

This guide was prepared using the Dell Laurel-Leaf edition, @1998. Other editions may differ.

SYNOPSIS

Party Time: Brent Bishop, who has recently moved to Chicago, is going to a party at the home of one of his new classmates. Brent worries about what to wear; it is very important to him to have the "right" look. He chooses khakis and a red Chicago Bulls T-shirt. He picks up Jonathan who is wearing a yellow shirt and blue jeans. Brent is not actually invited to the party but Jonathan is. When they arrived, all the other guests were dressed in all-black or all-white because the theme of the party is a human chess game. Jonathan says he forgot, but Brent feels betrayed. Chaz, the host of the party, humiliates Brent, who hates feeling helpless to stand up to him. Brent drinks scotch and soda and waits for an opportunity to talk to Brianna alone. When he does get to talk to her, she screams at him in front of the entire group, humiliating him even more.

Brent leaves the party knowing he has destroyed his chances of fitting in. He gets in his car and starts home; he shouts his rage at the night's injustices. As his head reels with drunken despair, he becomes lost and is distraught that every other car has a destination. The suicidal voice inside his head tells him he doesn't need to go back to school on Monday and face the pain, that he is not a pawn, that he is a king who had absolute power of his own life. He places his hands on his thighs, stares blankly at the lights of the other cars, then closes his eyes.

The Afterlife: Brent escaped the crash with only cuts and a minor head injury. Then he is tested for alcohol and taken to the police station, and is booked for drunk driving. He learns the girl in the car behind him has died; he is numb with the knowledge of what he has done. He learns that the victim's name is Lea Zamora, she was 18, an honor student, and a member of the student council, the orchestra, and the track team. She was also active in the Filipino community and a volunteer at a hospital. Brent talked to social workers, lawyers, and psychologists, but he never told any of them that he'd tried to kill himself. As part of his probation he had to meet with the victim's family, if they desired, and discuss restitution. Mrs. Zamora agreed to meet with him. She told of the grief her family had suffered, how Lea had been a caring soul who would have spread joy all over the country, and then made her request. She wants Brent to build four whirligigs of a girl that looks like Lea, put her name on them, and set them up in the four corner states of the United States. She has purchased a Greyhound bus pass good for 45 days. Brent's parents object, but he accepts because he wants to make atonement and because he wants to get away from Chicago.

Brent rides the bus to Seattle where he finds a campground and shares a site with a cyclist. Brent begins to question things he'd always taken for granted and to wonder about things he'd never been interested in, such as stars and constellations. He

has a book, *Make Your Own Whirligigs and Weathervanes*, which has several designs. Brent buys supplies, goes to the beach, and, after two days with several frustrating setbacks, manages to build a whirligig of a girl playing a harp. He mounts it in a tree, and watches mesmerized as the arms spin. Then he takes a picture of it for Lea's mother.

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star: On the bus ride from Seattle, Brent learns to identify some of the constellations. He stops in San Francisco, decides it is too cold to build a whirligig there, and continues to San Diego. He stays at a youth hostel that is only for foreign travelers. (He agrees with the clerk who suggests that Brent is from Canada.) He befriends a German boy named Emil, and he begins to be aware that others around him have a knowledge of language, history, art, and music that he admires but of which he is slightly envious.

Brent buys a harmonica and teaches himself to play it, and he begins reading *Two Years Before the Mast* which Emil had given him. He finds a park several blocks from the hostel and starts works on the whirligig—a whale blowing, and on top of the water spout is a mermaid with Lea's face. He makes many foolish mistakes, but after three days finishes the project. He can't find a place to mount it, so he takes it back to the hostel and asks the clerk if he could offer it as a gift. He mounts it and it works perfectly, so he takes a picture of it for Lea's mother. The next morning Brent moves on.

Apprentices: From San Diego, Brent rides the bus east to Beale Beach just outside Miami. He rents a cheap motel room, finds a boarded up shop on the beach with picnic tables beside it, and chooses that site to build his next whirligig—a marching band with a drummer, a trumpet player, a clarinetist (Lea), and a man with a trombone. He looks forward to the long project. He decides to learn about things that had never been important to him in school. He studies his star book, learns about the earth in its circuit around the sun, and reads *Two Years Before the Mast*. He reads all of the instructions for the whirligig and saves himself many of his earlier mistakes. The second day of his work, a group of children come to the water. They spot him and want to help do everything. The third day they do not come, but the fourth day four of them return. He finishes the whirligig and mounts it on the corner of the framework of the building. The children worry that a hurricane might destroy it, but Brent knows that those who helped him build it would repair it if it were damaged.

"Everybody Swing!": From Miami, Brent rides the bus to Portland, Maine, then catches a ride to Weeksboro. He chooses the most isolated site at a campground. The owner tells Brent how he refurbished the office, house, and campsite tables with materials he found in the dump. Brent discovers he has lost his book of whirligig patterns, but his own design begins to emerge in his mind. He decides to build the last whirligig from scrap building supplies and things he can scavenge. The result is a whirligig of constant motion and color. He befriends an artist whom he tells the cause of the accident.

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She replies that she thinks he is a good person, and this affirmation of Brent's character helps him start forgiving himself. He attends a "contradance" and feels welcomed and accepted—like a bee returning to the hive. The next morning he realizes that Lea had set him in motion, and that motion transfers to others; the world itself is a whirligig.

There are four chapters intermingled with the main story line. Each presents a subplot relating to one of the whirligigs.

Weeksboro, Maine: A young girl, Alexandra, takes her friend Stephanie to the beach where the whirligig is located. Alexandra orchestrates a "guided imagery" of great things happening and Stephanie finding the perfect boyfriend. They have no idea how the whirligig came to be there, but they joke about it carrying their dreams onto the wind. From then on Stephanie keeps the whirligig painted and repaired.

Miami, Florida: A young Puerto Rican immigrant remembers feeling trapped by the disappointment and the noise and disagreement that surround him. One night he drives to the Everglades where he thinks it will be peaceful. He stops at a cafe on the beach that has a wooden marching band on the corner. He takes a boat ride to see the shearwater bird which turns out to be noisy and aggressive—another disappointment. He stares at the marching band, thinks about how nice things are when they work in harmony, and then drives home.

Bellevue, Washington: On the first day of fifth grade, a Korean boy remembers how he spent his summer—science camp, violin practice, and a camping trip. The worst part of the camping trip was the whirligig that looked like a girl playing a harp. The weekend was breezy and the arms of the whirligig never stopped; his mother pointed out her dedication and her constant practice. She had always pushed Tony to practice a lot, and it becomes even worse after the camping trip. She takes a job outside their home and Tony has to tape his practices, so he quits practicing and replays old tapes for her. He makes one error after another at a recital, the instructor discerns the real problem, and his mother allows him to quit playing the violin.

San Diego, California: A young Jewish girl drives her dying grandmother around San Diego because her grandmother wants to see some of the old sites that had been important to her. At the end of the list is a house that has a whirligig of a whale with a black-haired mermaid riding on the spray. This makes the grandmother smile. She says that some thought they would never laugh again after Auschwitz. The whirligig, she explains, reminds her that not all people are like Hitler—most people are good, like the one who built this wind toy to bring joy to everyone who passes. Whenever she had been sad, she walked to the whirligig to remind herself of that.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Paul Fleischman was born September 5, 1952, in Monterey, California. He is the son of Albert Sidney (Sid) and Beth Taylor Fleischman. (Sid Fleischman is also an award-winning children's author.) As a child, he would gather with the rest of the family to hear the chapters of his father's books as they were completed. He learned early in life the importance of arranging words into pleasing, musical patterns. He sees the story line as the most important part of his writing, but his intense attention to sound runs through all his works. "If I can please my listeners' ears while telling my tale, such that the listener who knew no English would enjoy it read aloud purely for its music, so much the better," he writes in *Horn Book*.

Fleischman didn't plan to be a writer. He attended the Uni-

versity of California, Berkeley, 1972, and graduated from the University of New Mexico in 1977. Just before he graduated he wrote his first story, *The Birthday Tree*, because he felt he should do something. He showed it to his father after graduation, and the elder Fleischman was very impressed. He realized his son had been learning the craft of writing since childhood.

Paul Fleischman married Becky Mojica on December 15, 1978, and they have two children, Seth and Dana. They live in Pacific Grove, California, where he researches or writes approximately eight hours a day. In his free time, he plays bocce, the Italian outdoor bowling game, and dabbles in music. He has recently begun writing music.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Whirligig, like many of Paul Fleischman's other books, received high acclaim from critics. Most critics revel in the musical sound created by Fleischman's choice and arrangement of words. *Booklist* said, "...an unusual construction, its parts fitting together in delicate balance, much like those of the whirligig of the title and the story's central metaphor....The language of the whirligig stories gleams and soars: a metaphor of movement, dance, laughter, and irrepressible life..."

From *Horn Book*: "In an intricately structured novel, Fleischman skillfully connects the stories of several people to the evolution of his main character....The odyssey is a unique coming-of-age story...It's the ordinariness of the situations that makes the point stick: small deeds, like split-moment decisions, can have powerful and unforeseen consequences; a single action can reverberate endlessly...the theme is spun out endlessly and perhaps more than necessary. But Brent's journey is an embracing and edifying one."

Whirligig has won numerous awards including: Golden Kite Award honor book, Society of Children's Book Writers; Best Books for Young Adults, Young Adult Library Service Association (YALSA); Honor book, Society of School Librarians International; *Booklist* Editors' Choice; *Publishers' Weekly* Best Books; *School Library Journal* Best Books all in 1998, and the Black-Eyed Susan Book Award, 2000. Fleischman has also received many awards for his other books, including a Newbery Medal Award for *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices*; a Newbery honor book award for *Graven Images: Three Stories*; Golden Kite honor book awards for *The Half-a-Moon Inn*, *Path of the Pale Horse*, and *The Boring Room*; and a Parents' Choice Award for *Path of the Pale Horse*.

OTHER WORKS BY PAUL FLEISCHMAN

Juvenile Books

- The Animal Hedge* (picture book) (1983)
- Big Talk: Poems for Four Voices* (2000)
- The Birthday Tree* (1979)
- The Boring Room* (1991)
- Bull Run* (1993)
- Cannibal in the Mirror* (2000)
- Coming-and-Going Men: Four Tales* (1985)
- Copier Creations: Using Copy Machines to Make Decals, Silhouettes, Flip Books, Films and Much More!* (1993)
- Dateline: Troy* (1996)
- A Fate Totally Worse than Death* (1995)
- Finzel the Farsighted* (1983)
- Ghosts' Grace: A Poem for Four Voices* (1996)
- Graven Images: Three Stories* (1982)
- The Half-a-Moon Inn* (1980)

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I Am Phoenix: Poems for Two Voices (1985)
Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices (1988)
Lost! A Story in String (2000)
Mind's Eye (1999)
Path of the Pale Horse (1983)
Phoebe Danger, Detective, in the Case of the Two-Minute Cough (1983)
Rear-View Mirrors (1986)
Rondo in C (1988)
Saturnalia (1990)
Seedfolks (1997)
Seek (2001)
Shadow Play (picture book) (1990)
Time Train (1991)
Townsend's Warbler (nonfiction) (1992)
Westlandia (1999)

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<www.charlottezotow.com/paul_fleischman.htm>
- "Whirligig." *Amazon.com: Editorial Reviews*. Online 25 March 2002. <www.amazon.com/exec.obidos/tg/stores/detail/-/b.../104-6848309-604871>
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<www.overbooked.org/yabest.98.html>
- Robb, Laura, "Talking With Paul Fleischman," *Booklinks*, March 1997.
- Sime, Richard, and Laura Mongello, eds. *Elements of Literature*. Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2000. pp. 705-718.
- "ERIC Bibliography—Paul Fleischman,"
<www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/ieo/bibs/fleisp.html>
- "Paul Fleischman."
<www.charlottezotow.com/paul_fleischman.htm>
- "Paul Fleischman."
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- "Paul Fleischman-Seedfolks."
www.harperchildrens.com/hch/author/features/fleischman.asp
- Sime, Richard, and Laura Mongello, eds. *Elements of Literature*. Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2000. pp. 705-718.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the roles of superficial "things" in our lives
2. To evaluate the importance of fitting in with peers
3. To identify and evaluate behaviors that put teens at risk
4. To discuss the benefits of making atonement when we've wronged others
5. To realize how our actions can be the cause of far-reaching consequences

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To recognize the lack of real communication between Brent and his parents at dinner
2. To evaluate the behavior of Jonathan, Chaz, and Brianna toward Brent
3. To identify character traits and behaviors of Brent that made him at risk for suicidal behavior

4. To consider the motives behind Mrs. Zamora's choice of restitution from Brent
5. To recognize the changes that began occurring within Brent in Seattle
6. To identify the lessons Brent learned from Emil and the others at the hostel in San Diego and to discuss their importance in his life
7. To analyze the effects Brent's whirligigs had on others who came into contact with them

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

extended metaphor: a metaphor is a comparison between two unlike things that does not use the words *like* or *as* to make the comparison. An extended metaphor carries that comparison throughout the entire story or novel. In *Whirligig* Brent's life is compared to a whirligig. "When they'd met [Brent and Lea] he was longing to be swallowed by the blackness. She'd set him in motion, motion that he was now transferring to others....In his mind, his whirligigs were meshed the same way, parts of a single coast-to-coast creation. The world itself was a whirligig, its myriad parts invisibly linked, the hidden crankshafts and connection rods carrying motion across the globe and over the centuries." The descriptions of the whirligigs and the constant use of motion verbs in unexpected places adds to the feeling of this interconnected movement throughout the novel.

figure of speech: a word or phrase that describes one thing in terms of another and is not meant to be understood as literally true. The most common figures of speech are

simile: (p. 132) He knew it [guilt] would reside in him like the ashes after a fire, unconsumed.

metaphor: (p. 17) His life was a house that had burned to the ground.

personification: (p. 133) Outside, a warm breeze ran its fingers through the trees.

characterization: the way a writer reveals the personality of a character. The writer may simply tell the reader that a character is honest or trustworthy or shy or unhappy. This method is called direct characterization. An example of direct characterization in the book is on p. 7: "A sense of humor was a luxury that Brent had never been able to afford. He was always the new kid, stumbling through the maze, never quite rich or good-looking or athletic enough to join the elite." Writers also use indirect characterization which reveals a character's personality in one of these ways:

1. *the words and actions of the character*—example on p. 13 when Brent lies about his dad having owned a Porsche in Atlanta because he wants to impress others with a lie that he felt they could never find out.
2. *the description of the character's thoughts and feelings*—example on p. 5 when Brent's dad comments on the lines of the Jaguar. "He examined his father's words for signs that a Jaguar might now be in reach with his new salary. He imagined himself driving it, observed by the assembled student body...."
3. *the comments made about the character by other characters in the story*—example on p. 10 when Chaz is asking Jonathan why he's not dressed in black or white for the chess game. "I don't have a car at the moment, so Brent here drove me. I figured you could use an extra pawn or two."

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4. *the way other characters in the story react to the character*—example on p. 14 when Brent tried to talk to Brianna at the party. "Stop hanging all over me! ... You're like a leech or something! Get off of me! Can't you take a hint? Go bother someone else! And that goes for at school too!"

SETTINGS

The initial setting of the book is Chicago, Illinois, where Brent and his parents have recently moved after his father received a promotion. Brent travels by bus to Seattle, Washington, where he stays in a campground and builds a whirligig of a girl playing a harp. From Seattle, Brent travels south to San Diego, California, where he stays at a hostel for foreign travelers and builds a whirligig of a whale with a mermaid on the spray. From San Diego, Brent travels east to Beale Beach, Florida, which is a short distance from Miami. He stays in a cheap motel and builds a more advanced whirligig of a marching band. From Miami, he travels north to Portland, Maine, then catches a ride to a small town named Weeksboro. He stays in a remote campsite, and it is there he builds his most ambitious whirligig from items he has rummaged. At the end of the book Brent is thinking of other places he would like to visit before his bus pass expires.

Between the chapters that tell Brent's story are chapters telling how the whirligigs have impacted the lives of others. These chapters are in reverse order from Brent's travels: Weeksboro, Maine; Miami, Florida; San Diego, California; then Seattle, Washington.

CROSS CURRICULAR SOURCES

Fiction

Jan Alford, *I Can't Believe I Have To Do This*
Joan Bauer, *Rules of the Road*
Ann Brashares, *The Sisterhood of Traveling Pants*
Eve Bunting, *A Sudden Silence and Jumping the Nail*
Caroline B. Cooney, *Driver's Ed*
Corinne Demas, *If Ever I Return Again*
Sharon M. Draper, *Tears of a Tiger*
Patricia Calvert, Glennis, *Before and After*
Mary Downing Hahn, *The Wind Blows Backward*
Will Hobbs, *Down the Yukon*
Marilyn Kaye, *The Atonement of Mindy Wise*
Gail Carson Levine, *The Wish*
Ben Mikaelson, *Touching Spirit Bear*
Carol Plum-Ucci, *The Body of Christopher Creed*
Gary D. Schmidt, *The Sin Eater*
Maureen Crane Wartski, *My Name is Nobody*

Nonfiction

Jean McBee Knox, *Drinking, Driving, and Drugs*
Anders S. Lunde, *Making Animated Whirligigs*
Anders S. Lunde, *Whimsical Whirligigs and How to Make Them*
Cindy Burda, *Wind Toys that Sing, Twirl, and Whirl*
David Schoonmaker, *Whirligigs and Weathervanes: A Celebration of Wind Gadgets with Dozens of Creative Projects to Make*
John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charlie: In Search of America*

Internet

"Alcohol," <kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/alcohol/alcohol_p2.html>
"Be Responsible About Drinking, Inc.: The Facts About Alcohol Use," <www.brad21.org>

"Discouraging Teen Drinking," <www.nih.gov/news/WordonHealth/jun2002/capsules.htm#teenagedrinking>
"From Windmills to Whirligigs," <www.smm.org/sln/vollis/>
"Talking to Your Child About Alcohol Use," <healthlink.mcw.edu/article/997845242.html>

"Zoom Do: Whirligigs", <pbskids.org/zoom/do/whirligigs.html>

Videos/DVDs

I Ain't Drunk...I'm Just Drinkin' (TMW Media Group)

THEMES AND MOTIFS

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

Themes

- selfishness
- superficial values
- underage drinking
- suicide
- anger control
- independence
- grief
- atonement
- ripple-effect

Motifs

- how the values of our family shape our character
- how important it is to have friends
- how anger and depression can lead to bad decisions
- that our decisions and actions affect others (ripple-effect)
- the value of making restitution when we've wronged others
- the dangers of being self-centered
- the value of knowledge
- the healing benefits of atonement

MEANING STUDY

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

1. "All three watched a commercial for the new Jaguar. "What do you say, Brent?" said his father. "Nice lines, huh?" "Very nice," Brent replied. He examined his father's words for signs that a Jaguar might now be in reach with his new salary. He imagined himself driving it, observed by the assembled student body, adding to the daydream a Calvin Klein shirt from the advertisement that followed. (p. 5) (*After flipping channels past the news and a commercial to send help to famine victims in Africa, the entire family halts their fragmented conversation and watches the Jaguar commercial. This shows their lack of real communication and their focus on superficial things. Outward appearances are very important to the entire family.*)
2. Brent glared at his friend. He felt he'd been tricked. Fury rose up in him from a deep well. He'd been a head-banger as a toddler and still threw tantrums when he didn't get his way. He knew he couldn't afford a tirade here. (p. 9) (*This passage shows the problem Brent has with anger management. Instead of thinking Jonathan just forgot and made an honest mistake, Brent saw this as a bitter betrayal.*)
3. ...she stood near the top of the pecking order, and that her father, rumor had it, was worth a hundred million. He also knew, for a fact, that she was gorgeous. Having her for a

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girlfriend would mean instant respect. (p. 12)

(Again, this shows Brent's interest in money, prestige, and having all the right things. He never mentions one thing about her character, just what having her for a girlfriend could do for him.)

4. There's no need to go home. No need to go back to school on Monday. No need to go there ever again....There's no need to feel pain. You've already felt enough....No need to let them hurt you again....You have the power to stop the hurting....No need to be a pawn....They are the pawns. You are a king....You have a king's absolute power within you....You have the absolute power over your own life....You have the power to end your life. Now. (pp. 17-18) *(Brent's thoughts show his lack of ability to deal with anger and humiliation. He never stops to think how his actions may affect others. To Brent, everything is about him.)*
5. Brent suddenly thought back to Miss Gill, the mediator in Chicago, and her saying that the effects of an act traveled far beyond one's knowledge. He knew she'd meant harmful acts, like his. He saw now that the same could be said of good deeds, such as a teacher's years of inspiring. Everything we did—good, bad, and indifferent—sent a wave rolling out of sight. He wondered what his own accounting, generations later, would look like. (p. 70) *(These thoughts and this realization show a maturing of Brent's character. This is the first time he has considered his self worth based on his actions, values, and the legacies he would leave behind instead of the superficial things—the right hair, clothes, and car.)*
6. Maine summers, like dawn colors, were brief. Darkness and winter predominated. Lea's life had been similarly short. But his clacking, flashing, jingling memorial would give off sound and color all year, holding back the tide of death. It was a kinetic gravestone, painted in ever-blooming greens and yellows and reds. Lea would not be swallowed up. (p. 125) *(The first two whirligigs were a chore for Brent to build because of the difficulties he had during the construction process. The marching band whirligig gave him a sense of accomplishment in his growing skills. But in this last whirligig, Brent finds joy because he sees in it not only the likeness of Lea but the spirit of Lea—the life, the light, and the joy of Lea. With this whirligig, he feels he has created something which will give joy to those who see it, just as Lea's mother had asked.)*
7. The words worked their way through Brent's brain. That he might in fact be like everyone else was a foreign idea, never considered. That he could have done what he'd done and still be good was an even more startling notion. (p. 129) *(Brent had never considered himself a good person; he knew he was self-centered and had trouble managing his anger. After Lea's death, he never expected anyone who knew what he'd done to consider him a good person. To hear himself freely forgiven by someone he hardly knew but trusted was another step in Brent's healing process. The note from the maid in his motel in Florida had said that no one is ever alone with Jesus. He accepted that Jesus would forgive him, and that was reaffirmed by the painter. He told her the entire story just to make sure she still thought he was worth forgiving.)*

COMPREHENSION STUDY

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

Questions 1-4 (Literal Level)

1. What happened at the party that upset Brent?
(Brent was nervous about attending a party to which he was not invited. When they arrived, he noticed everyone was dressed in all-black or all-white. He asked Jonathan about this and Jonathan said he just forgot about the dress code. Brent saw this as a bitter betrayal. Then Chaz, the host of the party, put his hands on Brent and physically moved him around like a bishop, back and forth diagonally. At this point Brent started drinking and waiting for his opportunity to talk to Brianna alone. He did not notice the warning signs of her bad mood and continued talking to her. At that point she screamed at him to leave her alone both then and at school. Brent left the party humiliated.)
2. Who was Lea Zamora? What do you know about her and her family?
(Lea Zamora was driving the car behind Brent when he attempted suicide; she was killed in the accident. She was 18, a senior at Niles North High School, an honor student, and a member of the student council, the orchestra, and the track team. She was active in the Filipino community and was a volunteer at Resurrection Hospital. Her parents were Cesar and Tamara Zamora. Her father was extremely angry. Brent sent a letter of apology to him and it was returned mutilated with scissors, stabbed, and defaced with cigarette burns. Mrs. Zamora did not believe in restitution; she believed everything happened for a reason. She was teaching English in the Philippines when she met her husband; that was where Lea was born. Lea had a very caring soul, strong and generous, and everyone who saw her smiled. She was planning to do all kinds of good work. Mrs. Zamora's father was a carpenter who had made a whirligig for Lea that made others smile. This is what gave Mrs. Zamora the idea of Brent building whirligigs and placing them at the four corners of the country—for Brent to make the smiles which Lea would have made.)
3. Describe the whirligigs Brent built.
(The first whirligig in Seattle, Washington, was of a girl playing a harp. He had meant for it to be an angel but the wing broke and it became the figure of a girl. She had Lea's face. The second whirligig in San Diego, California, was of a whale blowing a spray with a mermaid on top of the spray. Lea was the mermaid. In Beale Beach, Florida, Brent built the third whirligig, a marching band with a drummer, a trumpet player, a clarinetist (Lea), and a man with a trombone. The fourth whirligig in Weeksboro, Maine, was one of Brent's own creations. It was three times the size of the others and did a better job of capturing her spirit and her joy. The pinwheels on the front were snipped and fashioned from soda cans, a dozen propellers were made from golf-motif coasters, linoleum scraps, license plates, and lobster-trap slats. It had one part of Lea's four part name on each of the propellers, and he painted a slight smile on her face. He glued sea glass and red reflectors in her hair. He put on extra varnish to

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make her skin glisten. He drilled holes in shells and made a necklace. He hung the necklace and a set of wind chimes around the neck. It was a clacking, flashing, jingling memorial that would give off sound and color all year.)

4. Why was the streetsweeper from Miami so disappointed when he finally got to see the shearwater bird?
(When the man had seen the shearwater bird on television, the announcer said that the bird lived almost all its entire life on the ocean. The man thought the bird lived all alone, far away from land, with no other birds around—very peaceful. What he finally saw was a noisy flock of birds, diving into the water, fighting over fish, and stealing fish from each other. This made the man feel sad because he valued solitude and quiet.)

Questions 5-8 (Interpretive Level)

5. How did spending time with Emil start to change Brent's ideas of what was important in life?
(For all his life, Brent thought he had to have the right "things" to fit in and be popular. During the nights he spent in the campground in Seattle he realized he knew no constellations or names of trees, flowers, rocks, birds, insects, or fish. He felt like a foreigner, so before beginning the bus ride south, he bought a book about constellations and began studying them. Then, when Brent met Emil, he felt inadequate because of Emil's knowledge, languages, interests, and accomplishments. When they spent time together, they visited the San Diego Zoo learning about mesas, rain forests, and aviaries. They sampled the museums of photography and model railroading and natural history. Brent enjoyed Emil's company but was slightly envious. He wanted to become more like Emil.)
6. Describe the changes that occurred within Brent as he traveled around the country.
(As Brent traveled around the country, he began to become interested in things other than himself—even in intellectual things. He met new people and was exposed to new ideas. This brought about a positive change in Brent. He became less superficial and developed more of a genuine interest in the people around him.)
7. How was the chess game at Chaz's party similar to the "contradance" in Weeksboro, Maine? How was it different?
(Both the human chess game and the contradance are extensions of the whirligig metaphor. They both involve human interaction where all the parts work together. They are different because the chess game had stipulations tied to it—an invitation, a dress code, organized for only a select few with an emphasis on the superficial. The contradance was open and welcoming—everyone getting along in spite of their differences. Brent was accepted just because he was there and willing to participate.)
8. Explain the importance of the whirligig in San Diego to the Jewish woman who'd been a prisoner in Auschwitz.
(The whirligig had brought her joy. Many thought that after their terrible ordeal at Auschwitz they would never laugh again. This woman, however, wanted to find joy and goodness in the world. Whenever she had been sad, she had walked to the spot where the whirligig was mounted on the side of a building; she did this to remind herself there was still goodness in the world and someone had built this whirligig to bring happiness to others. She wanted to

remember those feelings before she died.)

Questions 9-11 (Critical Level)

9. Why did Brent choose the artist in Maine as the one to whom he would tell about his suicide attempt?
(Brent chose the artist as the one to tell because he trusted her. She talked to him like an adult; she talked to him about Corelli composing music in 1681 that was still played 300 years later. She felt most people were swallowed by the darkness and that it was rare to leave something lasting behind. That statement gave him the idea for the whirligig he created. He trusted her enough to mount the whirligig at her house, believing that she truly saw beauty in it. She asked if Lea was a real person, and Brent just answered. He felt the need to talk about what he'd done, and with her, he could do that anonymously.)
10. How does being a part of the "contradance" make Brent feel that he belongs?
(All of Brent's life he had believed that he had to have the right "things" to fit in. He had learned all the rules and tried so hard to fit in with the "right crowd," but he had never succeeded. The people at the contradance were strangers, yet they accepted him without question. He became enmeshed in the music and the motion, guided, corrected, and welcomed by all. To Brent, this felt like his rite of reentry.)
11. Explain the metaphor of the whirligig in Maine and Lea's life.
(Lea's life was beautiful. She was kind, generous, nurturing, and joyful—she was a joy to everyone who came into contact with her. Brent wanted to create a whirligig that captured the beauty of her spirit; he created a memorial that would give off sound and color all year—a kinetic gravestone in ever-blooming colors to bring joy to those who saw it. Every part of the whirligig was attached to the central figure but worked independently also. This is like Lea's life—she was involved in many activities and organizations that helped people—each of these independent things combined to make Lea who she was.)

Questions 12-14 (Creative Level)

12. Pretend Brent kept a journal of his experiences as he traveled around the country building the whirligigs. Choose five important experiences and write what you think Brent would have written in his journal on those days. Be sure to include his thoughts and feelings as well as his actions.
13. Research the history of whirligigs and write a short paper explaining your findings.
14. Draft a design for a whirligig of your own.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art, Music, Dance

1. Create music using "rummaged" household or school items that would sound like the whirligig Brent built in Maine.
2. Draw an illustration or create a model of one of the whirligigs described in the book.
3. Draw a picture of Brent at the contradance.
4. Choreograph a dance like the one described on pages 130-131.

History and Social Studies

1. Alexandra and Stephanie laugh about Stephanie winning a Nobel Prize. Research the origins of the Nobel Prize and

WHIRLIGIG

write a short paper explaining your findings.

2. Research weather patterns for Portland, Maine; Miami, Florida; San Diego, California; and Seattle, Washington. Create a chart showing average weather patterns by season (summer and winter). Include average temperature, wind speed, rainfall, humidity, and predominate wind direction.
3. Use a map of the United States to chart Brent's travels around the country.

Language Arts

1. There is a story of the Greek god Hercules who committed a crime and had to perform labors to cleanse himself. Read the story and write a paper that compares and contrasts the events in Hercules' story with those in Brent's story.
2. Choose what you see as the major turning point in Brent's life. Write a paper explaining why this one thing is more important than any other.
3. Pretend Brent kept a journal during his travels. Choose four important days and write a journal entry for each.
4. Pretend Brent's parole officer asked him to write a letter to Lea's mother telling what he had learned during the time he traveled around the country building whirligigs. Write this letter and include at least three important lessons.

Science

1. Design a whirligig and create a poster showing your artistic design and the mechanics of the design.
2. In the book Brent learns to recognize constellations. Name some of the most recognizable constellations and tell how to identify them.
3. Brent worries about a hurricane destroying one of his whirligigs. Research hurricanes and write a short paper explaining how they form and how destructive they can be.
4. Brent learned about the tilt of the earth and how that affects the direction of the sun. Explain what the solstice is and how it affects our weather. Create a model to use for illustration to your classmates.

Math

Using the map from Social Studies #3 and an atlas, determine how many miles Brent traveled on a bus from the time he left Chicago until he reached Portland, Maine. If the bus averaged 60 miles per hour, how many hours did Brent spend riding a bus?

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Write a series of letters from Brent to his parole officer explaining what he learned during the time he traveled around the country building whirligigs. Include at least three important lessons.
2. Create a mural that shows the major events of Brent's life.
3. Explain the novel's theme or message.
4. Discuss in small groups the lessons you can take from Brent's life and apply to your own.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

1. Make a character list and describe each character.
2. Retell, in summary, the main events of the book in chronological order.
3. Compile a list of important lessons Brent learned while he was traveling around the country.
4. Explain, in your own words, why it is important to take responsibility for your actions.

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

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

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. he wasn't invited
2. to leave her alone
3. how to dress for the party
4. scotch and water
5. he'd been humiliated
6. carried dreams onto the wind
7. practice constantly
8. there are still lots of good people in the world
9. the shearwater birds
10. seemed like a good person

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

1. he thought it was necessary to fit in with the "in-crowd"
2. of the prestige that would bring to him
3. they didn't care about him
4. she wanted Brent to make the smiles Lea would have made
5. he wanted to make atonement and he wanted to get away from Chicago
6. Emil knew so much more than Brent did
7. the children who helped build it would take care of it
8. he liked her and he could remain anonymous
9. it captured more of Lea's spirit than the others
10. he was accepted without any qualifications

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

1. human chess game
2. the dress code
3. Brianna
4. humiliated
5. he attempted suicide
6. to make the smiles Lea would have made
7. she bought him a bus pass
8. his knowledge of language and academic material
9. stars and constellations
10. some neighborhood children

Part III: True or False (20 points)

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

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

WHIRLIGIG

VOCABULARY TEST

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

- | | | | |
|------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| a. maze | f. unlike | k. wanderer | p. furious speech |
| b. doubter | g. searched | l. laughing | q. not understandable |
| c. gently | h. sticking | m. beginnings | r. spellbound |
| d. expert | i. worried | n. exploded | s. not timely |
| e. effects | j. portioned | o. debating | t. made braver |

- ___ 1. Switching the control to his left hand, he **inopportunistly** dropped it when the screen showed the victims of a famine.
- ___ 2. No shaman knew better the importance of precise **adherence** to tradition.
- ___ 3. Brent trailed Jonathan through the **labyrinth**, at last emerging onto the patio.
- ___ 4. He threw tantrums when he didn't get his way, but he knew he couldn't afford a **tirade** here.
- ___ 5. Over the years he'd grown **adept** at creating alternate pasts for himself.
- ___ 6. He followed, **emboldened** by the alcohol to try to overcome her coolness.
- ___ 7. He pictured them repeating the scene to their friends, replaying it like the sports highlights, **guffawing** over it at the twenty-year reunion.
- ___ 8. He hated the grip on his shoulders again, the public humiliation, the snickers, the alcohol, all mixed and **detonated** inside Brent.
- ___ 9. He **rummaged** hopelessly through his memory, trying to recall their route.
- ___ 10. And you're a closed-minded **skeptic**.
- ___ 11. Out of nowhere, a word came to mind, a term for a **disparate** group of people linked together without their knowledge.
- ___ 12. The whole enterprise seemed taken from a dream, **incomprehensible** in the light of day.
- ___ 13. He paced the site, **deliberating**.
- ___ 14. He watched, **mesmerized**.
- ___ 15. He glimpsed a falling star, returned to his room and **rationed** out three chapters of the book before going to sleep.
- ___ 16. When the subject of the whirligig's **origin** came up at dinner, Brent was as silent as the others.
- ___ 17. A fugitive and a **vagabond** shalt thou be in the earth.
- ___ 18. Next he **agonized** over the whirligig's pivot point, marked the spot, drilled the hole, and hoped for the best.
- ___ 19. He inserted his only spare blade and worked **gingerly**. The blade survived.
- ___ 20. There are **consequences** for our acts, my boy.

WHIRLIGIG

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. Some names will be used more than once.

- | | | | |
|----------|----------------|---------|-------------|
| a. Brent | c. Mr. Zamora | e. Emil | g. Jonathan |
| b. Lea | d. Mrs. Zamora | f. Chaz | h. Brianna |

- _____ 1. planned a party with a human chess game
- _____ 2. bought a bus pass so Brent could travel around the country
- _____ 3. took Brent to the zoo in San Diego and taught him about mesas and aviaries
- _____ 4. screamed at Brent to go away, humiliating him
- _____ 5. did volunteer work at Resurrection Hospital
- _____ 6. forgot about the dress code for the "chess game" party
- _____ 7. traveled to four states and built whirligigs
- _____ 8. burned and mutilated Brent's letter of apology
- _____ 9. wanted Brent to make the smiles Lea would have made
- _____ 10. built a flashing clanging memorial to Lea

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the word or phrase in the parentheses that makes the statements correct.

- 1. Brent went with Jonathan to Chaz's party even though (his parents told him not to, he wasn't invited).
- 2. When Brent talked to Brianna, she told him (to leave her alone, to call her).
- 3. Jonathan forgot to tell Brent (how to dress for the party, what time the party started).
- 4. At Chaz's party, Brent was drinking (beer, scotch and water).
- 5. Brent didn't want to go back to school after (he'd been humiliated, he'd passed out) at the party.
- 6. In Weeksboro, Maine, Alexandra and Stephanie thought the whirligig (had been built by the Pilgrims, carried dreams onto the wind).
- 7. In Bellevue, Washington, Tony's mother wanted him to (be more independent, practice constantly) like the girl in the whirligig.
- 8. In San Diego, California, a Jewish woman explained to her granddaughter that the whirligig reminded her that (art is wherever you find it, there are still lots of good people in the world).
- 9. In Miami, Florida, a young Puerto Rican immigrant took a boat ride to see the (blue whales, the shearwater birds).
- 10. The artist in Maine said Brent (seemed like a good person, should go back home).

WHIRLIGIG

Part III: Motivation 20 points)

Complete each phrase below with a reason or justification.

1. The "right look" was so important to Brent because
2. Brent wanted Brianna to be his girlfriend because
3. Chaz and Brianna weren't nice to Brent because
4. Mrs. Zamora chose building the whirligigs as Brent's restitution because
5. Brent agreed to Mrs. Zamora's request because
6. Brent felt envious of Emil because
7. Brent knew that his marching band whirligig in Florida would be taken care of because
8. Brent confided the details of his suicide attempt to the artist in Maine because
9. Brent was pleased with the whirligig he created in Maine because
10. The "contradance" helped Brent feel that he belonged because

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain three of the lessons Brent learned while traveling around the country.
2. Why was agreeing to Mrs. Zamora's restitution a good choice for Brent?
3. What do you think Brent's relationship with his parents will be like when he returns to Chicago? Justify your answer.
4. Why did Brent think of traveling to other places before returning home to Chicago?

WHIRLIGIG

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. Some names will be used more than once.

- | | | | |
|----------|----------------|---------|-------------|
| a. Brent | c. Mr. Zamora | e. Emil | g. Jonathan |
| b. Lea | d. Mrs. Zamora | f. Chaz | h. Brianna |

- ___ 1. decided Brent should build whirligigs as restitution
- ___ 2. an honor student active in the Filipino community
- ___ 3. bought a book and began learning about stars and constellations
- ___ 4. humiliated Brent by physically moving him like a chess piece
- ___ 5. said Brent could go to the party even though he wasn't actually invited
- ___ 6. was too angry to accept Brent's apology after Lea's death
- ___ 7. was from Germany, traveling in the United States before starting college
- ___ 8. the girl Brent wanted to be his girlfriend
- ___ 9. wanted to make atonement for his actions
- ___ 10. felt welcomed at the contradance

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Answer and explain the significance of each of the following.

- 1. What was the theme of Chaz's party? _____
 - 2. What did Jonathan forget about the party? _____
 - 3. Who did Brent want to talk to alone at the party? _____
 - 4. How did Brent feel when he left the party? _____
 - 5. Why did Brent take his hands off the steering wheel? _____
 - 6. Why did Mrs. Zamora want Brent to build whirligigs? _____
 - 7. How did Mrs. Zamora plan for Brent to travel to different states? _____
 - 8. What was it about Emil that impressed Brent? _____
 - 9. What did Brent start studying on the trip from Seattle to San Diego? _____
 - 10. Who helped Brent build the marching band whirligig in Bale Beach, Florida? _____
- _____

WHIRLIGIG

Part III: True or False (20 points)

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

- 1. Jonathan and Brent had been friends since kindergarten.
- 2. Brianna was glad that Brent wanted to talk to her.
- 3. Brent felt sorry for Chaz because Chaz didn't have any friends.
- 4. Lea was an honor student at her high school.
- 5. Mr. Zamora would not accept Brent's letter of apology.
- 6. Brent had no interest in learning to play music.
- 7. Brent told the artist in Maine about his suicide attempt.
- 8. The shearwater bird turned out to be a noisy, squawking bird.
- 9. Brent couldn't wait to get home after the fourth whirligig was completed.
- 10. Brent's whirligigs brought joy to other people.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Compare and contrast Brent's values at the beginning of the story and the end of the story.
2. Explain how the contradance made Brent feel that he belonged.
3. Tell the events that changed Brent's character as he traveled around the country, and describe the effect each of these things had on Brent.



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