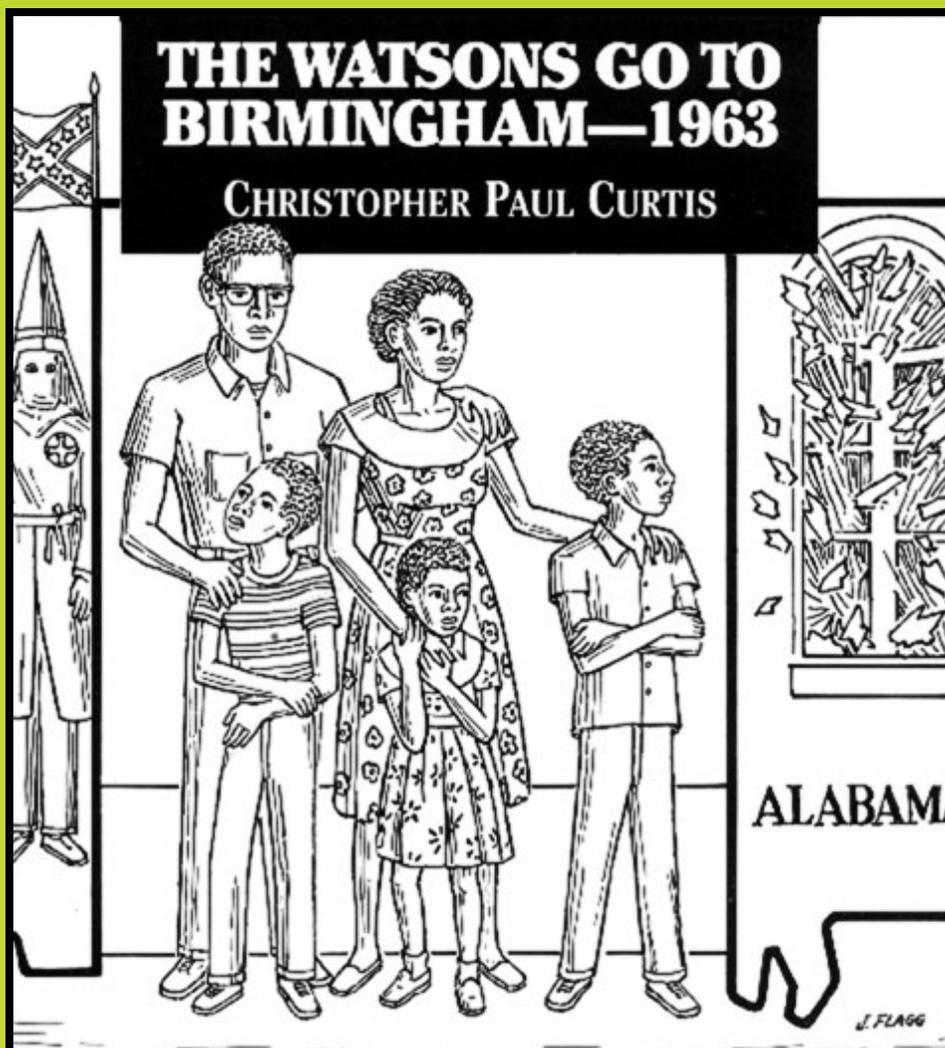


# Novel·Ties



## A Study Guide

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**LEARNING LINKS**

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## For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide to use in conjunction with the book *The Watsons Go to Birmingham–1963* consists of lessons for guided reading. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different novel at its reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for reading development by distributing the novel and a folder to each student. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading a chapter; all other work should be done after the chapter has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging student's love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits formed by practice in focusing on interpretive comprehension and literary techniques will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

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## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Preview the book by reading the title and the author’s name and by looking at the illustration on the cover. What do you think *The Watsons Go to Birmingham–1963* will be about? When and where do you think it takes place?
2. Read the dedication at the beginning of the novel. What do you learn about the author’s family? What does the author mean by his parents’ gifts of “roots” and “wings”? Do you agree that both are important? Then read *In memory of*, which also appears at the beginning of the book. Do some research to find out why the four girls who were memorialized all died on the same day.
3. **Social Studies Connection:** Read the Background Information on page two of this study guide and do some additional research on the Civil Rights Movement. Then make a time line showing the dates of important events. Display your time line on a bulletin board.
4. **Social Studies Connection:** Using your research on the Civil Rights Movement, write a list of questions you have about that time. Then use your questions to interview members of your family and neighbors who may have been active in the Movement or who remember the late 1950s and the 1960s. Present the results of your interviews in an oral report to your class.
5. This novel deals with the subject of racial prejudice. In a small group, discuss the meaning of the word “prejudice.” List books you have read or TV programs you have seen that dealt with the subject of racial prejudice. How does prejudice come about? Are there any groups of people in your school or community who are victims of prejudice? What can you do to address this problem and assure fair treatment for everyone?
6. **Literature Connection:** Early in this novel you will read about Langston Hughes. Do some research to learn about the life of Langston Hughes and why he was an important writer. Then locate a book of his writings and choose a selection to read aloud to your class.
7. **Social Studies/Geography Connection:** On a map of the United States, locate Flint, Michigan and Birmingham, Alabama. Determine the distance by car between these two cities and figure out how long a ride it would be. As you read the book, trace the family’s journey on a map.
8. Do you have any brothers or sisters? If so, has your relationship with your sibling(s) always been more or less the same, or has it changed over time? Do you think your relationship will be the same two years from now? Why do you feel this way?
9. What is a bully? How would you characterize bullying behavior? What options do you have when dealing with a bully? Do you think adults should intervene when a child has a problem with a bully? What is your responsibility when you observe someone being victimized by a bully?

## Chapters 1 – 3 (cont.)

### Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you think the Watsons would have considered themselves poor?
2. Do you think Momma should have such fond memories of Birmingham?
3. Do you agree with Kenny that being very smart in school can create enemies?
4. Why do you think so many boys in school teased Kenny as well as the new boy and his brother?
5. Do you think Momma was a good judge of character?
6. What lesson do you think Kenny learned from Rufus?

### Literary Devices:

- I. *Hook*—In literature, a hook is an interesting first sentence or paragraph in a novel that grabs the reader’s attention at the beginning of the book. Reread the first paragraph of *The Watson Go to Birmingham—1963*. How does this hook draw you into the novel?

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- II. *Allusion*—An allusion is a reference to a famous historical, mythological, religious, or literary person or event.

In Greek mythology, Narcissus was a handsome young man who was doomed because he fell in love with his own reflection. When Byron was frozen to the car mirror, Joey said it reminded her of the story of “Nar-sissy.” How does this allusion add to your understanding of Byron’s character?

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- III. *Metaphor*—A metaphor is a suggested comparison between two unlike objects. For example:

She [Momma] always blamed him [Dad] for bringing her all the way from Alabama to Michigan, a state she called a giant icebox.

What is Michigan being compared to? \_\_\_\_\_

What does this metaphor reveal about Momma’s feelings?

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