

Sixth Grade Summer Reading for Language Arts:

Everything here is **OPTIONAL!**

If you feel like you need help with reading and understanding your summer reading book, **you may do any of the following:**

Keep a Journal

While you are reading, you may want to keep a journal. After you read 25 pages or so, you can write a summary of what you read and also write about any ideas, predictions, analysis, or connections you have about the story.

Answer General Questions

While you read, think about the following questions, or answer them in writing if you wish:

What is the setting of the story? How does the setting affect the characters? How would the story be different if it were set in a different place and time? Remember, the setting is the time and location of a story.

Who are the main characters? Describe them. What are they like? Consider appearance, background, actions, emotions, and personality. How do you know what they are like?

How do the characters change through the story? What and who causes them to change?

What are the major events of the story?

What do you think are the themes of the novel? A theme is a moral, message, or meaning.

How does the type of narration (first person, third person) contribute to your appreciation of the novel? How would the book be different if the type of narration changed?

Answer Questions About Your Chosen Book While You Are Reading It or After You Have Completed It.

Some questions for *Chasing Vermeer*

1. What is art? What makes a piece of art valuable? Does it have to be tangible? Can anyone create it?
2. Which events in the story seem like coincidences but come together at the end to help solve the mystery?
3. What events from the story are classic parts of a mystery: the crime, clues, motive, alibi, red herring, etc.?
4. What is the importance of patterns in the story, especially the use of pentominoes?
5. Towards the end of the novel, Calder and Petra get separated while saving the painting. If you were Petra, would you have left Calder on the slide? If you would

stay, how would you save the painting? If you would leave, would you have made the same choices as Petra?

6. There are plans for a movie version of *Chasing Vermeer*. What scenes from the book are essential and must be included? What elements do you think the studio could save money and time by leaving out?

7. Calder carries around a set of Pentominoes and even dresses like an “F” for Halloween. Use the Internet to learn more about pentominoes. You can also play pentominoes online.

8. Petra was named after a famous city. Visit *Petra: City of Stone* at the Natural History Museum in NYC. <http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/petra/>

9. Petra found a book in the giveaway bin. She read a few paragraphs and noticed that the author discussed the raining of creatures from the sky (page 42). She notices the author is Charles Fort and the book is called *Lo!* You can find the *Lo!* on the Internet but it is very hard to decipher. Read the article *Raining Cats and Dogs and Fish and Frogs...* to find out more about this weird phenomenon. <http://www.wormwoodchronicles.com>

10. While looking for something Calder thought might be art, he uncovered a box his grandmother had given him. On the front of the box was a famous painting by Vermeer called *The Geographer*. You will visit two websites to learn more about this painting. Be ready to discuss what you have learned.

<http://www.mystudios.com/vermeer/27/vermeer-geographer.html> ,

11. Ms. Hussey was talking to her class and mentioned the 1990 art theft at the Isabella Stewart Gardner in Boston. Go to this website and hear an interview with the producer of a new documentary called [Stolen: The Search for the Lost Vermeer](#).

12. In the letter (page 108), the art thief says that only twenty six of the works attributed to Vermeer are actually his. He goes on to say the “real” Vermeers were done between 1656 and 1669. Take a look at all the Vermeers and decide why you think the thief thought that.

<http://essentialvermeer.20m.com/>

Some questions for *Flush*

1. What is Noah’s family like? How are Noah’s parents “polar opposites”?

2. Abbey thinks her mom can’t figure out how to fix her dad: What does Donna want to fix in Paine?

3. Compare and contrast Noah and Abbey’s personalities. Discuss how their differences make them a good team.

4. Explain Noah’s statement, “I wanted things to be different at home, for mom’s sake, but I sure didn’t want Dad to make himself into a whole different person.”

5. What are the characteristics of a bully?

6. How has Dusty Muleman managed to bully both the sheriff and members of the Coast Guard?

7. Name and describe other bullies in the novel.
8. What is the best way to deal with a bully?
9. Why does Noah keep his problems with Jasper, Jr., from his parents?
10. Noah's father says "fighting is for people who can't win with their brains." (p. 38) How does Noah defeat Jasper, Jr., and Dusty by using his brain?
11. Paine Underwood takes on politicians, the police, and the Coast Guard to protect the environment. He is so committed to his cause that he is willing to involve his family. Discuss how causes usually require sacrifice. How does Paine almost sacrifice his family for his cause?
12. What would the citizens of the Keys sacrifice if Dusty Muleman hadn't been stopped?
13. What has Grandpa Bobby sacrificed for his cause?
14. Noah and Abbey have learned courage from their father. What is courageous about Operation Royal Flush?
15. Donna Underwood isn't thrilled with her husband's actions. Does she lack courage, or is just tired of bailing him out of jail?
16. How does Shelly show courage when she asks Dusty for her job back as a bartender on the *Coral Queen*?
17. Paine says, "I'm not a common criminal. I know right from wrong." (p. 3) Ask students if they think he's right, and if so, why is he in jail?
18. Explain Shelly's meaning when she tells Noah, "Please don't grow up to be one of those men who lie for the sport of it." (p. 31)
19. Grandpa Bobby describes Paine as a good man, "but sometimes his brain takes a nap and lets his heart take the tiller." (p. 209) How do Noah and Abbey use their hearts and their brains to expose Dusty?

Some Questions for *Bud, Not Buddy*

1. Notice the author's unique style of writing. Discuss some things that make the style unique.
2. Bud says that his eyes don't cry anymore. Why do you think his eyes don't cry?
3. Why do you think Bud's mom saved the flyers that Bud keeps in his suitcase?
4. What makes Bud so self-conscious and protective of his name? What is special about his name?
5. What does Mrs. Amos mean when she says, "I do not have time to put up with the foolishness of those members of our race who do not want to be uplifted" (page 15)?

6. What was your impression of the Amos family, through Bud's description? What impression did they have on Bud?
7. Why do you think Bud has devised a set of rules to live by? How does Bud use his list of rules to help him through difficult situations? 6. Why is the suitcase so important to Bud? If you were Bud, what items would you put in your suitcase? Why?
8. Describe the relationship between Bugs and Bud. Why do you think Bugs was so important to Bud? What made the two alike, and why?
9. Talk about the significance of Bud's experiences at Hooverville. What did Bud remember most about that stop, and why? What do you think the Hooverville community resembled to Bud?
10. There are many references to seeds being planted or sprouted in the book. What do you think is the significance of these references?
11. How does Bud feel towards "Herman E. Calloway" in his first encounter with him? How does he feel towards him after the alarming news? Do his feelings change?
12. Who is Bud's favorite band member, and why do you think that is?
13. Does the ending of the story seem believable? Why or why not?
14. Why do you think Christopher Paul Curtis included an Afterword? Do you think the information in the Afterword adds to your understanding of the characters and events in the novel? Why, or why not?
15. According to Curtis, why is it important to talk to older relatives and friends and "keep their stories alive"? Do you agree with Curtis?

Some interesting websites related to the history of the book.

Pullman Porter Museum site

<http://www.aphiliprandolphmuseum.com/>

Smithsonian Institution Music History

<http://www.si.edu/resource/faq/nmah/music.htm>

Smithsonian Site on Jazz

<http://www.si.edu/ajazzh/>

Library of Congress resource on African American cultural history

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aopart8b.html>

African Americans during the Great Depression

<http://mtungsten.freesevers.com/>