

Skinnyybones

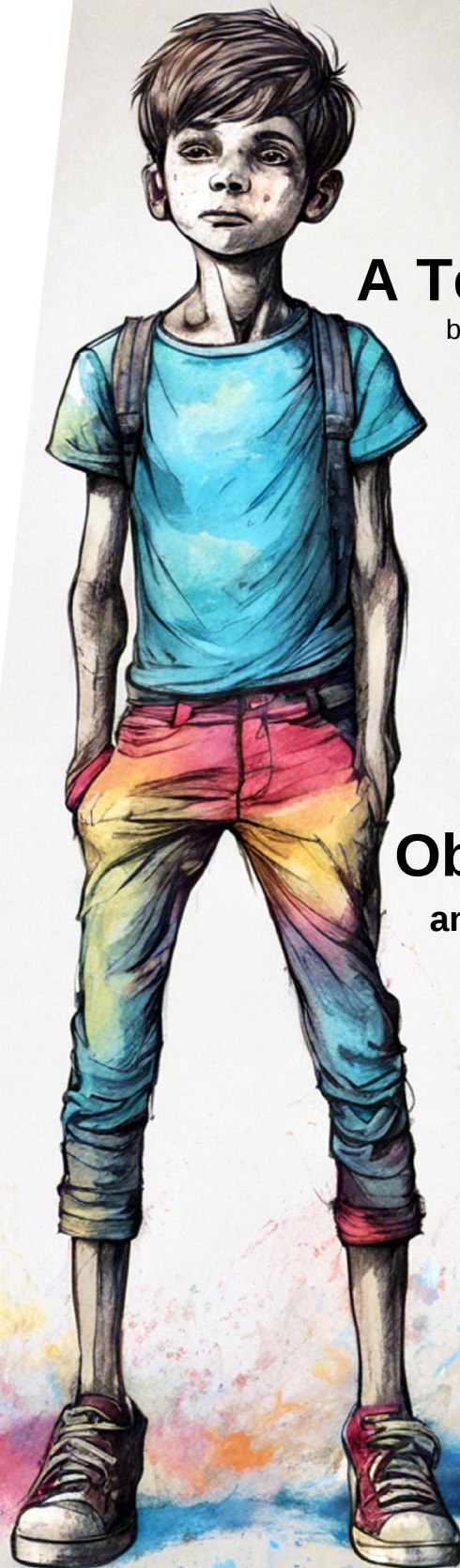
(Original Version) by Barbara Park

A Teaching Guide

by Margaret Whisnant

with

Objective Tests and Answer Keys



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By Barbara Park

Chapter 1

Pages 3-11

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

- _____ 1. Alex's mother bought Kitty Fritters because it was the only thing the cat would eat.
- _____ 2. In order to find the contest entry blank that was in the bag, Alex emptied a ten pound package of Kitty Fritters onto the kitchen floor.
- _____ 3. Alex told his mother it was Fluffy who made the mess with the bag of Kitty Fritters.
- _____ 4. Since she had the cat in the car, Alex's mother knew he wasn't telling the truth about the cat food.
- _____ 5. Because his mother caught him in a lie, Alex seriously considered telling her exactly what he had done and why.
- _____ 6. To cover up his first lie, Alex tried to convince his mother that one of Fluffy's friends came in and made the mess.
- _____ 7. Alex's mother did not believe either of his stories.
- _____ 8. Fluffy was stuffing herself with Kitty Fritters as Alex was sweeping them back into the bag.



- _____ 9. The Kitty Fritters swelled up in Fluffy's stomach and made her sick.
- _____ 10. Alex's mother really lost her temper when Fluffy threw up on his shoes.

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Chapter 2 Pages 12-17

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

- _____ 1. Did Alex discover that he liked to make people laugh?
- _____ 2. Did Alex think Peter Donnelly brought interesting hobbies to kindergarten Show and Tell?
- _____ 3. Was it an accident when Alex sneezed into Peter Donnelly's fuzz collection?
- _____ 4. Was it more fun for Alex to make people laugh than to sit quietly?
- _____ 5. When he ran out of true things to tell, did Alex make up things to talk about?
- _____ 6. Had Alex ever had a teacher who appreciated his sense of humor?



- _____ 7. Did this story take place in California?
- _____ 8. Was T. J.'s brother a professional baseball player?
- _____ 9. Did Alex like T. J. because he looked cool?
- _____ 10. Did Alex have a problem knowing when to quit being funny?

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Chapter 3

Pages 18-25

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

- _____ 1. According to Alex, what does a school principal do in the summer? (A) Sleep in his office. (B) Make lists of kids who hate each other and put them together in the same class. (C) Come up with new ways to punish people.
- _____ 2. Alex decided to try to make friends with T. J. because (A) he had grown to be the biggest kid in fifth grade, (B) he was really good at playing ball, (C) he was the coolest kid in class.
- _____ 3. How did T. J. feel about Alex? (A) T. J. hated Alex's guts. (B) T. J. tried to be friendly to everyone in class. (C) T. J. liked Alex's sense of humor.
- _____ 4. What sport was Alex good at? (A) Little League baseball, (B) soccer, (C) square dancing.
- _____ 5. What award did Alex **not** want to receive? (A) Best Hitter, (C) Good Sportsmanship, (C) Most Improved Player.
- _____ 6. Alex figured out the Most Improved Player award meant (A) he was not a good player, (B) his coaches liked him, (C) he put more effort into the game than his teammates.



- _____ 7. How did Alex's father react to his behavior at the awards ceremonies? He (A) thought Alex was funny, (B) was really annoyed with Alex, (C) understood how Alex felt about the award.
- _____ 8. What award did T. J. Stoner win? (A) Highest Scoring Player, (B) Most Valuable Player, (C) Best New Player.
- _____ 9. What did Alex do when he was handed the microphone? He (A) said "thank you," (B) made a big smacking, kissing sound, (C) burped.
- _____ 10. Why didn't Alex's father come into his room to yell at him? He (A) saw the sign on Alex's door, (B) thought what Alex had done was funny, (C) decided to ignore the situation.

About Your Teaching Guide

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. 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 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 individual charts for the main characters. As the chapters are read, record **facts**, **behaviors**, or **events** that relate to the each character. Then connect the items with several appropriate words such as **empathetic, brave, calloused, bold, untrustworthy**, etc. The teacher can take the lead by contributing the first few words and then assigning the task of identifying more terms to students. Record the word collections on the charts with the story facts.

This information is a valuable student resource when displayed in the room for all to see and use during a writing assignment. In creating and using character charts, students will soon begin writing more fluently and insightfully about story personalities.

Use the charts to encourage your students to try some "predicting" or "detective" writing about what the character(s) might do next or what might have happened after the story ended. Let the charts help your students recognize **CHARACTER CHANGE (dynamics)**.

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**, items requiring a student to **interpret** an event or a character's behavior are not included. Always included, however, are questions that *establish the existence of a story component carrying an implied meaning.*

MAKING PREDICTIONS

(Recognizing Story Clues)

Authors subtly place clues in the story line giving the reader hints as to what is about to happen. Like the implied meaning, these clues are brought to the reader's attention in the form of a question. Once a student learns to spot the gems, his/her ability to comprehend and enjoy a story tends to leap forward.

Use "thinking-out-loud" class discussions to list all the possible meanings of the clue questions. 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.

OTHER FUNCTIONS

The objective test pages are excellent discussion guides for both whole groups and small groups. They work well as homework reading guides and as conferencing tools. They are also useful management tools for teachers who wish to use multiple titles in one classroom.

IMPROVING/DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS

Rather than always requiring your students to answer test questions on a printed page, surprise them (and save paper!!) by occasionally 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.

Final Note

The Novel Teaching Packs are designed for use as supplementary material that supports a total reading program. It is my goal to provide busy teachers with a classroom-ready, practical resource loaded with motivational and learning opportunities for their students. It is my hope that your purchase will prove to be a hard-working instructional component for years to come. Thanks for choosing one of my products for your classroom.



Margaret Whisnant, Author