

Scorpions

Written by Walter Dean Myers

Teacher's Guide by Regina Abernathy

A Perma-Bound Production

Synopsis

Jamal and Tito are best friends who try to keep their dreams of growing up to become rich and important from being crushed by the realities of their environment. Being raised in the inner city makes it difficult for the boys to survive without experiencing the effects of poverty, drugs, and violence.

The story of Jamal and Tito is also the story of isolation. It shows what can happen to children who find they are isolated in school, in their neighborhoods, and even in their homes.

Jamal Hicks lives with the guilt of his older brother Randy's imprisonment and the feelings of responsibility for his loving, hardworking, underemployed mother and younger sister. When his mother tries to work and raise money for his brother's appeal of a murder conviction, Jamal decides he must assist her.

Jamal's mother unwittingly leads her son into a situation which he is too young to control. She informs him that Randy wants him to talk to Mack, a member of the Scorpions, the gang to which Randy belongs.

Jamal, who is twelve, discovers that Mack and Randy want him to become the new leader of the Scorpions. Twelve-year-olds, considered minors by the legal system, cannot be forced to testify in court, so older gang members recruit them to deliver drugs. Jamal is told that the money the Scorpions make, with him as their leader, could be used to get Randy out of jail. Both Jamal and Tito know the other Scorpions will not welcome a twelve-year-old as their leader, but Mack gives Jamal an equalizer—a gun.

Both Jamal and Tito change once the gun comes into their possession. The gun allows Jamal to stop a bully from beating him each day at school. Also, the gun briefly stops Indian and the other Scorpions from attacking him. The gun gives Jamal a sense of power that he has never known and does not want to relinquish.

Jamal and Tito hide the gun. Both know that Jamal must get rid of the gun because it will eventually lead to trouble. Neither boy, however, can bring himself to throw the gun away.

Jamal does not want to be the leader of the Scorpions, but he does not know how to separate himself from the Scorpions or the desire to free his brother Randy. The Scorpions at least offer an opportunity to raise the money for his brother's appeal. When he finally devises a plan to offer leadership of the gang to Indian, his chief rival, he is

attacked and Tito saves his life by shooting his attackers.

Thus, the gun serves to separate Jamal from his only friend. When guilt causes Tito to tell his grandmother that he had killed someone, the shooting is reported to the police. As a result, Tito is told he must go to Puerto Rico and Jamal is left to cope alone.

Biographical Sketch

Walter Dean Myers was born in Martinsburg, West Virginia. His first book, *Where Does the Day Go?*, was published in 1969. Since then he has won numerous accolades and awards for his writings. Myers has written such notable books for young readers as *Motown and DiDi - A Love Story*; *The Outside Shot*; *Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff*; and *The Young Landlords*.

Critic's Corner

Scorpions is an excellent book for children and adults. It is written with sensitivity and understanding of how adolescents think and react. *Scorpions* offers insights to the lives of children and adults caught in the midst of poverty, drugs, and violence. It does not offer solution to the problems, just a realistic view.

General Objectives

1. To comprehend the consequences of isolation
2. To discuss the meaning of friendship
3. To comprehend feelings and motives
4. To debate the importance of environment
5. To analyze the themes of isolation and friendship
6. To note that solutions are not easily available in all situations
7. To understand the social and economic issues affecting individuals living in poverty

Specific Objectives

1. To discuss Jamal's isolation in school, in the community and at home
2. To comprehend the consequences of Jamal's isolation
3. To analyze Jamal's feelings and motives
4. To understand the social issues affecting Jamal's family
5. To note the school and community environment and its affect on Jamal's behavior
6. To analyze the friendship between Tito and Jamal
7. To analyze Tito's feelings and motives
8. To explain that Jamal's problems of isolation and victimization as well as his family's economic and social conditions are not easily remedied

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page number are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. "No, I'm too tired to even read it," Mama said. She sat on the wooden chair, crossed one heavy leg over the other, and started to take her shoes off. Jamal liked the way Mama looked before she had let her hair grow out. To him she had looked like the African women he had seen in magazines, strong and pretty and the same deep brown as he was. Her hair had grown out in patches of gray in the back and one just over her forehead. She looked older than before, before all the trouble with Randy. (Chapter 1, p. 6)
(Jamal notices the change which has occurred in his mother's appearance since the trouble with Randy. It has made her appear old. He noted that before the trouble, she had appeared strong and beautiful. Randy's troubles were affecting his mother.)
2. "He's talking about how he gonna appeal his case and stuff, and asking me if I got five hundred dollars. No five hundred dollars grew on trees when he was out here in the street, and I sure don't see none growing on trees with him up there." (Chapter 1, p. 6)
(The family is poor, and the fact that the son needs financial assistance to get a good lawyer only makes them realize how difficult it will be for them to assist him. The family understands that the legal system works best when a person can pay for good representation but money is not easy to raise. Nevertheless, Randy asked his mother to raise the money.)
3. Jamal looked up at Mr. Davidson and then back down at the floor. He knew he had been late four times. He had been late twice the week that Randy had been transferred from the city to the prison upstate. "I would ask you to bring your mother to school, but she probably doesn't care any more about your education than you do." (Chapter 3, p. 16)
(Jamal is not an ideal student. He is late sometimes, and Randy's imprisonment has affected his life. It has also contributed to his tardiness. The principal doesn't care about the reasons for his tardiness. He doesn't care for Jamal and assumes, because of his tardiness, Jamal doesn't care about his education. He also feels comfortable enough to insult Jamal by assuming his mother doesn't care, either.)
4. When Jamal walked out of Mr. Davidson's office, he felt like walking out of school. He was tired of school anyway. The only thing he did was to sit in the classrooms and listen to the teachers tell him what he couldn't do. He didn't even have to show up for school to know what they were going to say. (Chapter 3, p. 17)
(Jamal did not find school an inviting place. School made Jamal aware of all the things he could not do. He was also aware of the rules which controlled his behavior. He was not aware of what school offered, and no one took the time to befriend him and show him the opportunities available to him during the school day.)
5. That was what was wrong. When you did something wrong, everyone put their mouth on you. Then when you did something good, everybody acted like it wasn't anything special. (Chapter 3, p. 19)
6. Dwayne made Jamal feel small inside. Even when the older boy turned away from him, Jamal could still feel him grin. Lots of things made him feel the same way, small inside, and weak. The guy at the furniture store who had yelled at Mama had made him feel that way. Teachers who made him stand up in class when he made a mistake or didn't have his homework. Big kids who laughed at him were the worst because there wasn't anything he could do to stop them. Not by himself, not while he was small and not as tough as they were. (Chapter 3, p. 22)
(Jamal was made to feel small and weak during most of his day at school. Dwayne picked on him constantly, teachers did not care to know why he did not have homework and he was not able to help his mother when people were disrespectful to her. Most of all, he could not defend himself against the big kids. The adults did not help him, and he knew he could not defend himself alone.)
7. "Cause they don't want Randy 'cause he too old. They don't want anybody seventeen or like that. If they have all young dudes like you and your homeboy here, they can't get you to testify or nothing. Randy, he old. The man get him, then he got to turn somebody." (Chapter 5, p. 43)
(Jamal is told the reason that young males his age are recruited for gangs and gang activities. If they are caught committing illegal acts they cannot be made to testify, nor can they be tried as adults. They will be treated like children. But youngsters seventeen and older are considered adults and will probably testify against gang members in an effort to reduce their sentence.)
8. Jamal didn't think the fight was even. He thought he had probably lost it, but it didn't mean anything to him. He knew he couldn't fight his best when he was thinking about Mama and getting Randy out of jail and stuff like that. Some of the girls started in giggling and pointing to him, but he just let it go. "We're gonna have to settle this mess," Dwayne said when they reached math. "You gonna punk out?" (Chapter 7, p. 72)
(Most of Jamal's time was spent worrying about his mother and finding a way to get the money to get Randy out of jail. He did not have time to concentrate on his own problems at school. Nevertheless, his problems at school would not disappear.)
9. Indian was tough, but he had shut up when he saw the gun in Jamal's belt. Dwayne was going to shut up too. Jamal could imagine him with his slanty looking face coming into the store-room and grinning and talking about how bad he was and everything. Then he'd see the gun and he'd know that he'd better shut up. He would shut up too. Just like Indian. (Chapter 9, p. 100)
(Jamal, even though he was afraid of the gun, wanted the gun because it allowed him to control the others. Those who were constantly challenging him would retreat at the sight of the gun.)
10. Long before he got to St. Nicholas Avenue, he told himself that the only thing to do was throw the gun away. But already, part of him knew that he wasn't going to do it. (Chapter 12, p. 134)
(Jamal knows the gun means trouble, but he cannot or will not

throw it away.)

11. He didn't even think it mattered that he wasn't a man yet. Most of the men he knew weren't doing that good either—they just talked tougher. (Chapter 14, p. 146.)
(Jamal was told by his father and brother that he had to be the man of the house. But Jamal did not feel he was in control of the situations in his life. He began to believe that it did not matter if he were a man or not. He did not know any men who could serve as role models for him. The men he knew were not in control of their lives either. Therefore, he could not watch anyone to see how they handled life's situations and copy their examples. Nor could he talk to anyone and explain his problems because he knew no one with whom he could talk.)
12. "Well, Randy told my mother he didn't want me to be the head of the Scorpions no more." Jamal said. "Anyway, he said that the Scorpions should get the money up for his appeal, and then you should be the leader." (Chapter 17, p. 189.)
(Jamal did not want to be the leader of the Scorpions, but did not know how to get out of it. When he finally devised a plan to tell Indian to be the leader, he did not forget to make plans to get the money for his brother's appeal.)
13. "You saved me, Tito." The words came in great rushes of breath. "You saved me. He was gonna stab me." (Chapter 18, p. 197.)
(Jamal's life was saved by his best friend Tito. Tito had shot Angel and Indian before they could stab Jamal.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a correct answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the novel.

Literal Level

1. Describe the crime Randy committed and who his accomplices were.
(Randy, along with Mack and Willie Pugh, had tried to rob a delicatessen. Mack was the lookout. During the robbery, the store owner was shot and killed.)
2. Describe the sentence Randy and his accomplices received for the crime. Also, how many years must Randy serve before being eligible to go before a parole board?
(Willie was fourteen and was sentenced as a juvenile for possession of drugs as well as his participation in the robbery. Mack was fifteen, also a juvenile. Also, he cooperated with the police investigation and stated that he was not inside the store, but Randy and Willie were, when the owner was shot. Therefore, he received a light sentence and returned to the streets. Randy was seventeen. The prosecutor waited until Randy turned eighteen and tried him as an adult. He was convicted and sentenced to fifteen to twenty years. He would not be eligible for parole until he had served seven years.)
3. Discuss the settings in which Mack could be located. What does this suggest about Mack?
(Mack could be found at a crack house. All of the windows were boarded, except one. It appeared dark from the outside. But, Jamal knew inside in the back, individuals were taking drugs.

Also, Jamal knew drugs were given to teenagers for distribution throughout the neighborhood in this house. The crack house was once a neighborhood grocery store. Mack could also be found in Marcus Garvey Park. People who were alcoholics and/or drug addicts frequented the park. Because of Mack's decision to frequent these places, it suggests that he is a drug runner or a drug user.)

4. List the reasons Jamal gives for not liking Mack.
(Jamal felt Mack was different. He ran his words together when he spoke, therefore making it difficult to understand him. He did not seem very intelligent. Jamal believed he could not tell time. Also, Jamal thought he had no conscience about hurting people. Mack had broken a man's arm with a baseball bat because the man stepped on his shoe. Also, Jamal and Tito thought he was a wino and a person who took drugs.)
5. What natural talent did Jamal possess, and what adult recognized and encouraged him to pursue his talent?
(Jamal was an artist. He could draw and wished he had enough money to buy the proper art supplies. However, no adult recognized his talent and encouraged him to pursue art.)
6. List the reasons Dwayne cited for fighting Jamal.
(No substantial reasons are given. Dwayne just ridicules Jamal about the types of clothes he wears, if he is man enough (not having the heart), or any other reason. Dwayne was older and bigger than Jamal. He was just a bully.)
7. According to Mack, why should Jamal be the leader of the Scorpions?
(If Jamal took over as the leader of the Scorpions, he could get the money for his brother's appeal. The Scorpions could carry illegal drugs for the Spanish adult drug dealers (p. 43) and make easy money. Also, according to Mack, it was Randy's wish that Jamal take his place if he could no longer be the leader of the Scorpions.)

Interpretive Level

8. Was Mr. Gonzalez justified in firing Jamal?
(Mr. Gonzalez did not dislike Jamal. Also, he was pleased with his work ethic and his politeness. However, Mr. Gonzalez recognized that Indian and Angel were gang members who showed little or no respect for adults or establishments. Thus, to maintain his store and clientele, he must remove the individual who attracted gang members to the store, Jamal. He cared for Jamal because he offered advice as well as paid him. He explained that Indian and Angel were headed for jail and Jamal should stay away from them.)
9. Why does Tito continue to befriend Jamal when he knows he is headed for trouble?
(Tito knows that Jamal is not really a vicious gang member. Instead, he knows the artist. He knows the individual who just wants to help lessen his mother's worry. He knows the friend. He knows the person who wants to raise money to get his brother a new trial. He knows the person who does not start the fights, but is willing to defend himself or just take a beating. Tito cannot separate Jamal, the person he knows, from Jamal the person who is heading for trouble.)

10. Discuss the circumstances that lead to the shooting of Angel and Indian.

(Jamal had planned to tell Indian that his brother wished for Indian to be the leader of the Scorpions. When Jamal attempted to do so, Indian and Angel decided to beat and kick Jamal. Jamal had decided he could take the beating, but Angel pulled out a knife and was about to stab Jamal. Then Tito shot both Indian and Angel.)

Critical Level

11. Why is Mack willing to accept responsibility for the death of Angel and wounding of Indian?

(Mack is addicted to drugs and may not remember if he shot Indian and Angel. Jamal has suggested that he is not very intelligent. Also, he may know he did not shoot them, but Angel is dead, and Indian is headed for prison. Thus, he receives the position of warlord without having to fight anyone. When Jamal suggests he become the leader, he could lead the Scorpions without a challenge. Also, if others believe that Mack is not afraid to kill them for the position of leader, it allows him to gain a reputation without having to do anything to deserve it as well as lessening the chance that he will have to defend his position immediately.)

12. During what other incident did Mack brag that he had shot someone?

(When the paper ran an article about the robbery and shooting of the grocery store owner, Mack bragged that he had done it. No one believed him, but an anonymous person notified the police which led to his arrest and the arrest of Jamal's brother Randy.)

13. What do you believe the main idea of this novel is?

(There are many messages in this novel. Some are as follows:

[a] Young men must be taught that they do not have to try to be "men" and responsible for adults. Jamal was trying to be a man and rescue his mother as well as his brother.

[b] Some secrets must be told for the protection of others. Sassy should have told her mother about the gun. Tito should have told his grandmother about the gun before the shooting, and Jamal should have told his mother that he was being pressured to be leader of the Scorpions. Also, Jamal should have told his mother about the medicine the school was forcing him to take as well as about the principal's treatment of him and his overall performance in school. He should have also informed his mother of the fights he was having with Dwayne, Indian, and Angel.

[c] If one carries a gun, sooner or later one will shoot it. Jamal and Tito wanted to shoot the gun. They just did not dream that one day, Tito would kill someone.

[d] It is difficult to live in the midst of poverty, drugs, and violence and not be affected by it. Jamal's brother was a member of a gang and a drug runner who had committed a crime and was serving time. This affected Jamal's life. School was a violent place for Jamal. Poverty made Jamal worry about finding solutions to adult problems.

There are many more themes. Have the students list them and explain how incidents in the story prove the themes true.)

14. What do both Tito and Jamal lose as a result of the shooting?

(They are no longer innocent teenagers. Also, they lose their friendship. Tito must go live in Puerto Rico with his father. Jamal

must remain in Harlem. The distance suggests that the friendship will fade. Tito loses a carefree heart in exchange for one filled with regret and shame.)

Across the Curriculum

Math

1. Using information from an atlas, or a travel guide from The Automobile Association of America (AAA) calculate the distance between New York City and San Juan, Puerto Rico.
2. If Jamal had continued to work for Mr. Gonzalez each night after school earning minimum wage, how many hours would he have to work to make \$500? How many days after school would he have to work? How many after-school hours would he have to work to earn \$2000? How many days?

Social Studies and Geography

1. Locate a map of New York City in an encyclopedia or atlas. Locate and memorize the names of the boroughs. To which borough does Harlem belong?
2. Research the city of Harlem. What famous people, landmarks, or occurrences contribute to Harlem's fame?
3. Locate a map of Puerto Rico. To what group of islands does Puerto Rico belong? Research the country of Puerto Rico.
4. Mack asked Jamal to meet him in Marcus Garvey Park. Research Marcus Garvey and his philosophy. Also, be able to list the accomplishments of Marcus Garvey.

Science

Tito has asthma. Research the cause, affects, and treatment for asthma.

English

1. Jamal thought that he understood how his father felt when he could not help his mother and Sassy. Write a paragraph explaining what you would do and how you would feel if life's circumstances did not allow you to assist your family when they needed you. (Read p. 96, last paragraph.)
2. Tito and Jamal are true friends. Write a paragraph describing the relationship between the two. Also, write a paragraph about your relationship with a friend.

Foreign Language

1. Abuelita is the Spanish word for grandmother in Mexico. By what title did Tito call his grandmother?
2. List words or phrases which have become part of American culture which originated in Hispanic culture.

example: food — tamales
 tacos

 Names — Ricardo (Ricky)
 Maria

3. Students may also name types of music, religion, fashion, sport stars, entertainers, art, authors, etc.

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VOCABULARY TEST

Fill in the sentences below with words from the list that follows.

1. Her voice was full of _____ as she made her way to the bathroom.
2. Jamal put his fingers to his lips and then _____ the presence of the bird with a nod of his head.
3. Mack had been put in a _____ home.
4. When Jamal got to the _____, Indian and Angel were waiting for him.
5. The woman, dark skinned with a lot of makeup on, wiped the _____ that ran down the side of her face.
6. Even when Billy Ware came up to him with a lot of _____ about how he thought Dwayne was going to beat Jamal, it just didn't matter.
7. Perhaps you can afford a _____ if you accuse this boy of doing something he actually didn't do.
8. The two women got on one of the boats and went into a little _____.
9. Lord have _____.
10. Sometimes the _____ we take are bitter, sister, but we got to take them anyway.

herbs
triumph
juvenile
bodega
mercy
nonsense
perspiration
lawsuit
compartment
indicated

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Identification (10 points)

Match the description of each character with one of the names below.

- _____ 1. A smart-mouthed eight-year-old who thought she was cute.
- _____ 2. Jamal's employer.
- _____ 3. Mama worked for him and tried to borrow money from him to pay for Randy's appeal.
- _____ 4. A religious woman who only wanted to protect her grandson.
- _____ 5. A bully who was older and stronger than Jamal but constantly started fights with him.
- _____ 6. Jamal's only true friend.
- _____ 7. The school principal.
- _____ 8. Challenged Jamal for the position of leader of the Scorpions.
- _____ 9. Wanted to raise money to help his brother pay for an appeal.
- _____ 10. Gave Jamal a pistol.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| A. Tito | F. Sassy |
| B. Indian | G. Jamal |
| C. Mr. Gonzalez | H. Mr. Stanton |
| D. Dwayne | I. Mr. Davidson |
| E. Abuela | J. Mack |

Part II: True or False (10 points)

Place an X by every statement that is true.

- _____ 1. Sassy knew that Jamal had a gun.
- _____ 2. The pills which the school nurse gave Jamal made him feel drowsy.
- _____ 3. Tito's faith was Catholic.
- _____ 4. Jamal wanted to use his artistic ability to help Mrs. Brown and her students with the scenery for the play.
- _____ 5. Jamal had a girlfriend who listened to his problems.
- _____ 6. Jamal told his mother that Tito was returning to Puerto Rico.
- _____ 7. Jamal and Tito said they would grow up and buy boats when they became rich.
- _____ 8. Tito suffered from sickle cell anemia.
- _____ 9. Mack was Jamal's warlord.
- _____ 10. Jamal disliked working at the grocery store.

Part III: Multiple Choice (10 points)

Complete each of the following sentences by circling the correct choice.

1. Jamal's mother's occupation is (waitress, maid, secretary).
2. Randy asks for (\$500, \$7,000, \$2,000) to pay a lawyer to begin his appeal.
3. Randy considered Mack his (enemy, lawyer, warlord).
4. Jamal was called to the principal's office after being accused of pulling a gun on (Billy Ware, Dwayne, Mack).
5. Tito's father lived in (Cuba, New York, Puerto Rico).
6. Jamal was (happy, upset, uncaring) with Randy for hurting his mother and asking her for money.
7. Mack told the police that (Jamal, Willie, Randy) shot the grocery store owner.
8. The present Jamal gave Tito before he left town was (a tiny boat, a drawing, a cross).
9. Jamal hid the gun in (his shoe, his bed, the couch).
10. Abuela put Tito out of the house when she discovered (the gun, he was a member of a gang, he was cutting school).

Part IV: Short Answers (40 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following. Put your answer in the blank.

1. _____ What did Angel and Indian do to upset Mr. Gonzalez?
2. _____ Who informed the principal that Jamal had threatened a student with a gun in the store room?
3. _____ What reason did Tito and Jamal give police for wanting to get a free ride on the train?
4. _____ Who recommended that Jamal get a job at the store?
5. _____ Who was afraid that God would punish him?
6. _____ At the end of the book, who became the leader of the Scorpions?
7. _____ Who did Tito kill?
8. _____ Who did Tito wound?
9. _____ How did Jamal's mother learn that Tito is leaving town?
10. _____ Why was Indian imprisoned?

Part V: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. List Jamal's friends in school, in the community, at church, and at home. Explain why Jamal might feel isolated with few individuals to assist him with his problems.
2. What part does Tito's religion play in his response to the shooting?
3. What kind of medicine was Jamal given by the school nurse? Do you believe Jamal needed the medicine? Why or why not?

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: True or False (10 points)

Write T or F next to the following statements.

- _____ 1. Jamal's mother often worked late; therefore Jamal had to care for his sister.
- _____ 2. Jamal's mother would come home late because sometimes after work, she would visit Randy who was in jail.
- _____ 3. Jamal did not care about his mother's feelings throughout the story.
- _____ 4. Jamal wanted to be the leader of the Scorpions.
- _____ 5. Tito thought Jamal should not get rid of the gun.
- _____ 6. Mack told Jamal that he would be his warlord and that would stop the other Scorpions from challenging him.
- _____ 7. Dwayne lured Jamal into the storeroom to attack him.
- _____ 8. The teachers and principal thought Jamal was a model student.
- _____ 9. Abuela tried to keep her grandson out of trouble.
- _____ 10. Sassy heard that Jamal had a gun from someone in school.

Part II: Sequence (10 points)

Number the events (1 through 10) according to which event occurred first.

- _____ 1. Tito leaves for Puerto Rico.
- _____ 2. Randy is convicted and sentenced to prison.
- _____ 3. Mack informs Jamal that he must be the leader of the Scorpions and could raise \$2,000 for Randy.
- _____ 4. Randy is stabbed in prison.
- _____ 5. Mack gives Jamal a pistol.
- _____ 6. Angel and Indian attack and try to stab Jamal.
- _____ 7. Jamal gets a job at the grocery store.
- _____ 8. Tito shoots Angel and Indian.
- _____ 9. Jamal tells Indian to lead the Scorpions.
- _____ 10. Randy needs \$2,000 to pay a lawyer to start his appeal process.

Part III: Multiple Choice (10 points)

Complete the following sentences with the best response. Indicate our choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Randy was arrested after an anonymous person repeated the story (A) Jamal (B) Mack (C) Randy had bragged to neighbors about how he killed the grocery store owner.
- _____ 2. Jamal had the natural talent of (A) singing (B) dancing (C) drawing.
- _____ 3. Most of the girls liked (A) Jamal (B) Tito (C) Randy.
- _____ 4. Tito and his grandmother were (A) Catholic (B) Jewish (C) Baptist.
- _____ 5. In Puerto Rico, according to Tito, the real mothers of the house were (A) grandmothers (B) aunts (C) mothers.
- _____ 6. Randy considered Mack important because he could count on him in a (A) negotiation (B) fight (C) war game.
- _____ 7. At Tito's house the gun was found by his (A) sister (B) father (C) grandmother.
- _____ 8. The bully who constantly fought with Jamal was (A) Willie (B) Oswaldo (C) Dwayne.
- _____ 9. Jamal joined the Scorpions at the age of (A) 14 (B) 12 (C) 16.
- _____ 10. After he threatened the bully with a gun, Jamal thought about (A) running away from home (B) telling the principal (C) telling his mother.

Part IV: Matching (10 points)

Match the speaker to the following statements.

- _____ 1. "You don't think I'm cute?"
- _____ 2. "You take over the Scorpions, then you can get the money for Randy's appeal."
- _____ 3. "Don't look sad, okay? If Abuela see you looking sad, she gonna start asking questions and going on."
- _____ 4. "I'm thinking about borrowing the money from Mr. Stanton."
- _____ 5. "The second warning is if you continue to find people like Jamal Hicks for your friends, you're going to be in trouble if you like it or not."
- _____ 6. "You know what we could do if we were rich? We could go live someplace warm, and maybe you wouldn't get asthma all the time."
- _____ 7. "We have to settle this mess. You gonna punk out?"
- _____ 8. "Everybody ain't happy with Jamal taking over the Scorpions."
- _____ 9. "I think me and you should get down to see who the leader of the Scorpions."
- _____ 10. "Tonight, Lord, we're praying for Sister Hicks' family. Not just her boy whose fate you hold cradled in the palm of your great hand, but all her family."

A. Indian
B. Angel
C. Reverend Biggs
D. Dwayne
E. Sassy

F. Jamal
G. Mack
H. Mr. Davidson
I. Tito
J. Mama

Part V: Short Answer (10 points)

Explain the following statements by supplying a brief interpretation.

1. "You don't give up the colors unless the leader say you give them up."
2. "You know you can die in them jails just from having a broken spirit."
3. "Lord, when am I going to learn that my problems don't belong to nobody but me?"
4. "You take my father. He don't like pictures. Maybe he just don't like me."
5. Tito looked at the picture. Then he looked at Jamal. "I don't look like this no more. I look different now."
6. "You're going to feel good when you are not a Scorpion anymore." Tito said. "I'll be glad when things get back to normal." Jamal said.
7. Jamal lay in the darkness and thought about what Mama had said about him being weak. The thing was that it was hard to be strong. It was really hard.
8. If you were a part of the life they were living, Jamal thought, then after a while you did something and the police came and got you.
9. Two girls came halfway down the stairs, stopped when they saw three boys in the hallway, turned and went back upstairs.
10. "You ain't going to get in trouble?" asked Jamal. "No man," said Mack, "you don't get in no trouble you snuff somebody ain't got nothing."

Part VI: Themes (30 points)

Throughout the novel, various passages may serve as themes. Read the following passages and answer the questions which follow.

1. "If we could carry packages for the A & P we could make five dollars or seven dollars a day. I think that's better than messing with the Scorpions." Tito said.

What values are Tito and Jamal discussing? Why does Tito believe carrying packages is better than messing with the Scorpions?

2. "What is he going to do when he gets out?" Jamal asked. "Go back to school." Mama said. "I'm seeing to that. Get something in his head so he can earn him a good living."

What hopes and dreams does Jamal's mother have for Randy? What kind of values is she trying to instill in her children?

3. "We going to start going to church more as a family," Mama said. "And it ain't going to do you a bit of harm, so don't try to get out of it, Jamal."

What steps does Mrs. Hicks take to try and save her family? Why? What types of values is she again trying to instill in her children?

Part VII: Essay Questions (20 points)

1. Write a paragraph describing what you believed would happen to one of the following characters if the book were to have a sequel. (Mack, Jamal, Tito, or Randy)
2. Explain Jamal's feelings about his brother Randy.

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Test

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. triumph | 6. nonsense |
| 2. indicated | 7. lawsuit |
| 3. juvenile | 8. compartment |
| 4. bodega | 9. mercy |
| 5. perspiration | 10. herbs |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Identification (10 points)

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

Part II: True or False (10 points)

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

Part III: Multiple Choice (10 points)

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. maid | 6. upset |
| 2. \$500 | 7. Willie |
| 3. warlord | 8. a drawing |
| 4. Dwayne | 9. the couch |
| 5. Puerto Rico | 10. the gun |

Part IV: Short Answers (40 points)

1. They wouldn't leave the store until Jamal came. Then when they left, they took a handful of candy bars and knocked over the card table where the domino players were sitting.
2. Dwayne's mother
3. Tito had had an asthma attack and was too weak to walk home
4. Jamal's mother
5. Tito
6. Mack
7. Angel
8. Indian
9. Abuela tells her
10. for possession

Part V: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: True or False (10 points)

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

Part II: Sequence (10 points)

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

Part III: Multiple Choice (10 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. B |
| 2. C | 7. C |
| 3. B | 8. B |
| 4. A | 9. B |
| 5. A | 10. A |

Part IV: Matching (10 points)

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

Part V: Short Answer (10 points)

1. A person cannot quit a gang when he or she chooses.
2. When some people in jail have no hope of getting out, they sometimes lose their reason for living.
3. It is difficult to learn that individuals must solve difficult family problems alone. Sometimes no one is coming to help.
4. Jamal's talent was drawing. His father disliked drawing and Jamal thought he also might dislike him.
5. Jamal had drawn a picture of a happy-go-lucky Tito. He tried to give Tito the picture after the shooting. But Tito felt the picture was a different person. He has changed.
6. Joining the Scorpions had negatively affected Jamal's life. He wanted his life to be normal again.
7. Jamal felt pressured not to be emotional or show that he needed attention. But this was very difficult because he was only 12 and everyone needs to be able to show emotions and ask for attention.
8. It was just part of life to view individuals being arrested. Thus Jamal felt that sooner or later in his neighborhood, the police came and took you away.
9. Girls had been cautioned to stay away from individuals who they did not know or who appeared suspicious. People were aware of crime in the neighborhood and took precautions.
10. Mack discusses the belief among many in crime-ridden neighborhoods that police do not actively pursue criminals whose victims are perceived as criminals or poor people.

Part VI: Themes (30 points)

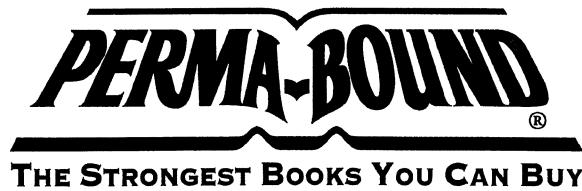
1. Tito and Jamal are discussing the value of work. The work ethic has been taught to both boys. They know it is better to work for the money they need than to become members of the Scorpions. If they mess with the gang they must become runners, individuals who obtain drugs from adults, and sell the drugs to young people in the community. They both know this is the easiest way to make the money, but not the correct way.
2. Jamal's mother hopes that her son can win his appeal and be released from jail. She also hopes that when he does gain his freedom, he will go back to school. Obviously, he had not completed his education and is not qualified to obtain the type of job which would allow him a living wage. Thus she hoped he will complete his education. With this statement, she is also trying to teach her children the value of an education.
3. Mrs. Hicks hopes to rescue her children by instilling religious and family values in them. She had decided that they must attend church as a family. She will set the example by attending church with her family. She is also hoping that while in church her children will believe in God and learn to live by his teaching, which is opposite from the teaching of the street.

Part VII: Essay Questions (20 points)

Answers will vary.

TEACHER'S NOTES

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