

Sample Pages from

Objective Tests
with
Thinking and Writing Prompts
for

The House of Dies Drear

By Virginia Hamilton



A Teaching Pack

by Margaret Whisnant

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The House of Dies Drear

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Chapter 1

Pages 1-14



Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. When he had the nightmare about the giant trees and the man with white hair and red eyes, Thomas was (A) in a camping tent, (B) riding in his father's car, (C) in his own bed.
- _____ 2. The man in the dream warned Thomas to (A) stay back, (B) forget what he had seen, (C) keep his thoughts to himself.
- _____ 3. Thomas Small was (A) thirteen, (B) fifteen, (C) sixteen.
- _____ 4. Thomas and his family were leaving (A) a new home they had just bought, (B) the town where Papa had worked for ten years, (C) an old house and folks who were mostly relatives.
- _____ 5. When Thomas's father asked her to move with them, Great-grandmother Jeffers (A) cried, (B) said she would consider it, (C) laughed.
- _____ 6. Great-grandmother planned to roast chicory because she believed it would (A) ward off calamity for the family on their journey, (B) bring great riches to Thomas and his family, (C) make Thomas's dreams come true.
- _____ 7. Thomas and his family were moving from (A) Atlanta, Georgia, (B) the mountains of North Carolina, (C) a Virginia mining town.
- _____ 8. Thomas and his family were moving to (A) Ohio, (B) Michigan, (C) Illinois.
- _____ 9. Since morning, Mr. Small had been driving in (A) snow, (B) fog, (C) rain.
- _____ 10. The family was making its move in the month of (A) June, (B) December, (C) March.
- _____ 11. The house where Thomas's family would be living had been (A) an important station on the Underground Railroad, (B) an army headquarters in the Civil War, (C) owned by the nation's first black college president.
- _____ 12. The old house where the family would live was located (A) in a small town, (B) on a rise in a kind of wilderness near a small town, (C) on the edge of a large town.

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Chapter 2

Pages 15-28

Write either **True** or **False** in the blank before each statement.

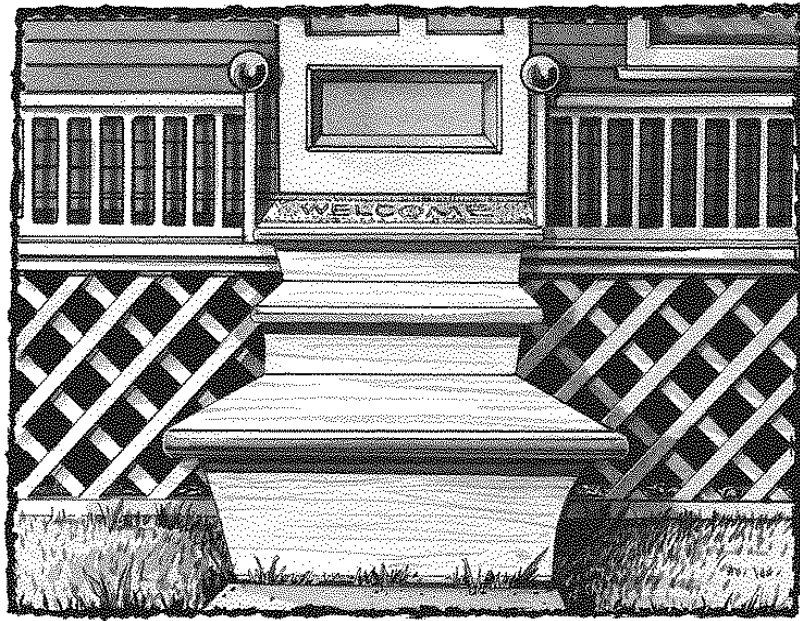
- _____ 1. When he saw the sign that indicated they had left North Carolina and had entered Virginia, Thomas thought to himself, "That's done with."
- _____ 2. Thomas's father hadn't been interested in the story of the Underground Railroad until he read about the house for rent in Ohio.
- _____ 3. Dies Drear was a poor Canadian farmer who dedicated his life to helping slaves who has escaped into freedom.
- _____ 4. It was Dies Drear who conceived the idea of sending escaped slaves back into the South with large sums of money to help other slaves escape.
- _____ 5. When Dies Drear had lived in it, the Ohio house had overflowed with fine antiques, but it had been plundered after its owner's death.
- _____ 6. People had disliked Dies Drear so much they had refused to call his name.
- _____ 7. Dies Drear was murdered the same week three slaves he had hidden for a time were captured by bounty hunters on their way south.
- _____ 8. Thomas's father had allowed him to read the report about the house from the local historical foundation.
- _____ 9. The foundation report made light of the legend that the house was haunted by two slave ghosts and the ghost of Dies Drear.
- _____ 10. Thomas was terrified at the thought of moving into the Ohio house because, deep down, he believed in ghosts, and he was certain he would not be able to avoid the ones that haunted the house.
- _____ 11. Mr. Small was not aware that Thomas knew about the ghosts.
- _____ 12. During the last one hundred years, no one had lived in the house for more than three months at a time.
- _____ 13. Mr. Small had rented the house of Dies Drear during the first trip he made to Ohio.
- _____ 14. Mr. Small said all old houses had ghost legends, and they were all poppycock.
- _____ 15. Mr. Small hoped some day to buy the Dies Drear house.
- _____ 16. Thomas thought his father was hiding information about the two slaves who were killed by the bounty hunters and about the murder of Dies Drear.
- _____ 17. Thomas's mother had never seen the house of Dies Drear, but Thomas knew she didn't like it at all.

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Chapter 4

Pages 47-60



Write either **Yes** or **No** in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. Were there two children, a small girl and an older boy, riding on the huge black horse that came around the corner of the house?
- _____ 2. Was the girl wearing a raggedy dress and old tennis shoes?
- _____ 3. Did the boy and girl wave and talk to Thomas as they circled the lawn with the horse?
- _____ 4. Did the boy and Pesty talk about the hole under the steps and Mr. Pluto and his tunnels as if Thomas wasn't there?
- _____ 5. When Pesty said that Mr. Pluto had let her walk in the hole under the steps, did the boy warn her not to get too close to Mr. Pluto or he might make her disappear?
- _____ 6. Were Pesty and the boy brother and sister?
- _____ 7. Were the children visibly frightened when Thomas told them his family would be living in the house and Mr. Pluto would be working for them?
- _____ 8. Did Thomas tell the children to get off his father's property, and then refuse the boy's offer to help him explore the hole under the steps?
- _____ 9. Did the boy say Mr. Pluto was the keeper of the fire and that Pesty was the keeper's helper?
- _____ 10. Did the boy tell Thomas his name?
- _____ 11. Did Mac Darrow push Thomas into the hole?

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Whole Book Test

Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. Thomas's father was (A) an engineer, (B) a teacher, (C) a writer.
- _____ 2. The house of Dies Drear was located in (A) the mountains of Virginia, (B) Tennessee, (C) Ohio.
- _____ 3. Thomas's family moved from the mountains of (A) North Carolina, (B) Virginia, (C) Tennessee.
- _____ 4. Thomas knew that the house of Dies Drear had a reputation for being (A) the oldest house in town, (B) a showplace of history, (C) haunted.
- _____ 5. Which member of the family was invited but refused to move with the family? (A) Thomas's grandmother, (B) Thomas's older brother, (C) Mr. Small's father.
- _____ 6. What was special about the day the family moved? (A) It was snowing. (B) It was Thomas's birthday. (C) Thomas had just graduated from elementary school.
- _____ 7. What time of year was it when the family moved to the new house? (A) Thanksgiving, (B) Easter, (C) July.
- _____ 8. The house of Dies Drear had been (A) a prison during the Civil War, (B) owned by freed slaves, (C) a stopping place on the underground railroad.
- _____ 9. Fleeing slaves sometimes went willingly back into slavery to (A) help others escape, (B) help fight in the Civil War, (C) help organize slave revolts.



- _____ 10. What happened to Dies Drear and two slaves he had hidden? (A) They lived in the house like hermits long after the war was over. (B) The two slaves were caught and killed by bounty hunters, and Dies Drear was murdered the same week. (C) They escaped to Canada where they kept the legend of Dies Drear and the house alive.

Something to Think About . . . Something to Write About . . . (Chapter-by-Chapter)

Chapter 1

Thomas's father had asked Great-grandmother Jeffers to move with the family, but she had refused.

- What facts prove that Thomas and Great-grandmother Jeffers liked each other?
- Why do you suppose Great-grandmother Jeffers laughed at the idea of moving with Thomas and his family?

The frightening man in Thomas's dream had warned him to stay back.

- Why would Thomas have such a dream? Was he afraid of something?
- Think about how Thomas behaved when he awoke from his nightmare. Which word do you think *best* describes Thomas's reaction to the dream—*logical*, *irrational*, or *terrified*? Explain your choice.

Great-grandmother Jeffers planned to roast chicory to ward off calamity and keep Thomas's family safe on their journey.

- What is chicory? How is it useful to people?
- Great-grandmother's notion that roasting chicory to keep the family safe is an example of a superstition. What are some superstitions that you are familiar with? Explain how you know about them. Have some of them been passed from one generation of your family to another?
- What is your favorite superstition? Explain why you think it's interesting.

The author wrote that the family was traveling in the rain on the *Blue Ridge Mountain Highway*.

- Is there such a highway?
- Research and write five facts about the *Blue Ridge Parkway*

Thomas had been living in the mountains of North Carolina in an old house. He was familiar with the forest and with being alone. Most of the families with boys his age had already moved away North. He tried not to think about his old home, telling himself it would be fun living in a big house in Ohio.

- How do you know that Thomas had an *optimistic* and *adventuresome* outlook?
- Find story clues to prove that Thomas was *imaginative*.
- What things about the old house in Ohio intrigued Thomas? Which bit of information do you find most interesting? Explain.

Thomas's father had taught Civil War history in North Carolina, and he would be teaching it in Ohio in the town where they were going to live.

- Which member(s) of Thomas's family seemed to be the most excited and pleased about the move to Ohio? Add details to support your choice.
- Which family member was the least enthusiastic? Explain your choice.
- Predict how Thomas's father, Thomas's mother, and Thomas will react when they finally see the house.

Something to Think About . . .
Something to Write About . . .
(Whole Book)

Use the following questions and facts to identify the general location and a possible name for the town where Thomas's family made its new home.

- Find three facts from the story to prove that Thomas's family had moved to a small town that had been around for a long time.
 - Which parts of Ohio meet the geological descriptions of the area around the house of Dies Drear?
 - Mr. Small mentioned that the high school Thomas would be attending was on Highway 68. There is a Highway 68 in Ohio. Where is it?
 - The area where the house of Dies Drear was located was called the Miami Valley. Like Highway 68, the Miami Valley does exist in Ohio. Where is it?
 - Mayhew told Mr. Small and Thomas that they might have to go all the way to Columbus to buy theater supplies. Find Columbus on a map of Ohio.
 - Using the data you have collected, make a list of several small towns that could be the Small family's new home.
 - From your list, choose one as the specific town. Explain your choice. (For example, is there a college in the town?)
-

Thomas moved with his family from a home that he loved to a new state, a town full of strangers, and an old house said to be haunted. The journey began on his thirteenth birthday.

- Cite evidence from the story to prove that Thomas Small was (1) *imaginative* (2) *inquisitive* (3) *analytical* (4) *resilient* (5) *amiable*
 - Add one more word of your own to describe Thomas Small. Find evidence in the story to support your choice.
 - Use Thomas's personality traits to make a list of five possible professions that he might pursue as an adult. Explain how some aspect(s) of his nature and temperament would be appropriate for each one. Do you predict that he will follow in his father's footsteps? Explain your thinking.
 - When he grows into a man, where do you think Thomas will choose to live? Add details to your answer.
-

Old Pluto thought of the Dies Drear treasure as his *legacy*.

- What is a *legacy*? Does the word's definition apply to Mr. Pluto and the treasure in the cavern? Explain your answer.
 - Does a legacy always come in the form of *valuable things*? What other types of legacies exist?
 - What do you think of as your legacy?
-

Imagine that Thomas wrote a letter to his great-grandmother after his first week at his new school. What did he say?
