



Crash

Jerry Spinelli

Teacher's Guide
By Kathy Sammis



LIVING
LITERATURE
SERIES

A Perma-Bound Production

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Synopsis

Chapters 1-2

The novel's narrator, John Coogan, tells us that everyone calls him Crash, because he crashes through life—people, things—headfirst, with or without his football helmet. In an extended flashback, Crash recalls the summer, just before first grade, when dweeby Penn Webb moves into his Springfield, Pa., neighborhood from North Dakota. Penn tries to be friends, but everything about him bugs Crash: Penn is small, cheerfully open, nonaggressive, gullible, and every day he wears a different button (his mother made them for a living) with a dorky slogan on it, like "peace."

Chapters 3-4

Penn continues his friendly advances, even though Crash responds to him in a decidedly unfriendly and sarcastic way. But when Penn invites Crash over for dinner, Crash is curious to "get an inside look at the boss dorks"—Penn's older parents—and the Webbs' tiny house. Typically, Crash turns the invitation into a competition, challenging Penn to beat him in a variety of improvised contests, all of which Crash wins. He is surprised, though, when Penn nearly keeps up with him in a foot race; Crash has never lost a race in his six-year-old life. Crash also gets furiously angry when Penn refuses to shoot a water pistol; Penn's explanation that he is a Quaker and does not believe in violence makes no sense to Crash.

Chapters 5-6

At the Webbs' house for dinner, Crash is stunned to discover that Penn's only toy is a model Conestoga wagon that his great-grandfather made for him.

His other prized possession is a tin full of dried mud from the bottom of the Missouri River that his great-grandfather dove for many years ago; legend says that if you wait at least fifty years and then reconstitute the mud with water, it will cure anything that is wrong with you. At dinner, Crash is dismayed to find that the Webbs are vegetarians and the oatburger taste terrible to him. When Mr. and Mrs. Webb tell Crash that they too are

Quakers, Crash responded, "That's too bad," because Penn is missing out on all kinds of neat Christmas gifts, like war toys. To cap things off, the Webbs do not even have a TV set! On Saturdays, Penn reads books, plays, and goes on outings with his parents.

Chapter 7

Back home, Penn asks his dad if they can go to the Phillies game on Saturday. As usual, Mr. Coogan says no—he's starting up his own business and has to work seventy-hour weeks, leaving no time or energy for anything else.

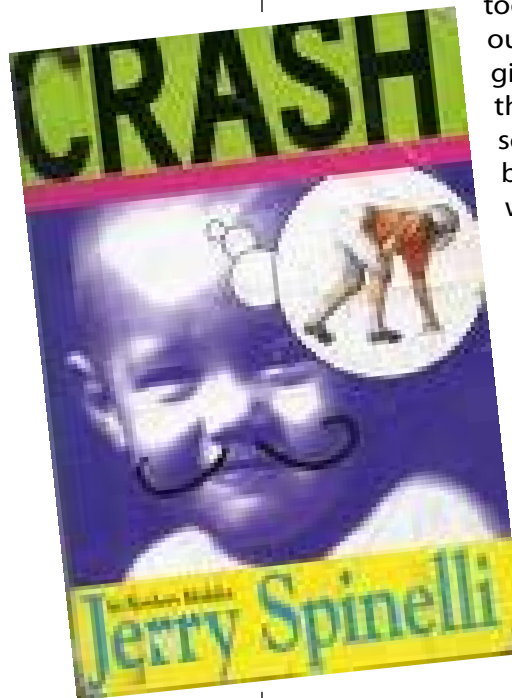
Chapter 8

Crash keeps refusing the Webbs' invitations to come for dinner and join them on out-

ings, and by third grade, Penn has given up trying to be friends with Crash. At the beginning of sixth grade, Mike Deluca moves across the street from Crash, and the two become immediate best friends, bonding through mock-aggression rituals. When Mike sees Penn pulling his Conestoga wagon along the sidewalk, he declares that he and Crash will renew harassment of Penn.

Chapters 9-10 (Sept. 8)

Crash's narration takes up in the present time, the beginning of seventh grade. Crash and Mike explodes in laughter when Penn tells them his "new" shirt came from Second Time Around, a local thrift store. Crash suddenly gets interested in



girls when he spots a stunning new seventh-grader, Jane Forbes. In the cafeteria, ever competitive, Crash and Mike get into an escalating food fight that starts out as fun but ends up serious because, as Crash explains, “I’ve never been No. 2 in my life. I can’t stand to lose. More than that, I just won’t.”

Chapters 11-12

The food fight earns Crash and Mike a visit with the vice principal, who lets them off with a warning, telling them to save the fighting for the football field. After school, at the first day of football tryouts, Crash and Mike cannot believe what they’re seeing—Penn Webb is going out for cheerleading (along with Jane, Forbes). After practice, back at the Coogans’ house, Crash and Mike order a pizza for supper, as usual.

Chapter 13

Also as usual, Mr. and Mrs. Coogan both arrive home from work exhausted. Crash’s younger sister, Abby, greets them with her customary perky animation. Not as usual, the family sits down and eats dinner together (Crash’s second meal). Abby is working on some secret plan involving the backyard. Crash unsuccessfully tries to get his father to commit to attending the team’s first football game, in October.

Chapters 14-15 (Sept. 13)

Crash and Mike resume their tormenting of Penn, this time filling his sneakers with mustard during geography class. After school, at football practice, Crash is disgusted to see that Jane Forbes is helping Penn wash out his sneakers.

Chapters 16-17

At home, Abby picks the pepperoni off her pizza, explaining that she is now a vegetarian: “I do not devour anything that has a face.” When Mr. and Mrs. Coogan come home, Crash notices that they always sag at this time as soon as he or Abby says anything to them. Crash mentions the first football game again to his dad. Upstairs, Crash looks at the paintings lining the hallway; his mother used to be a painter. Someone has drawn a mustache on the glass that covers the portrait of baby Crash. Crash rubs it off.

Chapters 18 (Oct. 8)

Crash scores a record six touchdowns in the game against Hillside East. All through the game,

Crash keeps looking for his parents in the stands. They are not there, but the Webbs are, which makes Crash angry at them. Crash feels that he has to score or make a big gain every time he gets the ball, so his parents will see him excelling if they appear at that moment. He only reluctantly obeys his coach when a second-stringer replaces him in the third quarter. Back home, Crash is thrilled to discover his grandfather Scooter cooking in the kitchen.

Chapters 19

Scooter has come to live with the Coogans! Crash delightedly tells Scooter how awesome he was at the game. At dinner—which is scrumptious because Scooter is an ex-Navy cook—Mrs. Coogan happily says that she is going to be the agent for three of the stores in the new mall that is about to be built. Because his parents forget to ask about the game, Crash barely mentions his exploits. When Abby gets home, she is carrying a sign and wearing a button that both read “The mall must fall.”

Chapters 20-21

Later, Crash and Abby sit on Scooter’s bed, with Scooter telling stories about his Navy days, as he has done since the kids were little. For Crash and Abby, Scooter’s bed has always been the safest place in the world, a secure bed boat, a place where you can tell secrets and confess anything. Tonight, Abby tells Scooter that she plans to make their backyard into a certified wildlife habitat, giving animals and birds displaced by malls a place to live.

Chapters 22 (Oct. 22)

Scooter attends football practices and games, which Crash considers puts him one-up on Penn Webb. That night, at a school dance Crash uses his “run through people” football approach on Jane Forbes. He showers her with jock-style come-on lines, grabs her hand, and tries twice to drag her out on the dance floor. Jane has to kick Crash to get him to let go of her, and sums up her opinion of him succinctly: “You think you’re so great, but you’re just pathetic. You have a big mouth. You bully people around. You don’t care about anybody’s feelings. You’re just a big, dumb, obnoxious jockstrap.” The accuracy of this description is proved when Crash responds by almost reaching out for Jane’s hand again—only to find Penn Webb

getting there first. Penn is wearing a “Stall the mall” T-shirt, and he gives one to Jane, too; she immediately puts it on. Leaving the dance in a fury, Crash rams into Penn and sends him flying across the floor.

Chapters 25-26 (Nov. 5)

Penn and Jane lose their spots on the cheerleading squad because they miss games, selling T-shirts and demonstrating against the mall instead. At dinnertime, Abby rushes into the house and excitedly turns on the six o'clock TV news, which shows the demonstration and even features a statement from Abby.

Chapter 27 (Nov. 20)

During the last game of the season, Crash breaks the Springfield Middle School record for touchdowns in one season. Scooter, attending the game as usual, records the feat with the family camcorder. Crash is annoyed, however, that Scooter is sitting next to Penn and his parents, and chatting.

Chapter 28 (Nov. 28)

As usual, Scooter cooks a delicious Thanksgiving dinner. Afterward, the family, Uncle Herm, and Cousin Bridget play a game of touch football. When Crash sees Scooter racing toward the goalie, he catches up and tackles his grandfather at the knees. Crash grabs the loose ball and returns it to the other end of the field for a TD, while everyone else tends to Scooter. Later, Crash reflects that he was a little mad at Scooter all week for pressing the wrong button on the camcorder so there is no movie of Crash's record-setting performance. But of course that is not why he tackled Scooter, Crash tells himself. Looking in on his sleeping grandfather, Crash is troubled to see for the first time that Scooter looks old.

Chapter 31 (Dec. 19)

“Scooter is in the hospital.”

Chapter 32 (Dec. 23)

Scooter has had a stroke, and the prognosis is uncertain. When Crash realizes he has not gotten Scooter a Christmas present yet, he thinks it might be because he does not expect his grandfather to live. He rushes on his bike to the first store he can find and grabs the nearest thing: a pair of glittery red high-heeled shoes. With the present bought, Crash feels the shadow back off from Scooter's

hospital bed. At home, when nobody else is around, Crash sometimes sits on Scooter's bed.

Chapter 33 (Dec. 29)

Christmas seemed flat to Crash without Scooter. Crash did get his grandfather a real gift, a book about Navy ships, but he keeps the red shoes as a possible good-luck charm.

Chapter 34 (Jan 1)

Mike and Crash competitively compare Christmas gifts. Crash reacts with anger when Mike takes Scooter's Navy cap out of the bedroom and wears it. Meanwhile, Penn brings over the jar of Missouri River mud with a note for Scooter, “to help you” get better.

Chapter 35 (Jan. 9)

Back at school, Crash is not interested in Mike's new plan to trick Penn into eating meat. Scooter is now in a rehab facility; he looks strange to Crash, with a crooked and drooling mouth and motionless right hand. At home, Abby has set her old dollhouse out in the back yard and labeled it “Mouse House.” She's also upset that Scooter will not be able to make her favorite catfish cakes for her February 1 birthday.

Chapter 36 (Feb. 1)

Abby does not want anything to do with her birthday because Scooter's not there; she even rejects the catfish cakes (brownies with catfish-face icing) that Crash has made for her. At school, Crash is not interested in Mike's plan to soak Penn with his Jetwater Uzi water gun, and Mike complains in return that Crash has become “a dud” who does not want to do anything fun anymore. Suddenly, Crash thinks, his name no longer fits him like a second skin.

Chapter 37 (Feb. 13)

Scooter can now say one word: “Abye.” After dinner, Crash sees Penn Webb sprinting down the street; no one is chasing him.

Chapter 38 (Feb. 28)

Crash tells his mother why he has a pair of glittery red shoes under his bed. Mrs. Coogan laughingly tells Crash he must have been shopping at Second Time Around; Crash shudders to think he has been in a thrift shop. Crash advises Abby on how to make her backyard Mouse House more appealing

to rodents. Penn Webb runs by the Coogans' house every night.

Chapter 39 (Mar. 22)

The English class assignment is to write an essay about someone who means something to you. Mike grabs and crumples Penn's essay, and Crash reads it before returning it to a surprised Penn. The essay is about Penn's great-grandfather, who lives back in North Dakota; Penn calls him his best friend, and he sorely misses him and his stories about the old days. As a special gift to his great-grandfather, Penn is practicing to run in the famous Penn Relays while Mr. Webb is visiting in April. (Penn's great-grandfather chose the boy's name in commemoration of the Relays, in which he had won a race in 1919.)

Chapter 40 (Apr. 2)

Abby chases the ChemLawn man away from the yard.

Chapter 41 (Apr. 12)

Crash loves to run track because he is so fast that he can demolish competitors in a race. At the track tryouts for the hundred-meter dash, Crash comes in first and Penn is second.

Chapter 42 (Apr. 15)

Jane shows Crash an anonymous note sent to Penn, saying he must eat meat in the cafeteria Monday if he wants to see his pet turtle alive again. Crash storms over to Mike's house and retrieves the turtle, shoving Mike down the hallway in the process.

Chapter 43 (Apr. 16)

"Scooter came home today!"

Chapter 44 (Apr. 18)

Penn Relays week arrives. The Springfield Middle School team has one non-eighth-grade spot open, for the four-by-one-hundred-meter race. Crash thinks, That spot is mine.

Chapter 45 (Apr. 19)

Mrs. Coogan cuts back to part-time real-estate work; things will be tight financially, so some of Crash's clothes really will come from Second Time Around now. On the other hand, Mrs. Coogan will be able to cook family meals, care for Scooter, spend time with Crash and Abby, and get back to

painting.

Chapter 46 (Apr. 20)

This is race-off day for the one spot on the relay team. At the track, Crash sees Penn's great-grandfather with the Webbs and thinks that Scooter and the old Mr. Webb would have liked each other, having much in common. Did this man know, Crash wonders, that his great-grandson cannot win the race-off and so would not run in the Penn Relays? Suddenly Crash sees a gift for a great-grandfather from North Dakota, "maybe for all great-grandfathers," but he is not sure he wants to give the gift. In the race-off, Crash gets a bad start because he is thinking of his grandfather's pet octopus. Ten meters from the finish line, Crash catches up to Penn, and he likes being just even. A half breath from the white string, he barks out to Penn, "Lean!" Penn leans, throws out his chest, and wins the race.

Chapter 47 (Apr. 25)

Crash feels strange. At first, losing the race makes him feel strange-bad, regretting what he had done. Today, the PA at school announced that the Springfield team has placed second in the Penn Relays, with Penn Webb running the anchor leg, bringing the team from last to second. Inside, Crash cheers.

Chapter 48 (Apr. 30)

Scooter walks upstairs, two days after Crash mixes up some Missouri River mud and dips Scooter's big toe in it.

Chapter 49 (July 2)

Crash still feels strange: "Like, is this really me?" But it is not strange-bad anymore, just different, sometimes even good. A lot has changed from a year ago. The back yard is all natural, unmowed. Mice are living in Abby's Mouse House. Abby and Crash tell stories to Scooter in bed. Crash buys his mother a set of paints instead of getting a pair of expensive sneakers for himself. At last, the whole family is going to a Phillies game. Crash has been invited to a party at Jane Forbes's. And Penn Webb is Crash's best friend.

Timeline of the Action

**Summer before
1st grade**

Penn Webb moves into
Crash Coogan's neighbor

Sixth grade	hood; Crash rejects Penn's attempts to be friends. Mike DeLuca moves into Crash's neighborhood; Crash and Mike become best friends.
Sept. 8	Seventh grade begins; Jane Forbes is a new student; football practice begins; Jane and Penn go out for cheerleading.
Oct. 8	First football game: Crash scores a record six touchdowns, but his parents do not attend the game. Scooter moves in with the Coogans.
Oct. 22	Crash clashes with both Jane and Penn at the school dance.
Nov. 5	Penn, Jane, and Abby join a demonstration against the planned new mall; Penn and Jane lose their spots on the cheerleading squad.
Dec. 19	Scooter has a stroke and is hospitalized.
Jan. 1	Penn brings his gift of Missouri River mud to the Coogans' house; Crash and Mike clash over Scooter's hat.
Jan. 9	Crash visits Scooter at the rehabilitation facility.
Feb. 13	Scooter talks (one word, "A-bye"); Penn Webb starts running every evening.
March 22	Crash reads Penn's essay about his great-grandfather.
April 15	Crash angrily retrieves Penn's turtle from Mike.
April 16	Scooter comes home.
April 19	Mrs. Coogan cuts back to part-time real-estate work.
April 30	Scooter walks upstairs.
July 2	Crash looks back on the many changes in his life over the past year; Crash and Penn are now best friends.

Author Sketch

Born February 1, 1941, in Norristown, Pa., Jerry Spinelli earned his B.A. from Gettysburg College in 1963 and his M.A. from Johns Hopkins University the following year. His early ambition was to become a major league baseball player, but he decided on writing in high school after the local newspaper published a poem he'd written.

Spinelli worked as an editor at Chilton Company, a technical publisher, from 1966 until 1989. In his early years at Chilton, Spinelli spent lunch hours and evenings writing, turning out four adult novels that found no publishers. He changed his writing approach after his 1977 marriage to writer Eileen Mesi, whose five children from a previous marriage provided him with inspiration and material. A written description of an incident at home evolved into Spinelli's first published book, *Space Station Seventh Grade*, in which newly adolescent Jason humorously describes the pitfalls of this perilous year. Other teen novels followed, drawing in readers with their humor and authentic voice while at the same time often dealing with serious themes of racism, gender bias, sex, and peer pressure. Perhaps his best-known book, Newbery Award-winner *Maniac Magee* (1990), grapples with the topic of racism. In addition to the Newbery, the book won the *Boston Globe/Horn Book Award*, the *D. C. Fisher Award*, the *Pacific Northwest Readers' Choice Award*, and the *Carolyn Field Award*. Spinelli describes the novel as "a blending of tall tale and actuality," in which truth and fiction merge "to the point where it makes no difference which is which." In his Newbery acceptance speech, Spinelli revealed his source of inspiration, recounting his answer to an audience of school kids when asked where he gets his ideas: "You. You're where I get all that stuff. You're the funny ones. You're the fascinating ones. You're the elusive and inspiring and promising and heroic and maddening ones." His enthusiasm for young people has helped him create a body of award-winning work that shines the light of humor and compassion on the struggles of growing up. He and his wife have six children and live in Phoenixville, Pa.

Critic's Corner

Jerry Spinelli is "a master of those embarrassing, gloppy, painful and suddenly wonderful things

that happen on the razor's edge between childhood and full-fledged adolescence," according to Deborah Churchman in the *Washington Post Book World*. Many critics have noted that Spinelli presents adolescents as they are, suffering from acne and filled with pubescent curiosity. John Keller, writing in *Horn Book*, remarked: "Jerry has listened and observed, and, in language that is never self-consciously literary, he illuminates that rough magic children carry around with them."

Spinelli's style and content have drawn a loyal following of readers—young adults facing social, moral, and personal problems and full of questions, just like his characters. A family man who draws on real-life events to both teach and entertain, Spinelli, as Keller wrote, "is a man who shines forth with the desire to be a writer, a man whose great drive is to share his vision of the world with his readers. As he creates the honest and accurate worlds reflected in so many of the passages of his novels, he is also a man whose enthusiasm for what he does is infectious."

Of *Crash*, *Horn Book* wrote, "Spinelli deals with intriguing themes in his fast-paced, readable, novel....great fun to read." *Booklist* agreed, commenting, "Spinelli's writing style is great for kids in this age group, fast-paced and funny," adding, "While it's plain where events are leading Crash, the strongly drawn characters, rather than the plot, become the focal point." The *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* noted, "Crash's character has a raw edge that often doesn't get acknowledged in pre-YA fiction; kids not ready for Chris Lynch but looking for that kind of grit will appreciate Crash's story." *School Library Journal* summed up, "Readers will devour this humorous glimpse at what jocks are made of while learning that life does not require crashing helmet-headed through it."

Selected Other Works by Jerry Spinelli

Space Station Seventh Grade (1982)
Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush? (1984)
Night of the Whale (1985)
Jason and Marceline (1986)
Dump Days (1988)
Maniac Magee (1990)
The Bathwater Gang (1990)

There's a Girl in My Hammerlock (1990)
School Daze: Report to the Principal's Office (1991)
Fourth Grade Rats (1991)
The Bathwater Gang Gets Down to Business (1992)
Who Ran My Underwear Up the Flagpole? (1992)
Do the Funky Pickle (1992)
Picklemania (1993)
Tooter Pepperday (1995)
The Library Card (1997)
Wringer (1997)
Blue Ribbon Blues (1997)
Knots In My Yo-Yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid (1998)
Stargirl (2000)
Loser (2002)
Milkweed (2003)
Eggs (2007)
Love, Stargirl (2007)
Smiles to Go (2008)
I Can Be Anything! (2009)

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The New York Times Book Review, June 16, 1996, p. 33.
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- Washington Post Book World*, January 13, 1985, p. 8; May 5, 1996, p. 14.

Internet

- "Embracing the Child: Jerry Spinelli," <
<http://www.embracingthechild.org/aspinelli.htm>>
- "Jerry Spinelli" <
<http://www.randomhouse.com/author/results.pperl?authorid=29311>>
- Official website,
 <http://www.jerryspinelli.com/newbery_002.htm>

General Objectives

1. To analyze the nature and causes of bullying behavior and discuss ways to deal with it and stop it
2. To consider guidelines on what does and does not constitute harassing behavior
3. To become familiar with elements of the coming-of-age novel
4. To discuss the important role grandparents and friends can play in a person's life
5. To examine family stresses in households where all adults work full-time
6. To identify elements and sources of the arrogant "jock" mentality and how this affects a person's relationships with others
7. To consider reasons why people become involved in environmental activism
8. To discuss people's choices to be pacifist and/or vegetarian

Specific Objectives

1. To identify the many ways in which Penn Webb annoys Crash Coogan, and the reasons why Crash feels this way about Penn
2. To note the numerous ways in which Crash and Mike harass and bully Penn
3. To recognize the common interests that draw Penn and Abby together

4. To trace the development of Abby's environmental activism through the course of the novel
5. To understand the role that Scooter plays in Crash's and Abby's lives
6. To contrast the roles that their parents play in Crash's and Penn's lives
7. To identify elements of Crash's typical attitudes and behavior when he is the stereotypical jock
8. To trace how and why Crash changes from stereotypical jock to empathetic young man
9. To recognize the common bonds that Crash finally finds with Penn Webb, and the positive character traits the novel presents as desirable as embodied in Penn
10. To analyze why "Crash" is an appropriate nickname for John Coogan, until he begins to change after Scooter's stroke

Literary Terms and Applications

To enhance students' appreciation and understanding of the novel, present them with the following terms:

- Coming-of-age novel:** a work of fiction in which the main character moves toward, into and/or through adolescence and develops at least the beginnings of maturity. In this novel, Crash moves past his smug jock persona and into empathy for others and sensitivity toward other people's feelings, the beginning of his young-adult maturity.
- Conflict:** the opposition of two forces or characters in a literary work. This novel is built around the central conflict and contrast between Crash Coogan and Penn Webb, which is a conflict between the macho, aggressive, bull-your-way-through-everything, I'm-number-one approach to life and other people versus the ecologically and morally responsible, people-friendly, empathetic approach to life and fellow human beings.
- Epilogue:** a concluding section of a book that briefly sums up subsequent events in the characters' lives. Chapter 49 of this novel is an epilogue, although it is not labeled as such, in which Crash relates a series of changes in his life that have occurred since the race-off, changes that are a result of the various events during his seventh-grade year that Crash has narrated in the course of the novel.
- First-person narration:** the telling of a novel or short story from the point of view of only one per-

son, in that person's voice. In this novel, Crash Coogan relates the events, so we experience them from his point of view. This allows us to see clearly how insensitive and me-oriented the smug-jock Crash is, and also brings us into the thought processes, which Crash only dimly understands at first, that transform Crash after Scooter's stroke.

Flashback: a scene inserted into a film, play, or work of fiction showing events that happened earlier, also known as analepsis. The flashback device allows an author to fill in background information about characters and events, explaining things that happened before the time when the work opens. In this novel, Chapters 1 through 8 cover the initial meetings between Crash and Penn, setting up the central conflict of the novel and providing the needed background to give depth to the seventh-grade Crash-Penn conflict.

The Importance of Setting

The events of this novel take place in the town of Springfield, Pa. Crash, Mike, and Penn live in a middle-class, side-walked neighborhood of single-family homes. Crash's house is a comfortable size, including four bedrooms and an office for Mr. Coogan, with the usual suburban amenities; Crash has his own TV and VCR in his bedroom. The upstairs hallway is lined with the portraits Mrs. Coogan used to paint, before she began working full-time. The Coogans' backyard is larger than many in the neighborhood, and Mr. Coogan keeps it neatly trimmed and chemically sprayed—until Abby transforms it into an uncut wildlife habitat with tall grass, weeds, and piles of brush. The Webbs' house is tiny, just one story, and it has no TV; Crash thinks of it as a garage.

Within biking distance of this neighborhood is Second Time Around, a thrift shop, which Crash constantly derides but where Penn's clothes come from and, later, some of Abby's and Crash's clothes as well. The kids attend Springfield Middle School, where Mike and Crash play pranks on Penn, where Crash clashes with Jane and Penn at the school dance, where Crash reads Penn's essay about his great-grandfather in English class, and where football and cheerleading practices are held. On the football field, at practices and at games, Crash suffers pangs of sharp disappointment when his parents consistently fail to appear as spectators, in

contrast with Penn's parents, who are always at the games. A planned mall in Springfield is the site of an antigrowth demonstration that gets Abby a spot on the evening TV news. After his stroke, Scooter is in the Springfield hospital for several weeks and then moves to a rehab facility; Crash barely recognizes his grandfather when he goes there to visit. The climactic scene of the novel takes place at the Springfield Middle School track field, where Crash lets Penn win the hundred-meter race-off so he can run in the Penn Relays in front of his great-grandfather.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Novels

Avi, *S.O.R. Losers*

Paul Baczewski, *Just for Kicks*

Bruce Brooks, *Everywhere* and *The Moves Make the Man*

Matt Christopher, *Soccer Halfback* (and many other sports novels)

Ilene Cooper, *Queen of the Sixth Grade*

Chris Crutcher, *Running Loose*

Anne Fine, *The Tulip Touch*

Barbara Snow Gilbert, *Stone Water*

Dennis Haseley, *Getting Him*

Maureen Holohan, *Left Out*

Beverly Keller, *Fowl Play*, *Desdemona*

Chris Lynch, *Slot Machine*

Sharon Bell Mathis, *Running Girl: The Diary of Ebonee Rose*

Claire Rudolf Murphy, *Gold Star Sister*

Walter Dean Myers, *Hoops*.

Julie Anne Peters, *Revenge of the Snob Squad*

Cynthia Voigt, *Tell Me If the Lovers Are Losers*

Carol Lynch Williams, *If I Forget, You Remember*

Hilma Wolitzer, *Wish You Were Here*

Short Stories

Chris Crutcher, *Athletic Shorts*

Donald R. Gallo, *No Easy Choices: Short Stories About Teenagers Making Tough Choices*

Paul D. Staudohar, ed., *Football's Best Short Stories*

Nonfiction

Dave Anderson, *The Story of Football*

Frank and Lynn Barrett, *How to Watch a Football Game*

Anita Baskin-Salzberg and Allen Salzberg, *Turtles*

Melvin Berger, *The Photo Dictionary of Football*

Matt Christopher, *Football Jokes and Riddles*
 Kate Cohen-Posey, *How to Handle Bullies, Teasers and Other Meanies*
 Jeremy Daldry, *The Teenage Guy's Survival Guide*
 Ann Heinrichs, *Pennsylvania (America the Beautiful series)*
 Margaret S. Herguth, *North Dakota (America the Beautiful series)*
 Colin Jackson, *The Young Track and Field Athlete*
 Barbara A. Lewis, *What Do You Stand For? A Kid's Guide to Building Character*
 Trevor Romain, *Bullies Are a Pain in the Brain*
 Rick and Ann Walton, *Take a Hike: Riddles About Football*
 Dr. Ruth Westheimer and Pierre A. Lehu, *Dr. Ruth Talks About Grandparents: Advice for Kids on Making the Most of a Special Relationship*
 Jean Kinney Williams, *The Quakers*

Computer Software (CD-ROM)

Amphibians and Reptiles (Junior Nature Guides Series) (ICE Integrated Communication and Entertainment)
Earth Quest (OK Multimedia)
Earthscape (McGraw-Hill)
Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Nature (Dorling Kindersley)
Olympic Gold (Ingram Micro)
Ultimate Human Body (Dorling Kindersley)

Internet

"Backyard Wildlife habitat" (National Wildlife Federation), <www.nwf.org/habitats/>
 "How Did the Pioneers Travel?," <tjjunior.thinkquest.org/6400/default.htm>
 "Jerry Spinelli" (students/teachers/librarians Q&A with Spinelli), <www.carr.lib.md.us/authco/spinelli-j.htm>
 "Kidscape: Help If You Are Being Bullied," <www.kidscape.org.uk/kidscape/bullied.htm>
 "No Bully," <www.nobully.org.nz/>
 "The Oregon Trail and Conestoga Wagons," <www.redmond.k12.or.us/obsidian/annal-newweb.htm>
 "Penn Relays," <www.pennathletics.com/pennrelays/>
 "Yahoo! Health-Stroke," <health.yahoo.com/health/Diseases_and_Conditions/Disease_Feed_Data/Stroke/>

Video

Bullies and How to Help Them (United Learning)
Bully No More: Stopping the Abuse (Aims Multimedia)
Good Conversation! A Talk with Jerry Spinelli (Tim Podell Productions)
Nutrition for Sports: Facts and Fallacies (Alfred Higgins Productions)
Reptiles and Amphibians (National Geographic)
Student Workshop: Making Decisions, Solving Problems (Sunburst)
Youth Football: Strategies for Success (Coaches, Inc./Instructional Video)

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and-situations in Crash should include these aspects.

Themes

- bullying and harassment
- coming of age
- friendship
- grandparent-grandchild relationships
- family relationships and stresses
- "jock" mentality
- environmental activism
- developing empathy and sensitivity

Motifs

- football
- stroke
- track/relay races
- Quaker beliefs
- turtles
- cheerleading
- wildlife habitats
- vegetarianism
- thrift stores
- Conestoga wagons and pioneering
- U.S. Navy
- cooking and family meals
- Missouri River mud
- gender roles

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. "I'm a Quaker." (Chap. 3, p. 12)
("Quaker" is a term commonly applied to members of the Society of Friends, a Christian group that believes in pacifism and actively promotes social reform. Be-cause Penn, like his parents, is a Quaker, he does not believe in using violence to achieve any ends, and this rejection of violence means that Penn does not play with toy guns or any other toy weapons or war toys.)
2. "A Conestoga wagon." (Chap. 5, p. 18)
(The Conestoga wagon was the vehicle of choice for pioneers heading out across the Great Plains during the mid-1800s. Conestogas, or prairie schooners, had large, broad wheels that could pass over the ruts and mud of the prairie trails. The wagons also had a canvas cover spread over arched hoops. Drawn by horses, mules, or oxen, a prairie schooner could hold a large load of household and homesteading goods. Penn Webb's great-grandfather made this toy Conestoga wagon for Penn as a model of the real one Penn's great-great-grandfather traveled in to North Dakota.)
3. "Dad, can we go to the Phillies game on Saturday?" (Chap. 7, p. 26)
(Crash is asking his father if they can go to the Philadelphia Phillies major league baseball game. It is something Crash loves to do with his dad, but Mr. Coogan works all the time and seldom makes any time to spend with Crash or attend Crash's sports events. Crash is asking his father now because he is jealous that Penn's parents go on outings with Penn on many weekends, and he wants his father to do the same thing with him.)
4. Second Time Around, see, is a thrift shop. (Chap. 9, p. 33)
(Second-hand, or thrift, shops sell used clothing and household items. Usually the goods are donated by people who no longer need or want them, and the sales may help support a charitable institution, such as Goodwill Industries or the Salvation Army. Crash is very contemptuous of the fact that Penn wears used clothes from Second Time Around. Later, though, Abby wants to get her clothes at Second Time Around, as environmentally sound recycling. By the end of the novel, Crash faces the fact that his mother is going to buy some of his clothes at Second Time

Around because finances are tight after Mrs. Coogan stops working full-time.)

5. "Speaking-of gender issues. ..." (Chap. 13, p. 47)
(Gender issues are an underlying motif of this novel. Here, Abby assumes she should ask her father a question about mathematics and measurements, and Abby and her mother are very annoyed that Crash and Mr. Coogan are chortling about Penn Webb going out for cheerleading. Elsewhere, Crash is amazed that his little sister is not disgusted by worms or afraid of a mouse. Other students harass Penn about joining the "girls" cheerleading team. At the school dance, Crash's macho jock attitude leads him to treat Jane Forbes like an object, a possession he is naturally entitled to.)
6. She was stacking up the pepperonis like quarters on her plate. "I'm a vegetarian." (Chap. 16, p. 54).
(Abby's concern for the well-being of animals has made her decide that from now on, she will be a vegetarian; that is, she will not eat meat. Her definition of meat is "anything that has a face" a definition that allows her to eat the oyster stuffing at Thanksgiving dinner.)
7. "Hey, swabbie." (Chap. 19, p. 66).
(This is Scooter's nickname for his grandchildren, derived from his years with the U.S. Navy. A swab is a large mop used on board ships for cleaning decks and other areas, and a swabber, or swabbie, is a person who is using a swab. More generally, a swabbie is a fellow sailor. Both Crash and Abby cherish this special nickname; after Scooter has his stroke; Abby cries, "He's Never gonna call me swabbie again!"
8. It was a stroke. (Chap. 32, p. 109)
(Stroke is an event that causes damage to the brain because of impaired or blocked blood vessels. A stroke causes sudden malfunction of the brain; it may be mildly incapacitating, or it may produce more severe symptoms, including coma, as when Scooter collapses in the middle of building Abby's tree observation stand. People affected by a serious stroke need intensive physiotherapy to restore function as much as possible; stroke patients often lose their ability to speak or move portions of their body, for varying lengths of time. When he returns home

from the rehab facility, Scooter can say only one nonsense word, and he can walk only with great difficulty, using a walker.)

9. He's at a rehab place. (Chap. 35, p. 120)
(Like most stroke victims, Scooter has been moved from the hospital to a rehabilitation facility, where he will receive the intensive physiotherapy he needs to regain as much normal function as possible. Scooter stays at the rehab facility from early January until April 16, when he finally comes home, to Crash's and Abby's great joy.)
10. It's Penn Relays week. (Chap. 44, p. 145)
(The Penn Relays set up the novel's climactic scene, when Crash lets Penn win the race-off. The Penn Relays are a day-long series of relay races for runners of all ages, held at a big double-decker stadium called Franklin Field. Penn Webb's great-grandfather won a race at the Penn Relays in 1919 and later chose Penn as his great-grandson's name. Now the old Mr. Webb is visiting from North Dakota, and Penn dearly wants to win a chance to run in the Penn Relays with his great-grandfather watching. The moment when Crash lets Penn lean forward and break the string to win the race-off is the first time in Crash's life that he has given up a chance to win at anything.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important, and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-3 (Literal Level)

1. What about Penn Webb seriously annoys Crash? In what ways do Crash and, later, Mike harass and bully Penn?
(At their very first meeting, Crash cannot stand Penn's cheery dorkiness, his small stature, his enthusiastic sharing of [in Crash's opinion] stupid personal information, his nonaggressive behavior, his gullibility, and his failure to acknowledge Crash's sarcasm and rejection. Crash also looks down on Penn's parents [too old], his house [too small], his toys [he only has one, and it is not a war toy], his TV-less-ness, his eating habits [he and his parents are vegetarians], his clothes [second-hand], and his social activism [who cares if a mall is built?]. Secretly, Crash is also jealous of Penn because Penn's parents spend a lot of time

with their son and attend school activities, which Crash's parents do not do. When they're little kids, Crash does things like snatch away Penn's pet turtle and the buttons he wears. In middle school, Crash and Mike torment Penn with little things, like sticking a pinch me sign on his back, or taking things from his locker, or filling Penn's sneakers with mustard. At the school dance, Crash physically assaults Penn, pinning him to the wall and knocking him across the floor.)

2. What common interests do Penn Webb and Abby Coogan share? What changes does Abby want to see in her family's life and home?
(Both children share an interest in animals and ecology, Penn having a pet turtle and respecting all forms of life and Abby moving from investigating worms and bugs to transforming the Coogan backyard into a certified wildlife habitat. These shared interests naturally draw both Abby and Penn into opposition to the planned mall; they both demonstrate and sell the mall must fall T-shirts. They also both demonstrate their respect for animal life by being vegetarians. Abby wants her home and family to be more environmentally friendly. She asks her mother to buy her clothes at the thrift shop [recycled clothes], she turns away the ChemLawn man with his herbicides and pesticides, she starts creating a wildlife habitat in the backyard, and she provides a house for the mice instead of trying to trap them.)
3. What role does Scooter play in Crash's and Abby's lives?
(Scooter provides Crash and Abby with the time and attention their parents do not have for them. He supports them in their interests and endeavors, advises them, hears their confessions of misdeeds and apprehensions, gives them unconditional love, and tells them wonderful stories--real and made-up--of his Navy adventures around the world. Ever since Crash and Abby were very little, they've loved to join Scooter in bed at night to listen to his stories. They have grown up thinking Scooter's bed was the safest place in the world, "like a boat in a sea full of crocs," a bed boat where you could say things out loud that you might only think anywhere else." Scooter is a rock of love and security for Crash and Abby.)

Questions 4-7 (Interpretive Level)

4. Compare the roles that Crash's parents and Penn's

parents play in each boy's life. *(Crash's parents are fully engaged in their work and have little time for their children. Mr. Coogan is starting his own business and works seventy-hour weeks—as he tells Crash each time the boy asks him to go to a Phillies game or attend one of Crash's own football games. Mrs. Coogan is a not-so-successful real estate broker who puts in long days on the job. When both parents return home in the evening, they're wiped out, and they "sag" when Crash and Abby start talking with them. The family seldom eats dinner together. Penn's older parents, in contrast, both work at home and eat dinner together with Penn every evening. They are fully engaged in their son's life, sharing their environmental activism, vegetarianism, and nonviolent beliefs with him and going on family outings on Saturdays. They also attend all the football games, even after Penn is off the cheer-leading squad, which is difficult for Crash to see, since he desperately wants his own parents to come to the games and witness his exploits.)*

5. How does Crash think and act when he is a stereotypical jock, before he changes? *(Crash is very macho-aggressive, completely focused on and proud of his physical and athletic prowess. He thinks he is the best at everything and is oblivious to or dismissive of other people's feelings or points of view. He expresses friendship through mutual shoving, chest thumping, and insults. He is supremely confident of his own charisma, to the extent that he ignores Jane's desire not to dance with him. He hates and refuses to lose. If there is something he wants, he crashes straight ahead to get it, knocking people and things out of the way with abandon.)*
6. How and why does Crash change after Scooter's stroke? *(Crash discovers empathy after Scooter's stroke. He is crushed at the loss of his relationship with his grandfather, and worry about Scooter makes Crash sensitive for the first time to other people's feelings. He is not interested in competitively comparing Christmas gifts with Mike, because Christmas was flat without Scooter. He gets angry at Mike's insensitive comments about Scooter not needing his hat; tormenting Penn is no longer fun for him, and he even*

thwarts Mike's plans to do so. Instead of ridiculing or ignoring his sister, Crash tries to make her feel better about Scooter by making her the birthday catfish cake, and he advises her about making her Mouse House more attractive to the little rodents. This new sensitivity allows Crash to let Penn win the race-off so Penn can run in the Penn Relays for his great-grandfather. Losing a race—losing an athletic contest—for the first time ever is very unsettling for Crash, but after a while this new persona begins to feel "different-okay," and even "different-good.")

7. What common bonds does Crash finally find with Penn Webb? *(When Crash reads Penn's English essay, he realizes that Penn's feelings for his great-grandfather—he is Penn's best friend, he understands how Penn feels, he used to tell wonderful stories about the old days—mirror Crash's feelings for Scooter. As Crash transforms from smug jock to empathetic young man, he comes to see value in many things he'd previously scorned in Penn, such as kindness, tolerance, sensitivity toward others, and a willingness to help others.)*

Questions 8-9 (Critical Level)

8. Why is "Crash" an appropriate nickname for John Coogan? *(Crash got his nickname one Christmas when he was very young. He had just gotten his first football helmet, and he charged straight into his cousin Bridget with his helmeted head, knocking her right out the doorway and into a snow bank. That act was typical of Crash's approach to life—crash straight ahead, into people or things or anything else, to get what he is aiming for, with no thought for anyone or anything but himself and his goal. Crash himself thinks the nickname fits him perfectly. "I had always thought my name and me were the same thing." After Scooter's stroke, when Crash begins experiencing empathy and sensitivity for the first time, the name no longer seems to fit exactly.)*
9. What character traits does this novel present as desirable, as embodied in Penn Webb? For each trait that you name, give an example of Penn exhibiting that trait. *(Examples will vary. Penn's desirable character traits include kindness, tolerance of differences*

among people, nonaggression, comfort in his own individuality, friendliness toward all, persistence, loyalty, concern for the environment and living things, infectious enthusiasm, openness, and rejection of the dominant consumer culture.)

Questions 10-12 (Creative Level)

10. Do you think it is credible that Crash Coogan and Penn Webb would become best friends? Explain.
11. Describe some scenes of the novel from Penn's point of view. Will the new Crash Coogan continue to be an outstanding football star? Why or why not?

Across the Curriculum

Art

1. Create a model of one of your favorite types of bird, as Penn's dad does for a living.
2. Design a button, T-shirt, and/or poster supporting a "cause."
3. Draw or re-create the Coogan Christmas tree (white lights, teddy bears), or draw or create your own ideal Christmas tree or other traditional holiday decoration.
4. Create an illustration of Crash in full football gear, or Penn and Jane as cheerleaders, or create actual uniforms for both sports and model them in class.

Science

1. Draw up a list of criteria and elements critical to a backyard wildlife habitat and identify the different creatures in your area that you might expect to inhabit this habitat.
2. Create a multimedia field guide to the octopus or the box turtle.
3. Find out what products local yard-care companies use in homeowners' yards, and what precautions the companies take in the use of these products. Or, investigate what yard-care products are available at local garden centers and hardware stores. Do these present any hazards to users or others?

Social Studies and Geography

1. Create an illustrated poster of the Conestoga wagon, labeling its various features and not-

- ing why it was the preferred vehicle for pioneers heading west across the Great Plains.
2. Create an illustrated travel brochure that will lure tourists to your home state of North Dakota or Pennsylvania.
3. With the class divided into small groups, create a chart of state nicknames, explaining why each state has its particular nickname(s).
4. Research and report on the history, beliefs, practices, and activities of the Society of Friends, or Quakers.
5. Penn's father says they live near the Amish country. What is this? Who are the Amish, and how is their lifestyle different from that of most Americans?

Health

1. Draw up a dietary plan for a vegetarian that will meet all the needs of the food pyramid on a daily or weekly basis.
2. Research and report on strokes—causes, effects, treatment, prevention, and rehabilitation techniques and possibilities.
3. On a poster, show the internal structure of the lower leg, ankle, and foot, highlighting the Achilles tendon. Explain the effects of an injury to the Achilles, and treatment/rehabilitation techniques.

Psychology

1. Young Crash loves his war toys, like GI Joe, whereas Penn does not play with any violence-simulating toys. What effects, if any, do experts believe war toys have on children who play with them as youngsters? What is your opinion on this subject?
2. Crash and Mike bond through mutual chest-thumping and other physical horsing around, plus trading insults. How and why is this different from the ways girls bond as friends?

Physical Education

1. Attend a relay race and note the various strategies and techniques the runners use as they pass the baton to one another. Try out for a relay race yourself.
2. For classmates who do not know much about the game of football, diagram some formations and plays explaining the various positions (tailback, running back, safety, etc.) and strategies.
3. Attend a baseball game, on any level, and video-

tape highlights of it. Edit the tape, and run it as a TV sports newscast, with you as the newscaster.

4. With friends and/or classmates, develop several cheerleading routines you'd like to see your school's cheerleaders use."

Language Arts

1. Read other Jerry Spinelli novels. Discuss with fellow readers similarities among the novels in characters, writing style, and themes.
2. Make a glossary of slang terms used in the U.S. Navy, Army, Air Force, and Marines.
3. Read other novels with themes of the jock mentality and bullying, and discuss with classmates the various ways in which characters in these novels experience and deal with these issues.
4. Complete the English class assignment given to Penn, Crash, and Mike: Write an essay about someone you know. Tell what the person means to you.

Mathematics

1. Visit a local thrift store and note the prices of various brand-name items. Then visit a regular retail store and figure out how much you would save by buying various items at the thrift store instead of the regular retail store.
2. Like Abby, measure your yard or a nearby open space and determine what its square footage is expressed in parts of an acre.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Role-play the parts of the activists demonstrating against the planned new mall in the novel's Springfield. Or get together with like-minded friends and actually protest for or against a cause you believe in.
2. Describe instances of bullying and/or harassment you have experienced or witnessed, and then discuss with classmates effective ways to deal with bullies and harassers.
3. Tell what parts of this novel you found most humorous, and how this humor adds to your enjoyment of the novel.
4. Tell about an unusual pet you or someone you know has owned. Include information on how to care for such a pet.
5. Visit a local thrift store and find and purchase some item you'll wear to school. Can anyone

tell that this item came from a thrift store?

6. Draw up a menu for one of your favorite holiday meals. You and classmates could then cook some of these dishes and share them with each other, parents, and friends.
7. Discuss with classmates the family stresses caused by conflicts caused by working parents ... when both parents/caregivers or a single parent/caregiver works full-time. Share ideas on how to reduce these stresses and allow family members to spend more time together.
8. Describe a meaningful relationship you have had with an older person, like a grandparent. What benefits do both younger people and older people gain from a relationship between them?
9. Develop your own delicious recipe for veggie burgers or catfish cakes.

Alternate Assessment

1. In outline or summary form, trace the relationship between Crash and Penn Webb from the start of the novel to the finish.
2. Draw up a detailed list of the novel's characters. Next to each name, describe the person's personality traits, the part the person plays in the novel's action, and the person's relationship with Crash.
3. Add relevant titles to each of the book's forty-nine chapters.
4. Trace the contrasting themes of 1) smug jock attitude and bullying/harassment as opposed to 2) friendliness and sensitivity to others through the course of the novel.

Vocabulary Test

Match each underlined word with its meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| a. lively | f. stared stupidly | k. faint with joy | p. annoying |
| b. smallest | g. shouts of praise | l. undesirable creatures | q. delicious |
| c. splendid | h. highly offensive | m. great distress | r. eat greedily |
| d. eat | i. very stupid person | n. deserving of pity | s. destroy |
| e. flinched | j. in a frenzy | o. caused distress | t. ridiculous |

- ____ 1. It really was a garage once, until somebody changed it into the world's dinkiest house.
- ____ 2. Webb gawked at his mother. His eyes bulged.
- ____ 3. "Crash, I guess we just feel that animals are God's creatures and that it's not for us to, uh, consume them."
- ____ 4. The father chuckled. "I'll relieve the boy's misery."
- ____ 5. "I have to be perky, Mom, 'cause you're so tired all the time. I gotta make up for you."
- ____ 6. All last year we tormented Webb. Mostly little stuff, like messing with his locker or his clothes or his books.
- ____ 7. In fact, Webb never gets mad at anybody. Day after day, his chippy chirpy perky self. What a moron.
- ____ 8. Abby looked at me all snooty. "I do not devour anything that has a face."
- ____ 9. The kids in the stands jumped up and gave me a standing ovation as I trotted off the field.
- ____ 10. "This stew is scrumptious," my mother said with her mouth full. "What's in it?"
- ____ 11. Scooter winced and blessed himself. He's not Catholic, but he does it when he feels unsafe.
- ____ 12. Abby piped, "We can do this every night now—forever!" Scooter pretended to swoon.
- ____ 13. "You think you're so great, but you're just pathetic."
- ____ 14. "You're just a big, dumb, obnoxious jockstrap."
- ____ 15. "Does this have something to do with your cockamamie idea to turn my yard into a jungle?"
- ____ 16. "That's why I work seventy hours a week, to make a good home for you—you, not vermin. Which is what that woodpile will attract."
- ____ 17. I figured Scooter was making the observation post Abby had been pestering me about.
- ____ 18. The soles of Mike's new sneakers were so gorgeous, I felt woozy.
- ____ 19. Webb started looking frantically for his essay—under his desk, in his books.
- ____ 20. You can demolish a kid just as much by beating him in a race as by plowing him under on a football field.

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. Use each name only once.

- a. Crash c. Abby e. Jane Forbes g. Henry Wilhide Webb III i. Mrs. Coogan
b. Penn d. Mike DeLuca f. Scooter h. Mr. Coogan j. Mrs. Webb

- ____ 1. New vegetarian and ChemLawn opponent.
____ 2. Cooks delicious meals for the Coogan family after he moves in with them.
____ 3. Gave up painting artworks when she took a commercial job.
____ 4. Winner of a race at the Penn Relays in 1919.
____ 5. Small, friendly, pacifist vegetarian.
____ 6. Has a home business making pin-on buttons with slogans.
____ 7. Football player, pizza lover, and Crash's best buddy.
____ 8. Works seventy-hour weeks starting up his own business.
____ 9. Smug jock football star.
____ 10. Stunning-looking new seventh-grader, cheerleader, and mall protester.

Part II: Fill-In (20 points)

Write one or two words in each blank to make each statement true.

1. Scooter used to have a very unusual pet, a one-legged _____ named Ollie.
2. The message on the T-shirts that Abby and Penn sell read "STALL THE _____."
3. Abby's old dollhouse turns into a(n) _____ House, as its label states.
4. The events of this novel take place in the U.S. state of _____.
5. John Coogan's nickname is _____.
6. The local thrift store is named _____ Time Around.
7. Almost every day, Penn wears a _____ with a different message on it.
8. Scooter becomes disabled because of a _____.
9. _____ tries to create an official wildlife habitat in her family's back yard.
10. Crash's mother's job is to sell _____.

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Most of the events of this novel happen during the year Crash, Penn, and Mike are in (third, fourth, seventh, eighth) grade.
2. Penn walks his pet (dog, turtle, ferret, goldfish) every day in his wagon.
3. The nickname of (Jane Forbes, Abby Coogan, Eric Schultz, Penn Webb) is Spider.
4. Abby's mother accurately describes Abby as (sad, perky, naughty, annoying).
5. Once, Crash and Mike fill Penn's sneakers with (mustard, ketchup, mayonnaise, salsa).
6. Crash scores a school-record number of (goals, home runs, touchdowns, baskets).
7. Crash thinks of Penn's parents as (very young, too strict, hippies, ancient).
8. Scooter has retired from the (U.S. Navy, U.S. Marines, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army).
9. Penn offers Missouri River (mud, water, clam shells, catfish) to help cure Scooter.
10. The Penn Relays are a (swim, soccer, track, cross-country ski) event.
11. Crash is very unhappy when he is served (liver, codfish, oatburger, turtle) for dinner at the Webbs' home.
12. Henry Wilhide Webb III is Penn's (father, great-grandfather, uncle, grandfather).
13. Crash and Abby especially love Scooter's (old uniforms, old photos, funny games, stories).
14. (Penn, Crash, Mike, Abby) wins the final spot on the middle school's Penn Relays relay team.
15. Crash plays for (Flickertail, Middletown, Springfield, Epiphany) Middle School.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. In what specific ways does Crash treat people insensitively and unkindly?
2. What annoys Crash about Penn, and why?
3. What common interests do Abby and Penn share?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. You will use one name twice.

- | | | | | |
|----------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| a. Crash | c. Abby | e. Jane Forbes | g. Mr. Webb | i. Mrs. Coogan |
| b. Penn | d. Mike DeLuca | f. Scooter | h. Mr. Coogan | |

- ____ 1. "A-bye."
____ 2. "My mother had me when she was forty years old. I was a late baby. ... I was a happy little surprise, too."
____ 3. "Crash, we're thinking of driving out to the Amish country this Saturday. Would you like to come along with us?"
____ 4. "You'd be tired, too, if you hadn't sold a house since the Pilgrims came over."
____ 5. "I'm the answer to your dreams, baby."
____ 6. "You're just a big, dumb, obnoxious jockstrap."
____ 7. "I do not devour anything that has a face."
____ 8. "That's why I work seventy hours a week running my own business, to make a good home for you—you, not vermin. The wood goes."
____ 9. "Okay, swabbies, bedtime. Batten the hatch on your way out, mates."
____ 10. "It's like you don't want to do nothing no more. You're a dud, man."

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Write a one- or two-word answer to each of the following questions.

1. Who is the author of this book? _____
2. What fall sport does Crash excel at? _____
3. What animal does Penn have as a pet? _____
4. What relation is Penn to Henry Wilhide Webb III? _____
5. What dinner food do Crash and Mike usually order? _____
6. What school sport do Penn Webb and Jane Forbes try out for? _____
7. What races was Penn Webb named after? _____
8. Whom does Crash insult and also try to compliment at the school dance?

9. What weapon do both Crash and Mike Deluca shoot at Penn Webb with?

10. What is Crash's real first name? _____

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Penn walks his pet every day in the model (Arctic Cat, Conestoga, Speed, Daisy) wagon his grandfather made for him.
2. Second Time Around is a (food bank, used sports gear, used music, thrift) store.
3. Crash feels scared and nervous when he is near a (mouse, worm, snake, large dog).
4. Abby and Penn work to block the construction of a (office tower, mall, skyscraper, sports complex).
5. Abby sets out her old (slippers, school bookbag, dollhouse, Barbie dream house) as a den for mice in her backyard.
6. Crash's mother earns a living by selling (encyclopedias, cars, real estate, software programs).
7. Penn and his family moved to Pennsylvania from (North Dakota, Minnesota, Texas, North Carolina).
8. Penn's mother has a business making (tie-dyed T-shirts, dog biscuits, greeting cards, pin-on buttons with slogans).
9. During the Thanksgiving Day touch football game, Crash tackles (Abby, Scooter, his father, Uncle Herm).
10. Abby, Penn, and Jane sell (cookies, T-shirts, football helmets, raffle tickets) to raise money for their mall-

stopping crusade.

11. Abby wants to transform the back yard into a (wildlife habitat, showcase garden, miniature golf course, children's playground).
12. For a Christmas gift, Crash first buys Scooter (a book, a football helmet, glittery red shoes, a sailor's cap).
13. Abby is very unhappy that Scooter will not be able to bake her favorites, (catfish cakes, oatburgers, chocolate macaroons, mini-pizzas), for her birthday.
14. Scooter brings the important skill of (painting, woodworking, farming, cooking) to Crash's family.
15. Penn and his parents are (Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, Quakers).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Compare Penn Webb and Crash-the-jock.
2. What family stresses are Crash, Abby, and their parents coping with?
3. What effect does Scooter's stroke have on Crash?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. o | 11. e | 16. l |
| 2. f | 7. i | 12. k | 17. p |
| 3. d | 8. r | 13. n | 18. c |
| 4. m | 9. g | 14. h | 19. j |
| 5. a | 10. q | 15. t | 20. S |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. j |
| 2. f | 7. d |
| 3. i | 8. h |
| 4. g | 9. a |
| 5. b | 10. E |

Part II: Fill-in (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. octopus | 6. Second |
| 2. MALL | 7. button |
| 3. Mouse | 8. stroke |
| 4. Pennsylvania | 9. Abby |
| 5. Crash | 10. real estate |

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1. seventh | 9. mud |
| 2. turtle | 10. track |
| 3. Penn Webb | 11. oatburger |
| 4. perky | 12. great-grandfather |
| 5. mustard | 13. stories |
| 6. touchdowns | 14. Penn |
| 7. ancient | 15. Springfield |
| 8. U.S. Navy | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. f | 6. e |
| 2. b | 7. c |
| 3. g | 8. h |
| 4. i | 9. f |
| 5. a | 10. d |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

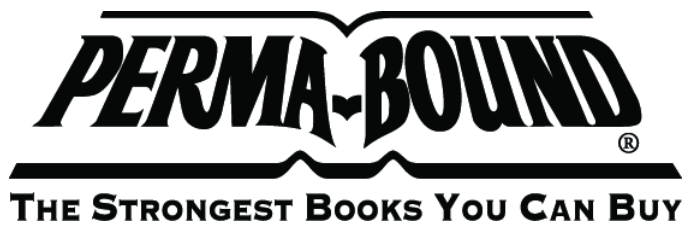
- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Jerry Spinelli | 6. cheerleading |
| 2. football | 7. Penn Relays |
| 3. turtle | 8. Jane |
| 4. great-grandson | 9. water gun |
| 5. pizza | 10. John |

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Conestoga | 9. Scooter |
| 2. thrift | 10. T-shirts |
| 3. mouse | 11. wildlife habitat |
| 4. mall | 12. glittery red shoes |
| 5. dollhouse | 13. catfish cakes |
| 6. real estate | 14. cooking |
| 7. North Dakota | 15. Quakers |
| 8. pin-on buttons with slogans | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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