete sentences.**

1. What is the temperature like in Birmingham?
2. How did Mr. Robert save his dog's life?
3. According to Kenny, how are Grandma Sands and Byron alike?
4. Does Byron seem to like Birmingham? Explain your answer with evidence from the book.
5. How does Mrs. Watson act differently when she is with her mother in Alabama compared with how she acts at home in Flint?

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 13 Guided Reading Questions

**Please answer in complete sentences.**

1. What happened a couple years ago at Collier's Landing?
2. Byron decides that Grandma Sands said that the "Wool Pooh" got Miss Thomas' son at Collier's Landing. What word did Grandma Sands really say?
3. What kind of humor is this?
4. What does Byron claim the Wool Pooh does?
5. How has Byron changed since he left Flint? Does he seem to think about the decisions he makes? Why do you think he has changed so suddenly?
6. Why does Kenny think it is okay to swim at Collier's Landing?
7. Who does Kenny first see in the water with him?
8. Who saves Kenny from the Wool Pooh?
9. How does Byron feel after he saves Kenny? How does he act?

***The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 14 Guided Reading Questions**

**Please answer in complete sentences.**

1. Where do the neighbors take Joetta on Sunday?
2. What was Joetta wearing when she left?
3. What was the noise that Kenny and the neighborhood heard?
4. What is the only thing Kenny can think about after Byron tells him the news on page 183?
5. What things does Kenny see when he arrives at the church? How does the author describe the scene at the church, after it has been bombed?
6. What does Kenny see pulling the other end of the shoe that he reaches for? Why do you think that is?
7. When Kenny leaves the church, where does he go?
8. Whose shoe does Kenny think he took from the rubble?
9. What does Kenny think is happening when he shows up at his room?
10. Why did Joetta leave the church? Who saved her?



***The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* Chapter 15 Guided Reading Questions**

**Please answer in complete sentences.**

1. Why does Byron spend so much time with Kenny when they come back to Flint?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why does Kenny start going to the World-Famous Watson Pet Hospital so often?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How does Byron help Kenny to feel better at the end of the book?

## ***AFTER READING***

### **Thinking about the CHARACTERS:**

1. How does Kenny's life change in the book?
2. Describe Byron's transformation in **Birmingham**.
3. What are some other important family relationships in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*?
4. How does the author, Christopher Paul Curtis, let the reader know that Kenny is not all good and that Byron is not all bad?
5. Compare Kenny and Byron's transformation from the beginning of the book to the end of the book.

### **Thinking about the THEME:**

GRIEF:

HUMOR:

FRIENDSHIP:

GROWING UP:

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS:

RACISM, PREJUDICE, & DISCRIMINATION:

5. What do you think is the most important theme of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*? Use the text to cite evidence of your choice of theme(s) of the book.