An internal conflict is a problem or a dilemma that a character faces within him or herself. What is the internal conflict within the boy? At what point is this conflict revealed? An external conflict is a thing or event that a character encounters as an obstacle. Identify the external conflicts in the novel. Explain how both internal and external conflicts change Little Man by the end of the summer?

The novel is told in first person from the main character’s point of view. The reader does not know the boy’s name until the end of the novel. How is this symbolic of the boy’s journey? Explain the significance of the scene when he stands up in class and says, “My name is Victor Vollmer the Third” (p. 222). How is this a step toward resolving his internal conflict?

Discuss the boy’s relationship with Mam, the housekeeper his parents hired to help take care of him. Mam’s real name is Miss Nellie Avent. How is Mam a term of endearment? Describe Little Man’s fascination with Ara T. What is the first clue that Ara T isn’t an honest man? How does Mam’s warning about Ara T foreshadow trouble? Mam is away for several days, and returns with bruises and a black eye. Explain how Mam came to the police station.

Define racism. Discuss Little Man’s struggle with racial prejudice. Are his experiences memorable? How do they help or hinder his growth?

Explain Mr. Spiro’s role in Little Man’s life. What is the significance of Mr. Spiro offering the boy that no one else knows? Describe Little Man’s friendship with TV boy. What do they offer one another?

Related Titles

• Because of Mr. Terupt
• Because of Mr. Terupt Falls Again
• Liar & Spy
• Mr. Terupt Falls Again

Questions for Group Discussion

1. An internal conflict is a problem or a dilemma that a character faces within him or herself. What is the internal conflict within the boy? At what point is this conflict revealed? An external conflict is a thing or event that a character encounters as an obstacle. Identify the external conflicts in the novel. Explain how both internal and external conflicts change Little Man by the end of the summer?

2. The novel is told in first person from the main character’s point of view. The reader does not know the boy’s name until the end of the novel. How is this symbolic of the boy’s journey? Explain the significance of the scene when he stands up in class and says, “My name is Victor Vollmer the Third” (p. 222). How is this a step toward resolving his internal conflict?

3. Discuss the boy’s relationship with Mam, the housekeeper his parents hired to help take care of him. Mam’s real name is Miss Nellie Avent. How is Mam a term of endearment? Describe Little Man’s fascination with Ara T. What is the first clue that Ara T isn’t an honest man? How does Mam’s warning about Ara T foreshadow trouble? Mam is away for several days, and returns with bruises and a black eye. Explain how Mam came to the police station.

4. Define racism. Discuss Little Man’s struggle with racial prejudice. Are his experiences memorable? How do they help or hinder his growth?

5. Explain Mr. Spiro’s role in Little Man’s life. What is the significance of Mr. Spiro offering the boy that no one else knows? Describe Little Man’s friendship with TV boy. What do they offer one another?

Internet Resources

• StutteringHelp.org
• The Mayo Clinic discusses stuttering, including the causes, risk factors, and when to see a doctor.

• StutteringHelp.org
• The official website for the Stuttering Foundation of America
• WebStutter.org
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• Liar & Spy
• Mr. Terupt Falls Again

About the Author

VINCE VAWTER, native of Memphis, retired after a forty-year career in newspapers, most recently as the president and publisher of the Evansville Courier & Press in Indiana. Paperboy is his first novel.

Questions for Group Discussion (continued)

1. Explain the following quote: “I can scrub something off my skin a lot easier than I can scrub it out of my head” (p. 135). What things would Little Man like to scrub out of his mind? Explain how his writing reflects a summer of courage, friendship, and hope. What is his story about the “wicked furniture”?

2. Define racism. Discuss Little Man’s struggle to understand all the rules that Mam must follow. He is upset when Mam is mistered at the Overland Park Zoo. How does her response to Little Man define her character? Debate whether Little Man’s parents decide to build a new house because of integration. What is the significance of their vague answer when Little Man asks where Mam will live in the new house?

3. These discussion questions correlate to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RI.4-6.3, RI.4-6.4, RI.4-6.5, RI.4-6.6; Comprehension & Collaboration RI.4-6.1, RI.4-6.2, Language: Conventions of Standard English 4-6.1, Knowledge of Language 4-6.2.
Mr. Spiro tells Little Man about Rosetta Stone. Read about Rosetta Stone on the following website: kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/emotion/stuttering.html. Then engage the students to share their writing on writingrosetta.html. Then have students tell the story of Little Man and Mam’s life-threatening encounter with Ara T in hieroglyphics. Allow time in class for students to share their writing.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.3; Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 4-6.4; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 4-6.4.

Mr. Spiro gives Little Man a piece of a dollar bill. Write a letter written on it in black ink. He tells him that in three weeks he can claim his “golden fleece.” The second word the boy receives is Servant, the third is Seller, and the fourth is Seeker. Read about the Greek myth The Quest for the Golden Fleece. Divide the class into small groups and ask them to discuss whether the four words relate to the myth. What is Little Man’s “golden fleece”? Allow time for the groups to share their thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 4-6.2; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 4-6.9; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 4-6.4.

Mr. Spiro encourages Little Man to continue writing poetry. Talk about the elements of an acrostic poem. Instruct students to use one of these words—Student, Servant, Seller, or Seeker—as a spine word and write a poem that Little Man might give to Mr. Spiro upon his return.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.1; Speaking & Listening SL. 4-6.1.

Mr. Spiro has an unusual way of expressing himself. Ask students to jot down unfamiliar words he uses and define them by taking clues from the context. Such words may include: transaction (p. 27), appraisals (p. 27), impediment (p. 30), rigidity (p. 30), deficits (p. 31), ledger (p. 31), velocity (p. 32), consumers (p. 32), compensation (p. 33), brooches (p. 58), susurrance (p. 100), imbibe (p. 102), pinances (p. 104), anchorage (p. 104), anxious (p. 105), cap (p. 107), and forsworn (p. 172). Then have them use a thesaurus to find more common words to express the same thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Craft & Structure RL. 4-6.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 4-6.5.

Setting is often defined as when and where a novel takes place. Make a list of the things that establish the setting of the book. If the class or school has a website, instruct students to post their list on a page called “What I Learned about 1959.” Suggest that students find and post additional cultural and political information about the year.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.4; Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.4.

Read about the Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education at PBS.org/ wnet/jimcrown/index.html. This landmark case occurred five years before Paperboy is set. Little Man and Art go to an all-white school because the Memphis public schools weren’t integrated until 1961. Have students write a guest editorial for the Pre-Simir in Mr. Spiro’s voice called “Integration: Supporting Equal Education for All.” Instruct them to make reference to Brown v. Board of Education in the editorial.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.1, 4-6.2; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.4; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.4.

Understanding the Era

Ask students to read and make a brief outline of the information about stuttering on the following website: kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/motion/stuttering.html. Then engage the class in a discussion about what they learned about this speech disorder. Finally, have students create a small poster or sign that lists dos and don’ts when talking with someone who stutters.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.1; Speaking & Listening SL. 4-6.1.

Time magazine named Dwight D. Eisenhower “Man of the Year” in 1959. Ask students to research Eisenhower’s career in the military, and his contributions as the thirty-fourth president of the United States. Then have them write the “Man of the Year” article for Time that explains why he received this distinction.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.4; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 4-6.7.

About the Book

It’s the summer of 1959 in Memphis, Tennessee. An eleven-year-old boy is asked by his friend to be a substitute paperboy for the month of July. The boy is an ace pitcher, so throwing the newspapers isn’t difficult—but collecting the money on Fridays is a challenge for him. As the summer draws to a close, the boy discovers that he has grown in ways he never expected.

Pre-Reading Activity

Ask students to read and make a brief outline of the information about stuttering on the following website: kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/motion/stuttering.html. Then engage the class in a discussion about what they learned about this speech disorder. Finally, have students create a small poster or sign that lists dos and don’ts when talking with someone who stutters.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.1, 4-6.2; Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.4.

Have students write an essay that Little Man might write for a Language Arts class called “My Best Friend.” Tell them to use specific quotes from the novel to support their ideas. Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling, and grammar.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.3; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.4.

Review the definitions of metaphor and simile. Ask students to explain the following metaphor: “Mrs. Worthington and her red hair. That was the dessert of my thinking” (p. 156). Explain the following simile: “[Mr. Spiro] sounded official like he was calling a baseball game on the radio” (p. 30). Instruct students to locate and analyze other metaphors and similes in the novel. Then have them write a metaphor that best describes Little Man’s relationship with Mam, and a simile that describes Little Man’s communication with TV boy.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 4-6.2; Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.4.

Mr. Spiro gives Little Man a piece of a dollar bill. Write a letter written on it in black ink. He tells him that in three weeks he can claim his “golden fleece.” The second word the boy receives is Servant, the third is Seller, and the fourth is Seeker. Read about the Greek myth The Quest for the Golden Fleece. Divide the class into small groups and ask them to discuss whether the four words relate to the myth. What is Little Man’s “golden fleece”? Allow time for the groups to share their thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 4-6.2; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 4-6.9; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 4-6.4.

Mr. Spiro encourages Little Man to continue writing poetry. Talk about the elements of an acrostic poem. Instruct students to use one of these words—Student, Servant, Seller, or Seeker—as a spine word and write a poem that Little Man might give to Mr. Spiro upon his return.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.1; Speaking & Listening SL. 4-6.1.
About the Book

It’s the summer of 1959 in Memphis, Tennessee. An eleven-year-old boy is asked by his friend to be a substitute paperboy for the month of July. The boy is an ace pitcher, so the newspaper’s owner hires him to run the delivery route of a newspaper that is called “Mam: My Best Friend.” Tell them how the boy learns to read lips by watching television. There’s a lot of drama as well. After a run-in with Ara T, a neighborhood junkman who is also a liar and thief, the boy and Mam, the family housekeeper, set out on a dangerous mission to recover the items Ara T stole from him. As the summer draws to a close, the boy discovers that he has grown in ways he never expected.

Pre-Reading Activity

Ask students to read and make a brief outline of the information about stuttering on the following website: kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/motion/stuttering.html. Then engage the class in a discussion about what they learned about this speech disorder. Finally, have students create a small poster or sign that lists dos and don’ts when talking with someone who stutters.

Activities

Reflecting on the Novel

Mr. Spiro tells Little Man about Rosetta Stone. Read about Rosetta Stone on the following website: ocr.wikiart.org/wiki/origin/rosetta-stone. Then have students tell the story of Little Man and Mam’s life-threatening encounter with Ara T in hieroglyphics. Allow time in class for students to share their writing.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.4; Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 4-6.6; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL 4-6.4.

Mr. Spiro gives Little Man a piece of a dollar bill with Student written on it in black ink. He tells him that in three weeks he can claim his “golden fleece.” The second word the boy receives is Servant, the third is Seller, and the fourth is Seeker. Read aloud the Greek myth The Quest for the Golden Fleece. Divide the class into small groups and ask them to discuss whether the four words relate to the myth. What is Little Man’s “golden fleece”? Allow time for the groups to share their thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 4-6.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 4-6.5.

Mr. Spiro encourages Little Man to continue writing poetry. Talk about the elements of an acrostic poem. Instruct students to use one of these words—Student, Servant, Seller, or Seeker—as a spine word and write a poem that Little Man might give to Mr. Spiro upon his return.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.4

Have students write an essay that Little Man might write for a Language Arts class called “My Best Friend.” Tell them to use specific quotes from the novel to support their ideas. Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling, and grammar.

Mr. Spiro tells Little Man about Rosetta Stone. Read about Rosetta Stone on the following website: ocr.wikiart.org/wiki/origin/rosetta-stone. Then have students tell the story of Little Man and Mam’s life-threatening encounter with Ara T in hieroglyphics. Allow time in class for students to share their writing.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.4; Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 4-6.6; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL 4-6.4.

Mr. Spiro gives Little Man a piece of a dollar bill with Student written on it in black ink. He tells him that in three weeks he can claim his “golden fleece.” The second word the boy receives is Servant, the third is Seller, and the fourth is Seeker. Read aloud the Greek myth The Quest for the Golden Fleece. Divide the class into small groups and ask them to discuss whether the four words relate to the myth. What is Little Man’s “golden fleece”? Allow time for the groups to share their thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 4-6.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 4-6.5.

Mr. Spiro has an unusual way of expressing himself. Ask students to jot down unfamiliar words he uses and define them by taking clues from the context. Such words may include: transaction (p. 27), approbation (p. 27), impediment (p. 30), rigidity (p. 30), deficits (p. 31), ledger (p. 31), velocity (p. 32), consumers (p. 32), compensation (p. 33), broilerbed (p. 58), sustenance (p. 100), amble (p. 102), pinata (p. 104), anchorage (p. 104), amusement (p. 105), carpet (p. 170), and forthwith (p. 172). Then have them use a thesaurus to find more common words to express the same thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Craft & Structure RL. 4-6.6; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 4-6.5.

Setting is often defined as when and where a novel takes place. Make a list of the things students mentioned that establish the setting of the book. If the class or school has a website, instruct students to post their list on a page called “What I Learned about 1959.” Suggest that students find and post additional cultural and political information about the year. If the class or school has a website, instruct students to post their list on a page called “What I Learned about 1959.” Suggest that students find and post additional cultural and political information about the year.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.4; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.6.
About the Book

It’s the summer of 1959 in Memphis, Tennessee. An eleven-year-old boy is asked by his friend to be a substitute paperboy for the month of July. The boy is an ace pitcher, so throwing the newspapers isn’t difficult—but collecting the money on Fridays is a challenge because he’s a stutterer. The customers intrigue him; there’s Mrs. Worthington, who drinks too much; Mr. Spiro, a retired merchant marine whose house is filled with books; and a deaf man who learns to read lips by watching television. There’s a lot of drama as well. After a run-in with Ara T, a neighborhood junkman who is also a liar and thief, the boy and Mam, a poem that Little Man might give to Mr. Spiro, upon his return. Mr. Spiro gives Little Man a piece of a dollar bill with Student written on it in black ink. He tells him that in three weeks he can claim his “golden fleece.” The second word the boy receives is Servant, the third is Seller, and the fourth is Seeker. Read aloud the Greek myth The Quest for the Golden Fleece. Divide the class into small groups and ask them to discuss whether the four words relate to the myth. What is Little Man’s “golden fleece”? Allow time for the groups to share their thoughts.

Pre-Reading Activity

Ask students to read and make a brief outline of the information about stuttering on the following website: kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/motion/stuttering.html. Then engage the class in a discussion about what they learned about this speech disorder. Finally, have students create a small poster or sign that lists dos and don’ts when talking with someone who stutters.

About the Author

Mr. Spiro, little man, and Martha Stone: Read about Martha Stone on the following website: writing/rosetta.html. Then have students tell the story of Little Man and Mrs. Stone in hieroglyphics. Allow time in class for students to share their writing.

Review the definitions of metaphor and simile. Ask students to explain the following metaphor: “Mrs. Worthington and her red hair. That was the dessert of my thinking” (p. 156). Explain the following simile: “[Mr. Spiro] sounded official like he was calling a baseball game on the radio” (p. 30). Instruct students to locate and analyze other metaphors and similes in the novel. Then have them write a metaphor that best describes Little Man’s relationship with Mam, and a simile that describes Little Man’s relationship with TV boy.

Mr. Spiro has an unusual way of expressing himself. Ask students to jot down unfamiliar words he uses and define them by taking clues from the context. Such words may include: transaction (p. 27), appalled (p. 27), impediment (p. 30), rigidity (p. 30), deficits (p. 31), ledger (p. 31), velocity (p. 32), compensations (p. 33),浏览器 (p. 58), sustenance (p. 100), ambibe (p. 102), pittance (p. 104), anchorage (p. 104), animal (p. 105), carp (p. 107), and forthwith (p. 172). Then have them use a thesaurus to find more common words to express the same thoughts.

Activities

Reflecting on the Novel

Mr. Spiro tells Little Man about Rosetta Stone. Read about Rosetta Stone on the following website: writing/rosetta.html. Then have students tell the story of Little Man and Mam’s life-threatening encounter with Aza T in hieroglyphics. Allow time in class for students to share their writing.

Students create a small poster or sign that lists dos and don’ts when talking with someone who stutters. Finally, have them write the “My Name” article for Time that explains why he received this distinction.

Understanding the Era

Setting is often defined as when and where a novel takes place. Make a list of the things and events the author references that establish the setting of the book. If the class or school has a website, instruct students to post their lists on a page called “What I Learned about 1959.” Suggest that students find and post additional cultural and political information about the year.

Research to make reference to Brown v. Board of Education for All.” Instruct them to make reference to PBS.org/BrownvBoard of Education for All. Ask students to research Eisenhower’s career in the military and his contributions as the thirty-fourth president of the United States. Then have them write the “Man of the Year” article for Time that explains why he received this distinction.

About the Author

Mr. Spiro encourages Little Man to continue writing poetry. Talk about the elements of an acrostic poem. Instruct students to use one of these words—Student, Servant, Seller, or Seeker—as a spine word and write a poem that Little Man might give to Mr. Spiro upon his return.

Have students write an essay that Little Man might write for a Language Arts class called “My Best Friend.” Tell them to use specific quotes from the novel to support their ideas. Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling, and grammar.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.3; Production & Distribution of Writing W.4-6.2.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL.4-6.3; Reading Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI.4-6.2.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Craft & Structure RL.4-6.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L.4-6.5.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI.4-6.1.

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Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W.4-6.2.
The boy stands up in class and says, “My name is Victor Vollmer the Third” (p. 222). How is this a step toward resolving his internal conflict? At what point is this conflict revealed? An internal conflict is a problem, issue, or event that a character encounters as an obstacle. Identify the external conflicts in the novel. Explain how both internal and external conflicts change Little Man by the end of the summer.

Explain his mother's vague answer when he asks why they are building a new house because of integration. Debate whether Little Man's parents decide to build a new house because of integration.

Describe Little Man's fascination with Ara T. What is the first clue that Ara T isn't an honest man? How does Mr. Spiro warn Little Man about Ara T? Explain why Little Man suspects Ara T is responsible. Why doesn't Mam call the police after Ara T robs Little Man for several days, and returns with bruises and a black eye. Discuss why Little Man suspects Ara T is responsible.

The boy says, “I wouldn't have made it this far without her” (p. 3). How does Mam eager to put their brush with death behind them? Discuss why it’s important for Mam and Little Man to keep the incident between them. What might happen if Little Man tells his parents knew?

Explain the relationship between Mam, the housekeeper his parents hired to help take care of him. Mam’s real name is Miss Nellie Avent. How is Mam a term of endearment? Explain why he calls her his best friend. What life lessons does she teach him? Why does she call the boy Little Man? Avent. How is Mam a symbol of the boy’s journey? Explain the significance of the scene when he stands up in class and says, “My name is Victor Vollmer the Third” (p. 222). How is this a step toward resolving his internal conflict?

Discuss the boy’s relationship with his parents. Why does he like to be around his mother more than his mother? Why does he call his best friend? What is the first clue that Ara T isn’t an honest man? How does Mr. Spiro warn Little Man about Ara T? Explain why Little Man suspects Ara T is responsible. Why doesn’t Mam call the police after Ara T robs Little Man for several days, and returns with bruises and a black eye. Discuss why Little Man suspects Ara T is responsible.

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Related Titles

About the Author

Vince Vawter, native of Memphis, retired after a forty-year career in newspapers, most recently as the president and publisher of the Evansville Courier & Press in Indiana. Paperboy is his first novel.

Internal Resources

StutteringHelp.org
The official website for the Stuttering Foundation of America
WebStutter.org
The official website for the National Stuttering Association
MaoClinic.org/diseases/conditions/stuttering/basics/definition/com-20025834
The Mayo Clinic discusses stuttering, including the causes, risk factors, and when to see a doctor.

Paperboy

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Questions for Group Discussion

An internal conflict is a problem or a dilemma that a character faces within him or herself. What is the internal conflict within the boy? At what point is this conflict revealed? An external conflict is a problem, issue, or event that a character encounters as an obstacle. Identify the external conflicts in the novel. Explain how both internal and external conflicts change Little Man by the end of the summer.

The boy is puzzled and surprised when he discovers his birth certificate and sees that his father is “Unknown.” Why does he call his best friend? What is the first clue that Ara T isn’t an honest man? How does Mr. Spiro warn Little Man about Ara T? Explain why Little Man suspects Ara T is responsible. Why doesn’t Mam call the police after Ara T robs Little Man for several days, and returns with bruises and a black eye. Discuss why Little Man suspects Ara T is responsible.

Questions for Group Discussion (continued)

Explain the following quote: “I can scrub something off my skin a lot easier than I can scrub it out of my head” (p. 135). What things would Little Man like to scrub out of his head? Explain how his writing reflects a summer of courage, friendship, and hope. Why does he bury his writing under the “wicked furniture”?

Explain his mother's vague answer when he asks why they are building a new house because of integration. Debate whether Little Man's parents decide to build a new house because of integration.

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The boy is puzzled and surprised when he discovers his birth certificate and sees that his father is “Unknown.” Why does he call his best friend? What is the first clue that Ara T isn’t an honest man? How does Mr. Spiro warn Little Man about Ara T? Explain why Little Man suspects Ara T is responsible. Why doesn’t Mam call the police after Ara T robs Little Man for several days, and returns with bruises and a black eye. Discuss why Little Man suspects Ara T is responsible.

Questions for Group Discussion (continued)

Explain the following quote: “I can scrub something off my skin a lot easier than I can scrub it out of my head” (p. 135). What things would Little Man like to scrub out of his head? Explain how his writing reflects a summer of courage, friendship, and hope. Why does he bury his writing under the “wicked furniture”?

Explain his mother's vague answer when he asks why they are building a new house because of integration. Debate whether Little Man's parents decide to build a new house because of integration.

Internet Resources

StutteringHelp.org
The official website for the Stuttering Foundation of America
WebStutter.org
The official website for the National Stuttering Association
MaoClinic.org/diseases/conditions/stuttering/basics/definition/com-20025834
The Mayo Clinic discusses stuttering, including the causes, risk factors, and when to see a doctor.

About the Author

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Related Titles

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Questions for Group Discussion

• An internal conflict is a problem or a dilemma that a character faces within him or herself. What is the internal conflict within the boy? At what point is this conflict revealed? An external conflict is a problem or dilemma that a character encounters as an obstacle. Identify the external conflicts in the novel. Explain how both internal and external conflicts change Little Man by the end of the summer.

• The novel is told in first person from the main character’s point of view. Does the reader know the boy’s name until the end of the novel? How is this symbolic of the boy’s journey? Explain the significance of the scene when he stands up in class and says, “My name is Victor Vollmer the Third” (p. 222). How is this a step toward resolving his internal conflict?

• Discuss the boy’s relationship with Mam, the housekeeper his parents hired to help take care of him. Mam’s real name is Miss Nellie Avent. How is Mam a term of endearment? Explain why he doesn’t share any of these things with Rat.

• Explain the friendship that develops between Little Man and Mr. Spiro. How does Mr. Spiro know so much about Little Man? What does Mr. Spiro offer the boy that no one else has? Describe Little Man’s friendship with TV boy. What do they offer one another?

• Discuss the boy’s relationship with his parents. Does the boy like to be around his father more than his mother? Why does he feel sorry for his mother?

• The boy is puzzled and surprised when he discovers his birth certificate and sees the fact that his parents are gone a lot. How does he feel sorry for his mother?

• “My name is Victor Vollmer the Third” (p. 22). How is this a step toward resolving his internal conflict?

• Why does Mam fill the empty space?

• Good and bad things happen to Little Man on the paper route. What might he say are the best and worst things that happen? Would Little Man consider his experiences with Mrs. Worthington to be “good stuff” or “bad stuff”? Why is he so intrigued by her?

• Define racism. Discuss Little Man’s struggle to understand all the rules that Mam must follow. Is he upset when Mam is mistreated at the Overland Park Zoo. How does her response to Little Man define her character?

• Define friendship from Little Man’s point of view. How did he and Rat become friends? Explain how Rat is his front man when other kids tease him about his speech. Discuss how their friendship changes when they enter seventh grade. How are these changes related to each boy’s growth over the summer? How does Rat express his loyalty to Little Man at the end of the novel?

• Explain the following quote: “I can scrub something off my skin a lot easier than I can scrub it out of my head” (p. 135). What would Little Man like to scrub out of his mind? How does writing down the events of his summer help him?

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Pre-Reading Activity
Ask students to read and make a brief outline of the information about stuttering on the following website: kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/emotion/stuttering.html. Then engage the class in a discussion about what they learned about this speech disorder. Finally, have students create a small poster or sign that lists dos and don’ts when talking with someone who stutters.

Activities

Reflecting on the Novel
Mr. Spiro tells Little Man about Rosetta Stone. Read about Rosetta Stone on the following websites, or have students write a report about the invention. writing/rosetta.html. Then have students answer the following questions:

1. What words appear to be wrong? Correct any pronunciations or spellings that students are unsure of.
2. What is Little Man’s relationship with Mam? Use specific quotes from the novel to support your ideas. Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling, and grammar.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.1, Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.3.

Review the definitions of metaphor and simile. Ask students to explain the following metaphor: “Mrs. Worthington and her red hair. That was the dessert of my thinking” (p. 156). Explain the following simile: “[Mr. Spiro] sounded official like he was calling a baseball game on the radio” (p. 30). Instruct students to locate and analyze other metaphors and similes in the novel. Then have them write a metaphor that best describes Little Man’s relationship with Mam, and a simile that describes Little Man’s communication with TV boy.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.2; Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.4.

Mr. Spiro encourages Little Man to continue writing poetry. Talk about the elements of an acrostic poem. Instruct students to use one of these words—Student, Servant, Seller, or Seeker—as a spine word and write a poem that Little Man might give to Mr. Spiro upon his return.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.1; Speaking & Listening SL. 4-6.1.

Mr. Spiro gives Little Man a piece of a dollar bill with a student written on it in black ink. He tells him that in three weeks he can claim his “golden fleece.” The second word the boy receives is Servant, the third is Seller, and the fourth is Seeker. Read aloud the Greek myth The Quest for the Golden Fleece. Divide the class into small groups and ask them to discuss whether the four words relate to the myth. What is Little Man’s “golden fleece”? Allow time for the groups to share their thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.2, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 4-6.7; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 4-6.4.

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Mr. Spiro has an unusual way of expressing himself. Ask students to jot down unfamiliar words he uses and define them by taking clues from the context. Such words may include: transaction (p. 27), appeal (p. 27), impediment (p. 30), rigidity (p. 30), deficits (p. 31), ledger (p. 31), velocity (p. 32), consumers (p. 32), compensation (p. 33), brouhaha (p. 58), sustenance (p. 100), amble (p. 102), pittance (p. 104), anchorage (p. 104), amenities (p. 105), cargo (p. 170), and forsworn (p. 172). Then have them use a thesaurus to find more common words to express the same thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.1, 4-6.2, Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.1, Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.4.

Setting is often defined as when and where a novel takes place. Make a list of the things that give the author references that establish the setting of the book. If the class or school has a website, instruct students to post their list on a page called “What I Learned about 1959.” Suggest that students find and post additional cultural and political information about the year.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.2, Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.4.

Understanding the Era

Read about the Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education at PBS.org/ wnet/jimcrow/index.html. This landmark case occurred five years before Peterboy is set. Little Man and Am go to an all-white school because the Memphis public schools weren’t integrated until 1961. Have students write a guest editorial for the Pre-Seminar in Mr. Spiro’s voice called “Integration: Supporting Equal Education for All.” Instruct them to make reference to Brown v. Board of Education in the editorial.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.1, 4-6.2, Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.1, Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.4.

About the Book
It’s the summer of 1959 in Memphis, Tennessee. An eleven-year-old boy is asked by his friend to be a substitute paperboy for the month of July. The boy is an ace pitcher, so throwing the newspapers isn’t difficult—but collecting the money on Fridays is a challenge for him. He runs into Ara T, a neighborhood junkman who is also a liar and thief, the boy and Mam, too much; Mr. Spiro, a retired merchant marine whose house is filled with books; and a deaf man who teaches to read lips by watching television. There’s a lot of drama as well. After a run-in with Ara T, a neighbor of Mr. Spiro who kidnaps his career as the family housekeeper, set out on a dangerous mission to recover the items Ara T stole from him. Mr. Spiro wants a newspaper seller, so he hires Little Man’s “golden fleece”? Allow time for the groups to share their thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 4-6.3; Speaking & Listening: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-6.1; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-6.3.

About the Author

Chris Sheban grew up in South Carolina and Colorado. He has a master’s degree in creative writing from the University of Memphis and is a former middle school English teacher. He is the author of Student, Servant, Seller, Seeker—a spine word and write a poem that Little Man might give to Mr. Spiro upon his return.

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