



Surviving the Applewhites

Stephanie S. Tolan

Teacher's Guide

Written By Laurie Rozakis, Ph.D.

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

The story is told in alternating chapters narrated by E. D. and Jake. When thirteen-year-old Jake Semple is kicked out of yet another school, the Applewhites, an eccentric family of artists, offer to let him live with them and attend their unstructured Creative Academy in rural North Carolina. They call their home "Wit's End." Jake is dressed in punk style with scarlet spiked hair, an eyebrow ring, many earrings, and black clothing. Twelve-year-old E.D., the only non-artistic (and organized) person in her family, feels like "the invisible Applewhite" and is wary of Jake.

Chapter 2

Jake watches beautiful Cordelia Applewhite, a dancer, chase a goat. The family patriarch, Zedediah, calmly takes Jake's cigarette and grounds it out. The rest of the family enters and exits as though they are in a farce, to Jake's bafflement.

Chapter 3

E.D. thinks about her adorable four-year-old brother Destiny and her reclusive older brother Hal. She recalls how the Creative Academy started: She was not allowed to express herself in school and her parents pulled her out. Since the family doesn't believe in telling their children what or when to study and everyone is distracted by their own concerns, E.D. is left on her own—which she likes. She is annoyed that Jake will be following the educational plans that she laid out for herself.

Chapter 4

Lucille Applewhite is sensitive and caring, always seeing the best in everyone, which baffles Jake. She is a poet. Jake is equally confused by the schoolroom, which has a large banner that reads: "Education is an adventurous quest for the meaning of life, involving the ability to think things through." Jake has no idea what he thinks or what he wants to study—if anything at all. Jake is appalled by the slapdash pseudo-vegetarian food the family eats. Little Destiny takes an instant liking to Jake and sticks to him.

Chapter 5

E.D. is trying to catch one last butterfly, a fritillary, to complete her science project. Winston the dog follows her around. Jake tells E.D. that he has no intention of doing anything; instead, he plans to go back to Rhode Island, even though his parents are in jail so he has no where to live. Jake realizes that this is indeed his last chance to straighten out his life.

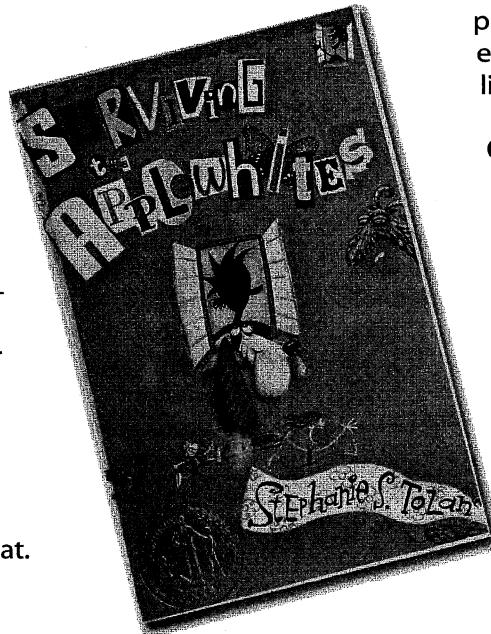
Chapter 6

Winston the dog attaches himself to Jake as Destiny has done.

Randolph, E.D.'s father, is invited to direct a community theater production of *The Sound of Music*. The invitation is based on his fame as an off-Broadway producer rather than on his prickly, pompous, and demanding personality. On the way to auditions, Randolph collides with a visitor and wrecks his car.

Chapter 7

Everyone pours out to see the crash. Randolph is screaming; the visitor, Jeremy Bernstein, bursts into tears since he has no money or place to stay. Bernstein, a reporter for a minor arts publication, has come to interview Sybil on her latest book. She has decided to take a break from her popular mysteries to write the Great American Novel, but it is



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not going well. The Applewhites invite Bernstein to stay for a while.

Chapter 8

At dinner, Bernstein explains that he considers the Applewhites' extended family an "artistic dynasty." Bernstein comes up with the idea for a TV story as well as an article on their talents. The eccentric family is enchanted by the attention and eagerly embraces his plan.

Chapter 9

E.D. is livid that she is not to be included in the TV documentary because she is not artistic. She hates being an Applewhite.

Chapter 10

Jake feeds Destiny what food remains in the cottage where he is sleeping and wonders how he has become the boy's baby-sitter.

Chapter 11

Jake helps E.D. make a paper maché chrysalis to complete her butterfly project and teach Destiny about metamorphosis. Meanwhile, Destiny has spiked his hair with flour and water paste in imitation of Jake's hair.

Chapter 12

Jake feels that he is disappearing because no one pays any attention to him. There is no reason to rebel because everyone else is busy rebelling in odd ways.

Chapter 13

Randolph blasts the music of *The Sound of Music* all day long. To help E.D., Jake catches the last butterfly she needs to finish her project. He expects her to be grateful, but she is furious because she feels that he has taken over her project.

Chapter 14

Randolph has rejected all the local talent, to their dismay. He drafts Jake to play Rolf, to Jake's astonishment. Jake has learned all the songs because he hears them all day long. To his equal astonishment, he has a clear, lovely singing voice and very much enjoys singing and acting.

Chapter 15

E.D. tells her grandfather how annoyed Jake makes her and how she feels like she is not part of the

family. He gently reassures her that she has a crucial talent that the rest of the family unquestionably lacks: the ability to organize.

Chapter 16

Jake loves being in the cast. Winston and Destiny accompany him to all rehearsals.

Chapter 17

Randolph has done color-blind casting, choosing his actors based on their ability rather than appearance. This hooks the TV producers and they prepare to attend the show and interview the Applewhites.

Chapter 18

Zedediah, alone of all the adults, takes an interest in the children's education.

Chapter 19

Lucille's guru Govindaswami comes for a visit to teach them to meditate. Randolph furiously rushes in to yell that his entire crew has quit because he is too demanding. The entire family becomes the crew, building sets, sewing costumes, and setting up sound equipment. E.D. is the stage manager.

Chapter 20

Govindaswami abandons his fast and takes over the kitchen. He is a fabulous cook and the family happily feasts on spicy Indian food. Destiny finds Jake's lighter and starts a fire in the theater. One of the children in the cast breaks her arm as a result.

Chapter 21

Supposedly as a result of the fire but really because her daughter was not cast in the show, Mrs. Montrose, president of the board of the Traybridge Theater, cancels the show. E.D. cleverly promises that Mrs. Montrose's daughter can have the part of Gretl and then invites them to dinner. Naturally, Randolph refuses to cast the child.

Chapter 22

The goat Wolfie smashes into the house. Destiny sings some of the songs from the play and Jake realizes that the child has a lovely voice. The caterpillars that Jake has gathered have formed chrysalises and are hatching. The kids are transfixed by the wonder of it.

Chapter 23

Mrs. Montrose and her daughter Priscilla come to dinner and it is a disaster. The food is much too spicy for them and they nearly choke on it. Destiny and Priscilla go off during the meal to look at the butterflies, but Wolfie the crazed goat chases them back, upending the table.

Chapter 24

The kids make a sugar syrup for the butterflies, who have become domesticated. Randolph decides to cast Destiny rather than Priscilla as Gretl, to Mrs. Montrose's fury.

Chapter 25

Mrs. Montrose cancels the show. The family decides to put the show on themselves, in the barn. E.D. comes up with the idea.

Chapter 26

The Applewhites passionately approach the tasks of transforming the barn into a stage.

Chapter 27

Twelve days later, E.D. is closely supervising the project, which has gathered a great deal of media attention because of its rainbow cast and Mrs. Montrose's cancellation. Jake has transformed himself from a punk to a preppy young man.

Chapter 28

Jake wants to be known as an actor, not a juvenile delinquent. Marcia Manning, an arrogant newscaster, interviews the family for TV. The interview ends when Winston jumps on her and the parrot starts cursing.

Chapter 29

The first performance is a triumphant success, despite a fierce rainstorm and power failure that occasions some quick thinking on E.D.'s part.

Chapter 30

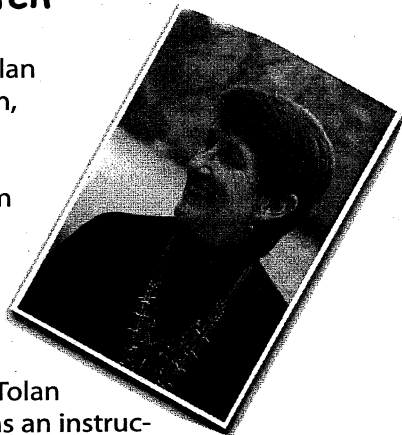
The reviews are excellent and everyone feels very satisfied. Jake now has the answer to Zedediah's question about what gives him joy: acting. The guru and Jeremy move on.

Timeline of Modern Events

- 1941 December 7 - America enters World War II
- 1942 Stephanie Tolan born.
- 1948 State of Israel founded
- 1950 Korean War begins
- 1952 Elizabeth II crowned Queen of England
Car seat belts introduced; polio vaccine invented
- 1954 Supreme Court issues *Brown v. Board of Education*, making segregation illegal
- 1955 Disneyland opens; McDonald's corporation founded
- 1956 Sabin invents oral polio vaccine
- 1957 Dr. Seuss publishes *The Cat in the Hat*
- 1958 NASA established
- 1960 First televised U.S. presidential debate
- 1961 Peace Corps founded; Berlin Wall built
Alan Shepard is first American in space
- 1963 President Kennedy assassinated
- 1964 The Tolans marry.
- 1967 First Super Bowl; first heart transplant
Six Day War in Middle East
- 1969 Neil Armstrong is the first human on the moon
- 1974 President Nixon resigns
- 1975 Tolan becomes a full-time writer.
- 1979 Sony introduces the Walkman
- 1981 First woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court
Pac-man video game is very popular
- 1983 Sally Ride becomes first woman in space
- 1989 Berlin Wall taken down
- 1990 Nelson Mandela is freed in South Africa
- 1991 Collapse of Soviet Union
- 1997 Scientists clone sheep
- 2002 *Surviving the Applewhites* published.

Author Sketch

Stephanie Stein Tolan was born in Canton, Ohio, in 1942. She earned her BA in 1964 and her MA in 1967, both from Purdue University. In 1964, she married Robert Tolan, a theater director. Tolan began her career as an instructor in continuing education at Purdue University, a position she held from 1966 to 1970. The following year, she worked as an actress. Next came a year as an instructor of speech and theater at the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1972. From 1973 to 1975, Tolan served as a faculty member in English at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. She was also coordinator of continuing education there from 1974 to 1975. Since 1975, Tolan has worked full-time as a writer.



In the mid-70s, Tolan also began working in the Poets-in-the-Schools program in Pennsylvania. Her first group of students were fourth and fifth graders, and she found among them a new generation of readers. "They brought back to me that special reading joy that most adults — even the readers among us — have lost, and I wanted to try my hand at writing for those kids, so like myself at their age and yet so different." The difference, she felt, was less in the children themselves than in the fast-changing world they lived in. Her writing for children and young adults, beginning with *Grandpa — And Me* in 1978, has reflected that contemporary world.

Tolan is also well known as an advocate for gifted children, an interest sparked by her own son's needs. She co-authored *Guiding the Gifted Child*, and has written many articles about the challenges that gifted children and adults face as they find a way to fit into their world. She lectures across the country to help people meet the needs of the gifted. "Most of the world is busy trying to tell children that they aren't good enough, aren't enough like other children, aren't really worthy of being loved,"

the author wrote on her Web site. "What every kid needs to know is that she is just exactly the person she is meant to be, and that—no matter what—she is absolutely and unconditionally worthy of love. If I could help even one boy or girl to begin to really believe that, I'd feel as if I'd done what I was meant to do."

Tolan currently lives on a lake in Charlotte, North Carolina, with her husband, one dog, one cat, two fish and plenty of outdoor creatures.

Critic's Corner

Tolan has won numerous fellowships and awards for her writing. Her fellowships include individual artist fellowships, Ohio Arts Council, 1978, 1981, and 1997; and a Bread Loaf Writers' Conference Fellowship, 1981. *Surviving the Applewhites* received a Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award, Books for the Teenage selection, New York Public Library, and Newbery Honor Book, ALA, 2003. *School Library Journal* named it a Best Book and the *Smithsonian Magazine* named it a Notable Book for Children. The novel won a Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award Masterlist (Vermont) and was named to the New York Public Library's "One Hundred Titles for Reading and Sharing" Not surprisingly, the reviews were largely positive.

For example, giving the book a starred review, Ilene Cooper wrote in *Booklist* that "Tolan has pulled off something special here. She takes a rather predictable plot (tough kid is tamed by exposure to a good family), and twists it into a screwball comedy that pushes the story to a whole new place."

Faith Brautigam, writing in *School Library Journal*, called *Surviving the Applewhites* a "laugh-out-loud novel." The novel has "terrific booktalk and read-aloud potential, and will help fill the need for humorous contemporary fiction," she noted.

Publishers Weekly noted some drawbacks, however. The reviewer argues that "some of the plotting feels unfinished: E.D. and Jake don't formally make peace and the Applewhites never come to terms with their individual narcissism. Jake's transformation too seems unconvincing." However, "humor abounds in the ever-building chaos: a writer coming to interview E.D.'s mother stays to do a slew of

projects on the famous family, including inviting a television crew to document their lives. In the end, it's the antics of the cast of characters that keep this show on the road."

Other Works by Stephanie S. Tolan

Books

Grandpa—and Me (1978)
The Last of Eden (1980)
The Liberation of Tansy Warner (1980)
A Time to Fly Free (1980)
No Safe Harbors (1981)
Guiding the Gifted Child: A Practical Source for Parents and Teachers, with James T. Webb and Elizabeth A. Meckstroth (1982)
The Great Skinner Strike (1983)
The Great Skinner Enterprise (1986)
Pride of the Peacock (1986)
The Great Skinner Getaway (1987)
A Good Courage (1988)
The Great Skinner Homestead (1988)
Plague Year (1990)
Marcy Hooper and the Greatest Treasure on Earth (1991)
Sophie and the Sidewalk Man (1992)
The Witch of Maple Park (1992)
Save Halloween! (1993)
Who's There? (1994)
Welcome to the Ark (1996)
The Face in the Mirror (1998)

Plays

The Ledge (1968)
Not I Said the Little Red Hen (1971)
Bridge to Terabithia (1992)
The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks (1995)
A Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck (1998)

Bibliography

Booklist, November 1, 2002, Ilene Cooper, review of *Surviving the Applewhites*, p. 494.
Hile, Kevin S., ed. *Something About the Author*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1994, vol. 78, pp. 218-220.
Kirkus Reviews, review of *Surviving the Applewhites*, p. 1046.
Lesniak, James, ed. *Contemporary Authors: New Revision Series*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1991, vol. 34, p. 451.

Locher, Frances Carol, ed. *Contemporary Authors*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1979, vols. 77-80, pp. 550-551.
Metzger, Linda, ed. *Contemporary Authors: New Revision Series*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1985, vol. 15, p. 430.
New York Times Book Review, April 30, 1978.
Publishers Weekly, review of *Surviving the Applewhites*, p. 73.
School Library Journal, Faith Brautigam, review of *Surviving the Applewhites*, pp. 235-236.
Washington Post Book World, June 10, 1990.
Writers for Young Adults. Supplement I. Ted Hipple, editor. Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000.

General Objectives

1. To understand home schooling
2. To distinguish each character in the large cast
3. To assess each character's personality
4. To trace the sequence of events
5. To describe the causes and effects of Jake's rebellion
6. To appreciate the author's humor
7. To probe the reasons for E.D.'s resentment
8. To understand how Jake matures
9. To recognize the significance of setting
10. To describe the book's mood

Specific Objectives

1. To analyze what Zedediah means by finding your "passion"
2. To understand how the Applewhites function as a family
3. To assess E.D.'s organizational abilities
4. To understand why the family is special
5. To describe how the family puts on the play
6. To understand the title
7. To grasp why the media is interested in the Applewhites
8. To see how Destiny becomes attached to Jake
9. To analyze the different ways that people can achieve an education
10. To explore the novel's resolution

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Stephanie Tolan's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

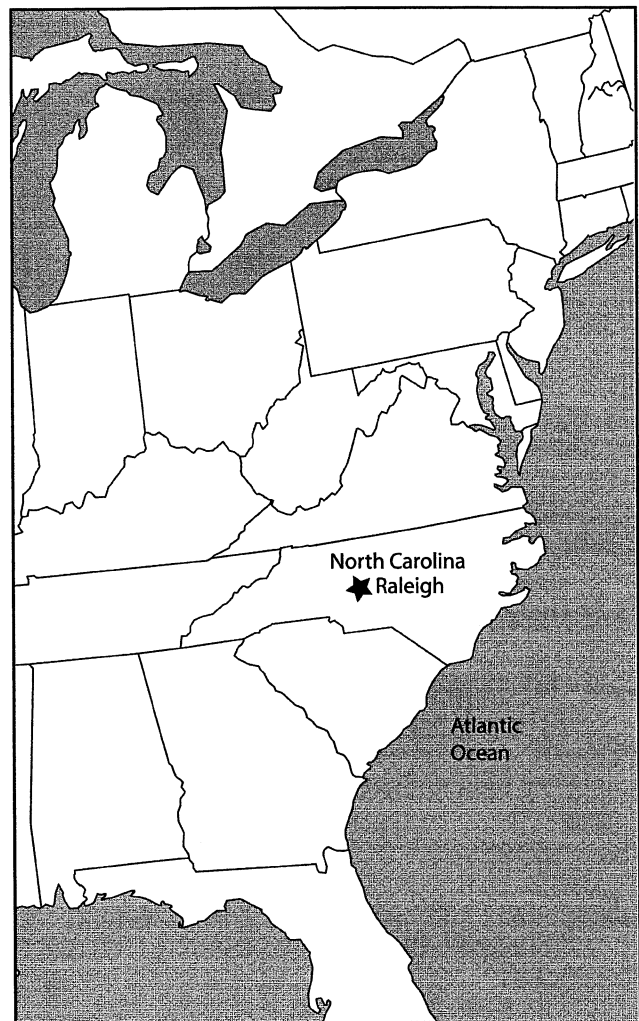
description a word picture of what something or someone is like. Description is made up of sensory details that help readers form pictures in their minds. Stephanie Tolan uses a great deal of description in *Surviving the Applewhites* to help readers visualize the characters. This is evident from Tolan's description of Lucille Applewhite, for instance: "Lucille Applewhite, wearing capri pants and a billowy blue-and-green flowered shirt, her hair clamped on top of her head and spilling curls in every direction, hurried from the end cottage to greet them." This description paints a word picture of Lucille's arty character. We see that she is messy, colorful, and creative.

humor parts of a story that are funny. Humor can be created through sarcasm, word play, irony, description, and exaggeration. Tolan creates humor through many means, especially irony. For instance, Lucille describes Jake as "a radiant light being, that's what you are. A radiant light being." Jake is just the opposite: he is dressed in punk style with spiked hair, many piercings, and the requisite sullen expression.

conflict In literature, there are two kinds of conflict. In an external conflict, characters struggle against a force outside themselves. In an internal conflict, characters battle a force within themselves. *Surviving the Applewhites* has a strong external conflict as Randolph struggles against Mrs. Montrose and the local community actors to produce the play he desires. There are also a series of internal conflicts, most especially shown by Jake's struggle to grow up and find himself and E.D.'s struggle to deal with her jealousy over Jake sharing her educational plan.

The Importance of Setting

Surviving the Applewhites is set in a small town in North Carolina. This is important because it allows the Applewhites the freedom to educate their children as they wish. It is apparently quite easy to start a home school in North Carolina. All that is required is a guarantee that the teachers possess high school diplomas. All the Applewhite adults have fulfilled this requirement. It was not even necessary to file a curriculum with the state. This is important because the adults don't believe in telling their children what to study. Nor do they have much interest in supervising their education, or supervising them much at all. Only Zedediah Applewhite, the patriarch, takes the slightest interest in the children's education. As a result, no one but E.D. has any educational plan at all—and she creates the educational plans herself. Of course, no one is ever doing the same thing at the same time.



Cross-Curricular Sources

Books

Avi, *The Secret School*
Joan Bauer, *Hope Was Here*
Meg Cabot, *The Princess Diaries*
Jenny Carroll, *Shadowland*
Andrew Clemens, *The School Story*
Sarah Dessen, *Dreamland*
Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*
Kate Dicamillo, *Because of Winn-Dixie*
Patricia Reilly Giff, *Pictures of Hollis Woods*
Laurie Halse Anderson, *Speak*
Carl Hiaasen, *Hoot*
Davida Wills Hurwin, *A Time for Dancing*
E. L. Konigsburg, *Silent to the Bone*
Gail Carson Levine, *Ella Enchanted*
Lois Lowry, *Gathering Blue*
Ben Mikaleson, *Touching Spirit Bear*
Louise Rennison, *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging*
Jerry Spinelli, *Loser*
Beatriz Vida, *A Library for Juana*
Jacqueline Woodson, *If You Come Softly*

DVDs and Videos

The Breakfast Club
Pretty in Pink
Sixteen Candles
St. Elmo's Fire
Ten Things I Hate About You

Audio

Surviving the Applewhites (AudioFile 2005)

Internet

Stephanie S. Tolan Home Page
<http://www.stephanietolan.com/>

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Stephanie Tolan's *Surviving the Applewhites* should include these aspects:

Themes

- animals
- the arts
- fear
- courage
- community theater

- fate
- luck
- nature
- family
- coping skills

Motifs

- being a juvenile delinquent
- being cared for by a new family
- following your passion
- coping on your own
- home schooling and learning independently
- acting and singing
- being an artist
- discovering hidden talents
- enjoying nature
- understanding how families work together

Meaning Study

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

1. "Good. Don't just think that because there isn't a teacher standing over you every minute, we don't take education seriously." (Chap. 5, p. 36-37)
(Zedediah explains his philosophy of education to Jake: The most important thing that Jake will learn while he is with the Applewhites is who he is and what he is made of. Jake doesn't understand what the family patriarch means, but by the end of the novel he has indeed found his identity.)
2. Applewhites or Juvie. It wasn't hard to think things through this time. (Chap. 6, p. 44)
(Living with the Applewhites is Jake's last chance. If he does not succeed with them, he will end up in juvenile hall. He must learn to think things through, as the banner in the Applewhite schoolroom says.)
3. Jeremy Bernstein was worried about a television show invading their family's privacy. That just showed how little he understood them. Every last one of them lived to be the center of attention. (Chap. 9, p. 70)
(E.D. makes this astute comment and she is

quite correct: every Applewhite demands to be the center of attention. Ironically, Jake fits right in, because he yearns for attention. We see this first in his punk garb and personae and later in his desire to be an actor and command center stage that way. Jake is much more of an Applewhite than E.D.—born into the clan—is.)

4. She turned to Destiny, who was talking about hair colors again. If no adult was going to protect the cub from the lion, she'd have to. (Chap. 11, p. 78)
(Until Jake's arrival, E.D. is raising her four-year-old brother Destiny. After Jake arrives, the child takes a liking to him and Jake takes over much of his care. This shows how both Jake and E.D. are responsible children and will likely mature into responsible adults.)
5. The Jake he knew, the Jake he had always been, was disappearing. And there was nothing—nobody—to put in his place. (Chap. 12, p. 87)
(Jake has yet to form his real character: up to this time, he has been hiding behind a punk personae. Now comes the difficult task of discovering who he really is.)
6. Then there was the acting. He didn't know for certain that he could act, at least not with a script and lines somebody else made up. But something told him he could. (Chap. 14, p. 98)
(Jake has been acting for most of his life, pretending to be someone that he isn't. Now he has a chance to be a performer on stage. Suddenly, the road that Jake would like to travel in life becomes clear.)
7. "I mean," Zedediah had said, "exactly what I said. What gives you joy?" (Chap. 18, p. 123)
(This is the novel's theme: find your bliss and follow it. The Applewhites are fortunate to have the means to do so, their eccentric lifestyle supported by Sybil's success as a popular writer. Few people have the luxury of doing what they really want to do.)
8. "Can't take the caterpillars," Jake told him. (Chap. 20, p. 144)
(Jake carefully packs a bag of toys and other things to keep Destiny busy during rehearsals. Jake's actions here reveal that all the children

are getting a rich and valuable education, despite the lack of structure.)

9. "Passion," Govindaswami had said. (Chap. 24, p. 173)
(Jake now realizes what everyone else in the family—visitors included—already knows: to have a fully-realized life, you must follow your heart and soul and do what gives you pleasure.)
10. Jake was standing there in his usual black T-shirt and black pants, but that was all that was usual about him. (Chap. 26, p. 191)
(Jake has been completely transformed: his punk look has gone. He has let the scarlet hair dye grow out and replaced the spikes with a crew cut. He has taken out all the rings; he has replaced his scowl with a smile.)

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 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. Why does Jake come to live with the Applewhites?
(Jake has been expelled from his last school on charges of arson. Lucille had been at the school conducting a poetry workshop when Jake was kicked out. She came up with the idea of enrolling Jake in her family's home school, the Creative Academy. She is convinced they can turn him around.)
2. Why does E.D. resent Jake?
(E.D. resents sharing her educational plan with Jake. The Applewhites are supposed to be on their own educationally to follow their passion; they are not supposed to be what the family calls "clumped." Nonetheless, it has been decided that Jake will study from the plan that E.D. made up herself to fit her individual needs and interests.)
3. Explain why Jeremy Bernstein comes to the Applewhites and why he stays.
(He has come to interview Sybil for an article on her new book, supposedly the Great American

Novel. He stays because Randolph crashes into his car and he lacks the money to repair it. He comes up with the idea of doing a TV story on the family.)

4. Why does Mrs. Montrose cancel the production of *The Sound of Music*?
(Ostensibly, it is because Destiny set a fire in the theater, but it is really because her daughter Priscilla has not been given a part in the play.)
5. How do the Applewhites manage to put on the play anyway?
(They all pitch in to convert their barn to a playhouse, make scenery and costumes, sell tickets, and choreograph the play.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. Destiny and Winston the dog both love Jake. What can you infer about Jake's character from this?
(Jake is a fine young man whose appearance as a punk belies his sweet nature.)
7. What is ironic about the guru's actions in the novel?
(The guru has come to be the family's spiritual advisor and lead them on fasts. Instead, he becomes their cook and makes sumptuous feasts for them.)
8. Why do you think the author chose this topic and wrote this book?
(The author is making the point that people should be free to pursue their passion, the interests that satisfy their soul.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Would you like to live with the Applewhites? Why or why not?
(No, because the family lacks all structure, such as regular meals. Yes, because family members are free to be themselves.)
10. What do the caterpillars and butterflies represent in the novel?
(They represent breaking out of your shell and transforming yourself.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Hold a roundtable discussion in which you discuss how people can be free to find and

follow their passion. Consider how people can support themselves in the meantime, especially if they pursue risky fields such as writing, dancing, and other creative arts.

12. Stage all or part of *The Sound of Music* in class.

Across the Curriculum

Art/Music

1. Watch the movie version of *The Sound of Music*. Explain the irony in the musical: why did Tolan choose that musical for Randolph to stage?
2. Make a piece of furniture, as Zedediah does.
3. Some of the Applewhites are planning an art show. Stage a school art show by gathering art from volunteers. Invite the school to attend the grand opening.
4. Sing "Frere Jacques," one of Destiny's favorite songs. First sing it in French and then in English.
5. Learn one of the songs from *The Sound of Music* to share with a small group of classmates.
6. Learn to dance the polka. Teach some basic steps to your classmates.
7. Make a poster for the Applewhites' performance of *The Sound of Music*.

Language Arts

1. E.D. is named after Edith Wharton. Read a book by Wharton and summarize it for your classmates.
2. Imagine that you have read a book that Sybil wrote. Write a review of the book, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses.
3. In an essay, describe your favorite subject and tell why you like it so much. Explain why it is your "passion."
4. Jeremy mentions other real artistic clans: the Brontës, the Wyeths, and the Barrymores.

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Choose one of these families and compare and contrast them to the fictional Applewhites.

5. Explain how Sybil can overcome her writer's block, using techniques you use or have discovered through research.

History/Social Studies

1. The story is reminiscent of the movie and play, *You Can't Take It with You*, also about a manic household. Watch the movie and trace its similarities to *Surviving the Applewhites*.
2. Report on the Civil War, as E.D. does.
3. Find out what a guru is and why Lucille would invite one to her home. Decide whether or not you would like to study with a guru.
4. Report on the Holocaust, another of E.D.'s projects.
5. Find the regulations for setting up a home school in your state. Share these with your classmates.

Science/Math

1. Do Jake's butterfly project. Share it with a small child, as Jake shares it with Destiny.
2. Find out how to raise a goat, especially how to feed it, milk it, and train it.
3. Create your own science curriculum, as E.D. does. Plan one month of lessons in a subject that interests you. Consider math, biology, chemistry, and earth science.
4. Make a list of Indian dishes that you think the guru might have made for the Applewhites. If possible, prepare one of the dishes, such as nan or samosas.
5. Jake is appalled when the Applewhites serve tofu. Find out what tofu is, how it is prepared, and whether or not it has any nutritive value.
6. The kids are worried about ticks, and wisely so. Explain what diseases ticks carry. Make a poster showing the correct way to remove a tick from yourself or a pet.

Speech/Drama

1. Working with a partner, role-play the scene in which Lucille convinces the school to allow her to homeschool Jake.
2. Jake Semple is notorious. Rumor has it he burned down his old school and got kicked out of every school in his home state. Speaking as Jake, explain what you really did before you came to live with the Applewhites.
3. In a roundtable discussion, explore the advantages and disadvantages of home-schooling.
4. Lucille performs tai chi. Find out what this is and then demonstrate some moves for the class.
5. Stage a reading of part of *Midsummer's Night Dream*, another of E.D.'s projects.

Alternate Assessment

1. Discuss what you learned about finding your passion from *Surviving the Applewhites*.
2. Write a review of the novel, explaining why you would or would not recommend it to a friend.
3. Write the next chapter in *Surviving the Applewhites*. Tell what happens to Jake.

Vocabulary

Complete the crossword puzzle with the following words from *Surviving the Applewhites*.

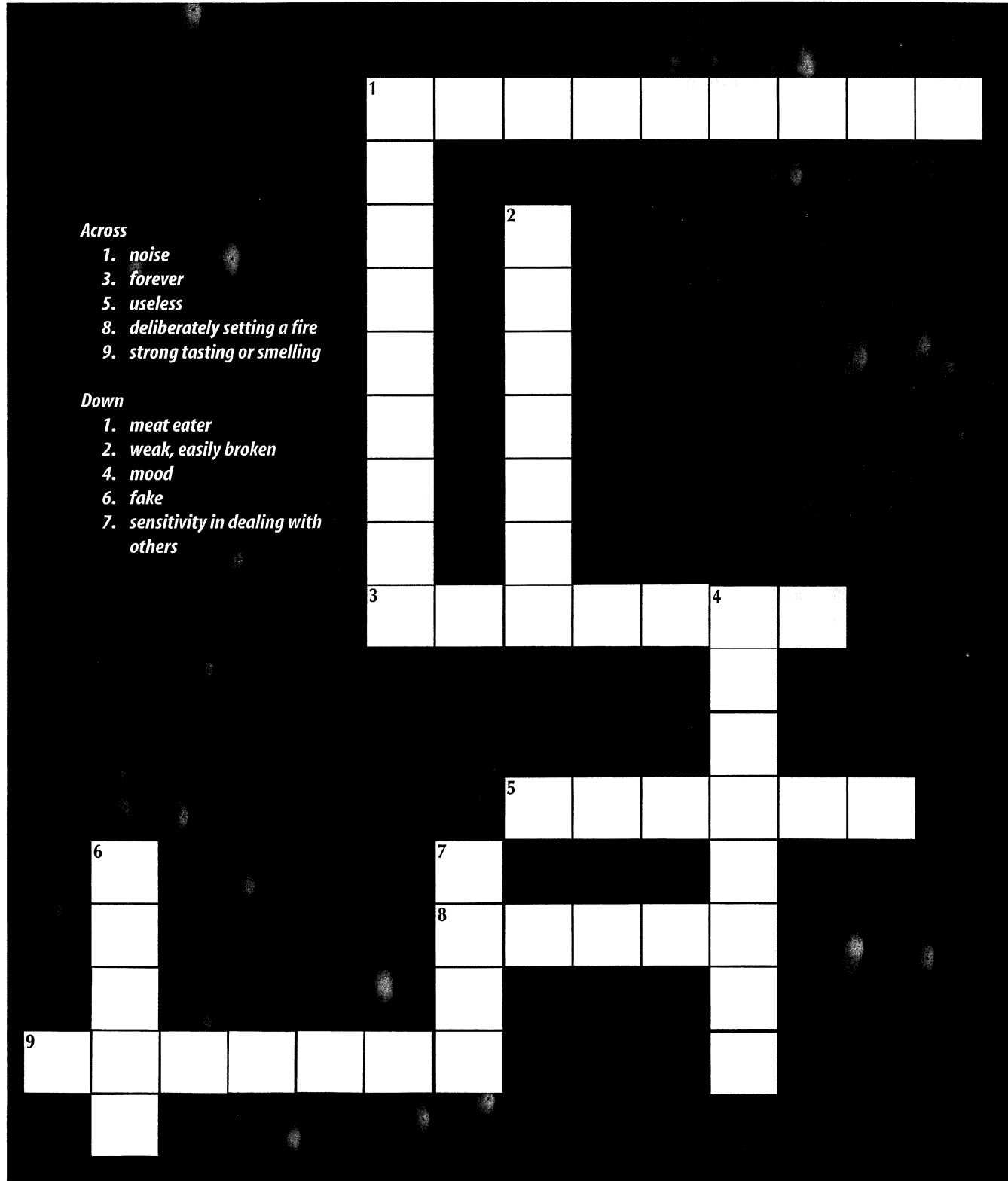
Word Bank - fragile cacophony bogus carnivore futile eternal
 ambiance arson pungent tact

Across

- 1. noise
- 3. forever
- 5. useless
- 8. deliberately setting a fire
- 9. strong tasting or smelling

Down

- 1. meat eater
- 2. weak, easily broken
- 4. mood
- 6. fake
- 7. sensitivity in dealing with others



Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match each description with a name from the list. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at the left of each number.

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| A. E. D. | F. Wit's End |
| B. Jake Semple | G. Randolph |
| C. Jeremy Bernstein | H. Zedediah |
| D. Destiny | I. Sybil Jameson |
| E. Wolfie | J. Paulie |

- ___ 1. E.D.'s father; he has directed some off-Broadway plays
- ___ 2. E.D.'s mother; she is well-known novelist
- ___ 3. The parrot that says rude words
- ___ 4. The name of the Applewhites' home
- ___ 5. E.D.'s four-year-old brother
- ___ 6. The twelve-year old girl who is a genius at organization
- ___ 7. The patriarch of the Applewhite family
- ___ 8. The ill-trained goat
- ___ 9. The man who comes to write an article on the Applewhites
- ___ 10. The punk kid who comes to live with the Applewhites

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each person, place, or thing and explain why it is important in the story.

- 1. butterfly chrysalis
- 2. Jake's spiked hair and nose rings
- 3. The Creative Academy
- 4. the guru
- 5. passion

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if all or part of the statement is false.

- ___ 1. When thirteen-year-old Jake Semple is kicked out of yet another school, the Applewhites, an eccentric family of artists, offer to let him live with them and attend their homeschool in rural North Carolina.
- ___ 2. Destiny takes an instant liking to Jake and becomes his sidekick.
- ___ 3. E.D. is trying to catch one last goat to complete her science project, but the goat is very nasty and refuses to be penned.
- ___ 4. Jake's parents have both died in a tragic car crash, so he is all alone in the world.
- ___ 5. Sybil has decided to take a break from writing mysteries and write a serious novel that she hopes will be the great American novel.
- ___ 6. Hal is invited to direct a Broadway theater production of *The Sound of Music*.
- ___ 7. Jake helps E.D. make a paper maché chrysalis to complete her butterfly project and teach Destiny about metamorphosis.
- ___ 8. Destiny finds Jake's lighter and starts a fire in the theater. One of the children in the cast breaks her arm as a result.
- ___ 9. Priscilla Montrose is cast as Gretl in the play, to her mother's delight.
- ___ 10. The reviews for the play are bad and the family is angry that they went to all the trouble to stage it.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Which character in the *Surviving the Applewhites* did you admire the most? Why?
- 2. Summarize the events in *Surviving the Applewhites*.
- 3. Explain how the caterpillars/moths symbolize Jake.
- 4. Argue that the children in the novel do or do not receive a good education.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Write in the term that best completes each of the following statements.

1. The Applewhites live in **(North Carolina, Florida)**.
2. At the beginning of the novel, Jake's hair is **(spiked, crew-cut)**.
3. Zedediah and Archie make **(rugs, furniture)** by hand.
4. Randolph crashes his car into a car driven by **(Marcia Manning, Jeremy Bernstein)**
5. Jake helps E.D. make something out of paper maché to complete her **(globe, butterfly)** project.
6. Randolph blasts the music from **(West Side Story, The Sound of Music)** all day long.
7. Randolph has done **(color-blind, first-in)** casting.
8. Destiny **(starts a fire, breaks the lights)** in the theater, which very much upsets Mrs. Montrose.
9. Randolph decides to cast **(Paulie, Destiny)** rather than Priscilla as Gretl, to Mrs. Montrose's fury.
10. The opening is a triumphant success, despite a fierce **(snowstorm, rainstorm)** and power failure that occasions some quick thinking on E.D.'s part.

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each person, place, or thing and explain why it is important in the story.

1. a fritillary
2. *The Sound of Music*
3. passion
4. Wit's End
5. Kool-Aid

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left. Use each name only once.

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| ___ 1. The beautiful Applewhite girl who dances | A. Govindaswami |
| ___ 2. The responsible Applewhite girl | B. Marcia Manning |
| ___ 3. The Applewhite boy who hides in his room | C. Priscilla |
| ___ 4. The arrogant TV reporter | D. Cordelia |
| ___ 5. The slobbery dog that loves Jake | E. E.D. |
| ___ 6. The patriarch of the clan | F. Jake Semple |
| ___ 7. The Applewhite who makes odd furniture | G. Archie |
| ___ 8. The guru who turns out to be a great cook | H. Hal |
| ___ 9. The rebellious teenager who comes to Wit's End | I. Winston |
| ___ 10. Mrs. Montrose's daughter | J. Zedediah |

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Tolan called this book *Surviving the Applewhites*. Argue that the title does or does not fit the action.
2. Explain why the Applewhites join together to help Randolph put on *The Sound of Music*.
3. Analyze how Jake changes from the beginning to the end of the novel.
4. Explain why you would or would not like to live with the Applewhites and be educated at their Creative Academy.

Surviving the Applewhites Stephanie Tolan

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

Across

1. cacophony
3. eternal
5. futile
8. arson
9. pungent

Down

1. carnivore
2. fragile
4. ambiance
6. bogus
7. tact

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: Identification (20 points)

1. The butterfly chrysalis symbolizes how Jake breaks out of his shell to become the person he really is—a kind young man who likes to sing and act.
2. Jake's spiked hair and nose rings represent Jake's rebellion. They show that the old adage is true: "You can't judge a book by its cover."
3. The Creative Academy is the name the Applewhites have given to their homeschool.
4. The guru comes to lead Lucille on a fast. Ironically, he becomes the family's cook and makes lavish and delicious foods for them. He shows that a person can have more than one passion.
5. Passion is the novel's word for finding what interests you and satisfies your soul. For Randolph, it is theater; for Cordelia, it is dancing.

Part III: True/False (20 points)

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

Part IV. Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. North Carolina | 6. <i>The Sound of Music</i> |
| 2. spiked | 7. color-blind |
| 3. furniture | 8. fire |
| 4. Jeremy Bernstein | 9. Destiny |
| 5. butterfly | 10. rainstorm |

Part II: Identification (20 points)

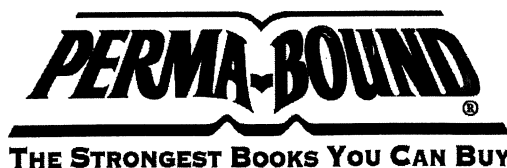
1. A fritillary is the last butterfly that E.D. needs to complete her project. She is furious when Jake finds it for her, even though he was just trying to be nice.
2. *The Sound of Music* is the play that Randolph stages at the community theater.
3. Passion is the thing that fires your soul. For Sybil, it is writing; for Jake, it is acting. The important thing, the author says, is to find your passion and follow it.
4. Wit's End is the name the family has given to their house. It is humorous because anyone living with the Applewhites would no doubt be at their Wit's End in the madness.
5. Kool-Aid is the sugar water that Jake and Destiny make for the butterflies to eat. It shows how the kids are absorbing science—and other lessons—unconsciously.

Part III: Matching (20 points)

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

Part IV. Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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