

Grade 5: **Unit 1**

The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963: Whole Class Novel Seminars

Seminar 3: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars envision the members of the Watson family, noticing how the author makes each character come alive. They describe the relationship between the main character, Kenny, and his brother.

Seminar 3:

The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963: Chapters 1–2 (pages 1–31)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday’s seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Tell scholars that as they listen to the opening pages, they should PICTURE the Watsons. Remind scholars to envision as they listen and read.

Read and Discuss 1 — 35 minutes

Read (15 minutes):

- **Play Audiobook (00:00:14–00:15:42):** Chapter 1, pages 1–11 (stop after last full paragraph)

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What do we learn about the Watson family? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How does Kenny’s narration impact the way we experience the story?

Read (12 minutes):

- **Play Audiobook (00:15:42–00:27:00):** Chapter 1, pages 11–19

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How would you describe the relationship between Kenny and Byron? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- At the end of the chapter, we see each character reacting to the “tongue situation” in very different ways. What do Kenny’s and Byron’s reactions teach us about the roles they play in the family? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Read and Discuss 2 — 20 minutes

Independent Reading (10 minutes):

- Chapter 2, pages 20–31

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Based on the interactions between Kenny and other characters, what ideas are you starting to have about Kenny? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: At the end of Chapter 2, Kenny describes the new kid as his “saver” (page 31). Why does Kenny consider the new kid his “saver” (page 31)?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Based on Chapter 2, how does the reader's understanding of Kenny and Byron's relationship change? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Seminar 4: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze the interactions between Kenny and his peers and siblings, and they explain how Kenny views himself and others.

Seminar 4:

The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963: Chapters 3–4 (pages 32–63)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday's seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday's reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: Based on the interactions between Kenny and Byron that we have already seen, describe their relationship. Then, build excitement for today's reading and discussion.

Read and Discuss 1 — 35 minutes

Read (15 minutes):

- **Play Audiobook (00:44:00–00:58:25):** Chapter 3, pages 32–42

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Compare Kenny and LJ's relationship to Kenny and Rufus's relationship. Based on this difference, what is the author revealing about friendship? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What do Rufus's actions make Kenny realize about the meaning of friendship?

Read (8 minutes):

- **Play Audiobook (00:58:25–00:1:05:34):** Chapter 3, pages 42–46

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What does Kenny mean when he tells Rufus "I am different" (page 46)? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Based on your reading thus far of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*, would Christopher Paul Curtis agree with the following statement: "The more friends you have, the better off you are"? Why or why not? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Read and Discuss 2 — 20 minutes

Independent Reading (15 minutes):

- Chapter 4, pages 47–63

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How is Kenny's relationship with Joetta different from Byron's relationship with Joetta? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What does Byron's reaction to Kenny's lost gloves reveal about the brothers' relationship?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

As Kenny watches Larry being beaten, he thinks “Byron was the only person in the world who could make you feel sorry for someone as mean as Larry Dunn” (page 62). What does Kenny’s thought reveal about Byron? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*: Chapters 5–6 (pages 64–85).

Seminar 5: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze the author’s message about family by paying close attention to the interactions between Kenny and the rest of the Watson family.

Seminar 5:

The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963: Chapters 7–8 (pages 86–120)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday’s seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from scholars’ at-home reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: How do Byron’s interactions with his family in chapters 5 and 6 change the reader’s understanding of Byron’s character? Then, build excitement for today’s reading and discussion.

Read and Discuss 1 — 35 minutes

Read (15 minutes):

- **Read Aloud:** Chapter 7, pages 86–99

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What motivated Byron to straighten his hair? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why does Mr. Watson happily cut Byron's hair?

Read (10 minutes):

- **Read Aloud:** Chapter 8, pages 100–109

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How would you describe the relationship between Kenny and Mr. Watson? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- At the beginning of the chapter, Curtis writes, “I don't know why we didn't catch on that something different was really going to happen this time” (page 100). What is the author foreshadowing? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Read and Discuss 2 — 20 minutes

Independent Reading (10 minutes):

- Chapter 8, pages 109–120

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What is the author's message about family? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How does the author convey this message?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Imagine that you are Mrs. Watson. Write a journal entry about today's events, including the family time in the Brown Bomber and Byron's reaction to the big news. Support your big idea with at least **two** concrete details from the text.

Seminar 6: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze the relationship between Kenny and Mr. Watson and between Byron and his family. They use these interactions to articulate the author's message about the purpose of family.

Seminar 6:

The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963: Chapters 9–10 (pages 121–148)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday's seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday's reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following prompt: Imagine that you are Mrs. Watson. Write a journal entry about today's events, including the family time in the Brown Bomber and Byron's reaction to the big news. Then, build excitement for today's reading and discussion.

Read and Discuss 1 — 35 minutes

Read (12 minutes):

- **Play Audiobook (02:43:56–02:55:02):** Chapter 9, pages 121–129

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How has the relationship between Kenny and Mr. Watson changed? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Why is Joetta dissatisfied with her gift from Mrs. Davidson? What does this reveal about her?

Read (12 minutes):

- **Play Audiobook (02:55:02–03:06:08):** Chapter 9, pages 129–137

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How has the relationship between Kenny and Byron changed? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- How is the trip to Birmingham an opportunity for both Byron and Kenny to mature? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Read and Discuss 2 — 20 minutes

Independent Reading (10 minutes):

- Chapter 10, pages 138–148

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How would you describe the interactions between the family members on the trip? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: On page 148, Kenny says, “I thought the Brown Bomber must look like a bug lying on its back with four skinny brown legs kicking and twitching to try to put it back on its feet.” What does this image reveal about the purpose of the family’s trip to Birmingham?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- How does Christopher Paul Curtis convey the Watson family’s anxiety in the final scene? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Homework

- Read *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*: Chapters 11–12 (pages 149–168).

Seminar 7: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars analyze the changing relationships between the Watson siblings. They describe how the siblings' internal and external conflicts impact one another.

Seminar 7:

The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963: Chapters 13–14 (pages 169–190)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday's seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from scholars' at-home reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: How is Byron continuing to change throughout the book?

Read and Discuss 1 — 35 minutes

Read (12 minutes):

- **Play Audiobook (03:50:32–04:02:00)**: Chapter 13, pages 169–176

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How has Byron's attitude changed? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: How do Byron's and Kenny's reactions to Birmingham differ?

Read (5 minutes):

- **Play Audiobook (04:02:00–04:06:55)**: Chapter 13, pages 176–179

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does the image of Joetta as an angel save Kenny's life? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- Based on Byron and Joetta’s actions in Chapter 13, what is Christopher Paul Curtis’s message about family? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Read and Discuss 2 — 20 minutes

Independent Reading (10 minutes):

- Chapter 14, pages 180–190

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following questions in pairs: Who does Joetta think saved her from the bombing? Why is this detail significant? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: What does the continuous image of the Wool Pooh symbolize for Kenny?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- In Chapter 13, Joetta “saved” Kenny. Did Kenny “save” her? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Seminar 8: Whole Class Novel

What Does Success Look Like?

Scholars explain the connections between the fictional events in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963* and the historical events that the novel references. They articulate the author’s purpose for writing a fiction text with this historical context.

Seminar 8:

The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963: Chapter 15 and Epilogue (pages 191–210)

Do Now — 10 minutes

- Play classical or jazz music to establish a calm work environment.
- Scholars revise their Exit Tickets from yesterday’s seminar based on the feedback you gave them.

Launch — 2 minutes

- Review the big ideas from yesterday’s reading by having scholars quickly discuss the following question: In Chapter 13, Joetta “saved” Kenny. Did Kenny “save” her? Then, build excitement for today’s reading and discussion.

Read and Discuss 1 — 35 minutes

Read (12 minutes):

- **Play Audiobook (04:23:32–04:35:13):** Chapter 15, pages 191–198

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: Pay attention to the details that Curtis uses to describe Kenny’s feelings following the church bombing. How did the church bombing affect him? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: Consider what you know so far about the chapter. Why does the author entitle this chapter “The World–Famous Watson Pet Hospital”?

Read (12 minutes):

- **Play Audiobook (04:35:13–04:47:39):** Chapter 15, pages 199–206

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: How does Byron help Kenny at the end of the novel? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.

Write — 10 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- What scene from Chapter 15 best shows how Byron and Kenny’s relationship has changed? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

Wrap-up — 5 minutes

- Show an exemplar essay to scholars. Have scholars discuss what makes the claim clear and compelling. Have scholars articulate the transferable takeaway from the work study that they will apply to their own work moving forward.

Read and Discuss 2 — 20 minutes

Independent Reading (5 minutes):

- Epilogue, pages 207–210

Discuss:

- Scholars discuss the following question in pairs: What is the purpose of the Epilogue? Call on pairs to share out. Insist that scholars back up their claims with evidence from the text.
- If scholars nailed the previous question, ask: On page 209, the author writes, “Although these may be nothing more than names in a book to you now, you must remember that these children were just as precious to their families as Joetta was to the Watsons or as your brothers or sisters are to you.” Based on this quotation, why did Christopher Paul Curtis write *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*?

Exit Ticket — 8 minutes

Write an essay of no more than 200 words:

- What is the most significant message Curtis wants to convey to readers at the end of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*? Justify your argument with at least **two** concrete pieces of evidence from the text.

You Did It!

Congratulations! You’ve reached the end of Literature Unit 1: *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*!

As a result of teaching this unit, you as the teacher have:

- Helped your scholars fall in love with this hilarious book about the “weird Watsons”!
- Built your scholars’ ability to articulate their understanding of texts both orally and in writing.

Your scholars can:

- Envision the setting, characters, and plot in a fiction text.
- Write and revise arguments of 200 words to demonstrate their understanding of texts.

Celebrate your scholars’ successes by acknowledging what they can now do as readers as a result of their work during this unit. Invite scholars to share how much fun they had learning about the Watson family.

Reflect on your successes and stretches, as well as those of your scholars. Look at your Fountas & Pinnell results. Have your scholars grown as readers over the last month? Between the start of the school year and midyear, your scholars should move from a Level S to a Level U. This is always a tricky jump for scholars, and they can easily get stuck, making little to no growth. In order to move to a Level U, scholars must pay attention to how the setting impacts the plot, keep track of jumps in time and narration, consider the perspectives of multiple characters, and connect ideas across multiple pages and chapters. Enlist parents to help get scholars over this hump!

Scholars must read at home, as well as in school. Do you have 100% of your scholars reading nightly at home? Make sure at-home reading is happening, and meet with families who are falling short to recommit them to this team effort.

Do you have 100% of your scholars reading fluently? Using all of the tools at their disposal to figure out the meaning of what they are reading?

Do you have 100% of your scholars doing their literacy homework? You must insist that 100% of scholars complete their homework nightly.

Going into the next unit, make specific reading goals for yourself. Set a percentage goal for how many scholars you will move. Set a goal for scholars who are not reading at home. Who will you get to consistently read at home? Set a goal for moving any scholars stuck at Level R or below. Why are they stuck? Do they read fluently? Do they understand what they're reading? Do they understand the big idea? How will you partner with parents to support their growth?

If you are having trouble meeting your goals, do not wait until you have NOT succeeded. Consult your colleagues. Consult your leaders. ASK FOR HELP so you can meet your goals!