

# SOMEWHERE IN THE DARKNESS

# LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

WALTER DEAN MYERS

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY PATRICIA BUTLER

## SYNOPSIS

Going to school, "hanging out" with friends, or walking the streets alone are choices that fourteen-year-old Jimmy Little must make on a daily basis. Although his foster mother Mama Jean has impressed upon him the importance of education, he still finds that his poor attendance and grades may cause him to fail the tenth grade.

School is a flurry of activities. Achievement tests are scheduled for the day, and the student body is dismissed early. When Jimmy returns home, his neighbor Cookie informs him that a man has been inquiring about him. Before long, Jimmy finds out that the man claims to be Cephus "Crab" Little, his father.

Once inside the apartment, Crab tries to convince Jimmy that he is his father even though the photos that Mama Jean has of Crab only vaguely resemble him. As they await Mama Jean's arrival, Crab attempts to discover what Jimmy knows about him and his incarceration. Jimmy only knows that Crab has been accused of murder, but Crab maintains that he is innocent.

Mama Jean is elated to see Crab until he tells her the reason for his visit — he plans to take Jimmy with him to Chicago. She is taken aback when Crab insists that they must leave immediately since he has a job waiting for him. In fact, Crab convinces her that he needs Jimmy with him. Furthermore, he promises to allow Jimmy to return to New York if his plans fail. Heartbroken, Mama Jean encourages Jimmy to go with his father, packs his suitcase, and gives him \$50 in case of an emergency.

The pair leave New York by car, not by bus as Crab has previously indicated to Mama Jean. When Jimmy questions Crab's deception, he answers that he wants to spare Mama Jean from worrying.

At first, Jimmy experiences homesickness, but before long, he relaxes a bit. When they stop in Cleveland for food and fuel, Jimmy asks if he can contact Mama Jean. Instead, Crab makes the call. When Mama Jean does not ask to speak to him, Jimmy becomes suspicious. His suspicions are heightened when he observes Crab's nervousness when he sees the police. Later, Jimmy attempts to call home, but Crab stops him and explains the reason for his behavior: he has escaped from jail and the police are after him. He goes on to say that he has been falsely accused of robbery and murder. He plans to go to Arkansas and confront one of the men involved in the crime and convince him to clear his name.

They arrive in Chicago, get rooms at a rooming house,

and visit Crab's ex-girlfriend Mavis Stokes and her son Frank. It is obvious that Crab wants Mavis back in his life, but Frank is surprisingly hostile towards Jimmy.

After watching Frank work out at the local gym in preparation for the Golden Glove competition, Crab seeks employment as a saxophone player at Vernon's, a downtown night club. When Crab becomes ill, Jimmy is called to take him home. Later that evening, Crab decides that Mavis and Frank will accompany them to Arkansas.

Angry that Mavis declines his invitation, Crab rents a car using a stolen credit card belonging to Robert Daniels and then drives Jimmy to Arkansas.

Though the trip commences with a flat tire, the pair become closer as Crab shares his feelings and life experiences with his son. Crab's kidney ailment worsens, but he covers the pain with aspirin.

In Arkansas, Crab coaxes Jimmy to call Rydell Dupuis, the man he has come to see. Rydell sends a warning to Crab not to start any trouble.

They arrive at the home of Miss MacKenzie, a family friend; they freshen up, then visit High John, the conjure man. High John examines Crab and tells him how to temporarily relieve his pain. Before they leave, High John comments that only God knows how Crab has made it thus far. During the night, Jimmy overhears his father crying in his sleep and wonders what High John has seen in his father's future.

The next day Rydell and Crab meet, but Crab is unable to convince Rydell to clear him. While Crab and Jimmy discuss their next move, Rydell returns with the police. Crab is arrested and taken to the hospital where he dies.

After the funeral, Jimmy returns home.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Walter Dean Myers is a contemporary black writer whose focus is on books for children and young adults. Born in Martinsburg, West Virginia, in 1937, Myers was raised in Harlem from the age of three.

Though a precocious reader and writer, Myers was not encouraged to pursue writing as a profession because it was not considered a "legitimate" career. Myers, however, continued to read voraciously and write short stories and poems. His direction changed sharply when, at the age of 17, he joined the U.S. Army. After being discharged three years later, Myers worked as a mail clerk, a messenger, and an interviewer at a factory. Finding little fulfillment in these areas, he turned once again to writing.

In the late 1960's Myers entered and won a contest for picture book writers sponsored by the Council on Inter-

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racial Books for Children for the manuscript *Where Does the Day Go?* Encouraged by the publication of this winning piece, Myers created texts for other picture books, including *The Dragon Takes a Wife*, *The Dancers*, and *Fly, Jimmy, Fly!*

In 1975 Myers turned from picture books to novels for young adults with the publication of *Fast Sam*, *Cool Clyde*, and *Stuff*. This prolific writer's works include science fiction, fantasy, nonfiction, and mystery-adventure stories.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

A number of Myers' novels are set in Harlem and focus on the experiences of black teens who confront the obstacles of inner city life. In all of his works he proposes to create "the essence of life." His subjects are serious, but his tone is optimistic. In *Shadow and Substance: Afro-American Experience in Contemporary Children's Fiction*, Rudine Sims notes that Myers emphasizes "the love and laughter that is part of the strengths and the inner resources that enable us to cope and to survive." Ellen Fader notes in *The Horn Book Magazine* (May-June 1992) that *Somewhere in the Darkness* "is one of Myers's most memorable pieces of writing: there is not an unnecessary word or phrase; the scenes are vivid and emotionally powerful; and the characters are heartbreakingly realistic."

Myers is the recipient of numerous awards and honors which include the American Library Association Notable Book citation, Woodward Park School Annual Book Award, Coretta Scott King Award for fiction and nonfiction, and the Newbery Honor Book award.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To discover the effects of single-parenting
2. To determine the father's role in the family unit
3. To explore the changes which occur during adolescence
4. To distinguish between a house and a home
5. To specify the characteristics of a man
6. To recognize and appreciate ethnic beliefs, superstitions, and rituals
7. To explain the importance of realistic dreams
8. To explore the dynamics of human relationships
9. To recognize the literary journey as a passage into adulthood
10. To propose changes in the justice system

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate Mama Jean's influence on Jimmy's life
2. To determine whether Crab fits Jimmy's image of a father
3. To discuss Jimmy's attitude towards school
4. To describe Jimmy's environment
5. To explain each character's view of what makes a man
6. To explore the purpose of the conjure man
7. To analyze Crab's prison dreams
8. To explain Crab's relationship with Jimmy, Mavis, and Rydell

9. To specify the significance of Jimmy's four days with Crab
10. To explore ways in which Crab is a victim

### MEANING STUDY

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

1. The funny thing was that he never knew he wasn't going to school until he found that he wasn't there. (p. 4)  
(*Jimmy never really plans to skip school. It just happens.*)
2. It was almost as if something tired was growing in him. (p. 17)  
(*Jimmy is experiencing the pangs of adolescence. Adults and everyday situations have become both challenging and confusing.*)
3. the Bronx (p. 23)  
Brooklyn (p. 51)  
Queens (p. 51)  
(*These are New York City boroughs, or administrative units.*)
4. Muslims (p. 28)  
(*Muslims are adherents of the religion of Islam.*)
5. For some reason he had always imagined a father as somebody who told him to come home at a certain time or who got mad when he didn't do his homework. He had imagined them going to baseball games together or maybe for walks in the park. He hadn't thought about Chicago. (p. 39)  
(*At this point Crab does not fit Jimmy's image of a father.*)
6. Crab was breathing harder, his chest heaving. He looked at Jimmy and then away. There was something in his eyes, something at once frightening and sad. (p. 46)  
(*Crab is reacting to the police. Jimmy sees that something is wrong with Crab and the situation they are in.*)
7. "No matter what else I done in this world I didn't kill nobody. I couldn't prove it to no judge, and the jury didn't believe me but I can prove it to you! I can prove it, Jimmy!" (p. 50)  
(*Crab is obsessed with proving his innocence.*)
8. Vietnam (p. 58)  
(*Vietnam is a country in S.E. Asia. The Vietnam War was a conflict between South Vietnam, backed by the U.S. and North Vietnam, backed by the Soviet Union and China.*)
9. Golden Gloves (p. 64)  
(*Golden Gloves is an amateur boxing competition which was first sponsored by the New York Daily News in 1927 and the Chicago Tribune in 1928.*)
10. Maybe, Jimmy thought, being his father was just one of the things that Crab had to do. (p. 75)  
(*Jimmy is trying to figure out where he stands in Crab's life.*)
11. the Loop (p. 80)

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*(The Loop is the commercial center of Chicago.)*

12. When Crab was like this, hurt and feeling bad, it was easier to be with him, Jimmy thought. (p. 86)  
*(Crab's vulnerability makes him less frightening.)*
13. "One day I'm saying that I'll get out and start all over again. Then the next day I'm saying that I'm going to do something to get rich. And when I get out I find that I'm still Crab, and this is still the same old world. You know what I mean?" (p. 98)  
*(Crab admits his dreams are unrealistic.)*
14. "Cause I'm sick to dying, man," Crab said, looking straight ahead. "It don't matter how I get what I need." (p. 99)  
*(Crab is dying, so he doesn't care who he hurts in order to get what he wants.)*
15. prison dreams (pp. 151, 153)  
*(Prison dreams are dreams that are not expected to come true.)*
16. "But one thing a gutter rat hates is to see another gutter rat sitting in the sun." (p. 151)  
*(The first gutter rat refers to Rydell; the second refers to Crab. Crab knows from his visit with Rydell that Rydell is potentially dangerous. In fact, it is not long before Rydell returns with the police.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the novel.

#### Questions 1-8 Literal Level

1. Describe Jimmy Little's neighborhood.  
*(Jimmy and Mama Jean live in a lower class neighborhood in a seven-storied apartment building. Loud music blares all night and junkies are frequently chased from the building. Dogs roam the debris-lined streets, and drunks are taunted by children playing hooky from school.)*
2. What is Jimmy's initial response to Crab?  
*(Jimmy is not sure who Crab is. He doesn't look like the photo Mama Jean has of him. In fact, Jimmy thinks he might be a crack head.)*
3. Characterize Mama Jean.  
*(Mama Jean and Dolly Little were good friends. When Dolly died, Crab left Jimmy with Mama Jean who has been mother, father, and friend to Jimmy. When Jimmy is with Mama Jean, he is home.)*
4. Why is Crab in New York? Where has he been for the last eight years?  
*(Crab has come to take Jimmy on the road with him. He has been in jail for murder for the past eight years.)*
5. How does Crab escape from jail?  
*(He escapes when he is hospitalized for kidney problems.)*
6. Trace Jimmy and Crab's travels.  
*(When they leave New York, they stop in Cleveland. They head to Chicago, where Crab tries unsuccessfully to get work as a saxophone player. Then the pair travel to Arkansas, where Crab is finally captured.)*

7. Why does Crab insist on meeting with Rydell?

*(Crab thinks that he can get Rydell to admit that he was not involved in the robbery-murder. To Crab, proving his innocence means starting over again.)*

8. What information does the conjure man give Crab?

*(The conjure man knows that Crab is near death. He tells him to face the truth.)*

#### Questions 9-11 Interpretive Level

9. Explain what the prison dreams symbolize.  
*(When he is in jail, Crab has grandiose dreams about starting over, getting rich, walking off in the sunset, etc. The reality is that Crab hasn't changed and nor has the world. He is an uneducated thief, running away from the law.)*
10. How is Crab's death foreshadowed?
  - a. Crab states, "I don't think I was going to make no parole." This could mean that he would not live to be paroled.
  - b. Crab admits, "Cause I'm sick to dying, man."
  - c. Crab insists, "We got to go see the conjure man. See what he got to say. We don't have a whole lot of time to waste."
  - d. Crab says to Jimmy, "We're getting a few minutes together after all, huh?"
  - e. Finally, Jimmy notes that "Crab had found something tougher than he was and he couldn't handle it."
11. Crab respects those who "fight" back. In what ways does Crab attempt to fight?  
*(Crab attempts to fight the system by escaping from prison and facing Rydell. He also attempts to fight his illness by taking aspirin. His final fight is to try to establish a relationship with his son.)*

#### Questions 12 and 13 Critical Level

12. Share your feelings about the novel.
13. Evaluate the ending.

#### Questions 14 and 15 Creative Level

14. Predict what will happen when Jimmy returns home. Predict how his experiences have changed his life.
15. Illustrate major scenes from the novel. (For example, Jimmy's first encounter with Crab, Jimmy meeting Frank Stokes, Crab's visit to High John, or Crab's capture by the police.)

### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

#### History/Geography

1. Research one of the five boroughs of New York City:
  - Manhattan
  - the Bronx
  - Brooklyn
  - Queens
  - Richmond
2. Draw a map detailing Jimmy's travels with Crab — New York, Cleveland, Chicago, and Marion, Arkansas. Label the capitals of each state and then determine

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the number of miles between each capital city and the approximate length of time it would take to reach each destination by car.

### Art

1. Create a collage on home and family.
2. Illustrate these scenes:
  - Jimmy's neighborhood
  - High John's house
  - Vernon's nightclub
  - the crossing in Arkansas
  - Mama Jean's apartment
3. Make a model of your neighborhood.
4. Sketch the major characters using details from the novel.
5. Illustrate major scenes from the novel.

### Music

Compose a song which depicts the life and death of Cephus Little.

### Health

1. Research and report on the causes, symptoms, and treatments for the following:
  - asthma
  - arthritis
  - kidney disorders
2. Investigate the positive and negative effects of aspirin.
3. Report on the effects of ragweed.

### Speech

1. Prepare and present Cal's eulogy.
2. Write and present a speech on one of these topics:
  - love
  - honesty
  - responsibility
  - family
  - home

### Drama

Role play one of these scenes:

- Jimmy meeting Crab
- Crab's escape from the hospital
- Crab confronting Rydell
- Crab's capture
- Jimmy's return home

## STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Write a news article using one of these headlines:
  - a. Murderer Escapes from Green Haven
  - b. Stolen Credit Cards Traced to Little
  - c. Student Wounded in Lunchroom Brawl
  - d. Criminals Meet
  - e. Conjuring Up a Cure
  - f. Stokes Competes in Golden Gloves Competition
  - g. Captured!
2. Discuss the similes used in the novel. Explain the images in each example:
  - a. Jimmy enjoyed letting his mind wander, enjoyed the thoughts that ran through his mind like a long, pleasant movie. (p. 7)

- b. Up the road there were tall poles that stretched over the road like alien giraffes, their great shiny eyes lighting up the night. (p. 40)
  - c. He was a small man, and old. His face was as dark as black walnuts, and deeply lined. (p. 131)
3. Research and report on how the definition of family has changed over the decade.
  4. Read aloud an interesting excerpt from the novel.
  5. List and discuss the characteristics of a good father. Evaluate Crab using the attributes listed.
  6. Write an essay on one of the following:
    - a. The Importance of a Father
    - b. What Makes a Home?
    - c. Being an Only Child
    - d. The Death of a Parent
    - e. What Makes a Man?
    - f. Reputation Means Everything
    - g. When Parents Depend on Their Children
    - h. A Trip to Remember
    - i. Making Excuses
    - j. Men Do Cry
    - k. A New Beginning
    - l. Dreams
  7. Debate whether Crab is a victim.
  8. Rewrite the end of the novel.
  9. Create a collage which illustrates Crab and Jimmy's journey.
  10. Write the letter Crab would have written Jimmy from prison. Write Jimmy's response.
  11. Examine the life of a championship boxer.
  12. Trace the bus route that Jimmy would have to take in order to reach New York from Marion, Arkansas.
  13. Share a personal dream and establish a plan to fulfill it.
  14. Report on dreams as symbols.
  15. Write your own personal quest story.

## ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Explain how the novel would change if the following occurred:
  - a. Mama Jean had accompanied Crab and Jimmy to Arkansas;
  - b. Mavis and Frank had agreed to go to Arkansas with Crab and Jimmy;
  - c. Rydell had agreed to go to the police for Crab;
  - d. Mama Jean had attended Crab's funeral.
2. Retell a scene from the novel from a different character's point of view:
  - a. Rydell's views of Crab
  - b. Mama Jean's thoughts of Jimmy
  - c. Frank's feelings towards Jimmy
  - d. Mavis' opinion about Crab
3. Explain the significance of these lines:
  - a. "It's good to be able to take care of yourself." (p. 62)
  - b. "I guess I need something good to think about myself." (p. 99)
  - c. "You got to act like a man acts." (p. 101)
  - d. "Sometimes a man grows a cloud over his eyes and can't see the work of his own hand, or the truth in his own heart." (p. 132)

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- e. "And I'll give your search for 'truth' some real hard thought." (p. 149)

### OTHER BOOKS BY WALTER DEAN MYERS

#### Picture Books

- Where Does the Day Go?* 1969  
*The Dragon Takes a Wife*, 1972  
*The Dancers*, 1972  
*Fly, Jimmy, Fly!* 1974  
*The Black Pearl and the Ghost; or, One Mystery After Another*, 1980  
*Mr. Monkey and the Gotcha Bird*, 1984

#### Novels

- Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff*, 1975  
*Brainstorm*, 1977  
*Mojo and the Russians*, 1977  
*Victory for Jamie*, 1977  
*It Ain't All for Nothin'*, 1978  
*The Young Landlords*, 1979  
*The Golden Serpent*, 1980  
*Hoops*, 1981  
*The Legend of Tarik*, 1981  
*Won't Know Till I Get There*, 1982  
*The Nicholas Factor*, 1983  
*Tales of a Dead King*, 1983  
*Motown and Didi: A Love Story*, 1984  
*The Outside Shot*, 1984  
*Sweet Illusions*, 1986  
*Crystal*, 1987  
*Scorpions*, 1988  
*Me, Mop, and the Moondance Kid*, 1988  
*Fallen Angels*, 1988  
*The Mouse Rap*, 1990  
*Mop, Moondance, and the Nagasaki Knights*, 1992  
*The Righteous Revenge of Artemis Bonner*, 1992

#### "The Arrow" Series

- Adventure in Granada*, 1985  
*The Hidden Shrine*, 1985  
*Duel in the Desert*, 1986  
*Ambush in the Amazon*, 1986

#### Non-Fiction

- The World of Work: A Guide to Choosing a Career*, 1976  
*Social Welfare*, 1976  
*Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary*, 1993

### RELATED READING

- Asher, Sandy. *Everything Is Not Enough*.  
Close, Jessie. *The Warping of Al*.  
Cormier, Robert. *After the First Death*.  
Driscoll, Jack. *Skylight: A Novel*.  
Farley, Carol. *Twilight Waves*.  
Filson, Brent. *The Puma*.  
Ford, John M. *Growing Up Weightless*.  
Gaines, Ernest J. *In My Father's House*.  
Geller, Mark. *What I Heard*.  
James, Peter. *Prophecy*.

- Klass, David. *Wrestling With Honor*.  
Klein, Norma. *Learning How to Fall*.  
Peck, Robert Newton. *A Day No Pigs Would Die*.  
Stark, Stephen. *Second Son: A Novel*.

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Chevalier, Tracy, ed. *Twentieth Century Children's Writers*. Chicago: St. James Press, 1989.  
Hendrickson, Linnea. *Children's Literature: A Guide to the Criticism*. Boston: G.K. Hall Co., 1987.  
Rush, Theresa G., ed. *Black American Writers: Past and Present*. New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1975.  
*Something About the Author*. Vol. 71. Detroit: Gale, 1993.

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### WORDS IN CONTEXT

Read the following sentences and use the context clues to figure out the meaning of the underlined words.

1. "Who you?" A defiant little boy . . . stepped forward. (p. 12)  
Meaning:
2. They were nearing a city, and the buildings loomed against the gray sky. (p. 41)  
Meaning:
3. "We don't want to bust into Arkansas looking like panhandlers." (p. 56)  
Meaning:
4. He covered up and Frank flailed away at him. (p. 66)  
Meaning:
5. The sounds of a saxophone filled the room, pushing against the inverted pyramid of glasses on the bar... (p. 81)  
Meaning:
6. The sax seemed to spit out notes, throwing them helter-skelter across the tops of the sweating crowd. (p. 82)  
Meaning:
7. "Got myself all aggravated. That's why my back started getting up." (p. 86)  
Meaning:
8. "What time is it?" he said, his voice barely audible. (p. 106)  
Meaning:
9. He turned toward Crab and saw him sitting, head tilted forward, the intense eyes coming from under the high forehead. (p. 114)  
Meaning:
10. A brilliant white half-moon hung sullenly in the night sky above the point of the tin roof. (p. 130)  
Meaning:
11. On the side of the house flies buzzed in erratic patterns over the full garbage can. (p. 141)  
Meaning:
12. The girl held the baby toward Jimmy again, taunting him with it. (p. 142)  
Meaning:
13. He followed Crab's gaze out over the flat barren land. (p. 142)  
Meaning:
14. The hair in the small goatee he wore was thick but flecked with gray. (p. 144)  
Meaning:
15. The low buildings with their corrugated roofs hadn't been there. . . . (p. 159)  
Meaning:

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### VOCABULARY TEST

Match the words in the first column with the definitions in the second column. Place the letter of your answer in the space provided.

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| _____ 1. aggravate      | A. bold              |
| _____ 2. audible        | B. appear            |
| _____ 3. barren         | C. beggar            |
| _____ 4. corrugated     | D. beat              |
| _____ 5. defiant        | E. upside down       |
| _____ 6. erratic        | F. hastily           |
| _____ 7. flail          | G. upset             |
| _____ 8. flecked        | H. heard             |
| _____ 9. helter-skelter | I. strong, emotional |
| _____ 10. intense       | J. depressing        |
| _____ 11. inverted      | K. irregular         |
| _____ 12. loom          | L. mocking           |
| _____ 13. panhandler    | M. sterile           |
| _____ 14. sullen        | N. spotted           |
| _____ 15. taunting      | O. wrinkled          |

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### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Relationships (30 points)

Identify the relationships between the following:

1. Crab — Rydell — Ritchie
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Mama Jean — Jimmy — Dolly
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Crab — Mavis — Frank
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Crab — Ford — Robert Daniels
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Jimmy — Vernon's — Crab

#### Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Which characters make the following statements? Write the letter of your answer in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. "Things don't go right for you, honey, you come on home."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "I can make the Golden Gloves this year."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. "You got a clear walk, or you on parole?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. "Just resting my eyes from the ragweed. You know it's a shame the way I suffer from the ragweed."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. "There's no reason in the world to live in dirt."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. "They take their dollars down to the city clinic to people who don't care if they live or die. You think those people know that people got souls?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. "If you stand up to them then they figure you got heart and they don't try to dis you."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. "You walking in strength . . . But only you and the Good Lord know where you getting it from."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. "Working in a nursing home . . . I'm off tomorrow."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. "You begging and I got to figure out what you begging for."

- |              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| A. Crab      | E. Mama Jean      |
| B. Frank     | F. Mavis          |
| C. High John | G. Miss Mackenzie |
| D. Jimmy     | H. Rydell         |



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### **Part III: Settings (20 points)**

Explain the significance of the following settings. Be specific.

1. Green Haven

2. Vietnam

3. Cahill Street

4. Marion

5. Blue Light

### **Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose one of the following essay topics.

1. Discuss the development of Crab's relationship with his son.

2. Explain how one of the following titles is expressed in the novel.

- A. Crab's Search for Truth
- B. A Boy Needs a Father
- C. Being Your Own Worst Enemy
- D. When Dreams Turn Into Nightmares
- E. Leaving Home
- F. No Honor Among Thieves

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### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: True or False (30 points)

Mark each statement either T for true or F for false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Jimmy Little is a fourteen-year-old boy who lives in a middle class neighborhood in New York City.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Mama Jean, his grandmother, has been solely responsible for his rearing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Crab Little comes to take Jimmy on the road with him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Glad that Jimmy is being reunited with his father, Mama Jean plans to go back to school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. When Crab heads towards a Dodge two blocks away, Jimmy realizes that Crab has not been totally honest with Mama Jean.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Crab and Jimmy's first stop is Cleveland, Ohio.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. When Jimmy attempts to contact Mama Jean, Crab stops him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. When Crab tells Jimmy that the police are after him, Jimmy drives away.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Jimmy changes his mind and decides to help his father escape.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. When the pair arrive in Chicago, they visit Mavis, Crab's old girlfriend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Mavis' son is a professional football player.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Crab becomes ill while playing saxophone at a local nightclub.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. When Mavis refuses to leave Chicago with Crab, he and Jimmy decide to continue on to Arkansas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. When Rydell and Crab meet, Rydell agrees to go to the police to clear him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Before Crab and Jimmy leave town, Crab is shot and killed by a policeman.

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Explain the significance of the following items.

- 1. \$50
  
  
- 2. Cadillac
  
  
- 3. crack head
  
  
- 4. aspirin
  
  
- 5. conjure man

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### **Part III: Completion (20 points)**

Complete each statement below by explaining the reason.

1. Jimmy Little goes to Cookie's apartment because
2. Crab comes to New York because
3. Crab has spent eight years in jail because
4. Crab claims that he must leave for Chicago immediately because
5. Mama Jean gives Jimmy some money before he leaves New York because
6. Jimmy goes to Vernon's in Chicago because
7. Crab tells Jimmy about his past because
8. High John is considered gifted because
9. Crab drives to Arkansas in order to meet with Rydell because
10. Crab cries after seeing High John because

### **Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

1. In four days with Crab, Jimmy learns a great deal about life. Discuss two lessons that Jimmy has learned and speculate how these lessons will change him for the rest of his life.
2. Write a character sketch on one of the following:
  - A. Crab Little
  - B. Mama Jean
  - C. Jimmy Little

## SOMEWHERE IN THE DARKNESS

### ANSWER KEY

#### WORDS IN CONTEXT

- |                |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. bold        | 9. strong, emotional |
| 2. appeared    | 10. depressingly     |
| 3. beggar      | 11. irregular        |
| 4. beat        | 12. mocking          |
| 5. upside down | 13. sterile          |
| 6. hastily     | 14. spotted          |
| 7. upset       | 15. wrinkled         |
| 8. loud enough |                      |

#### VOCABULARY TEST

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. K  | 11. E |
| 2. H | 7. D  | 12. B |
| 3. M | 8. N  | 13. C |
| 4. O | 9. F  | 14. J |
| 5. A | 10. I | 15. L |

#### COMPREHENSION TEST A

##### Part I: Relationships (30 points)

- Crab, Rydell Dupuis, and Ritchie (Frank) Dutton have planned to rob an armored truck, but Crab is stricken with a toothache and is not involved in the actual robbery which leads to the death of a guard. When Ritchie is caught, he implicates Crab, who is arrested, tried, and found guilty. Crab spends eight years in jail, Ritchie gets out in ten months, and Rydell gets away.
- Dolly, Jean's close friend, is Jimmy's mother. Jean takes responsibility for Jimmy when Dolly dies.
- Trying to re-establish a relationship with Mavis, Crab asks her to go to Arkansas with him. Mavis declines.
- Crab rents a Ford using credit cards which belong to Robert Daniels.
- Thinking that he can earn money playing the sax, Crab goes to Vernon's, a nightclub in Chicago where he becomes ill and Jimmy is called to take him home.

##### Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)

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

##### Part III: Settings (20 points)

- where Crab has been imprisoned for eight years
- where Crab's brother served and was shot
- where Crab and Jimmy rent a room in Chicago
- where Crab and Jimmy stay while in Arkansas; where Miss Mackenzie lives; where Rydell and Crab confront each other; where Crab is captured
- where Jimmy calls Rydell to let him know that Crab is in town

##### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

#### COMPREHENSION TEST B

##### Part I: True or False (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T  | 11. F |
| 2. F | 7. T  | 12. F |
| 3. T | 8. F  | 13. T |
| 4. F | 9. F  | 14. F |
| 5. T | 10. T | 15. F |

##### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

- what Mama Jean gives Jimmy before he leaves with Crab
- what Rydell drives to meet with Crab
- what Jimmy thinks Crab may be when he first meets him
- what Crab takes for his pain
- what High John is called

##### Part III: Completion (20 points)

- she promises to let him use her umbrella.
- he wants to be reunited with his son.
- he has been accused of murder.
- he has a job waiting for him there.
- she wants him to be able to return home if necessary.
- Crab gets sick and needs help getting home.
- he wants Jimmy to get to know him and he wants to clear his name.
- he was born with a veil over his eyes.
- Crab wants Rydell to prove his innocence.
- Crab knows he is going to die.

##### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

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