



## **The Meaning of Family and Home in the New South**

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Clear Creek Elementary

This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
(Language Arts/4<sup>th</sup> Grade and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade)

**Keywords:** Family, Grandparents, Character Analysis, Southern Children’s Literature, New South, Poetry

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** This short ELA unit has a concentration on novels and poetry which highlight grandparents and their crucial presence in many families. These wonderful and rich pieces of children’s literature all feature strong grandparent figures that teach lessons and support their families in times of need. They also highlight the positive influences and wisdom that these grandparents impart on their young grandchildren. These grandchildren walk away with new perspectives on life and create another much-needed parental relationship with the older generations of their family tree—those that hold the stories, the memories, and the past in their very capable grasp. Students will use various activities to analyze characters in each story. They will also reflect and analyze how grandparents in these stories influence their grandchildren in positive ways. Finally, students will reflect on how their own grandparents influence their lives and create a poem, piece of art, or create a special award to share with them.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 27 students in (Language Arts for 4<sup>th</sup> Graders)*

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# The Meaning of Family and Home in the New South

By Jashonai Payne

## Introduction

### Rationale

As I look across my classroom, I notice the variety of families my students have at home. There are students that have the traditional American nuclear family. However, there is so much more. I also have students raised by single mothers, grandparents, cousins, and other extended family members. These families bring me back to my own childhood and the personal importance of having the aunts, uncles, and grandparents that were an integral part of my upbringing and experiences. This is also an acknowledgement of the role that our extended families have played in our lives and how connected we are to their lessons, wisdom, and presences in our lives. It gives my students a chance to celebrate the beauty and diversity of their own various representations of families in their communities.

I want to look at several books and how the extended family members played a significant role in their existence, and sometimes, even their very survival. Through hardships, family come through and step in to share the load. Whether it is separation, divorce, loss of work, and even death, the family. In the book *Clover*, by Dori Sanders, the main character Clover was raised by her single father who was the principal of her elementary school in South Carolina. Sadly, Clover loses her father unexpectedly and her aunt, uncle, and her father's new wife work together to raise her. In another novel, *Brown Girl Dreaming*, by Jacqueline Woodson, the main character goes South to live with her grandparents on their farm during her parents' separation and impending divorce. I also want to include the poem "Knoxville, Tennessee" by Nikki Giovanni in which she talks of summers with family and especially her grandparents, who made her feel warm and safe when she was with them. Finally, in the book, *as brave as you*, by Jason Reynolds, the parents drop off their two sons in Virginia for a month with their paternal grandparents while they go on vacation to salvage their marriage.

Without these family members, there would be very few options for additional support for their children to spend extended periods of time in a safe and loving environment. It is also a great opportunity to learn about their family's stories that are their legacies. These people are the keys and bridges to the past of our family tree. It is imperative to have these relationships with the younger generations to pass on these lessons. In the article "The Importance of Grandparents in Indigenous Literature" by Nancy Cooper, she states,

"Grandparents are important in Indigenous communities and families. A deep respect for Elders and the knowledge they carry is part of this importance, but I feel that it goes deeper than this. Grandparents have so much to teach all of us. Traditional ways of knowing are carried down through their teachings. We witness the histories of their lived experiences and honour those memories, both good and tragic. We learn to parent from them. Some of us are parented by our grandparents. We learn the importance of carrying

on, despite the obstacles in our way, from our grandparents. We also learn to have fun and find joy in this mysterious life we have been given from Creator.”<sup>1</sup>

(Canadian Children's Book News; Toronto Vol. 44, Issue 2, (Summer 2021): p. 18-21.)

I argue that this truth is represented in not just indigenous cultures, but many other cultures such as Latinx, Asian, African, and namely African-American. I was a product of this type of upbringing. I lived with my single mother in a house with my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. My mother worked from 3 to 10 pm each weekday and my grandmother became my primary caregiver for most of my school-aged years. I remember sitting with her for hours on end listening to stories about her life and family, reading the Bible, singing songs, watching Westerns and Magnum P.I. (she had the biggest crush on Tom Selleck), and eating her secret stashes of snacks. She was my Ma. I even followed her into the garden, which was her most sacred place in the world. She taught me lessons that I was aware of and lessons that I wasn't aware of and didn't understand until I became a woman, a wife, and a mother.

### Demographics

I work at Clear Creek Elementary that serves Pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. It is in suburban Charlotte, North Carolina. I am a self-contained teacher of 27 students in my classroom. My school is diverse, with approximately 30% White, 30% Black, 30% Latinx, and 10% is Asian, Multiracial, American Indian, etc.

In my own classroom, I have four students who are certified EC, three students who are EL learners, and three students who are certified academically gifted. I also have twelve students who are transitional who came to fourth grade with a retention label due to not passing third grade benchmark assessments last year.

### Unit Goals

Family. It is our lifeline. Our beginning. Our foundation. I want to teach the theme of the importance of family and the great significance of grandparents through the novels *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis and *As Brave as You* by Jason Reynolds, as well as certain poems. I also want to provide biographical background about the authors and the reasons why their grandparents and/or extended family were so significant to them and in turn, their writing.

### Content Research

The complex notion of family brings me to thoughts on how the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade manipulated and nearly destroyed the Black family. From abducting people from their villages, to separating families on the auction blocks in places like Charleston, South Carolina, the Black family has been in great jeopardy of being dismantled. However, the resilience of these people, my people, amazes me. In the early 1910s, to the 1970s, roughly six million Black people moved to the North, the Midwest, or the West Coast during the Great Migration to find better opportunities than what the South offered them. (<https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/migrations/great-migration>) Many left with what they could pack in a box or a

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper, “The Importance of Grandparents in Indigenous Literature”, Canadian Children’s Book News; Toronto, Volume 44, Issue 2, Summer 2021: pgs. 18-21.

suitcase and traveled to places throughout the country to run from the vicious Jim Crow laws that still existed after slavery was abolished. However, despite this mass movement of African-Americans, many still stayed connected to their relatives and their family homes in the South. Many who had moved to the North or other places would send for other relatives and they would allow them to stay with them until they “got on their feet” and could afford a place of their own. Despite the awful history and contentious relationship with the South, Black people continued to visit, send money “home”, and even sent their children to stay with grandparents for the summers. Why was it important to stay connected to these places and why did the older generations choose to stay in the South despite the harsh experiences they endured during their lifetimes? There is no denying that grandparents are a central hub in Black families and many of the relatives all keep their ties to them. They are the rocks which are there for advice, recipes, money, security, and protection.

Christopher Paul Curtis was born on May 10, 1953 in Flint, Michigan. He was the second oldest of five siblings. His childhood home proved very significant in three of his books, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963*, *Bucking the Sarge*, and *Bud Not Buddy*. After high school, he began work in the General Motors assembly plant, which was a place of employment that did not require a high school education and paid good money. While working at the plant, Curtis graduated from the University of Michigan at Flint.<sup>2</sup> He did not enjoy the job but stayed to pay the bills that he created. He started to write during the day on his breaks from work. He eventually took a year off from the assembly plant and wrote his first novel, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963*. Starting as a writer in his 40s, Curtis submitted the manuscript for the book to a publisher and it was rejected. Then, he entered it into a contest which he did not win but was in turn published. He stated in this interview that if the second publisher rejected him as well, his writing career would have been over. This novel began a turn in his career where he was finally able to do something that he truly loved. *The Watsons* was his first novel and his favorite book to this date because it signified a positive shift in his financial situation in life. He had finally made it.<sup>3</sup> *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963* went on to win several awards in 1996: The John Newbery Honor Award, The Coretta Scott King Honor Book Award, and the Golden Kite Award for Fiction. It has proven to be a gem in the children’s literature world, loved by teachers and students alike.

In an interview that Christopher Paul Curtis did with Collaborative Classrooms, he mentioned his relationships with his grandparents, one of whom appears in his novel, *Bud Not Buddy*. He talks of the influences they had over his storytelling abilities:

“My sense of humor and any gift of storytelling I have probably come from my grandfathers. Both were great weavers of stories and both were relentless teasers. My father’s father, my Grampa Herman E. Curtis Sr., was a big-band leader and was particularly big on off-color stories. My mother would nearly die when Grampa and I were alone, and he’d tell me about being on the road. I was only nine when he died and can only vaguely remember one story dealing with chewing tobacco and spitting it on the hot register of someone’s home. My Grandpa, my mother’s father, and I were much closer and since he lived into his eighties, we spent more time together. I can remember

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<sup>2</sup>(<https://nobodybutcurtis.com/biography>)

<sup>3</sup> (<https://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/curtis>)

how angry my grandmother became with him when she came home, and I was in the back yard with a box of salt in my hands. She asked me what I was doing, and I told her how Grandpa had told me the way to catch a bird for a pet was to sprinkle salt on its tail. When Gram called me back into the house and confronted Grandpa, he told her, ‘You gotta give the boy credit for persistence, he’s been out there for two hours waiting to catch one.’ One of my biggest regrets is that at the time, I rarely appreciated or cared to listen to the stories they’d tell us. <sup>4</sup>

The novel, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963*, was first set in Flint, Michigan. The main character and narrator of the story is Kenny Watson, a gullible and naïve ten-year-old 4<sup>th</sup> grader, who gets into various capers, often under the influence of his older brother, Byron. Byron is described as a “juvenile delinquent” who often gets in big trouble with his parents for doing things like getting his hair processed, skipping school, and buying items on credit from the neighborhood store without permission. The parents have reached their limit with Byron and feel that he needs to be taught a serious lesson. They call Grandma Sands down in Birmingham, Alabama, to set Byron straight.

The second author I would like to highlight in my unit is Jason Reynolds. Jason Reynolds was born in Washington, D.C. <sup>5</sup> His grandmother died when he was just ten years old. His first writing was used to console his mother from his grandmother’s death. He attended the University of Maryland, College Park and majored in English. He began doing spoken word poetry and moved to New York City after being rejected from graduate school. Reynolds struggled after publishing a book with his college roommate in 2009 that he thought would have greater success and was forced to work in retail to make ends meet. Struggling financially, he moved back home to Washington D.C. to work with his father as a case worker in a mental health clinic. This work drained him emotionally and he later returned to New York City and worked in retail. Feeling discouraged with writing, his good friend, Christopher Myers, the son of the late and great Walter Dean Myers, encouraged Reynolds to write again. Reynolds went on to write his next book *When I Was the Greatest* in 2014. This book becomes the spark his career was waiting for. <sup>6</sup>

“We’ve got a double shot of writing exercises today for young writers from Jason Reynolds, the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature. He’s doing a series of these — short, witty, thoughtful — and you can find them on our [Engage](#) or [Families](#) pages.

The first one is about framing things that are special to you. It’s a way of preserving something you find important as well as making a statement to others that this is part of who you are. Jason tells us he has all sorts of things framed, including the contents of his grandmother’s wallet. This tells us that his grandmother, and the life she lived, is important to him today. This, in turn, tells us something about him.” <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> (<https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/blog/interview-with-christopher-paul-curtis/>)

<sup>5</sup> (<https://www.jasonwritesbooks.com/>)

<sup>6</sup> (<https://www.jasonwritesbooks.com/>)

<sup>7</sup> (<https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2020/05/jason-reynolds-two-writing-exercises-for-young-writers/>)

“Reynolds is six feet three, with dreadlocks he hasn’t cut in years. He favors black jeans and black tees, offset by statement sneakers. He lives in a narrow town house in Washington, D.C., that is full of orderly clutter; its walls are lined with contemporary artwork by Bisa Butler, a portraitist who uses African and African American textile and quilting techniques, and Fahamu Pecou, who is known for his bold, intensely colorful paintings of Black men. Reynolds’s collection also includes mid-century West African photographs of young couples, dazzlingly dressed, kissing or holding hands, and family artifacts, such as the unfinished pack of cigarettes that was in his grandfather’s pocket when he died, framed behind glass.”<sup>8</sup>

And it does. Reynold’s grandparents were clearly important influence on him.

In the novel *as brave as you*, the main character Genie and his brother Ernie stayed with their paternal grandparents for a month in Virginia during the summer while his parents attempt to mend their marriage in Brooklyn and on their getaway trip to Jamaica. During this month, Genie spends this time getting used to country life and get acquainted with his grandparents, especially his grandfather who he discovers is blind. This book explores the close relationship that blossoms between a grandfather and grandson. Ernie’s grandpa trusts him to walk outside at night after his grandmother and brother went to bed. Ernie helps his grandfather count the steps outside to safety so he can be outside without being afraid. He was also allowed to enter and hang out in grandpa’s special room with his birds and birdcages. Genie kept it clean and even fed the birds dead flies to help his Grandpa.

In the books *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963* and *as brave as you*, both families in the book send their children to the grandparents’ houses for various reasons. These Southern grandparents are always the characters in the book that give the life lessons, love, protection, and structure in their grandchildren’s lives at a time when their parents are living amid the unpredictable.

Grandparents are practical, reliable, and needed when times get rough. In the novel, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963*, the parents bring the family to Birmingham, Alabama from Flint, Michigan to drop off their troubled juvenile delinquent son, Byron. It was their belief that Grandma Sands and the Southern way of life would straighten Byron right up from all the foolishness he had been getting into in Flint.

“Going South” also served as an inexpensive vacation for the family in which they could stay at the grandparents’ house and eat delicious homecooked meals for free and became an annual trip back home for celebrations such as family reunions. In the book, *Going Down Home with Daddy*, all of Daddy’s children prepared something special for their great-grandma, Granny at the special anniversary celebration during their family reunion, except for the main character. He is feeling the weight of not having something special to present to her.

Thinking back to special memories that many African American females have with their grandparents, getting one’s hair lovingly brushed and cared for by a grandma is a significant one. Rudine Simms Bishop states in her article, “...it was difficult to find common traits across their

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<sup>8</sup> (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/08/16/who-jason-reynolds-writes-his-best-sellers-for>)

illustrations, but there were a few shared aspects. For example, at least two images appeared quite frequently in illustrations by various artists: the image of a grandmother embracing her grandchild and the image of a mother or other adult family member braiding a child's hair, even in books that focus on a topic other than hair. Both are images of family bonding and reinforce the thematic emphasis on family so frequently found in African American picture books. ("Reflections on the Development of African American Children's Literature", Rudine Sims Bishop. *Journal of Children's Literature*; Las Vegas, Vol. 38, Issue 2, (Fall 2012): 5-13.

Grandparents can also be the source of tough love for their children when they don't make the best choices in life, but still provide them with a soft place to land during times of adversity.

As I research books set in the South which have African American characters, I find many that have a strong grandparent somewhere in the story. This shows the significance of grandparents and extended family members in the lives of Black people. There cannot be a story without them. They are somewhere close by guiding, loving, support, and teaching future generations.

Now, with many African American families moving back to the South, they are able to claim some of the lost heritage and stories that were left behind during the Great Migration. My grandmother never knew that she was born and raised in Badin, North Carolina for the first three years of her life. She always assumed that she was born in New Jersey, as my mother, me, and my daughter were. She was proud of being a Northerner, but in reality, she was a Southerner by birth, born in a place that is less than 40 miles away from where I live today. It seems to be a full-circle life event which makes me wonder if there was a generational pull to this very place. We are connected to the South despite our troubled past with this land. People are now moving back to the region of our country that caused their ancestors so much contention and strife. Today, the South seems to offer more opportunities, a slower pace of life, and a lower cost of living. As one drives around Charlotte today, a person may see more New York and New Jersey license plates than ever before.

## **Teaching Strategies**

Think-Pair-Share-Students get a prompt or a question to answer or ponder. Then, they think about the question. Next, the student pairs with a partner to compare their thoughts to the question and come up with the best answer to question. Finally, they share out their answer to the class or group.

Close Reading-Students delve closely into a text by reading the text multiple times for various purposes. The first read is to get acquainted with the text and to find unknown vocabulary words, identify interesting or through-provoking parts in the text. The second text can be used to find the main idea or summary. The third reading can be used to answer surface and deep questions about the text.

Socratic Seminar-The strategy is used to have deep and rich student-led discussions of literature and poetry. Students are given a list of questions to discuss in a round robin format to share their thoughts and expand their learning through peer interaction.

Turn and Talk-This strategy is used to help students get a better understanding of the text by discussing the text or assignment with a partner. It is often helpful for students to discuss the

questions, texts, and assignments together to help break down the texts in a more meaningful way and to see various points of view, adding to their learning.

Graphic Organizers-This strategy and resource helps students to organize and make sense of the information they gather from a text.

Stop and Jot-This strategy is a great way to quick-write students' ideas down after reading and analyzing a text.

### Classroom Activities

Activity #1-Grandparents Make the World Go 'Round
<b>Brainstorm:</b> Do all families look the same? What makes your family special?
<b>Stop and Jot:</b> Why are grandparents important to a family? Do you have to live with your grandparents to have a special relationship with them? Do you have a grandparent that influences you in a positive way?
<b>Share:</b> "We will read three different texts and analyze how the grandparents in the story influence the main character or characters in each text."
<b>Background:</b> Give background and historical context of <i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963</i> . Discuss the time, place, and culture of the nation during this time in the two settings of the book-Flint, Michigan and Birmingham, Alabama. Share with your students that this story is about an African American family who travels to the South during the Jim Crow era. A great connected picture book for background could be <i>Ruth and the Green Book</i> which is about the difficulties that African American families experienced during this time period. I recommend reading the entire book, but due to time constraints, you may only be able to read the excerpts from these lessons. If so, encourage your students to read this novel independently. Share the Anticipatory Guide and visuals for the novel to build excitement and background about the novel.








Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Anticipatory Guide for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963***

- |  |       |          |
|--|-------|----------|
| 1. It is ok to be mean to someone who is mean to others. | Agree | Disagree |
| 2. Leaving out information is not lying.                 | Agree | Disagree |
| 3. A good friend laughs with you and not at you.         | Agree | Disagree |
| 4. Some people are better than others.                   | Agree | Disagree |
| 5. You should always listen to adults.                   | Agree | Disagree |

<b>1948 Plymouth</b>	
<b>Butter/Process/Conk</b>	
<b>Poindexter</b>	
<b>Record Player</b>	
<b>Outhouse</b>	

## Activity #2-Character Profile of Grandma Sands

**Read Aloud:** *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963*, Chapter 7

**Read Chapter 7. Re-read pages 98 and 99. Analyze the following excerpt from the text:**

“I could hear someone yelling from the phone. Dad whispered to Momma, ‘Why does she think she’s got to yell into the phone for a long-distance call?’ Momma slapped his arm and whispered back, ‘You leave my momma alone!’ They were talking to Grandma Sands! All the way in Alabama! Me and Joey crowded up next to them on the couch and heard Grandma Sands yell, ‘This is costing y’all a fortune, Daniel, let me talk to my baby again.’ Dad handed the phone back to Momma, then dug his finger in his ear like he was going deaf. Momma gave Dad a dirty look and said, ‘O.K., Momma, we’ll be getting back with you. We love you. Bye-bye.’ She said this stuff Southern-style.”

**Turn and Talk** to your partner about creating a character profile of Grandma Sands. Ask each other the following questions:

-What does she look like?

-What does she sound like?

-What does she say, do, think that gives us information about Grandma Sands?

(Remember: It may be too early to know some of this information. We will build a theory about Grandma Sands as we go through the story.)

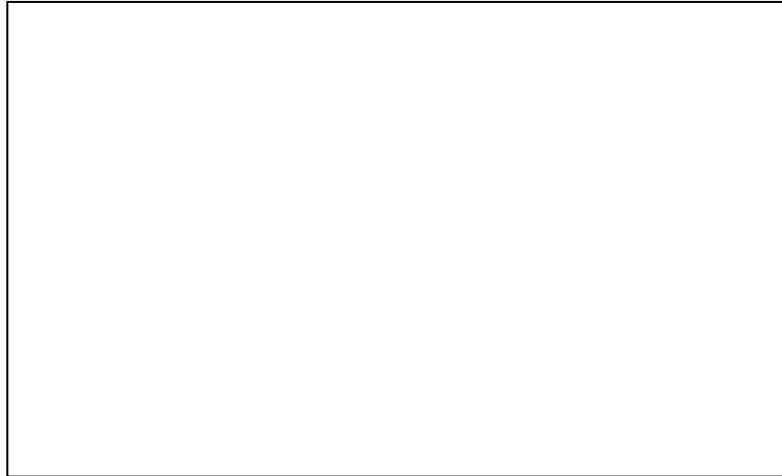
**Share** out with the class. Fill in what you know so far in your **Character Profile Graphic Organizer**.

Teacher will add information to the **Class Character Profile Graphic Organizer**. We will add information about our character as we go on further in the book.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Character Profile



Character's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Part 1-Sketch of the character (What does he or she look like?) Sketch in the box above.

Part 2-What are some things you have learned about your character?

Family Members: \_\_\_\_\_

Friends: \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies or Talents: \_\_\_\_\_

Likes: \_\_\_\_\_

Dislikes: \_\_\_\_\_

Character's actions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Character's words: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Character's inner thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Activity #3-Kenny's Imaginings vs. Kenny's Reality

**Read Aloud:** *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963*, Chapter 11

**Read Chapter 11. Re-read pages 156-161. Analyze the following excerpt from the text on page 156:**

“Me and Joey had never seen Grandma Sands in our lives. Byron said he could remember that she was the meanest, ugliest person in the world, but he was probably lying, he was only four the last time Momma and Dad were here. Byron said he had nightmares for a couple of weeks after they left Alabama ten years ago. All the Weird Watsons had real good imaginations but none of us was ready for what came out of the door of that house. I was expecting a troll. I thought Grandma Sands would be bigger than Dad, I thought she'd be foaming at the mouth like she had rabies. I remember a couple of years ago how Momma had cried and cried when someone called her from Alabama and told us that Grandma Sands had had a little stroke, so I knew she walked with a cane now. I'd imagined the cane would be as big as a tree trunk with crows and owls and lizards living in it.”

**Visualize** the excerpt you just read.

**Sketch** a picture of what Kenny expected and imagined Grandma Sands to look like.

**Turn and Talk** with a partner and compare your sketches. What was similar? What was different?

**Close Read** pages 156 through 162. **Turn and Talk** with a partner. How does this new information differ from your original sketch and Kenny's imaginings of Grandma Sands?

**Synthesize** the information you acquired about Grandma Sands and add this new information to your Character Sketch Graphic Organizer.

**Share out** your findings with the class.

Teacher will add information to the **Class Character Profile Graphic Organizer**.

### Activity #4-Character Influence Does Grandma Sands' influence change Byron?

**Read Aloud:** *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963*, Chapter 11-12

**Read Chapter 12. Re-read pages 158-168.**

**Write a summary** of the ways that Byron changed his behavior based on the influence of Grandma Sands. Use a sentence starter if necessary:

“Grandma Sands’ influence changed Byron’s behavior by...”

**Turn and Talk** to your partner and share your summary.

**Share out** your findings with the class. What does this new information tell us about Byron? What does this tell us about Grandma Sands?

### Activity #5-Character Profile of Grandpa

**Read Aloud:** *as brave as you*, Chapter 1.

**Re-read pages 23-25. Analyze the following excerpt from the text:**

“Rise and shine, babies! Breakfast is ready!’ The boys and their mother followed the smell of food down the shaky wooden steps to the kitchen doorway. Grandma was standing over the stove, flipping bacon with a fork. The grease popped every time she poked the bacon, but she never flinched. An old man-Grandpop! -sat at the round kitchen table, He had on a white dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and, like Ernie, dark sunglasses. His face had that look old men get when they’d shaved the day before and the beard was starting to grow back, white specks of dust all over their cheeks... ‘Hi,’ Genie said softly. ‘Genie.’ Grandpop put his hand out again. ‘Nice to finally meet you.’ Genie went to give him five, but Grandpop caught his hand, clamped down on it like a mouse-trap on a mouse, and shook it hard and tight. Tight enough to make one of Genie’s eyes close up. Tight enough to almost make him ask, *What’s your problem?* ‘The first one is always like this.’ Grandpop leaned in close enough for Genie to smell him-a mix of sweet and sweat-and lowered his voice to almost a whisper. ‘But now that we know each other, all the rest’ll be fives.’ Then he grinned big. His teeth were like Dad’s and Ernie’s. Perfect, white. Speaking of Dad, Genie wondered where he was and when he was going to show up and maybe save him from this white-toothed crazyman. With Grandpop still clutching his hand, Genie peered around, looking for his father.”

**Turn and Talk** to your partner about creating a character profile of Granddad. Ask each other the following questions:

-What does he look like?

-What does he sound like?

-What does he say, do, think that gives us information about Grandpa?

(Remember: It may be too early to know some of this information. We will build a theory about Grandma Sands as we go through the story.)

**Share out** with the class. Fill in what you know so far in your **Character Profile Graphic Organizer**.

Teacher will add information to the **Class Character Profile Graphic Organizer**. We will add information about our character as we go on further in the book.

**Activity #6- Character Influence**  
**Does Grandpop’s influence change Genie?**

**Read Aloud:** *as brave as you*, Chapter 10

**Read Chapter 10. Re-read pages 182-185.**

**Write a summary** of the ways that Genie changed his behavior based on the influence of Grandpop. Use a sentence starter if necessary:

“Grandpop’s influence changed Genie’s behavior by...”

**Turn and Talk** to your partner and share your summary.

**Share out** your findings with the class. What does this new information tell us about Genie? What does this tell us about Grandpop?

**Activity #7-Instagram Grannies**

**Create an Instagram Profile** for one of the grandparent characters from the novel *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963* or the novel *as brave as you*.

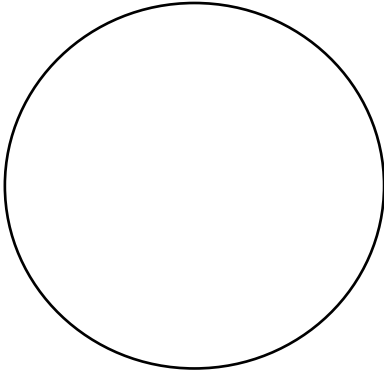
**Complete the Instagram Graphic Organizer Template** to fill out for your character of choice.

**Follow the directions on the Graphic Organizer.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Instagram Grannies Account  
Graphic Organizer**



**Profile Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Saying/Personal Quote** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Posts**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Followers**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Following**

**Illustrate three (3) photos of activities your grandparent would do based on the story and their interests. Write captions under each picture.**

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Activity #8- “Knoxville, Tennessee” by Nikki Giovanni**

**Read Aloud** the poem “Knoxville, Tennessee” by Nikki Giovanni to the class once.

**Read Aloud** the poem “Knoxville, Tennessee” a second time to the class while the students close their eyes and visualize the images in the poem.

Have the students **sketch the images** they see in their mind from the poem.

Have the students **read the poem silently** a third time and answer the questions.

**Review** the questions with the class.

**Activity #9- Reflection and Culminating Activity**

**Choose a grandparent** or older relative from your own family.

**Write** a brief **Stop and Jot** about how your own grandparent has been a positive influence in your life.

Write a poem, draw a picture, or create a certificate celebrating your grandparent. Give your grandparent this gift. (If at all possible, teach this unit early in the year to have the gift made for Grandparents’ Day on September 12<sup>th</sup>!)



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### “Knoxville, Tennessee” Questions

1. Where is the setting of the poem? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In which season of the year does this visit with the speaker’s grandparents take place?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Name two (2) activities that the speaker of the poem does with her grandparents.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Figurative language in a poem often has multiple meanings. What does the following phrase from the poem mean?  
*“...and go to the mountains with your grandmother and go barefooted and be warm all the time not only when you go to bed and sleep.”*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. The mood of the poem is the feeling that the poet creates for the reader. What is the mood of this poem?
  - A. Melancholy
  - B. Frustrated
  - C. Angry
  - D. Joyful
6. Which of the following would NOT be a possible theme of the poem?
  - A. Family is important.
  - B. Never judge a book by its cover.
  - C. Kindness comes in many forms.
  - D. Love conquers all.

## **Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards**

(RL4.1)- Students will make inferences about characters, events, and settings in the story.

(RL4.2)- Students will recognize and identify the theme of stories.

(RL4.2)-Students will summarize the text.

(RL4.3)-Students will analyze characters in the text and how they change over time.

(RL4.3)-Students will compare characters and settings in a text.

(RL4.3)-Students will understand how setting consists of time, place, and culture and how this can influence a story.

(L4.4)-Students will identify phrases with figurative language and be able to interpret its literal meaning.

## **Annotated List of Teacher Resources**

Barnwell, Ysaye M., *No Mirrors in My Nana's House*. Orlando: Voyager Books, 2005.

This picture book is a song from the singing group, "Sweet Honey in the Rock." The colorful pictures by renowned painter and artist, Synthia Saint James, tell the story of a child who did not notice the imperfections of her surroundings or herself because her grandmother never kept mirrors in her house. She could only see the beauty of the things around her with her own eyes and the reflection of the love in her Nana's eyes.

Curtis, Christopher Paul, *Bud, Not Buddy*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1999.

This novel is about a young African American boy named Bud who was orphaned in Flint, Michigan and ran away from his terrible foster home in search of his father. This story is hilarious as well as heartfelt and you cheer Bud on as he gets closer and closer to solving the mystery of finding his dad.

Curtis, Christopher Paul, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1995.

This novel is about the Watson family, and the main character, Kenny, who narrates the story. This story takes place in Flint, Michigan in 1963 in the dead of winter. Kenny is a very bright, yet gullible young man who is often subject to his older brother Byron's jokes and pranks. The family takes a trip to Birmingham, Alabama to get Byron "straightened out", but their lives are changed forever.

Flournoy, Valerie, *The Patchwork Quilt*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1985.

This book is about a grandmother and her special relationship with her granddaughter, Tanya. Grandma teaches Tanya how to make a patchwork quilt and the importance of each piece of fabric, which serves a way to preserve the family's history. When Grandma gets sick and is unable to work on the quilt, Tanya takes over the job and learns much more than just quilting.

Giovanni, Nikki, *Grandmothers: Poems, Reminiscences, and Short Stories About the Keepers of Our Traditions*. New York: Henry Holt and Company Inc, 1994.

In the immortal words of Nikki Giovanni herself, “This isn’t a balanced book nor a sociological book nor a look at grandmothers through the ages. It’s just a book that makes me miss the only person I know for sure whose love I did not have to earn.” Well said.

Giovanni, Nikki, “Knoxville, Tennessee.” In *Black Feeling, Black Talk, Black Judgement*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1968, 1970.

This beautiful poem is a tribute to family, summers, and the child remembrances of safety and warmth of being with grandparents and other relatives.

McKissack, Patricia, *Stitchin’ and Pullin’: A Gee Bend’s Quilt*. New York: Random House, 2007.

This book is about an Alabama community that keeps their quilting traditions alive by incorporating the young into their artwork and

Reynolds, Jason, *as brave as you*. New York: Atheneum Books for Younger Readers, 2016.

This novel is a tribute to grandparents and the special relationships that come from going “down South” to visit family. Genie and his brother Ernie go to Virginia for a month to stay with their grandparents while their parents work to reconcile their marriage. During this time, Genie gets to know his Grandfather and creates a special relationship with him while learning the family history as well as the family secrets.

Sanders, Dori, *Clover*. New York: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1990.

This novel is about a young African American girl named Clover who is raised by her father, who is the principal of her elementary school. She also has a close relationship with her aunt and uncle since her mother passed away when she was younger. Tragedy strikes the family leaving Clover to make sense of the loss she experiences all while trying to understand her new white stepmother.

Starling Lyons, Kelly, *Going Down Home with Daddy*. Atlanta: Peachtree Publishing Company, 2019.

This picture book is about a family who goes to visit their extended family “Down Home” in preparation for a special anniversary celebration for their Granny at the family reunion. The main character, Alan, is worried because he is the only one who doesn’t seem to have something special to present to Granny during the celebration. As Alan learns about the family’s history and traditions, he gets together the perfect words to share with Granny.

Taylor, Mildred, *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*. New York: Puffin Books, 1981.

In this novel, the Logans’ friend, T.J. goes on trial for murder despite him being falsely accused. Times are hard because of the Depression and Cassie’s father is forced to go work away from home on the Railroad. Her older brother Stacey leaves home to earn money against his family’s wishes. The Logan parents search endlessly for Stacey and fear for his safety. Race relations, disease, and injustice continues to plague the community in this sequel of *Roll of Thunder*.

Taylor, Mildred, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. New York: Puffin Books, 1976.

This novel is about the Logans, an African American family who owned land during a time when Blacks were sharecropping on the lands of others. Set in Mississippi during the 1930s, the only girl in the family, Cassie, witnesses many injustices being done around her to others she cares about as well as to herself.

Taylor, Mildred. *Song of the Trees*. New York: Puffin Books, 1975.

This is a wonderful but short story about the Logan family. They were in a unique situation in the 1930s as they owned land and did not have to sharecrop in the fields of the local white landowners as the other Black families did. However, the Logan family were in desperate need of money and they were seriously weighing the idea of cutting down trees on their property and selling the land for money to Mr. Anderson, the antagonist. The main character, Cassie is against cutting the trees as they were so important to the family.

Taylor, Mildred. *The Friendship*. New York: Puffin Books, 1987.

This novel features the very familiar Logan family and our young hero, Cassie Logan. They witness a verbal exchange between the local White store owner and an elderly Black man, Tom Bee, which they are shocked about. However, what they uncover is a secret acquaintance between these two men which is a very unlikely relationship during the early 1930s. Cassie and her siblings try to get to the bottom of this strange “friendship.”

Taylor, Mildred. *The Road to Memphis*. New York: Puffin Books, 1990.

This novel is set later in our main protagonist’s life, Cassie. She is a 17-year-old young lady who is looking towards the future. Cassie is concentrating on the next steps in life regarding college and career, but some things in her town in Mississippi don’t change. Race relations between the white and Black families continue to exist. Cassie and her brothers’ friend Moe speaks up about an injustice done, but may have to pay for it. Can they get Moe out of town before he gets into trouble, and even danger?

Taylor, Mildred. *The Well*. New York: Puffin Books, 1995.

Another novel about the Logan family, this story focuses on the childhood of David Logan, Cassie’s father. This book takes place in the 1900s where there is a dry spell in the area and all of the wells of the families dry up except for the Logan family’s well.

Williams-Garcia, Rita, *Gone Crazy in Alabama*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015.

This novel is all about three sisters who go south to learn all about their family in Alabama. There, they discover some not-so good secrets about their family history and their strength as family is tested by the events from the past that haunt their present lives and relationships.

Woodson, Jacqueline, *Brown Girl Dreaming*. New York: Nancy Paulsen Books, 2014.

This is an autobiographical free-verse novel of poetry by author Jacqueline Woodson. This story tells the story of Woodson’s parents’ and how they met as well as the family histories of each parent. Sadly, Woodson’s parents have marital issues, and her mother brings her children to South Carolina to stay with their grandparents while they figure out their relationship. During

this time, Woodson creates a wonderful relationship with her grandparents and learns the ins and outs of country life on a farm.