

Sample Pages from

Objective Tests
Thinking/Writing Prompts
and
Answer Keys

for

The Westing Game

By Ellen Raskin

1979 Newbery Medal Winner



A Teaching Pack

By Margaret Whisnant

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Table of Contents

Objective Tests

1. <i>Sunset Towers</i> — 2. <i>Ghosts or Worse</i>	Pages 1-3
3. <i>Tenants In and Out</i>	Pages 4-5
4. <i>The Corpse Found</i>	Pages 6-7
5. <i>Sixteen Heirs</i> —6. <i>The Westing Will</i>	Pages 8-9
7. <i>The Westing Game</i>	Pages 10-11
8. <i>The Paired Heirs</i>	Pages 12-13
9. <i>Lost and Found</i> — 10. <i>The Long Party</i>	Pages 14-15
11. <i>The Meeting</i> — 12. <i>The First Bomb</i>	Pages 16-17
13. <i>The Second Bomb</i>	Pages 18-19
14. <i>Pairs Repaired</i>	Pages 20-21
15. <i>Fact and Gossip</i> — 16. <i>The Third Bomb</i>	Pages 22-23
17. <i>Some Solutions</i> — 18. <i>The Trackers</i>	Pages 24-25
19. <i>Old Relatives</i> — 20. <i>Confessions</i>	Pages 26-27
21. <i>The Fourth Bomb</i>	Pages 28-29
22. <i>Losers, Winners</i>	Pages 30-31
23. <i>Strange Answers</i>	Pages 32-33
24. <i>Wrong All Wrong</i>	Page 34
25. <i>Westing's Wake</i> — 26. <i>Turtle's Trial</i>	Pages 35-36
27. <i>A Happy Fourth</i> — 28. <i>And Then. . .</i> — 29. <i>Five Years Pass</i> —	
30. <i>The End?</i>	Pages 37-38

Whole Book Test	Pages 39-42
----------------------------------	-------------

Answer Keys	Pages 43-46
------------------------------	-------------

Something to Think About. . .

Something to Write About	Pages 47-54
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About Your Teaching Pack	Pages 55-59
---	-------------



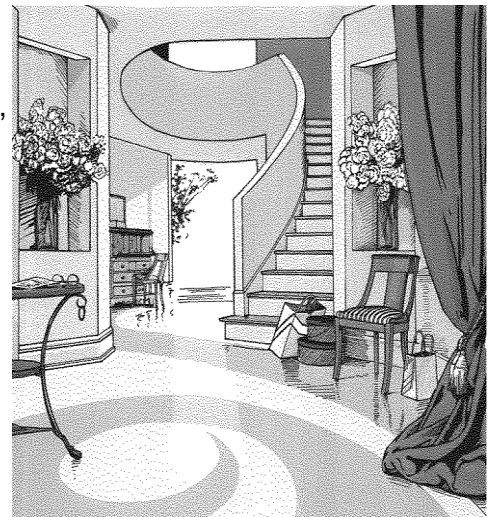
The Westing Game

By Ellen Raskin

1. *Sunset Towers* 2. *Ghosts or Worse*
Pages 1-11

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

- _____ 1. Which of the following was **not** true of Sunset Towers? It (A) faced east and had no towers, (B) was two stories high, (C) stood alone on the Lake Michigan shore.
- _____ 2. On the Fourth of July, how many people received letters inviting them to rent an apartment in Sunset Towers? (A) five, (B) six, (C) seven.
- _____ 3. Barney Northrup, the person who signed the letters, (A) didn't exist, (B) owned the high class restaurant on the top floor of Sunset Towers, (C) was actually the sixty-two year old man who delivered the letters.
- _____ 4. The letter said the Sunset Towers apartments would be affordable, have a picture window, maid service, and (A) a shopping village on the entry floor, (B) a separate parking garage on the first floor, (C) a rental space for a doctor's office in the lobby.
- _____ 5. The person who showed the prospective tenants around Sunset Towers was (A) Barney Northrup, (B) the delivery boy, (C) a hired real estate agent.
- _____ 6. What was unusual about the glass in Sunset Towers? It (A) was different colors, (B) didn't reflect any sunlight, (C) was one way, enabling the tenants to see out, but no one could see in.
- _____ 7. The lobby at the Sunset Towers had (A) chandeliers, a mirrored wall, and carpet three inches thick, (B) five large chandeliers and several paintings over six feet tall, (C) mirrors on both the walls and the ceiling and deep, red carpet.
- _____ 8. How did Mr. and Mrs. Wexler like apartment 3D? (A) She thought the rooms were small, but Jake Wexler liked the idea of having an office in the lobby, (B) Mrs. Wexler loved it, but her husband was less enthusiastic. (C) They both thought the place was beautiful.
- _____ 9. Jake Wexler wondered how Barney Northrup knew (A) so much about Sunset Towers, (B) how much the upkeep was on their old house, (C) that he was weary of driving to and from work, mowing the lawn, and shoveling snow.
- _____ 10. Which of the following was **not** part of the plans Grace Wexler had for her apartment? To (A) have many parties and invite only rich guests, (B) show off the lake view to her so-called friends, (C) buy new furniture and have special stationary made.
- _____ 11. Sydelle Pulaski (A) was just as overjoyed about sunset Towers as Grace Wexler, (B) was disappointed because her apartment didn't have a lake view, (C) was offered a three bedroom apartment.



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3. *Tenants In and Out* Pages 11-19

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

- _____ 1. Flora Baumbach was a dressmaker who lived and worked in her small apartment on the second floor of Sunset Towers.
- _____ 2. Flora was fitting Angels Wexler for her wedding dress when she saw the smoke coming from the Westing house chimney.
- _____ 3. Mrs. Wexler thought that she should visit her new neighbors and offer them decorating advice.
- _____ 4. Turtle Wexler and her sister Angela were very much alike.



- _____ 5. Turtle told her mother and Theo everything she had heard about old man Westing's rotting corpse.
- _____ 6. Turtle thought wedding dresses and weddings were simply wonderful.
- _____ 7. Mrs. Wexler had never hit Turtle, and she promised herself that she never would do such a thing to her daughter.
- _____ 8. When she became Denton Deere's wife, Angela's new name would be Angela Deere.
- _____ 9. Angela offered to hem Turtle's witch costume.
- _____ 10. Dr. Jake Wexler was a podiatrist.
- _____ 11. Turtle Wexler had kicked the shins of both Flora and Mrs. Crow, the cleaning lady, for pulling her braid.

The Westing Game

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4. The Corpse Found Pages 19-25

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

- _____ 1. On the Halloween night she planned to enter the Westing mansion, was Turtle dressed as a witch and wearing her hair loose instead of in her usual braid?
- _____ 2. Did Doug Hoo act as timekeeper for Turtle's stay inside the mansion?
- _____ 3. Did Turtle have to force the French doors open to get inside the house?
- _____ 4. In addition to two sandwiches, orange pop, and a flashlight, did Turtle carry her mother's silver cross to ward off vampires?
- _____ 5. Did Turtle come screaming out of the Westing house after only two minutes?
- _____ 6. Had Turtle found the dead man tucked in a four-poster bed on the second floor?



- _____ 7. Was it a throbbing whisper-- "Pur-ple" or "Tur-tle"-- that beckoned Turtle to the bedroom with the corpse?
- _____ 8. Did Turtle and Doug call the newspaper to let it be known that Sam Westing's body had been found?
- _____ 9. Did Turtle recognize the picture in the paper as the corpse she had seen?
- _____ 10. According to the newspaper article, was Sam Westing sixty-five years old?
- _____ 11. Was Sam Westing a rich man because he had inherited two hundred million dollars from his parents?
- _____ 12. Had the city of Westingtown been founded to house the thousands of Westing Paper Products Corporation workers and their families?
- _____ 13. Had Sam Westing been a dedicated gamesman and a master at chess?
- _____ 14. Had Samuel Westing been a great patriot, famous for his Fourth-of-July celebrations that included fireworks displays?

The Westing Game

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9. *Lost and Found* 10. *The Long Party* Pages 62-74

important business papers
the elevator
Grace Wexler
share the clues
a Mickey Mouse clock
Spend it wisely

J. J. Ford
clues
Flora Baumbach
Turtle
Sydelle Pulaski
George Theodorakis

Mr. Hoo
Angela
laughed
Jake Wexler
twins
Doug Hoo

Theo
Chris
Crow
Madame Hoo
chess
a closet

From the list above choose the name, word, or phrase that fits each of the clues below and write it in the blank. **All** answers will be **used at least once**. **Some** answers will be **used more than once**.

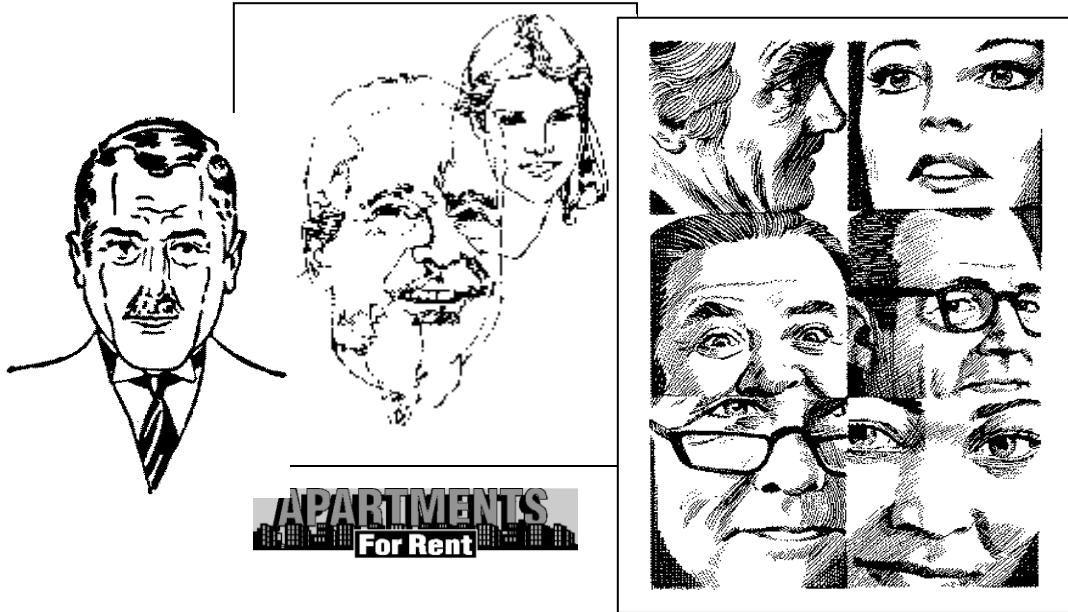
- _____ 1. She thought the pair of players who made the most money with the \$10,000 check would inherit the whole Westing estate.
- _____ 2. None of the party guests did this.
- _____ 3. Her note invited everyone to an informal party.
- _____ 4. It bothered her that people considered her a nobody without Denton and that her mother bossed her around.
- _____ 5. She claimed to be hurt because Turtle wouldn't share clues with her.
- _____ 6. Sydelle Pulaski posted a note on the elevator's back wall saying she had lost these, and there would be no questions asked upon their return.
- _____ 7. Grace Wexler tried to interfere with their plans, but Sydelle and Angela attended the party dressed like this.
- _____ 8. He once sued Sam Westing for stealing his idea for the disposable paper diaper.
- _____ 9. She posted a notice about lost jewelry, including a silver cross on a filigree chain.
- _____ 10. He talked to Madame Hoo, although people said she couldn't speak English.
- _____ 11. Sydelle Pulaski thought there were a pair of these among the heirs.
- _____ 12. He was the bartender at the party.
- _____ 13. Along with his wife, he was one of the two people in Sunset Towers who were not Westing heirs.



The Westing Game

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Whole Book Test



Sunset Towers
the Westing house
Turtle Wexler
Sam Westing
Sandy McSouthers
Barney Northrup
Berthe Crow
Grace Wexler
a wax dummy

an automobile accident
Theo Theodorakis
Chris Theodorakis
Flora Baumbach
America the Beautiful
George Theodorakis
crooked false teeth
Madame Hoo
Julian R. Eastman

J. J. Ford
Sydelle Pulaski
Violet Westing
Denton Deere
the stock market
Otis Amber
Sidney Sikes
Windkloppel
Angela Wexler

Doug Hoo
E. J. Plum
with a limp
the elevator
a murderer
Baba
Shin Hoo
Jake Wexler
Alice

From the list above, choose the name or phrase that fits each of the clues below and write it in the blank. **All answers will be used at least once. Some answers will be used more than once.**

- _____ 1. She was Sam Westing's daughter, and it was rumored that she killed herself rather than marry the politician as her mother wanted.
- _____ 2. He played a game of chess with an unknown partner in the Westing house.
- _____ 3. She wore her hair in a braid and kicked people in the shins for pulling it.
- _____ 4. Sam Westing cheated him out of the disposable paper diaper that he invented, but he made a fortune with his paper innersoles.
- _____ 5. He was a podiatrist, a bookie, Turtle's father, and the state crime commissioner.

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Something to Think About . . . Something to Write About . . .

Consider the following facts from Chapter 1.

*Sunset Towers faced east and had no towers.
Luxurious Sunset Towers was located on the shore of Lake Michigan.
There was no such person as Barney Northrup.
Certain people were chosen and invited to live in Sunset Towers.
Jake Wexler wondered how Barney Northrup knew the rent at Sunset Towers
was cheaper than the upkeep of his old house.
In one day, Barney Northrup had rented all of sunset Towers.
Sunset Towers had one-way glass.
Before they moved in, the names of the Sunset Towers tenants were already
printed on the mailboxes in an alcove off the lobby
Barney Northrup rented one of the apartments to the wrong person.
The tenants were mothers and fathers and children.
Of the tenants, there was a bomber, a bookie, and a burglar.*

- Use the above facts to answer the following questions:
 - (a) What does the information you have about the Sunset Towers tell you about the person who owns it? For example, is he/she rich or poor? What can you infer about his/her personality?
 - (b) How do you know that Barney Northrup was keeping secrets from the tenants?
 - (c) What clues point to the fact that each apartment was designed specifically for each tenant?
 - (d) How were the tenants of Sunset Towers both ordinary and extraordinary?
 - (e) What person, place, and/or thing is or *could be* a common denominator for each tenant?
 - (f) Who, in your opinion, is the most likely person pulling the strings?
- Use your answers to the above questions to write a summary of what you know so far about Sunset Towers and its tenants.

Both Otis Amber and Sandy McSouthers told what they knew about Mr. Westing, whose house stood on the hill above Sunset Towers. Chris Theodorakis observed the Westing house and noticed certain things.

- Make three columns with the headings **True**, **Could Be True**, and **Probably Not True**. Under each heading, list events or facts from the commentaries about Mr. Westing and his house.
- Using your categorized information, compose a report with the title **Mr. Westing and the Westing House: Fact and Fiction**.

Assign each of the following words to either Angela or Turtle Wexler. Use each word only once. Support your choices with the words' definitions and events or conversation from Chapter 3 .

*impulsive opinionated proper obedient serious playful
considerate ill-mannered*

About Your Teaching Pack.

Objective Tests

The primary goal in creating the teaching packs for children's novels is to provide a **classroom-ready**, non-threatening method for checking student comprehension and stretching thinking skills. **When used as a basic guide for teaching a novel, the materials offer many and varied opportunities for learning.**

Use your teaching pack as a guide and lead your students into discovering new ideas about

THE PLOT

Each test page is actually an outline of the plot. In your teaching pack, the chain of related events that tell the story has been pulled from the novel and reformatted into a series of questions. Whether they are aware of their ability or not, all good readers sense the **rhythm** of the **connected** events that compose the plot; and consequently **comprehend** the story. This "plot rhythm" is the basic structure of the tests.

To further your students' understanding of plot, try the following activities:

Summarizing the Story: Using only the chapter questions as a guide, have your students write a summary of the chapter. For a set of ten questions, limit the number of sentences they may write to seven. For twenty questions, allow no more than twelve sentences.

Reporting the News: Have students write a newspaper article, based on the events from a set of questions, and add the *who, what, when, where, why* format. Some needed information may be located in previous chapters.

Twisting the Plot: Choose one or two questions from each chapter and change its answer—true to false, no to yes, or a different answer—and explain how changing a single (or several) events would change the story.

For example: In *Bridge to Terabithia*, if Jess had invited Leslie to go along on his trip with Miss Edmunds, how would this have affected future events in the story? (a major part of the plot) If Jess had had at least one younger brother, how would this have affected the story? (Could have had a major impact by changing the way Jess' parents treated him—changing his personality—changing the relationship he formed with Leslie. Also could have had no impact at all.)

In *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*, how would the story be different if Mrs. Frisby had two children instead of three? (A story detail—not a major part of the plot.) How would the story change if Mrs. Frisby had been a widow with no children? (A major part of the plot.) Her sick child was the reason she went to the rats.)

From *Number the Stars*, suppose Annemarie's uncle lived in the city a block from her family and owned a hardware store? How would this have changed her family's efforts to help their friends escape the Nazis? (An important element of the plot.)

To further illustrate the rhythm of a good story, try changing the answers to one complete set of questions. Your students will see how difficult, if not impossible, it is to tell a sensible story from a tangled set of events.

THE CHARACTERS

Questions that illustrate character motivation and personality are purposely and carefully included. Too often, when they are asked to tell what kind of person a story character is, the only answer many of our students can muster is "nice."

In your efforts to remove "nice" from your students' literary vocabulary, try this idea:

Character Charts: Display a chart in your room for one or more characters (for example: *The Biography of Maniac Magee* or *Russel and Piper, the Clueless Two*); and, as each chapter is read write facts, behaviors, or events on the chart that relate to the character. (On Maniac's chart: Lost his parents at an early age—Lived temporarily with crazy aunt and uncle—good at sports—liked to run—untangled knots, etc.) The information is most valuable when displayed in the room for all to see and used as a reference during a writing assignment. With character charts as resources, students will be able to write more insightfully about personalities.

Encourage your students to try some “predicting” or “detective” writing. Using Maniac’s chart, for example, to speculate about what was happening to him during the “Lost Year.” Or, using the facts about Maniac, predict what profession he will choose as an adult. The task here is to connect the known with the unknown in a logical, sensible fashion. The characters in *The Pinballs* lend themselves perfectly to this activity. Heaven only knows what *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* will be doing at age 21.

Use the charts to help your students recognize **CHARACTER CHANGE (dynamics)**. Leigh, the main character in *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, moves from an angry child consumed with self pity to an independent, accepting, more mature young boy. By pulling Leigh’s personality (behaviors and thoughts) from the story and viewing them as an independent element, the boy’s growth is more obvious.

Sometimes, the author’s reason for including minor characters in the story is not obvious—the children who came to Fudge’s birthday party in *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, for example. Looking at information on a character chart could make the author’s intentions more clear. How would taking the character(s) out of the story, change the plot (or the impact of the story)?

Another fun activity with the charts is to match a book personality with a zodiac sign. Students must justify their reason for thinking a character is a particular sign by citing his/her behaviors, words, reactions to situations, etc. that prove the match.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

(Implied Meaning)

Because the primary goal for the objective questions is **basic comprehension**, it is with rare exception that an item requiring a student to *interpret* an event or a character’s behavior is written. Always included, however, are questions that *establish the existence of a story component carrying an implied meaning*.

In *The Giver*, for example, questions establish the fact that the Giver and certain children in the story have blue eyes, making them unique in their strange society. Although the author writes that Rosemary, who had blue eyes, was the Giver’s daughter, she never says that Jonas and Gabriel are also his biological children. This fact is implied and must be interpreted by the reader.

In *The Wish Giver*, many references are made concerning Thaddeus Blinn’s eyes. The author leaves it up to the reader to decide whether Thaddeus might be the devil himself, or at least a demon on the loose.

From *The Cay*, Timothy believes that Stew Cat is harboring an evil spirit which is the source of their bad luck, and he engages in some unusual behavior to remedy the situation. Phillip uses the word “voodoo,” but Timothy himself never speaks about his spiritual side. What could this incident, coupled with Timothy’s over-all behavior, be saying about Timothy’s religious upbringing?

Bright Morning, the main character in *Sing Down the Moon*, returns to her canyon home and finds a ewe with a lamb—a fact that could easily go unnoticed as an insignificant detail. However, the existence of a lamb indicates that at least one ram and one ewe have survived their four-year ordeal alone on the mesa. Given this fact, the reader can then believe that Bright Morning and Tall Boy will be able to rebuild not only the flock but also their own lives.

MAKING PREDICTIONS

(Recognizing Story Clues)

The best stories are often those in which the author subtly places clues in the story line giving the reader hints as to what is about to happen. Once he/she learns to spot this technique, a student’s ability to comprehend tends to leap forward. Any fact or story event that is a predictor becomes a test question drawing attention to its existence. For example, in *A Taste of Blackberries* the fact that Jamie’s friend is both a clown and a show-off becomes a sad predictor of the events surrounding his death. Jonas’ unusual experiences with the apple and the girl’s hair in *The Giver* are not only predictors of the changes taking place inside him, but an indication of the unusual structure of his society. *Walk Two Moons* is a story loaded with clues, beginning with the first page, where Sal’s mother is said to be “resting peacefully.”

Use “thinking-out-loud” class discussions to list all the possible meanings of the clue planted by the author. Have your student write their individual predictions (no sharing or telling), store the papers until the novel is finished, and then retrieve them for reading. Sometimes, a wrong prediction makes a story as good as the original.

REAL LIFE SITUATIONS

Real life applications can be found in the insignificant details of a novel's plot as well as in the major story line. These events are lifted from the story and included in our questions as something important for the student to recognize. Interpretation of the event is not part of the question.

From **Walk Two Moons**, for instance, Mrs. Partridge, who is blind, recognized the "Lunatic" as Sal's brother by the sound of his voice. This fact can be the catalyst for class discussion or compositions on family traits, adoption, famous singing siblings, etc.

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH presents the idea, well ahead of its time, of genetic altering and its implications. This could lead to a lively discussion, debate, drama—whatever your students like—concerning the actual cloning/genetic engineering now being done. Also in **Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH**, the rats realize that finding the toy tinker's truck and his tools is both a blessing and a curse. Consider the ideas of "too much of a good thing," "killing with kindness," "One can never be too rich ..." and apply the rat's realization to a human condition—winning a forty-million dollar lottery, for example.

Open any newspaper, or watch any news broadcast, and there is real life application for the characters and story in **Number the Stars**.

IMPROVING/DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS

Rather than always requiring your students to answer test questions on a printed page, surprise them occasionally by doing the test orally.

Try this technique:

Student Rules for an Oral Test:

The teacher will read each question *two times*. No comments or questions that interrupt this initial phase of the test are allowed.

When all questions have been read, individual students may ask for repeats of any question he/she wishes to hear again.

No interruptions/comments during the re-reading part of the test.

Teacher Rules for an Oral Test:

The teacher will read each question *two times*. Except to remind students that a re-reading phase will follow after the last question, he/she will not respond to comment/question during this period.

The teacher will repeat **any** and **all** questions (even if it results in reading the same question multiple times).

(The second teacher rule is a *vital* part of the exercise. Asking for multiple repeats of a question does not mean students aren't paying attention. It does indicate their desire to *understand* and *answer* the question correctly.)

As students become more comfortable and experienced with oral test-taking, the number of requests for repeated questions will diminish. An added bonus to this technique is that skills learned in these testing periods tend to translate into other situations where teacher-talking and student-listening are required components of learning.

Something to Think About. . . Something to Write About. . .

In this section, students pack up what they already know about the novel and go exploring into its every nook and cranny. Some activities require the simplest interpretation or application, while others will challenge the most proficient thinkers. There is a high probability that young scholars, even reluctant ones, will label some of the selections as *fun*.

Rationale:

Guidelines. . .

Most of the items in this section are based on the skills presented in the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom's Taxonomy)*. There are two reasons for this choice. First, it mirrors the Novel Teaching Pack's primary purpose of building a variety of sophisticated thinking skills on a foundation of basic knowledge. Second, in following the taxonomy guidelines, activities that correlate with many state educational standards emerge automatically.

Organization. . .

Chapter-specific activities are grouped and presented according to their corresponding sets of **Objective Test** page(s). Having led students through the basics for each chapter (or selected section), teachers may shop in this section for activities to optimize student understanding and interest. Armed with a firm grasp of each successive chapter, students are more likely to anticipate, embrace, and enjoy the next section. By repeating the process, students are also mastering concepts and intricacies connected to the **whole** novel.

The **Whole Book Activities**, as their name indicates, require a grasp of the theme(s), characters, implications, etc. as they apply to the full novel. These pages offer a variety of culminating possibilities.

Levels of Difficulty. . .

A broad spectrum of **difficulty levels** to accommodate the needs of individual students, including the gifted, is an integral part of this component. However, **all** items from this section are intended to **challenge** and **sharpen** thinking abilities.

Activities. . .

Something to Think About/Something to Write About includes activities that require students to choose and use precise, appropriate, and meaningful **vocabulary**. These exercises involve choosing a word or a group of words to describe a character's personality or behavior. The following example is from *Because of Winn-Dixie*.

Opal comforted Winn-Dixie during thunderstorms, holding on to him tight so that he wouldn't run away. She decided that the best way to comfort Gloria was to read a book to her, loud enough to keep the ghosts away.

From the list of words below, all of which can correctly describe Opal's behavior, which *two* do you think are the best? Cite facts from the story and the words' definitions to support your choices.

<i>empathetic</i>	<i>compassionate</i>	<i>nurturing</i>	<i>warmhearted</i>
<i>sympathetic</i>	<i>loving</i>	<i>devoted</i>	<i>benevolent</i>
<i>unselfish</i>	<i>generous</i>	<i>thoughtful</i>	<i>considerate</i>

In each case students work with a given collection of terms, all of which can be correctly applied to the character(s) in question. However, the individual words have varying strengths of meaning. It is the student's task to analyze both the character's behavior and the words, make choices, and then cite events from the story to support his/her selection.

Teachers may opt to narrow the choices to fewer words, choose words for individual students, divide the class into groups and offer a specific set of words to each group, or use the assignment as it is written. Whatever the technique, it is here that the word *nice* can be knocked off the shelf, shattered on the floor, and swept out the door. No longer necessary. Useless. Gone!

Other items in this section challenge students to . . .

<i>create drawings, diagrams, photos, maps,</i>	<i>make predictions</i>
<i>form opinions and theories</i>	<i>understand point of view</i>
<i>cite "evidence" from the story to support their</i>	<i>imagine</i>
<i>explanations and opinions</i>	<i>categorize</i>
<i>connect personal experience to story situations</i>	<i>engage in research and data gathering</i>
<i>become familiar with and identify literary elements</i>	<i>recognize and perceive story theme(s)</i>
<i>analyze story characters and events</i>	

Note: Inclusion of activities will vary with each novel title.

Options, options, and more options. . .

Something to Think About, Something to Write About is purposely jam-packed to give teachers **pick-and-choose options** for

<i>individualizing assignments</i>	<i>homework</i>
<i>group work</i>	<i>short-term and long-term projects</i>
<i>whole class activities</i>	<i>differentiating assignments for two or more</i>
<i>classes</i>	
<i>capitalizing on student interest</i>	

Final Note

The Novel Teaching Packs are designed for use as supplementary material. They are not intended to be a total program. I do hope, however, that this work can provide a core resource for busy teachers and eager students as they strive to become competent readers.

Margaret Whisnant, Author