

If I Just Had Two Wings

By Virginia Frances Schwartz



These words may not be familiar to your students:

overseer	auction	indigo	conductor
raspy	cotton boll	pantry	curtseyed
cellar	wincing	safe stations	stalking
quilt	skeins	spellbound	burrowed
musky	reed	flinch	scouting
hush puppies	manure	coverlets	slumber
parchment paper	disguises	ebony	
entwined	stowaways	toiling	

Synopsis

CHAPTERS 1-3

Thirteen-year-old Phoebe, a house-slave in Alabama, has been moved from the house to the cotton fields to work because the cotton came up too fast and too early. Liney, a nineteen-year-old field worker, seems more mature and more secretive than the others. Liney has two children, Sarah, age six, and Beth, age four. The daily conditions of being a slave are discussed. Jake, Dinah's sixteen-year-old son, was sold off to a neighbour's plantation. Phoebe's older sister, Rachel, has run off and Phoebe's mother warns her to stay away from Liney, as Liney is nothing but trouble. Despite the warning, Phoebe accepts Liney's offer to take a nap under a tree during work hours, as Liney could pick cotton extremely fast and the group always made their quota by the end of the day because of Liney's abilities. Phoebe is daydreaming and has freedom on her mind as

Old Willie has told her many tales about the wonders of freedom. Phoebe dreams she can fly.

CHAPTERS 4–6

Phoebe overhears that the master is going to sell Liney without her babies, Sarah and Beth. Phoebe tells Liney, and she makes the decision to run, but tells no one. Phoebe's parents tell her about how Rachel ran off on the Underground Railroad. They explain some of the techniques and signals used to keep the escapees safe from detection, such as songs with hidden messages and the use of conductors. She learns that the Underground Railroad goes north to Canada. At noon the next day, Liney is returned, as a load on a horse's back, with hounds barking at her heels. She has been beaten within an inch of her life and it is not clear whether she will recover. Phoebe is instructed not to visit Liney while she is recovering. However, Phoebe decides the least she can do for Liney is to look after Sarah and Beth.

CHAPTERS 7–9

Phoebe is determined that she is going to learn to pick cotton as fast as Liney so that she can become strong. She becomes so skilled that she is able to offer other slaves, like Emmett, resting time. Phoebe begins to understand why her mother doesn't want her associating with Liney: it is because Phoebe may learn information about the Underground Railroad and want to run off. Phoebe decides to go speak to Old Willie to learn more about the Underground Railroad. Phoebe believes that Old Willie hasn't got much time to live. Old Willie tells her the password, "I'm lost," to which the response is "You are found." At last, Liney is well enough to return to the cotton field. She appears quite worn and scarred. All that night, death was in the air and the next morning Old Willie is dead. His funeral is late at night and Old Willie finds his freedom in death.

CHAPTERS 10–12

Liney is getting ready to run again from the plantation, this time with her children, and she hopes Phoebe will come. One night Phoebe hears "Whooping" and remembers that Old Willie told her that was the call that the slaves waited for. Was it an owl or a conductor? It turns out Old Willie told Liney everything he knew about the Underground Railroad. He told her she would make it next time she ran. Liney recruits Phoebe to run with her and the

children when it is learned that Phoebe may be sold off at auction the next week. Liney tells Phoebe not to say a word about their plans to anyone. The only thing Phoebe has to pack is the cornhusk doll given to her by Old Willie, but she decides to leave it with her parents as a memento. Phoebe and Liney think the hounds were after them, but learn during a close call that it was Jake's scent they were following as he ran off at the same time. They make it to the first station down by the river. Liney, Phoebe, and the children are given a change of clothes, food, and information to further their journey. They are told to hide in the cellar until it is safe to continue the journey.

CHAPTERS 13–15

They are elated when they meet up with Jake who is also hiding in the cellar. Jake, Liney, and Phoebe discuss their hopes and dreams of freedom before they go to sleep. Jake tells the story of how his father interfered when his mother was being beaten by an overseer. That resulted in his father being beaten and hanged. They decide to invite Jake to join them. When they leave, Phoebe and Liney are disguised as young boys. They all get into a hidden compartment in a wagon that is carrying supplies north to Montgomery. Along the route there are a number of checkpoints manned by soldiers. A soldier checks the wagon by putting the spear of his gun through the flaps. Jake's thigh is cut during the search. They make it past Montgomery and are now looking for the next stop, which is the mapmaker's at Elmore. He lives deep in the woods.

CHAPTERS 16–18

The mapmaker cooks a hot meal of stew and draws a map of the route and rivers that lead to Canada. They have to memorize the map because he erases it from the ground. He tells them they have to rely on each other's memory and he quizzes them to make sure they know everything. At their next rest spot they share what's left of their food with an old man. The old man turns out to be a traitor. Phoebe has a dream of four people walking on and on, as all around them tiny flecks of snow fall from grey skies. That night, as she looks up at the sky, she sees the North Star. Phoebe keeps one thought in mind: soon they would be safe. They hear the slave catchers and hounds at their heels and hide in the swamp. They continue their journey to freedom and when they think they are lost, Jake follows his instinct and they proceed north.

CHAPTERS 19–21

Finally they land on a riverboat on the Ohio River and hide out as bags of potatoes in the bottom of the boat. Phoebe wakes up to hear the conductor say the secret word, "Sunrise." He points out the directions to Ripley Station. He says there is plenty more to tell but there is no time left. As the conductor throws the sacks off the boat, they hit the ground with a thump. Beth is hungry and they can go on no more. Phoebe decides to go with Jake and knock on the door at Ripley Station to ask for food. The Widow Rankins opens the door and tells them, "Praise the Lord, you have made it half way to Canada." They discover that Rachel might have been at Ripley Station. Washed, fed, and with clean clothes, they all sleep peacefully through the night. Mrs. Rankins gives them woolen jackets and they continue on their journey. An old white farmer catches three of them and wants to turn them in for the reward. Jake saves the day by jumping down from the loft and killing the farmer.

CHAPTERS 22–24

They hear slave catchers outside their daytime hideout. Suddenly, Jake runs out yelling as a decoy in order to save the other four. They are separated from Jake, and Phoebe and Liney finally reach the Scioto River. Beth, the baby, almost dies, and once again they are almost caught by a slave catcher. Union soldiers force them out of the river and direct them to Patterson's Station. Beth is very ill and is medicated by Patterson. They are temporarily safe, are fed, and get some rest.

CHAPTERS 25–28

They finally arrive at Alum Creek, where Mr. Benedict, the conductor, was arrested. Mrs. Benedict gives them food and directs them to a barn at the end of the road because she fears for her own safety. They don't know where to go, or how to continue their journey from here; they fear they are lost. Phoebe's dreams continue and a Black figure appears and points them in the right direction. Mrs. Benedict sends Quaker John Goodman to the barn. He carries Liney, Phoebe, and the children in his wagon to Sunrise, or the port of Sandusky. They meet Reynolds, a free Black man of Cherokee descent, who is Dr. Tilden's assistant and a conductor. He hides the runaways in the barn until the ship sails at midnight. They are walking down the dark street with Dr. Tilden when Liney becomes frightened and does not want to board the boat. Finally, Liney gets on the boat. Investigators board the boat and Dr. Tilden lies; they believe his story. Jake, Phoebe, and family are reunited.

They arrive at Point Pelee on Christmas Eve. They recall that the mapmaker told them they would be in Canada for Christmas. Dr. Tilden points to a grove, tells them to keep walking or they will get frostbite. They arrive in Chatham, Ontario, where former slaves house them. They celebrate and give thanks.

Language

Junior/Intermediate

Word Bookmark (Line Master 7)

Have students use the words noted above on the activity sheet and add 20 words to the list that students selected from the novel.

Novel Assignment

Have students do the Novel Assignment, using Independent Reading Guide (Line Master 8).

Do any combination of the following projects to a value of 35 marks or more.

Project	Value	Mark
A cover design (other than the one on the book) related to the story's plot (8½" × 10")	5	
An advertisement that might appear in the newspaper or on the radio urging people to buy the book	5	
A collage that illustrates the main events in the story (8½" × 10")	5	
A personality sketch of the main character or characters (four characteristics minimum, with proof from the novel)	8	
Compose a short-answer quiz on the story (10 questions minimum) with answers.	8	
Make a labelled plot graph indicating the events in the story.	10	
Give a two-sentence explanation of the title's relationship to the story.	2	
Compose another suitable title for the book and give your reason.	2	
Write a paragraph summary of the best part.	5	
Copy the words of a poem or song that is related to the story; give a two-sentence minimum explanation of the relationship between the story and song.	8	
Draw a sketch of at least two settings and one character.	10	
Write an imaginary interview with the main character questioning her/him about an important decision she/he made (1 page).	10	
Rewrite the ending of an important scene (1 page).	10	

Research

Find a slave/gospel song that has a hidden message of freedom.

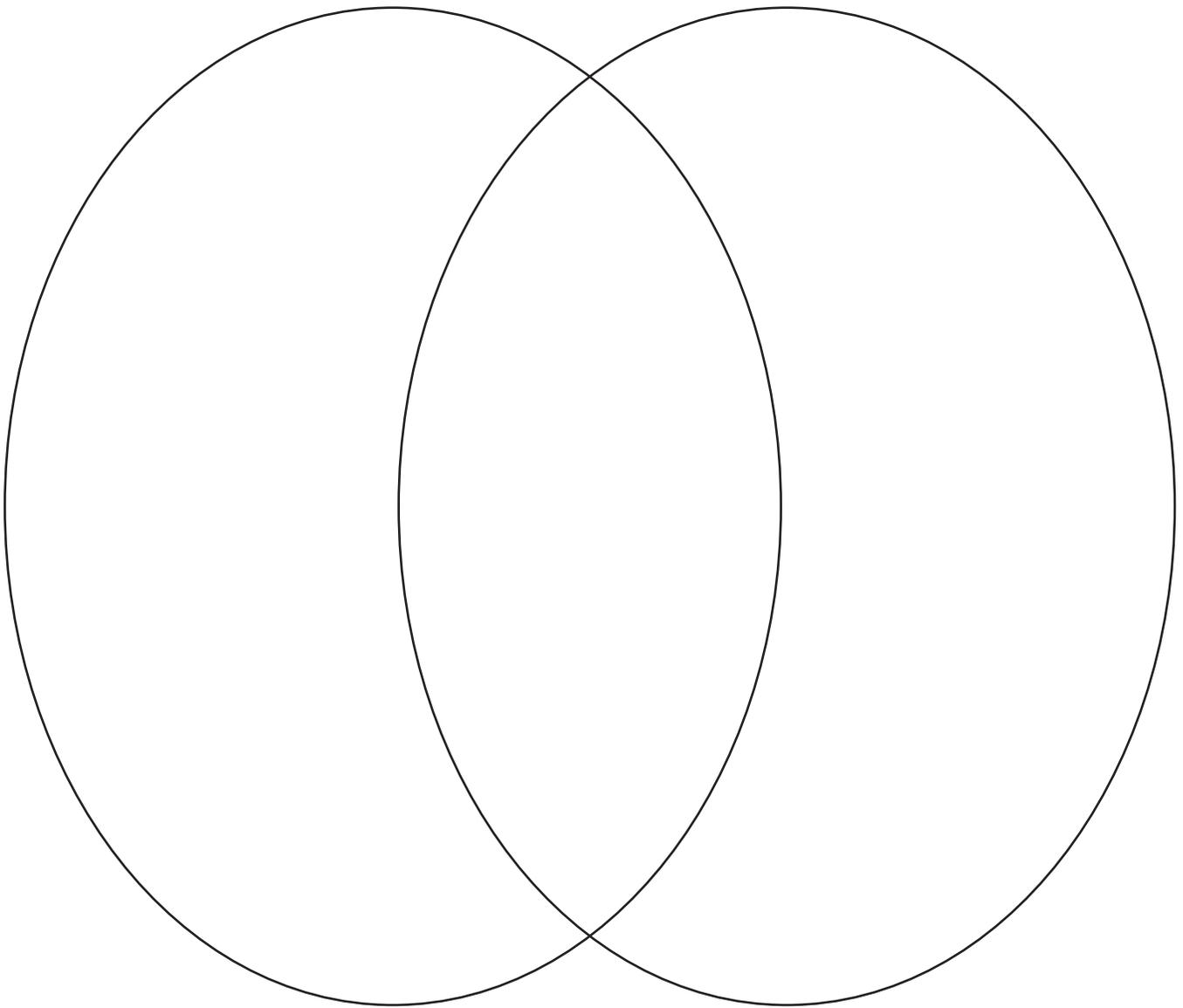
Research the relationship between Black people and Aboriginal peoples and the role they played with escaping slaves.

LM 1 Venn Diagram for Character Comparison

Using the Venn diagram below, compare two different characters or one character at different times. The diagram will help you organize similarities and differences.

Character

Character



LM 2

Story Pyramid

One good way for a reader to respond to a book is by making a Story Pyramid. Think about the book you have just read. To complete each line of the pyramid, follow the directions given below.

Title: _____

- Line 1** Write the name of the main character.
- Line 2** Write two words describing the main character.
- Line 3** Write three words describing the setting.
- Line 4** Write four words stating the story problem.
- Line 5** Write five words describing one event in the story.
- Line 6** Write six words describing a second event.
- Line 7** Write seven words describing a third event.
- Line 8** Write eight words describing the solution to the problem.

LM 3

Tableau Assignment

A tableau is a frozen "picture" created by the students. These pictures represent an event, idea, or feeling from the novel. Creating a tableau is meant to encourage discussion and reflection. Through the use of body position, posture, and expression the group members can "reflect" on a moment from the novel. Students are directed to use all the space (low, medium, and high space) within the performance area. Each tableau should contain one main focal point so that the audience knows where to look and is not distracted by competing points of focus.

One further element to the tableau exercise is "thought-tracking," which is a device used by the leader of a drama session to gain further insight into a tableau. When the leader taps individuals in a tableau on the shoulder, they speak the character's thoughts out loud.

Tableau Rubric

Student Name

Components	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Planning and Cooperation	The group has difficulty planning due to lack of cooperation skills and inattention on the part of some members.	Problem solving is challenging. Roles are not defined or accepted. One or two members do most of the work.	Group works together and roles are shared.	Group works together effectively and roles are shared equitably. New ideas are embraced and all group members feel valued. Leaders grow by sharing leadership roles.
Delivery Skills	Opening and closing are vague and leave the audience confused. Performance is partially audible and expression does not match emotion.	Opening and closing are defined. Most voices are clear and contain appropriate expression.	Opening and closing are well presented. Voices are generally clear and contain appropriate expression.	Clear and strong opening and closing. All voices are concentrating and expressive. Eye contact is made. There is always a congruency between affect and facial expression.
Tableau Skills	There is no focal point to the tableau. Body language and expression are not used effectively. Backs are facing the audience. Playful energy and risk-taking are not evident.	More than one focal point. Performers do not use all three levels of space: high, middle and low. Performances are usually open to the audience. Playful energy and risk-taking are rarely seen. Use of props and costumes are unimaginative.	One focal point for the audience. Most levels of space are occupied and staging choices match content. Performers are open to the audience. Playful energy and risk-taking are sometimes evident. Some creative use of props and costumes.	One clear focal point for the audience. Staging choices match content. Low, middle and high levels of space are used. Performers are always open to the audience. Playful energy and risk-taking are evident. Creative use of props and costumes.

LM 3 (continued)

Tableau Assignment

Student Comment:

Student Worksheet Tableau Assignment

My Group Members:

My assigned chapter is:

Most interesting scene:

My activity and emotions:

Position, facial expressions:

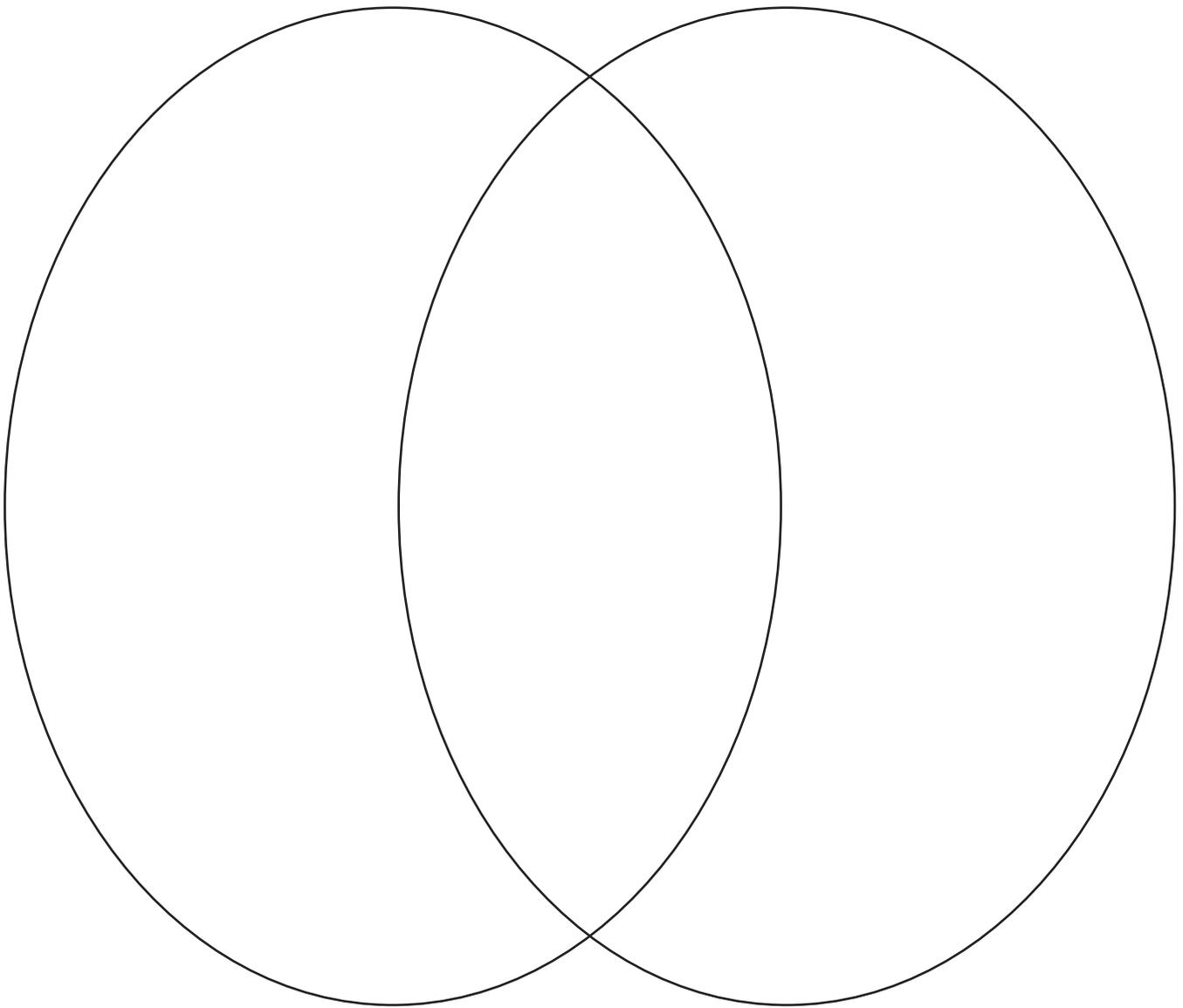
In point form, write down the three most important things you want your audience to know about your character, how your character feels at this moment in time, and the emotional response to the scene you want the audience to experience:



LM 4

Character Comparison Part I: Character Analysis

Select 2 characters from the novel for comparison. Use the Venn diagram below to help organize the similarities and differences between these 2 characters.



LM 5

Character Comparison Part II: Writing a Comparison Essay

Using the information that you collected in part I of this exercise, write a comparison essay about your two characters. Use the following outline to help organize your essay.

Paragraph 1

Introduce the two characters that you wish to compare

Paragraph 2

Write a detailed description of character A

Paragraph 3

Write a detailed description of character B

Paragraph 4

Outline similarities and striking differences between characters A and B

Paragraph 5

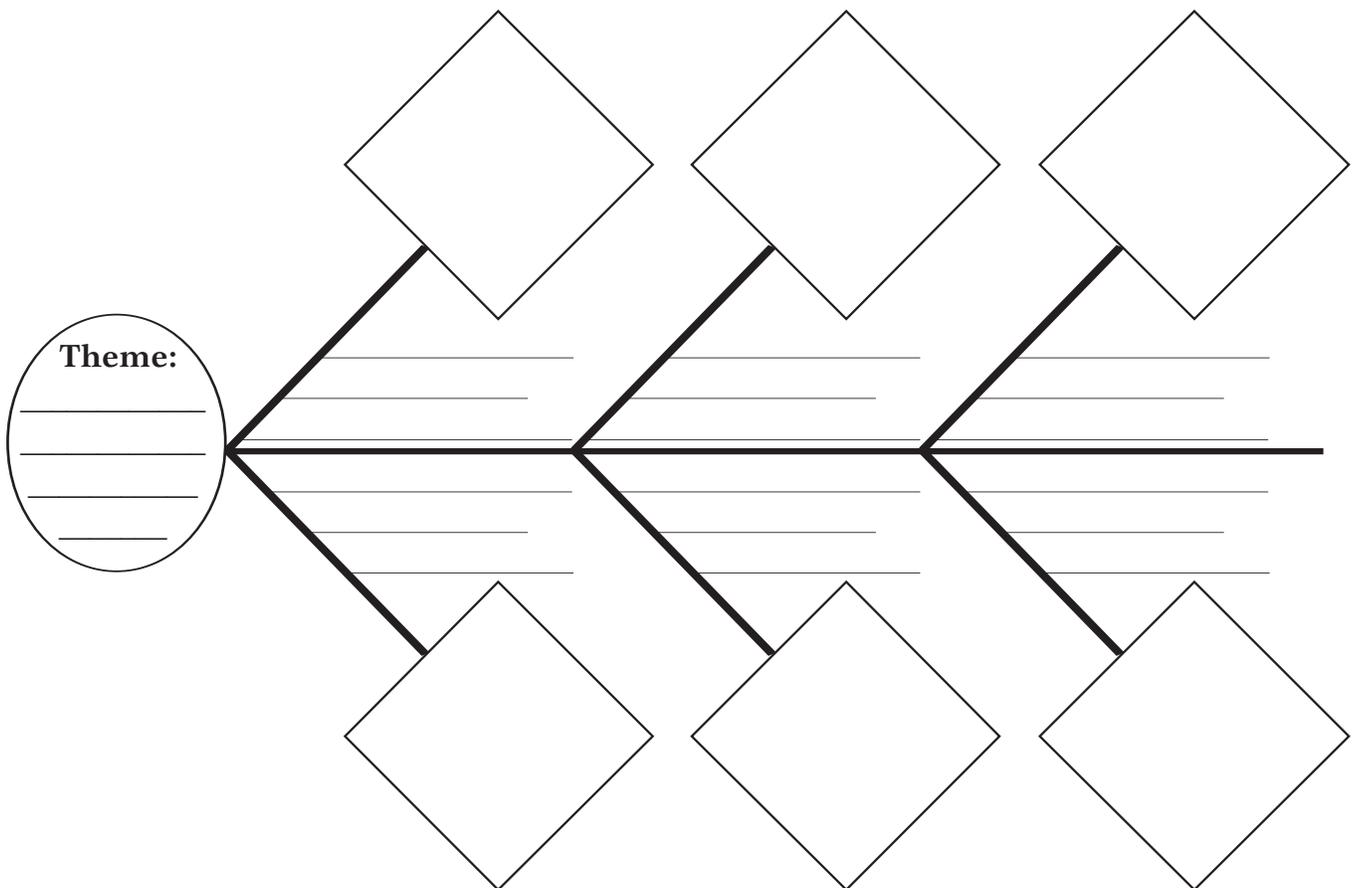
Write a conclusion that sums up the two characters you have compared. Include at least one of the following:

- Which character would you most like to meet and why?
- In what ways have these characters made the book interesting for you?
- Relate a personal experience. How should these characters react to this experience?

LM 6 Fishbone Organizer: Exploring a Theme

A Fishbone organizer helps explore complex issues or themes in a text. It is often used to solve problems or identify and organize various factors pertaining to a topic. In the diamonds, note key words that apply to the theme or issue that you are considering. On the horizontal lines, list specific references from the novel you are reading.

Title: _____

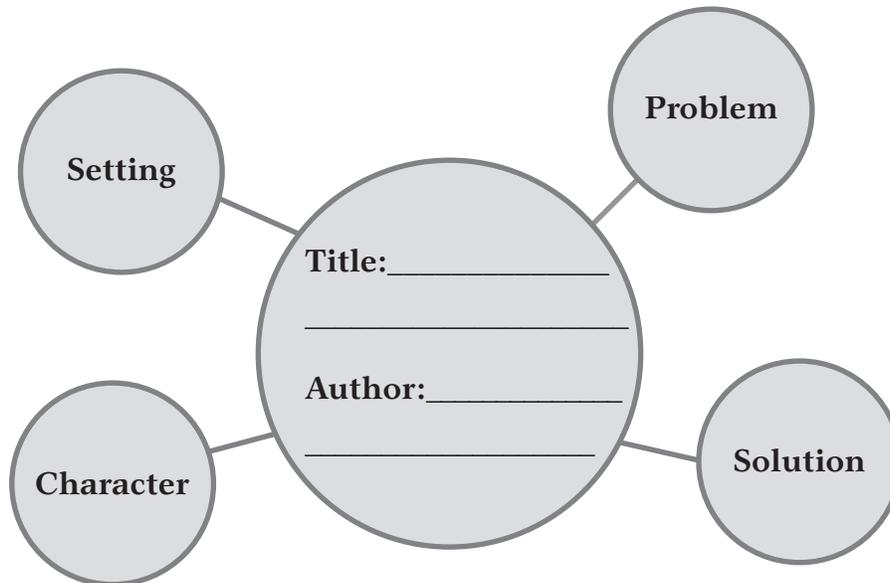


LM 8

Independent Reading Guide

Title: _____ Author: _____

1. Draw this web on a sheet of notebook paper. Use the web to help you think about the book as you read.



2. Respond to the book by completing two of the activities in this list.

- Imagine that you are introducing the main character to a friend. Tell about the character's family life, challenges, personality, and feelings. In your notebook, write the introduction that you would make.
- Draw the setting for an important scene in the book. Label details in the scene. Title your drawing and identify the page numbers of the scene you have chosen.
- Write about a problem that the characters faced. Explain how you would handle the same problem. Tell why you would have acted the same way as the characters or why you would have acted differently.
- Identify three objects of some significance to the main character—for example, a puck for a hockey player—and find items to represent them. Think about how these objects connect to the character and make notes. Using the objects as prompts, talk to a classmate about the character.

LM 10

Making Decisions Web

We all have to make difficult decisions. Whenever we have a serious decision to make, the best thing to do is to look at the choices and the consequences of each possible action. Using the web organizer below, help a character weigh alternatives.

In each rectangle, write one possible action that your character might take. In the ovals around each rectangle, write two possible consequences for each.

Character: _____

