

Flying Solo

by Ralph Fletcher

Teacher's Guide

Written By Lori Lindemann

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**CLASSROOM
FAVORITES**

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Synopsis

Friday, April 28

Rachel White: Rachel likes to read about airplanes. The only part of school she likes is Mr. Fabiano's sixth-grade class. A classmate, Tommy Feathers, had a crush on her, and she had rejected him rudely. After her best friend Missy called and told her the news, Rachel stopped speaking and hasn't spoken or smiled for the last six months.

Bastian Fauvell: Bastian is an Air Force brat who is moving for the eighth time in his life. He loves his puppy, Barkley, and worries because Barkley will have to be quarantined for four months when he reaches Hawaii. His best friend, John LeClerc, wants him to skip school, but Bastian has to go since it is his last day.

Jessica Cooke: Jessica is the daughter of a lawyer; she dreams of becoming the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

Sean O'Day: Sean dreams of mansions made in the woods. His father's girlfriend, Darlene, wakes him up for school, and Sean can tell from the number of beer bottles on the counter that his dad is still passed out. Sean grabs a soda and a candy bar and heads out the door.

Mrs. Muchmore: Wendy Muchmore is supposed to substitute teach for Mr. Fabiano, but she wakes up sick. She calls the school to let them know she won't be there. The secretary makes a note of her call.

The Principal's Office: The principal, Irwin Peacock, is listening to Peggy Ransom, the president of the PTA, complain about the sixth grade teachers. When she leaves, she knocks over a stack of phone messages, and one of them falls against the radiator where it is out of sight.

First Bell: When the students enter Mr. Fabiano's room, they find the notice on the board that they will have a substitute. The students are: Jessica, Missy, Karen, Jasmine, Christopher Ransom, Vicki, Tim, Jordan, Robert and Corey (two of triplets), Rhonda, Bastian, Sean, and Sky Reed. Christopher is rude to his classmates; he said "fact" or "opinion" after they make a statement. Bastian announces that this day is his last day at school. Mr. Peacock makes the daily announcements, and the class says the Pledge of Allegiance. They wonder where their sub is. Karen checks the attendance and takes it to the office. Jessica reminds Karen to tell the office about the sub not being there.

Main Office: Helen Pierce, the school secretary, and Shelley Fields, a parent volunteer, are having a hectic morning in the office. Karen walks in and gives Shelley the attendance sheet and lunch count and leaves the office.

Kids Rule: Karen walks back into the classroom and gets Mr. Fab's lesson plans. Jessica calls out the words for the spelling test. They finish and follow their regular routine. Karen admits that she didn't tell the office workers about the substitute. They

decide to run the class by themselves for one day. Jessica is the only student opposed to the idea. Rachel writes a note that Mr. Fabiano would want them to think about it and then decide. They vote to run their own class. Next they do "flashdrafts." Bastian doesn't want to write, but the others begin writing. Rachel is thinking of Tommy Feathers – how he would have voted and how he liked to write even though he wasn't very good at it. He had written dozens of stories for her, and she had thrown them all away.

Flashdrafts: Rachel writes about not speaking. Sean writes about being in the woods. Jasmine writes about her dreams for the future. Bastian writes about moving. Missy writes about orphans.



Music: The class goes unescorted and very quietly to music class and sings a song based on Emma Lazarus' poem written on the Statue of Liberty. The music teacher does not ask about their teacher.

Snack: The students take out their snacks. Rachel has carrots and potato chips. She offers some to Missy who declines and gives the rest to Sean because she had noticed he didn't have a snack. She remembers meeting with the school psychologist during snack time.

Visitors: Katie Bretz, a student from Mrs. Reilly's class, comes to get the book orders. Karen takes the envelope off Mr. Fabiano's desk and gives them to her. She asks about not having a teacher, and Tim tells her about the sub not showing up. Katie doesn't believe him and leaves. Morgan Hasshagen comes in next. Karen tells him about not having a sub, and he jumps onto Mr. Fab's desk and starts dancing. He tries to go through Mr. Fabiano's desk, but the students stop him. He had come for the teacher's edition of the American History book. The class gets rid of him, and Sean takes the history book to Mrs. Kiefer. When he returns to the room, music is playing and everyone is writing.

Connections: While the rest of the class is writing, Bastian looks up "quarantine" in the dictionary and the thesaurus. Sean writes about Rachel not talking and about some kittens he had found. Karen suggests they share what they have written. Robert, Jessica, and Rachel had written about their class being on their own. Christopher wrote a silly knight story. Sky wrote about surfing a wave and being in the curl. The class likes his story.

Lunch: The class discusses how to keep their secret from others during lunch. At first, they think it will be impossible, but Rachel suggests they make the other sixth graders feel they are a part of it too so everyone will help keep their secret. The story spreads like wildfire at lunch. Dozens of kids were sitting in pairs talking intently.

Early Dismissal: Bastian gulps down lunch then calls home. His phone had been disconnected. It finally hits him that he is moving. He walks out of school, and no one tries to stop him. He walks to his best friend John LeClerc's house. Bastian tells John what is going on at school. John decides to go to school, but he needs a note to return. Bastian forges a note for him.

Recess: Rachel hears an airplane and thinks of her father. She remembers when her parents were having another terrible argument, and she told them to stop. They did – the next day her father moved out. She misses him terribly. Part of why flying is so important to her is because if

she could fly, she could see him whenever she wanted. She wishes she'd never said anything about their arguments. Back then she didn't know she had the right to remain silent.

Blood: At the end of recess, the students are talking about Bastian leaving. Rachel thinks of Tommy Feathers. It has been exactly six months since his death. Sky comes in with his knee bleeding. The students discuss if he should go to the nurse, but he needs a signed pass for that. Missy gets the first aid kit out of Mr. Fabiano's desk, then cleans and bandages Sky's scrape.

Enrichment: Rachel wonders if deer really are silent. Jessica announces that it is time for some of the students to go to enrichment, the program for gifted students. Rachel used to be in the gifted program, but when she stopped speaking, she had been dropped. Jessica and Karen don't want to go, so Karen calls Mr. Doblin, the enrichment teacher. She tells him they are doing a project in Mr. Fabiano's class and asks if they can skip a day. Sean is supposed to go to Resource Reading. Karen tries to call his teacher, but she walks in just as Karen is calling. She complements the class on their behavior and leaves with Sean. The class breaks into laughter after Sean and the teacher leave, and Rachel makes a small smile.

D.E.A.R.: Bastian and John come in wet from the rain. The boys party while the girls read during Drop Everything and Read time. Tim, Christopher, Robert, Corey, Jordan, Sky Bastian, and John crowd around the computer and play *Doom III*. Rachel wonders what Sean would have chosen. She loves reading her book, *A Beginner's Flight Manual*. It is the most detailed book she's read yet on becoming a pilot. The room gets lighter, and the rain lets up reminding Rachel of the first time she flew to New Mexico to see her father.

Exploration: Exploration is geography period focusing mainly on map skills. None of the students are excited. Karen hands out the photocopies, but John suggests they do the rock ritual since it is Bastian's last day. The class votes to hold the ritual.

Rock Ritual: Mr. Fabiano frequently uses rituals in his classroom. The purpose of the rock ritual is to say goodbye to a class member who is leaving. The person leaving chooses a rock, and everyone takes turns holding it while sharing a memory of that person. The rock soaks up memory after memory, story after story, and then the person leaving takes the rock. Bastian chooses a brown rock with crystals on one side that throws tiny rainbows onto the wall. The ritual begins with a minute of silence.

Bastian feels a sadness he has never felt before. Sean comes in and sits next to Rachel. She is thinking of Tommy Feathers and of the way he looked at her that let everyone know he loved her. The boys each remember pranks Bastian has pulled. Sean remembers Bastian's birthday party, and that Bastian got a puppy for his birthday; Sean is saving his money to buy a puppy too. Bastian realizes he is saddest about Barkley and decides to give Barkley away instead of subjecting the puppy to a four-month quarantine. Rachel writes her memory and Missy reads it aloud. She remembers him making fun of Tommy Feathers and some more specific memories. Bastian tries to turn the tables on Rachel and calls attention to how often and how rudely she had rejected Tommy. Rachel starts sobbing. Sean reads the last note that Rachel has balled up and thrown at Bastian. Bastian starts to cry, throws the rock out the window, swears, and runs out of the room. John goes after him.

Tommy Feathers: Those who remain in the circle discuss how they had never really talked about Tommy after his death – even though they all thought about him a lot. Karen suggests they write about Tommy. Among their thoughts on Tommy:

Missy: Tommy was a little weird, but he was usually sweet. He adored Rachel and was an amazing cook. He made a pie of golden raspberries and gave it to Rachel.

Tim: Tommy had a big head and looked a little strange.

Jasmine: Tommy's parents really loved him even though he was a little slow. They were trying to make him independent so he could run their bakery on his own. After he died, she went to the bakery and they looked so sad she couldn't stand to back there again.

Christopher: Death is a part of life. They quit telling the truth about Tommy as soon as he died. Tommy had done some mean things, told some dirty jokes, and had plenty of faults. He shouldn't be turned into a saint just because he died.

Rachel: Instead of writing about Tommy, Rachel writes a letter to Bastian. She apologizes and admits she'd been mean to Tommy too. She wonders if she'd ever forgive herself. She also remembers a time Bastian made Tommy a hero. She hopes her argument with Bastian won't be the last thing he remembers about their school.

John and Bastian return, and Bastian starts to write. Rachel puts her letter on his desk. Mr. Peacock makes an announcement for all students to go to the assembly. Bastian stays behind to finish what he is writing. Sean asks Rachel if he can walk her home after school. She smiles.

School Assembly: Bastian catches up to the class and gives John a letter to give to Mr. Fabiano on Monday. Bastian offers Sean his puppy Barkley; Sean accepts. Class 6-238 goes to hear a storyteller from Hungary, Klof Selat. Things are fine until he asks for four teachers to help him. Mr. Peacock asks for the four sixth grade teachers to come forward. Three teachers do, and Mr. Peacock asks Karen who their substitute teacher is. Karen has to admit that they didn't have one. The newspaper photographer snaps a picture, and a commotion follows.

Sunday, April 30

Karen Ballard's House – Karen's parents are furious, and Karen is tired of arguing. She repeats over and over how they had run the class, did their work, and behaved themselves. Mr. Fabiano calls. She tells him they'd mostly done their work, about the rock ritual, and the argument between Rachel and Bastian. Mr. Fabiano asks if Rachel talked. Karen asks if he is mad; he asks if he should be. She says, "No, I don't think so."

Monday, May 1

Room 238: Almost everyone is in a somber mood. There are parents, reporters, and TV cameras outside the school. Mr. Fabiano calls roll, and Rachel answers aloud when he calls her name; everyone is amazed. Mr. Fabiano says that some unusual and serious things had happened on Friday, and they needed to discuss them. He sits down at Tommy Feathers' desk and asks each to write him a letter telling him what happened. He gives them 20 minutes to write and tell him something he doesn't know. Among the thoughts each write:

Jasmine: What had begun as a prank left them feeling proud of what they had done. It had turned out to be a pretty normal day, and that, at times, it felt as if the class had been a team.

Jessica: She did NOT want to talk about Friday. Her parents had cross-examined her all weekend, and she was the only student who had voted against it in the first place.

Christopher: Nothing happened; they'd been too good.

Missy: It was an important day. They had proved kids could have fun and still act responsibly. The class had seen the chance for more freedom, taken that chance, and was willing to pay the price.

Bastian: He explained that it is his style to pick on others. He had cried because he knew he would give up Barkley.

Sean: He didn't mind getting fussed at by the principal. Friday had been a great day for him; he had walked Rachel home, and Bastian had given him Barkley. When Bastian had cried, Sean had felt sorry for him. He had felt like it was Christmas morning when he woke up and Barkley was sleeping curled up at his feet.

Rachel: This felt like the right time to start talking again. What they did on Friday was somewhat dangerous, but she believed it was the right thing. She admitted being unfair to Bastian and writing the letter to apologize. She admitted being mean to Tommy Feathers and snubbing him the night before he died. During the weekend she had realized that she couldn't change the things she'd done, but she could now admit that aloud.

Author Sketch

Ralph Fletcher didn't plan to write books for children, but after he earned his master's degree in writing from Columbia University, he took a job in New York City, helping teachers develop better ways to teach writing, that led to his career as a writer of adolescent books. He demonstrated teaching and carried around a large bag of children's books to give children ideas for writing. He fell in love with many of the books and began writing books for children himself.

Fletcher was born March 17, 1953, the oldest of nine children. Each of his parents was one of eight children, so he was always surrounded by relatives. He got stories from grandparents, uncles, cousins, friends, and books. He thought it would be great if he could write books that would affect others the way the books he read affected him. Books taught him many things – mostly the power of words.

He graduated from Dartmouth College, B.A., 1975. While in college, he had the opportunity to participate in two

foreign study programs. After college he traveled around the world as a tour leader. During this time he kept a notebook in which he noted interesting facts, details, impressions, and ideas for stories, characters, etc.

Fletcher's first published titles appeared in the early 1990s, but it was his 1994 poetry volume for young adults, *I Am Wings: Poems about Love*, that earned solid reviews and established him as a popular writer for adolescent readers. He has written several volumes of poetry; all of them received strong, positive reviews. His first acclaimed novel for late-elementary readers was *Fig Pudding*. He has followed with several others that have been very popular.

Ralph Fletcher is married with four sons, and he said that he is a better writer because of them. If he could have chosen any career, it would have been playing center field for the Boston Red Sox, but being a writer is also a dream come true. "I love to write. I love getting up every morning and mucking around in sentences, playing with stories, trying to build my city of words."

Critic's Corner

Flying Solo, like many of Ralph Fletcher's other novels for adolescents, was met with critical acclaim. *School Library Journal* reported, "The students learn about themselves and one another, and several issues are resolved by the end of the day. The resolutions are simple but not pat, the prose is economical but not sparse, and the characters are developed as sketches rather than in-depth portraits, which helps keep the book moving briskly. The premise will make the novel easy to booktalk. Not a must-have, but a worthwhile purchase."

Booklist states, "Rest assured Fletcher's characters aren't goody-goodies. Rather, they are coconspirators as a countdown clock builds tension: Will they make it through the day without being found out.... Fletcher expertly balances a wide variety of emotions, giving readers a story that is by turns sad, poignant, and funny, and little by little, realistic portraits of the complicated kids emerge. There is no *Lord of the Flies* anarchy in this thoughtful, absorbing novel, which has a story that will linger long after the book is closed."

According to *Horn Book*, "This kaleidoscopic novel is more thoughtful and poignant than most school stories, while still appropriately leavened with comic moments; it demonstrates an utter respect for its characters and its readers who will appreciate the honest and uncondescending portrayals."



Other Works by Ralph Fletcher

Fiction for Children

Fig Pudding (1995)
Twilight Comes Twice (1997)
Spider Boy (1997)
Tommy Trouble and the Magic Marble (2000)
Grandpa Never Lies (2001)
The Circus Surprise (2001)
Uncle Daddy (2001)
Hello, Harvest Moon (2003)

Poetry for Children

Water Planet: Poems about Water (1991)
I Am Wings: Poems about Love (1994)
Ordinary Things: Poems from a Walk in Early Spring (1996)
Buried Alive: The Elements of Love (1996)
Room Enough for Love (1998)
Relatively speaking: Poems about Family (1999)
Have You been to the Beach Lately? (2001)
Writing Kind of Day (2005)
Moving Day (2006)

Other

Walking Trees: Teaching Teachers in the New York City Schools (1990)
Walking Trees: Portraits of Teachers and Children in the Culture of Schools (1995)
What a Writer Needs (1993)
Breathing In, Breathing Out: Keeping a Writer's Notebook (1996)
A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You (1996)
 (With JoAnn Portalupi) *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K-8* (1998)
Live Writing: Breathing Life into Your Words (1999)
How Writers Work: Finding a Process that Works for You (2000)
 (With JoAnn Potalup) *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide* (2001)
 (With JoAnn Potalup) *Nonfiction Craft Lessons* (2001)
Poetry Matters: Writing a Poem from the Inside Out (2002)
 (With JoAnn Potalup) *Teaching the Qualities of Writing* (2004)
Marshfield Dreams: When I Was a Kid (2005)

Bibliography

Sime, Richard and Laura Mongello, eds. *Elements of Literature*. Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2000. pp. 705-718.
 "Ralph Fletcher." *Literature Resource Center – Author Resource Pages*. Gale Group. Online. 15 May 2003. <galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>
 "Flying Solo." Student Resource Center – Periodical Display. Gale Group. Online. 19 May 2003. <galenet.gale-group.com/servlet/SHR>
 "Biography." Ralphfletcher.com Online. 7 July 2003. www.ralphfletcher.com/Biography.html
 "Flying Solo." Randomhouse.com Online. 15 May 2003. www.randomhouse.com/teacher/awards/state.html
 OPAC Gonzales Junior High School Library

General Objectives

1. To evaluate the importance of fitting in with peers at school
2. To analyze the characters' personalities
3. To analyze relationships between the characters
4. To examine different forms of conflict in the novel
5. To compare and contrast characters
6. To discuss the importance of making good decisions
7. To discuss the importance of closure
8. To consider the extent of influence teachers have on students

Specific Objectives

1. To evaluate the relationship between Tommy Feathers and the other students
2. To identify positive and negative behaviors of students
3. To identify the dominant personality trait of each character
4. To examine the inner conflicts of Rachel and Bastian and how inner conflicts caused the external conflict
5. To decide what students did right and what they did wrong
6. To identify the "closure" that occurred during the rock ritual
7. To analyze the extent of Mr. Fabiano's influence on his students

Literary Terms and Applications

To enhance students' appreciation and understanding of the novel, present them with these terms.

Points of View: The most common points of view are omniscient, third-person limited, and first-person.

1. In the omniscient (all-knowing) point of view, the narrator knows everything about the characters and their problems. This all-knowing narrator can tell us what all of the characters are thinking or feeling. The main story line of *Flying Solo* has an omniscient narrator.
2. In the third-person limited point of view, the narrator focuses on the thoughts and feelings of only one character. From this point of view, we observe the action through the eyes of only one of the characters in the story.
3. In the first-person point of view, one of the characters, using the personal pronoun I, tells the story. We become familiar with the narrator, but we can know only what this person knows and observe only what this person observes. All of our information about the story comes from this narrator. Although *Flying Solo* is written primarily in omniscient, the students' journal entries and letters to Mr. Fabiano are written in first-person. Those writing samples give extra insight into the characters' thoughts and feelings.

Conflict: A struggle between opposing characters or opposing forces. In an external conflict a character struggles with an outside force, which may be another character, society as a whole, or a natural force. An example of external conflict is when Rachel and Bastian argue then throw things at one another during the rock ritual (p. 105-106). An internal conflict takes place within a character's own mind; it is a struggle between opposing ideas, needs, or emotions. An example of internal conflict is when Rachel thinks of the many stories Tommy Feathers wrote for her and regrets that she throw them all away (p. 41). In this instance it is Rachel's inner conflict that leads to the external conflict. She confronts Bastian about being mean to Tommy, when, in fact, it is her own mean behavior to Tommy that is really bothering her.

Characters: Characters are the people or animals in a story, a play, or another literary work. Characters can be rounded where the author reveals both good points

and bad points of the character's personality. Examples of rounded characters are Rachel and Bastian. Or characters can be stereotyped where the author makes them fit into a mold without really revealing much of the character's personality to the reader. Peggy Ransom, to PTO president, is an example of a stereotyped character.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Fiction

Andrew Clements, *Frindle*
Beverly Cleary, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*
Andrew Clements, *The Landry News*
Roald Dahl, *Matilda*
Jack Gantos, *Heads or Tails: Stories from the Sixth Grade*
Amy Hest, *The Great Green Notebook of Katie Roberts*
E.L. Konigsburg, *The View from Saturday*
E.L. Konigsburg, *Silent to the Bone*
Gordon Korman, *Radio Fifth Grade*
Elizabeth Levy, *My Life as a Fifth-Grade Comedian*
Kate McMullan, *The Great Ideas of Lila Fenwick*
Stephen Mooser, *It's a Weird, Weird School*
Gary Paulsen, *The Boy Who Owned the School*
Gary Paulsen, *Molly McGinty Has a Really Good Day*
Julie Anne Peters, *Define "Normal"*
Carol Plum-Ucci, *The Body of Christopher Creed*
Joanne Ricklin, *For Your Eyes Only*
Paula Danziger, *The Cat Ate My Gymsuit*
Barthe DeClements, *Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade*
Betsy Duffey, *The Gadget War*
Patricia Reilly Giff, *The Beast in Mrs. Rooney's Room*
Jamie Gilson, *4B Goes Wild*
Natalie Honeycutt, *The All New Jonah Twist*
Natalie Honeycutt, *The Best-Laid Plans of Jonah Twist*
Jerry Jenkins, *Busted!*
Lou Kasseem, *Middle School Blues*
Louis Sachar, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School*
Louis Sachar, *Wayside School is Falling Down*
Thelma Hatch Wyss, *Here at the Scenic-Vu Motel*

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central themes and situations in *Flying Solo* should include these aspects.

Themes

- education
- guilt
- responsibility
- leadership
- teacher-student relationship

- closure
- choices
- parental support
- friendship
- forgiveness
- acceptance (of things we cannot change)

Motifs

- the effect feeling guilty has on us
- the stress that change can cause
- the immeasurable quality pets bring into our lives
- that children should take responsibility for their behavior
- that teachers teach more than just the curriculum
- that we live with the choice we make
- that selflessness is sometimes painful
- that friendships enrich our lives

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. Missy was fat. Rachel often wondered if Missy’s own problems helped her to understand Rachel’s. Missy knew what it was like to have kids point fingers, make nasty comments, whisper behind her back. She knew what it was like to have something eating at you from the inside. More than anybody else Missy accepted Rachel’s silence. (p. 25)
(Rachel had quit talking when she found out Tommy Feathers died. The outer silence was caused by inner turmoil; there was nothing physically wrong with Rachel. Missy was the most understanding of all Rachel’s friends because Missy has spent years with kids making fun of her. Missy had that pain inside of her just as Rachel has the pain of rejecting Tommy Feathers inside her.)
2. Even now she had the nagging thought that in some way her scolding had been the catalyst for his moving out. Those fights had been horrible, but she wished he was still living at home, arguments or not. She wished she had kept her mouth shut. Back then it had never occurred to her that she had the Right. The Right to remain silent. (p. 79)

(When Rachel’s parents fought, she’d get upset. Finally, in desperation, she spoke up and told them not to fight. The next day her dad moved out leaving her with pain and guilt. She felt that she may have been part of the cause. She wasn’t speaking now because of Tommy Feathers’ death, but she wished she hadn’t spoken then about her parents fighting. She somehow feels that speaking might make situations more painful.)

3. Bastian closed his eyes. There, in the darkness, he saw the whole thing: Barkley, Tommy, the Nerf football. Barkley and Tommy looking at him. (p. 106)
(Rachel had just written a note about the Nerf football Bastian had given Tommy. Tommy thought it was the best present he had ever received. She said Tommy looked up to and trusted Bastian. Bastian knew he had not made good decisions about how to treat Tommy. All day long, Bastian had been struggling with the decision to send Barkley to Hawaii and the four-month quarantine. He realized that Barkley looked up to him and trusted him too, and he decided to make a better choice this time. He decides to give the puppy away instead of putting him through isolation and loneliness.)
4. “I wasn’t here on Friday. But it has come to my attention that Friday was not your typical day. Something happened, right here in this classroom. Something unusual. Something serious. And I would like to know about it.” (p. 129)
(Mr. Fabiano’s reaction to what his class had done was totally different from the reaction of all the other adults mentioned. The principal and some of the parents yelled, lectured, and blamed. Mr. Fabiano was genuinely pleased at Rachel’s breakthrough. He quietly and calmly invited the students to tell their side of the story.)

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 1-4 (Literal Level)

1. Explain how the mix-up occurred that caused the class to not have a substitute.
(Mrs. Muchmore was scheduled to substitute for Mr. Fabiano, but she woke up sick on Friday morning. She called the school, and the secretary made a note. Peggy Ransom was in Mr. Peacock’s office complaining about the sixth grade teachers. When she left, she knocked over Helen’s stack of notes. The note about Mrs. Muchmore not being able to substitute fell against

the radiator where it remained out of sight. The secretary had a nagging feeling that there was something she'd forgotten, but she just couldn't remember what it was.)

2. Why was flying so important to Rachel?
(Rachel thought if she could fly, she could go see her father whenever she wanted.)
3. What did the boys do during D.E.A.R.?
(They gathered around the computer at the back of the room and played Doom III.)
4. How did the principal find out that Class 6-238 didn't have a substitute?
(When the classes went to the auditorium for the assembly, the storyteller asked for four teachers to help him. There were exactly four sixth-grade teachers. The principal, Mr. Peacock, asked the sixth-grade teachers to come up on the stage. Three walked forward. Then Mr. Peacock looked at Karen and asked her who their substitute was. She was forced to admit the truth.)

Questions 5-7 (Interpretive Level)

5. Why didn't Karen tell the office workers that the substitute wasn't there?
(When Karen got to the office, she realized that they would just send some stranger to tell the class what to do. The class already knew what to do. Mr. Fabiano had well established routines, and he had left lesson plans for the substitute. She decided at that moment they could run the class by themselves.)
6. What was the main conflict Bastian faced?
(Bastian faces several conflicts – moving to a new school and the argument with Rachel among them. However, the thing that bothers Bastian the most is the thought of his beloved puppy Barkley having to spend four months in quarantine when they move to Hawaii. The decision about what to do with his puppy is the source of his greatest conflict.)
7. What enabled the class to run so smoothly for most of the day?
(There were several things that allowed the class to run smoothly. One was that Mr. Fabiano has well established routines; his students knew exactly what to expect in his classroom. Another was that Karen emerged as a leader and guided the class into following the lesson plans he had left for the substitute. The fear of getting caught made them behave to some extent. If they had been loud and off-task, one of the other teachers would have become suspicious. The girls in particular wanted to do what they were supposed to do because they didn't want Mr. Fabiano to be disappointed in them. They boys, if left to their own devices, would have done less work.)

Questions 8-10 (Critical Level)

8. Why does Christopher behave so rudely to the other students?
(Christopher seems very spoiled; his behavior is rude, loud, and obnoxious. His family is described as wealthy and demanding. His mother was very critical of the sixth-grade teachers. Christopher, like his mother, seems to think that they're always right and that they can say whatever they want to whomever they want. Christopher is also immature; he is disappointed that they were on their own for a day and were mostly well behaved.)
9. Why does Sean want a puppy so badly?
(Sean has some problems at home – a drinking father and his young, live-in girlfriend, unclean clothes for school, and junk food. Early on, Sean dreamed of walking with his dog through a huge mansion in forest and made of trees. Dogs are known for giving unconditional love and acceptance; a dog would be a constant companion. This was something that was missing in Sean's life – something for which he longed.)
10. How did Mr. Fabiano's routines and rituals affect the day?
(Mr. Fabiano's structured routines allowed the students to be successful in running their own class. They knew what was expected and what the routine was. He had rituals, such as playing music during writing, to which they adhered. The conflict between Rachel and Bastian during the rock ritual was the climax of the day, but the students managed to work through any of the problems they had.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Make a Venn Diagram that shows how Karen and Jessica are similar and different.
12. Pretend your class has no teacher for one day. Write a lesson plan you think you and your classmates would follow.

Across the Curriculum

Art, Music, and Dance

1. Sing your favorite patriotic songs in class.
2. Find songs about flying, share them with your class, and compare and contrast the themes of the songs with the themes of the novel.
3. Create a mural of the major events of the novel.
4. Draw three pictures for the novel. Explain where they fit in the story.

History and Social Studies

1. One of Rachel's role models is Amelia Earhart. Research her life and report your findings to your class.
2. Jessica wanted to be a Supreme Court Justice. Describe the purpose of the Supreme Court. Research the women who have sat on the court and share the information with your class.

Language Arts

1. Write diary entries telling the most important event that happened on Friday, April 28. Write the entries from Jessica's, Karen's, Bastian's, and Rachel's point-of-view.
2. Write a newspaper article about what happened in Class 6-238 on Friday, April 28.
3. Write a list of interview questions for a local television reporter to ask the students for a special news report on their experience.
4. Make a character list and tell if students are stereotyped, flat, or rounded.

Math

1. Determine the number of miles from Los Angeles to Hawaii. If a non-stop flight takes 5 1/2 hours, determine the speed that the plane is traveling.
2. If Mr. Fabiano's class spends 20% of each day writing and a school day is 6 hours long, calculate in minutes and hours how much time they devote to writing. In a 5 day week. In a 180 day school year.

Science

1. Research the history of airplanes and write a short report.
2. Draw or build a model of Amelia Earhart's plane.
3. Research flight simulators. Find the most technologically advanced features and explain them to your class.
4. Determine the most common diseases of dogs.
5. Some animals imported into the United States have to spend time in quarantine. Determine which animals are subject to this quarantine and the length of the quarantine.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Explain the novel's theme or message.
2. Discuss in small groups the lessons you can take from Rachel's life and apply to your own. Which lessons can you take from Bastian's life and apply to your life?
3. Using scenes from the novel, draw and print a mural showing the major events.
4. Write an article for the school newspaper explaining how the students feel about running their own class and how administrators feel about it.

Alternate Assessment

1. Make a character list and describe each character.
2. Retell the main events of the novel in chronological order.
3. Compile a list of important lessons the students learned on Friday, April 28.
4. Explain, in your own words, why it is important to take responsibility for your actions.

Vocabulary Test

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

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| A. signal | F. clear | K. keepsake | P. walked clumsily |
| B. problems | G. talk | L. highly praised | Q. flooring material |
| C. view | H. disbelieving | M. individual | R. place apart from others |
| D. backpack | I. turned | N. foolish | S. container with holes |
| E. grouped | J. reasonable | O. looked | T. fascination |

- _____ 1. He yanked a can of soda from a six pack and tucked it into his **knapsack**.
- _____ 2. When they were together, Missy didn't try to fill the dead space with lots of empty **chitchat** like most kids did.
- _____ 3. Now she gave the girls a small wave as a **gesture** intended to mean "Hello."
- _____ 4. Christopher Ransom **lumbered** into the room.
- _____ 5. "My mind is a **sieve**," she said to Shelly Fields.
- _____ 6. Already it had been one of those mornings full of **crises**-Peggy Ransom's tirade, a boy who swore at the bus driver, and two kids who had been sent home because of head lice.
- _____ 7. On mornings like this she pictured her mind as a glass that had broken and shattered into countless tiny, **transparent** pieces so small you can't find them until you step on one.
- _____ 8. "Many people **perceive** professional athletes as rich, spoiled, selfish individuals.
- _____ 9. When Christopher went to Disney World, his father bought him a stuffed Mickey Mouse as a **souvenir** of the trip.
- _____ 10. This is the dumbest, stupidest, most **asinine** idea I've ever heard.
- _____ 11. The entire class **clustered** around him.
- _____ 12. They are putting him in **quarantine** for four months.
- _____ 13. You are **unique** as snowflakes. No two are exactly alike.
- _____ 14. Rachel walked along the hallway of polished **linoleum**, long and perfectly smooth.
- _____ 15. I think your **obsession** with flying is your attempt to fly away from your problems.
- _____ 16. "The first **sensible** words I've heard all day," Jessica said smiling at Rachel.
- _____ 17. Miranda gave Missy an **incredulous** look then glanced over at Rachel.
- _____ 18. "You are to be **commended**," Mrs. Zemet said, smiling at the kids in the classroom.
- _____ 19. The class waited while Bastian **peered** into the bowl and selected a rock.
- _____ 20. At that moment the photographer **swiveled** around and her flash went off.

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. Karen | C. Missy | E. Tommy | G. Sean | I. Christopher |
| B. Rachel | D. Jessica | F. Bastian | H. John | J. Barkley |

- _____ 1. was moving to Hawaii
- _____ 2. took the attendance slip to the office but didn't mention that there was no substitute
- _____ 3. was rude to classmates; said "fact" or "opinion" to their comments
- _____ 4. the classmate who died in October
- _____ 5. voted against running the class with no substitute
- _____ 6. dreamed of mansions of trees and walking through them with his own dog
- _____ 7. hadn't spoken since a classmate died
- _____ 8. Rachel's best friend
- _____ 9. would be put in quarantine for four months
- _____ 10. skipped school Friday morning

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the word or phrase in the parenthesis that makes the statement correct.

- 1. Mrs. Muchmore didn't substitute because she (**confused the date** , **woke up sick**).
- 2. (**Karen, Christopher**) got the class to follow most of Mr. Fabiano's lesson plans.
- 3. (**Amelia Earhart, Brittany Spears**) was Rachel's hero.
- 4. Rachel and Bastian argue during (**lunch** , **the rock ritual**).
- 5. (**Christopher's** , **Sean's**) mother was the president of the PTA.
- 6. Tommy's family ran a (**bookstore** , **bakery**).
- 7. Bastian gave Barkley to (**John** , **Sean**).
- 8. (**Mr. Peacock, Mr. Fabiano**) reacted calmly to what the class had done.
- 9. Rachel shared her snack with (**Sean** , **Christopher**).
- 10. (**Rachel** , **Jessica**) wished she had remained silent when her parents were arguing.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Rachel's dad lived on a ranch in New Mexico.
- _____ 2. Christopher's mother complained about the sixth-grade teachers.
- _____ 3. Tommy Feathers tried to avoid Rachel.
- _____ 4. Jessica wanted to have a party—even if they got in trouble.
- _____ 5. Sky Reed has a great experience surfing in the curl of a wave.
- _____ 6. Class 6-238 didn't do any of their work on Friday.
- _____ 7. The class didn't tell anyone in the entire school about not having a substitute.
- _____ 8. Bastian wrote a note to get John into school.
- _____ 9. The class wrote about Tommy Feathers.
- _____ 10. Karen's parents were proud of the decisions she made on Friday.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Explain the things that led to the argument between Rachel and Bastian.
- 2. Compare and contrast Karen and Bastian.
- 3. Analyze why Christopher treated others the way he did.
- 4. Explain why Karen decided not to tell the office workers the class did not have a substitute.

Comprehension Test B

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. Karen | C. Jessica | E. Bastian | G. Mr. Fabiano | I. Mrs. Muchmore |
| B. Rachel | D. Tommy | F. Sean | H. Mr. Peacock | J. Sky |

- _____ 1. decided to give away his dog
- _____ 2. the regular teacher of Class 6-238
- _____ 3. told a story about surfing the curl of a wave
- _____ 4. took the blame for the class not having a substitute
- _____ 5. the deceased classmate Rachel and Bastian argued about
- _____ 6. wanted to be a pilot
- _____ 7. the school principal
- _____ 8. wanted to be a Supreme Court Justice
- _____ 9. was happy about getting a dog
- _____ 10. the substitute who called in sick

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the word or phrase in the parenthesis that makes the statement correct.

1. Barkley would have to (**be quarantined , get a series of shots**).
2. Bastian was moving to (**Hawaii , Washington, D.C.**).
3. The school (**principal , secretary**) lost the note about the substitute being sick.
4. (**John , Sean**) skipped school Friday morning.
5. Bastian went to (**John's house , the pet store**) when he finished eating lunch.
6. (**Christopher , Sean**) said "fact" or "opinion" to his classmates' comments.
7. After the rock ritual, the class wrote about (**Barkley , Tommy**).
8. Rachel dreamed of becoming a (**pilot , teacher**).
9. (**Jessica , Christopher**) voted against running the class by themselves.
10. (**Karen , Bastian**) made the decision not to tell the office workers that the class had no substitute.

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Sentence Completion (20 points)

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

1. _____ made Rachel a pie of golden raspberries.
2. _____ wrote that it's just his style to pick on others.
3. During D.E.A.R. time the boys _____.
4. The purpose of the rock ritual was _____.
5. Mr. Fabiano has the ritual of playing _____ during writing time.
6. _____ didn't mind getting fussed at by the principal because Friday was a good day for him.
7. Bastian struggled with the decision to _____.
8. Friday, April 28 was exactly six months after _____.
9. _____ communicated with the class by writing notes.
10. _____ was the only adult who reacted calmly to what Class 6-238 had done.

Part IV: Essay

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain how the principal found out that Class 6-238 had no substitute.
2. Evaluate the relationship between the rock ritual and Rachel starting to speak again.
3. Compare and contrast Christopher and Sean.
4. Identify and analyze situations when students in Class 6-238 showed responsibility and good judgment.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. B | 11. E | 16. J |
| 2. G | 7. F | 12. R | 17. H |
| 3. A | 8. C | 13. M | 18. L |
| 4. P | 9. K | 14. Q | 19. O |
| 5. S | 10. N | 15. T | 20. I |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. G |
| 2. A | 7. B |
| 3. I | 8. C |
| 4. E | 9. J |
| 5. D | 10. H |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. woke up sick
2. Karen
3. Amelia Earhart
4. the rock ritual
5. Christopher's
6. bakery
7. Sean
8. Mr. Fabiano
9. Sean
10. Rachel

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F |
| 2. T | 7. F |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. F | 9. T |
| 5. T | 10. F |

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. B |
| 2. G | 7. H |
| 3. J | 8. C |
| 4. A | 9. F |
| 5. D | 10. I |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

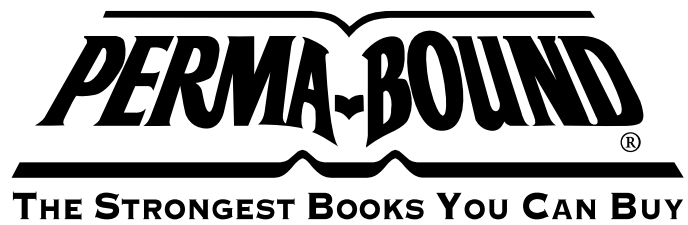
1. be quarantined
2. Hawaii
3. secretary
4. John
5. John's house
6. Christopher
7. Tommy
8. pilot
9. Jessica
10. Karen

Part III: Sentence Completion (20 points)

1. Tommy
2. Bastian
3. played *Doom III* on the computer
4. to say goodbye to a classmate who was leaving
5. music
6. Sean
7. give Barkley to someone else
8. Tommy Feathers died
9. Rachel
10. Mr. Fabiano

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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