



Flush

by Carl Hiaasen

Teacher's Guide

Written By Kathy Sammis



CLASSROOM
FAVORITES

A Perma-Bound Production

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

As the novel opens, preteen Noah Underwood is visiting his father in the local Florida Keys jail on Father's Day. Paine Underwood is proud of his illegal action: sinking the large casino boat *Coral Queen* because, according to Paine, its owner has been dumping the gambling boat's sewage into the ocean basin water. The filth sometimes carries down to Thunder Beach, where kids swim and loggerhead turtles come to lay their eggs. The boat's owner, Dusty Muleman, is rich and influential, and no one has caught him in the act. Noah's father is passionate about the environment and impulsive, so he took direct action. Noah's mother is not pleased, but Noah and his younger sister Abbey are inclined to help Dad by finding proof against Muleman.

Chapter 2

At his father's request, Noah pays a visit to scruffy lowlife Lice Peeking, who used to work on Dusty's casino boat until he stole Dusty's girlfriend Shelly. Lice strongly suggests that he could implicate Dusty, but he wants a tangible reward in return for talking. Back at home, Noah's Mom is exasperated with Dad for refusing to get bailed out and once again acting impulsively and disrupting family life.

Chapter 3

When Noah returns to talk with Lice, the man is passed out on the floor, so Noah talks with Shelly instead. She's tall, brassy, and tattooed, and she makes Noah nervous, but she knows and likes Noah's dad and seems interested in why he sank the boat.

Chapter 4

The next day, Noah has a nasty encounter with the local bully, Jasper Muleman Jr. (Dusty's son), and his sidekick Bull, but Noah uses his brains (and his fishing rod) to

turn the tables. At home, Miles Umlatt, a reporter for the local paper, interviews Noah for an article about Noah's father. Umlatt reviews Paine's two previous skirmishes with the law for taking action against environmental abusers, one of which led to the loss of Paine's fishing captain's license. When asked, Noah declares that he is proud of his father, but admits that Paine has a problem with self-control. After the interview, Noah finds Abbey crying; Mom has mentioned divorce to the family's lawyer.

Chapter 5

Noah revisits Lice, who agrees to sign a statement stating that he witnessed the illegal *Coral Queen* dumping, in return for Paine's bonefish skiff. Late that night, Noah and Abbey sneak out and go to the marina, hoping to witness the dumping. Instead, they see crew members pumping the sewage into a holding tank.

Chapter 6

The kids narrowly escape Muleman's thuggish watchman. The next day, Lice Peeking fails to come and get the skiff and deliver his statement. Shelly tells Noah that a threatening-looking man (the marina watchman) visited Lice the night before, and then Lice ran off. Noah

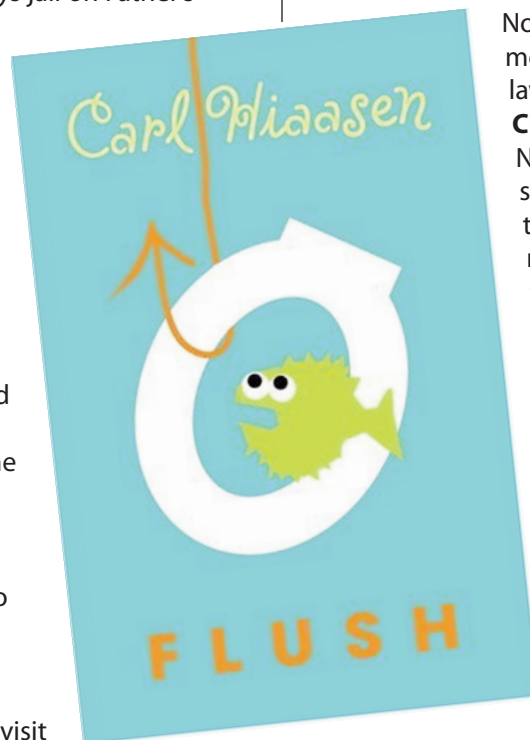
explains the deal that Lice made with his father; Shelly responds that she can help.

Chapter 7

Despite Noah's and Abbey's efforts, Mom views and is deeply upset by Dad's jailhouse TV interview. Late that night, Noah returns to the marina. Hiding from the watchman, Noah bangs against the holding tank and realizes it's empty; sewage simply pours through the rusted-out tank right into the water.

Chapter 8

Shelly is now convinced that Muleman had Lice kidnapped and killed. (Actually, the goon just scared Lice off; he later returns.) She's taken back her bartending job aboard the *Coral Queen* as a way to find evidence to nail Muleman. That night, Dad returns home—after escaping from jail.



Chapter 9

The sheriff had planned to release Paine the next morning, so he's happy to be rid of this self-styled "political prisoner." Noah warns Dad that Mom is thinking about divorce. Jasper Jr. and Bull again punch and kick Noah.

Chapter 10

Dad is put under house arrest, wearing an electronic anklet. A week later, Shelly tells Noah and his family that she has witnessed the overboard pumping. That night, Abbey disappears from her room; Noah, Mom, and Dad (minus his electronic anklet) go out to search for her.

Chapter 11

Abbey isn't at the marina, but Dusty Muleman is, and Noah's mother maneuvers Noah's dad into apologizing to Dusty for sinking the casino boat. Dusty accepts the apology. As the family drives home, Abbey cheerfully appears on the roadside.

Chapter 12

Abbey took video of the overboard dumping, but the tape is so dim and fuzzy, it's worthless as evidence. Back in jail for forty-eight hours, Noah's dad vows to abandon his activism, remorseful that his environmental passion has endangered his family. At the once-again-contaminated Thunder Beach, Shelly reports to Noah and Abbey what she's learned: a civilian working for the Coast Guard has a major gambling problem and has been tipping off Muleman whenever the Coast Guard plans a surprise inspection of the *Coral Queen*.

Chapter 13

Jasper Jr. and Bull attack Noah and Abbey (who, as a childhood biter, chomps hard and relentlessly on her attacker). A mysterious, weather-worn, browned, and leanly tough old man suddenly appears, addresses Noah and Abbey by name, and sternly warns off the two bullies.

Chapter 14

Noah and Abbey prepare to carry out Operation Royal Flush—they buy food coloring to add to the *Coral Queen*'s toilets so the overboard flushes will leave a visible trail. But the bottles are very small; Shelly will flush half of the thirty-four bottles, and Noah will flush the other half.

Chapter 15

With Shelly's help, Noah sneaks aboard the *Coral Queen* while it's open for business and locks himself into a ladies' restroom that Shelly has labeled OUT OF ORDER. It takes a long time to flush the seventeen bottles, and when Noah finally makes a run for it, the bouncers corner him at the ship's bow.

Chapter 16

Noah plunges into the water. After a dangerous delay, Abbey arrives in a dinghy. Muleman's goon tracks them

with a spotlight, but the mysterious "old pirate" reappears and takes him out. Noah and Abbey cheer—but then the old outboard engine conks out and their dinghy drifts out toward the sea as a lightning storm approaches and then engulfs them. Next morning, they are still out at sea—but soon a Tropical Rescue boat piloted by their Dad arrives, with the "old pirate" also aboard. It's Noah's and Abbey's long-lost Grandpa Bobby.

Chapter 17

Grandpa Bobby (Paine's father) supposedly died years ago in South America, but has actually been playing dead while seeking to recover the boat stolen from him years ago while he was involved in smuggling emeralds. He came back when he saw Paine's TV interview, to help protect the family, and alerted Paine about the kids' drifting in the dinghy.

Chapter 18

The next day, the current and the wind transport the dye-slicked sewage to Thunder Beach, and the Coast Guard helicopter records and traces it. (Shelly has side-tracked the love struck civilian informant.)

Chapter 19

The Coast Guard shuts down the *Coral Queen*. Noah's dad takes Noah's mom's advice and declines to comment. After a bonding fishing afternoon with Noah and a gift of emerald earrings to Abbey, Grandpa Bobby heads back to South America to wrap up his business.

Chapters 20-21

Dusty Muleman gets off lightly for what he's done because of his political influence and a threat of blackmail; Mr. Underwood offers this to Noah as a bitter lesson in reality. But Jasper and Bull inadvertently torch the *Coral Queen*, and the subsequent investigation turns up evidence of Dusty's embezzlement and tax evasion. The novel ends with the suggestion that Grandpa Bobby is on his way back to the Keys with his beloved, recovered boat.

Timeline

June	Noah's father is jailed for sinking the <i>Coral Queen</i> .
the next week	The <i>Coral Queen</i> is refloated and refitted.
July	Noah and Abbey escape the marina's thuggish watchman.
next day	Lice disappears; Shelly offers to help Noah; Noah discovers the rusted-out holding tanks; Noah's father walks out of jail and comes home.

- the next week** Abbey videotapes the Coral Queen; Mr. Underwood goes back to jail for two days.
- a few days later** The "old pirate" halts Jasper's and Bull's assault of Noah and Abbey.
- the next night** Noah flushes the food coloring aboard the Coral Queen and escapes with Abbey in the dinghy; they drift out to sea.
- next morning** Dad and Grandpa Bobby rescue Noah and Abbey; the Coast Guard shuts down the Coral Queen.
- late summer** The Coral Queen burns down during its grand reopening party.

Author Sketch

Carl Hiaasen (pronounced hiya-sun) was born (in 1953) and raised near Fort Lauderdale, in South Florida, where he loved the unspoiled outdoor areas and became dismayed at the constant development of those areas. He graduated from the University of Florida in 1974 and began working for the *Miami Herald* in 1976, focusing on investigative journalism. Since 1985, he has written award-winning columns for the *Herald* that expose corruption in government and in business, expressing particular outrage at schemes that promote destruction of Florida's natural environment. He began writing novels in the 1980s; his first solo novel was *Tourist Season*, published in 1986, followed by many more. These satirical thrillers for adults have been extremely popular. They focus on South Florida's social and environmental malfunctions and feature sharp and satirical humor, eccentric and colorful characters (both heroes and villains), creative forms of violence, and, often, absurdist situations. Hiaasen published his first book for young readers, *Hoot*, in 2002; it was a Newbery Honor winner. Hiaasen lives in the Florida Keys with his second wife; he has a son from this marriage and another son from his first marriage.

Critic's Corner

As with his adult novels, Hiaasen's offerings for young readers have been very popular with readers and critics alike. Hiaasen's writing style and subject matter for his juvenile novels are similar to those in his adult novels, but toned down in language and racy content. *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Literature* called *Flush* "a compulsively readable action adventure with a cleverly conceived resolution." *Horn Book* commented, "While the plot offers enough twists and turns to satisfy even the most serious adventure junkies, it is the multi-dimensional characters who give the novel its vitality."

The New York Times added, "It's thrilling to read a writer so shameless and so good. ... This is pitch-perfect writing." *The Guardian* summed up, "*Flush* is convincing, urgent, tense, funny and, well, pretty much perfect really." The novel won the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award.

Works by Carl Hiaasen

For Young Readers

Hoot (2002)
Flush (2005)

Selected Titles for Adults

Novels

Tourist Season (1986)
Double Whammy (1987)
Lucky You (1997)
Sick Puppy (2000)
Skinny Dip (2004)
Nature Girl (2006)

Nonfiction

Team Rodent: How Disney Devours the World (1998)
Kick Ass: Selected Columns of Carl Hiaasen (1999)
Paradise Screwed: Selected Columns of Carl Hiaasen (2001)
The Downhill Lie: A Hacker's Return to a Ruinous Sport (2008)

Sound Recording

Flush (Listening Library, 2005)

Bibliography

Booklist, August 2005, p. 2028
The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, October 2005, p. 96
Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, Vol. 113. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale
The Guardian, December 10, 2005
The Horn Book Magazine, September/October 2005, pp. 579-80
Kirkus Reviews, August 1, 2005, p. 849
The New York Times Book Review, November 13, 2005, p. 24
Publishers Weekly, June 27, 2005, p. 64
School Library Journal, September 2005, p. 204
USA Today, September 20, 2005

Internet

"About the Author": <www.randomhouse.com/features/hiaasen/author.html>
 "Carl Hiaasen":
 <www.biblio.com/authors/569/Carl_Hiaasen_Biogra

phy.html>
"Carl Hiaasen":
<www.carlhiassen.com>
"Carl Hiaasen: <'Delightfully Juvenile'>":
www.teachingk
8.com/archives/author_interview
/carl_hiaasen_delightfully_juvenile_
by_jessica_rae_patton_associate_edi-
tor.html>
"January Interview with Carl Hiaasen": <www.january-
magazine.com/profiles/hiaasen.html>
"A Kinder, Gentler Carl Hiaasen, Still Pissing People Off"
(Powell's Author Interviews):
<www.powells.com/author/hiaasen.html>
"Meet the Writers: Carl Hiaasen": <www.barnesandno-
ble.com/writers/writerdetails.asp?cid=883021#top>
"Visiting Authors Series: Carl Hiaasen": <teacher.scholastic.com/authorsandbooks/events/hiaasen/>



General Objectives

1. To discuss threats to the environment—water pollution in particular
2. To consider reasons why people become involved in environmental activism and to consider what types of actions constitute ecoterrorism
3. To explore the philosophy and tactics of civil disobedience
4. To analyze the nature and causes of bullying behavior and discuss ways to deal with it and stop it
5. To examine family stresses in households where husbands and wives have differing responses to societal problems
6. To gain an understanding of the casino-gambling industry and how business interests sometimes compete with the public interest

Specific Objectives

1. To identify why Dusty Muleman has been able to get away with dumping raw sewage into the ocean waters
2. To identify the methods that Noah, Abbey, and their father use to try to expose and stop Muleman's illegal activities
3. To understand and evaluate Paine Underwood's reasons and justifications for his actions, and his family's opinions about this
4. To trace the various interactions between Noah and Jasper Jr., and their outcomes
5. To understand Grandpa Bobby's background and the role he plays in the novel's plot

6. To analyze the illegal actions that the novel's characters take and discuss any possible justifications for these actions
7. To identify and evaluate the novel's various messages about environmental concerns

Literary Terms and Applications

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

Deus ex machina: an improbable device that an author uses to resolve the complications of a plot. In this novel, the "old pirate," a.k.a. Grandpa Bobby, repeatedly appears out of nowhere to save Noah and Abbey when they are in tight, seemingly irresolvable, circumstances.

Ecofiction: fiction that focuses on environmental concerns. A number of Carl Hiaasen's adult novels, as well as both of his young readers' novels, focus on environmental threats and degradation in South Florida.

First-person narration: the telling of a novel or short story from the point of view of only one person. In this novel, Noah tells us, in his realistic and humorous pre-teen voice, about the fast-paced series of events involving Dusty Muleman's casino boat.

Local color: showing in detail the places, natural environment, activities, and ways of thinking and speaking that are special to a particular region or city. Critics often cite Carl Hiaasen's ability to bring the unique aspects of South Florida to colorful life.

The Importance of Setting

The novel is set in the Florida Keys; a key element of the novel is the author's vivid evocation of the South Florida region. Specific settings include the local jail, where Noah visits his father several times; the Underwoods' home, where family tensions simmer and law-enforcement officials periodically come to the door; Shelly and Lice's run-down trailer-park home, where Noah makes a deal with Lice and enlists Shelly in his scheme to bust Dusty; and the *Coral Queen* casino boat and the marina where it is tied up, where Noah and Abbey make various daring attempts to get evidence of the sewage pumping. The natural environment is also a pervasive setting, as Noah enjoys fishing from shore and in the family skiff, has various encounters with the bullying Jasper and Bull, vows to stop the pollution of beautiful Thunder Beach, and drifts out to sea with Abbey in the disabled dinghy.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Fiction

Edward Bloor, *Tangerine*

Brian Doyle, *Spud Sweetgrass*
 Jack Gantos, *Joey Pigza Loses Control*
 Gail Gauthier, *Saving the Planet & Stuff*
 Carl Hiaasen, *Hoot*
 James Howe, *The Misfits*
 David Klass, *California Blue*
 E. L. Konigsburg, *The View from Saturday*
 Ruth Park, *My Sister Sif*
 Gary Paulsen, *Harris and Me: A Summer Remembered*
 Rodman Philbrick, *The Young Man and the Sea*
 Cynthia Rylant, *Every Living Thing*
 Graham Salisbury, *Lord of the Deep*
 William Sleator, *The Beasties*
 Jerry Spinelli, *Crash*

Nonfiction

Rona Arato, *World of Water: Essential to Life*
 Anita Baskin-Salzburg and Allen Salzburg, *Turtles*
 Kate Cohen-Posey, *How to Handle Bullies, Teasers, and Other Meanies*
 Richard A. Gardner, *A Boys and Girls Book About Divorce*
 Ann Heinrichs, *Florida (America the Beautiful Series)* (revised ed.)
 Melanie Ostopowich, *Water Pollution*
 Trevor Romain, *Bullies Are a Pain in the Brain*
 Jeff Ripple, *Sea Turtles of the World*
 Janice VanCleave, *Janice VanCleave’s Oceans for Every Kid: Easy Activities That Make Learning Science Fun*
 Dr. Ruth Westheimer and Pierre A. Lehu, *Dr. Ruth Talks about Grandparents: Advice for Kids on Making the Most of a Special Relationship*
 Charles A. Wills, *A Historical Album of Florida*

CD-ROM

Field Trip to the Sea Deluxe (Sunburst)
Imagination Express Destination Ocean (Sunburst)
Microsoft Oceans (Microsoft)
Ocean Planet (Discovery Communications)

Internet

“Blue Planet: Seas of Life”: dsc.discovery.com/convergence/blueplanet/blueplanet.html
 “Carl Hiaasen”: www.carlhiassen.com/
 “Flush Online”: flushbook.weebly.com
 “Hoot” (movie site): www.hootmovie.com/
 “It’s My Life: Friends: Bullies”: pbskids.org/itsmylife/friends/bullies/
 “Kidscape: Help If You Are Being Bullied”: www.kidscape.org.uk/childrenteens/index.asp
 “No Bully”: www.nobully.org.nz/advicek.htm
 “Planet Ocean”: school.discovery.com/schooladventures/planetocean/

“Sea Turtles”: www.seaworld.org/infobooks/SeaTurtle/home.html
 “Turtle Trax—A Page Devoted to Marine Turtles”: www.turtles.org/

Video/DVD

Ancient Sea Turtles Stranded in a Modern World (Sea Turtle Restoration Project of Earth Island Institute/Bullfrog Films)
Bullying: You Don’t Have to Take It Any More (Human Relations Media)
Bully No More: Stopping the Abuse (Aims Multimedia)
The Blue Planet DVD Set (BBC)
GoingGreen: Every Home an Eco Home (GoingGreen Prods./Library Video Co.)
Hoot (Warner Home Video)
Journey of the Loggerhead (Environmental Media)
Stop Bullying! Stand Up for Yourself and Others (Paraclete Press)
Window to the Sea (PBS)

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in *Flush* should include these aspects.

Themes

- environmentalism and ecoterrorism
- corruption and greed
- civil disobedience
- bullying
- water pollution and sewage disposal
- right vs. wrong
- family relationships

Motifs

- Florida Keys and South Florida
- Florida Keys marine life
- fishing
- boats
- quirky character traits
- jail
- gambling and casinos
- emeralds and smuggling

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the chapter and page numbers given in parentheses to reread the items in context if you wish.

1. The Coral Queen had gone down stern-first. Her hull had settled on the bottom with the bow

pointing upward. (Ch. 1, p. 7)
(The stern is the rear end of a boat; the bow is the front end. The hull is the frame or body of a boat. These sentences describe what happened to the Coral Queen when it sank.)

2. He'd idled out to the mouth of the basin. ... The Coral Queen had gone down crosswise in the channel. (Ch. 1, p. 9)

(A basin is a partly enclosed area of water. The channel connects it to a larger body of water, in this case, the ocean. Sometimes the sewage from the Coral Queen is carried out the channel to the ocean. Other times, currents keep it in the basin, sometimes carrying it to Thunder Beach.)

3. He'd opened the seacocks and cut the hoses and disconnected the bilge pumps. (Ch. 1, p. 9)

(A seacock is a valve in the hull of a boat that can be opened to let water into some part of the hull. The bilge is the lowest part of a boat's hull; bilge pumps pump water that collects in the bilge out of the hull. Noah's father disabled the bilge pumps and opened the seacocks so that water would flood the Coral Queen's hull and sink the boat.)

4. "But why didn't Dad just call the Coast Guard?" (Ch. 1, p. 10)

(The United States Coast Guard is a branch of the U.S. military, with a mission of protecting the public, the environment, and U.S. economic and security interests in maritime regions. The Coast Guard plays a role in homeland security, law enforcement, search and rescue, response to marine pollution, and maintenance of navigational aids. The Coast Guard is the primary government agency that would respond to a report of the Coral Queen pumping sewage directly into the seawater.)

5. "He threatened to sue your father for slander." (Ch. 4, p. 46)

(Slander is saying something false about another person that damages that person's reputation or standing in the community. Slander is a civil (not criminal) offense, so a person who thinks she or he has been slandered can bring a lawsuit against the person who allegedly spoke the slanderous words. Since Paine Underwood has made his unproven charges against Dusty Muleman very, very public, Dusty is threatening to sue Paine for slandering him.)

6. "I sunk the Coral Queen as an act of civil disobedience." (Ch. 8, p. 82)

(Civil disobedience is the refusal to obey a law or follow a policy that a person feels is unjust. People who practice civil disobedience base their actions on moral right and usually act in a nonviolent way. As put forth in the famous essay by Henry David Thoreau and applied by its most famous practition-

ers, Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., civil disobedience is nonviolent, nondestructive, peaceful, and courteous. The aim of civil disobedience is to gain wider public awareness of an issue and, ultimately, to change the objectionable law or policy. Paine Underwood is seriously misapplying the concept of civil disobedience by violently destroying another person's private property and engaging in verbal hostility (he refers to people like Muleman as "ruthless greedheads"); legal remedies are available to deal with the pollution, although the authorities are not yet pursuing them. Underwood's activities could more rightly be characterized as "direct action," along the lines of the Boston Tea Party during the Revolutionary War.)

7. "Have you ever heard of a gag order?" (Ch. 9, p. 96)

(A gag order is a legal order that prohibits public comment about a particular matter, or the release of information about the matter. Gag orders are most often used to order parties to a lawsuit or criminal trial from commenting on the case. In Paine's case, the sheriff has not issued a gag order against him, but has simply refused to let Paine do any more jail-house interviews with the media. Paine, of course, sees this as being gagged.)

8. "tampering with a court-ordered monitoring device" (Ch. 12, p. 133)

(Paine has been ordered to wear an electronic anklet that will alert the sheriff's office if he leaves his house, because he's under house arrest. Paine removes the anklet when he goes out to search for Abbey during the night. The sheriff's department knows that he's tampered with the anklet, so Paine goes back to jail for forty-eight hours as punishment.)

9. "So much for the First Amendment." (Ch. 14, p. 167)

(The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of speech. As part of the settlement of the Coral Queen sinking case, Paine has had to swear that he won't say anything bad about Dusty to the media or anywhere in public. Paine perceives this as an unfair violation of his constitutional right to freedom of speech.)

10. Rado kept a blue dinghy tied to the seawall. (Ch. 15, p. 172)

(A dinghy is a small open boat that is rowed, sailed, or driven by an outboard motor. Noah borrows his buddy Rado's dinghy to get to the casino boat by water, and he and Abbey use it to flee the Coral Queen, hampered by the dinghy's unreliable outboard motor.)

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.

Literal Level (Questions 1–3)

- How has Dusty Muleman been able to get away with dumping raw sewage into the ocean waters?
(Dusty has his crew members carry out the dumping in the dark, after the casino boat has closed for the night and all the customers have left. Sometimes the crew seems to be pumping the sewage into holding tanks, but as Noah discovers, the tanks are rusted out, so the sewage flows on into the water. Dusty employs the burly goon Luna to make sure no one gets near enough to see what's going on. Also, a civilian working for the Coast Guard has a severe gambling problem; he repays Dusty the money he owes by tipping off Dusty whenever the Coast Guard is planning a surprise inspection of the Coral Queen. Dusty also may have some influence with the local police and with local politicians. He has compromising photos of federal prosecutors on the Coral Queen, which he uses to get off lightly when he is first prosecuted.)
- What methods do Noah, Abbey, and their father use to try to expose Dusty Muleman's illegal sewage dumping, and stop it?
(Noah's and Abbey's dad first tried to get the authorities to take action. When they failed to respond, he took matters into his own hands and sank the Coral Queen. Noah and Abbey first spy on the boat to try to see the crew carrying out the illegal dumping. When this fails, Abbey returns and takes a video of the dumping, but the video is too fuzzy and dim to use as evidence. Then Noah and Abbey come up with the scheme to flush food coloring down the casino boat's toilets, creating a visible trail of evidence, which they summon the Coast Guard to come and record as evidence.)
- What encounters does Noah have with Jasper Jr.? Who "wins" in each case? What is Jasper Jr.'s final mistake?
(Noah has repeated encounters with Jasper Jr. and this bully's sidekick, Bull. When Noah is at the marina watching the salvage crew refloat the Coral Queen, Jasper threatens him but is interrupted by Dusty. Later, Jasper punches and spits on Noah, an unprovoked attack—but Noah snags the departing Jasper with his fishing jig, which leads to the capsizing of

Jasper's and Bull's boat. The next day, Jasper calls out an insult as Lice and Noah pedal by; Lice forces Jasper to back down. Days later, Jasper and Bull waylay Noah; Jasper punches and kicks Noah. Then the two bullies jump both Noah and Abbey; the "old pirate" materializes and halts the attack. He intimidates Bull and Jasper into apologizing to Noah and promising to stop the assaults. The next time Noah encounters Jasper, Noah stops and confronts the bully, knocks Jasper's arms away, and scares an apology out of Jasper when he displays the "old pirate's" gold-coin chain. Jasper manages to torch his father's casino boat when his cigar ignites a cache of fireworks.)

Interpretive Level (Questions 4–6)

- What opinions do Noah, Abbey, and their mother have about Paine Underwood's beliefs and actions?
(All three admire Paine's passionate environmental concerns and deep desire to right environmental wrongs. All three have reservations about the ways in which Paine impulsively acts on his beliefs. In spite of their reservations, Noah and Abbey are inclined to admire their father for taking action, even if illegally. Their mother, on the other hand, is exasperated by the disruptive effects Paine's actions have had on their family, including economic woes. The casino-boat sinking may be the last straw; Mom is starting to contemplate divorce.)
- What role does the "old pirate" play in the novel?
(The "old pirate"—actually Noah's and Abbey's Grandpa Bobby—acts as a deus ex machina (see "Literary Terms and Applications"). He repeatedly steps into the action from offstage to rescue Noah and Abbey. He first materializes when Jasper and Bull are assaulting the pair of siblings and halts the attack. Then, as Noah and Abbey float toward Luno in their dinghy as they attempt to flee the Coral Queen, the "old pirate" again appears out of nowhere, frightening off Dusty and pounding on Luno while the kids make their getaway. The "old pirate" then alerts Paine Underwood that the kids have drifted out to sea. The next morning, the "old pirate," soon revealed as Grandpa Bobby, accompanies Paine Underwood in his Tropical Rescue boat to Noah and Abbey's drifting dinghy offshore.)
- How does Noah respond to the various challenges he encounters in the course of this novel?
(Noah develops into a self-confident youngster as he faces and deals with these challenges. After repeated confrontations with Jasper, and seeing how Lice and Grandpa Bobby intimidate the bully, Noah is able to

face Jasper with confidence, smiling and knocking away Jasper's attempt to go after him. At first, Shelly makes Noah nervous, but as he learns to be comfortable around her, he's able to accept her as a valued and reliable ally, giving him confidence to carry out his dye-flushing scheme. Noah's early unsuccessful attempts to get evidence of Dusty Muleman's polluting practices make him all the more determined to carry out the bold dye-flushing scheme. Coping with the legal and family problems his father's actions have caused helps Noah gain the determination to carry out his father's objective of nailing Muleman.)

Critical Level (Questions 7–9)

7. What illegal actions do the novel's characters engage in? Are any of these actions justified, in your opinion?
(Dusty Muleman and his crew illegally discharge raw sewage into the ocean waters. Dusty embezzles casino profits from his Indian partners and practices tax evasion. Paine Underwood deliberately sinks Dusty's casino boat. He also walks out of jail and removes his electronic ankle monitor. Lice steals Shelly's Jeep and her cash. Jasper and Bull assault Noah and Abbey. Noah and Abbey trespass at the marina; Noah trespasses on the Coral Queen. Grandpa Bobby was involved in emerald smuggling. Student opinions about justifications will vary relative to the Underwoods' actions. Paine insists he is practicing legitimate civil disobedience, but he is using the term incorrectly; he is actually engaged in direct action against a polluter who may be in cahoots with corrupt government officials. As for Noah, do the ends (trespass, dye-flushing) justify the means (a gross polluter is brought to some justice)? These issues can make for an interesting class discussion.)
8. Carl Hiaasen is known for creating colorful, quirky, offbeat characters. Which characters in this novel match that description, and in what ways?
(Answers will vary somewhat. Shelly, for example, is oversized, buxom, adorned with a barbed-wire tattoo, brassy, and hard-living. Lice is hygiene-challenged and such a pathetic physical specimen that it's amazing Shelly finds him attractive. Luno is a caricature of the hired thug, with his Z-shaped nose, bald head, and foreign accent. The "old pirate" is an exotic, mysterious character, seemingly homeless, with his craggy face, weather-beaten skin, gold-coin chain, and habit of suddenly appearing out of nowhere. Paine Underwood is volatile, impassioned, and given to acts of ecoterror.)
9. One reviewer has called *Flush* "a book that thinks

local and acts global." Explain this.
(Carl Hiaasen expresses his environmental concerns in *Flush* by focusing on a local case of pollution that the Underwood family becomes involved in trying to stop. Noah describes the grossness of raw sewage floating down to Thunder Beach, where children swim and loggerhead turtles come to lay their eggs. This local case leads to the novel's characters commenting on the larger picture of ocean pollution, the decline of fishing stocks, and protection of ocean and Everglades resources.)

Creative Level (Questions 10–12)

10. Write the Island Examiner newspaper article titled "Local Cabbie Defends Sinking of Casino Boat," or create a TV news report on this topic (see Chapters 5 and 6 of the novel).
11. Write the Island Examiner newspaper article titled "Casino Boat Busted in Pollution Probe," or create a TV news report on this topic (see Chapters 18 and 19 of the novel).
12. Write some more letters from Grandpa Bobby describing his adventures while tracking down his stolen boat in South America.

Across the Curriculum**Art**

1. Create an imaginatively illustrated family tree of Noah's family. Alternatively, create your own family tree.
2. Create illustrations of some of the novel's colorful characters. Do your own illustrations, or find pictures in the media or online that fit your mind's-eye vision of these characters.

Science

1. Create a poster, illustrated field guide, or multimedia presentation on one or some of the marine creatures of the Florida Keys featured in the novel, such as dolphins, loggerhead turtles, manatees, bonefish, and mullets.
2. Explain in scientific terms the phenomenon known as the green flash.
3. Diagram a small engine. Show its various parts, and explain the mechanics of getting the engine started. Or, bring a small engine to class and explain it mechanically to classmates.
4. Use a poster or a multimedia presentation to demonstrate how a satellite TV dish works.
5. If you live near a seacoast, or visit one, map the major currents and tidal forces that affect your region.

6. Explain in scientific terms the reason why counting the seconds between seeing a lightning flash and hearing its associated boom of thunder can tell you how many miles away the storm is from you.
7. Research and report on the emeralds of Colombia, and the active illegal emerald trade there.

Environmental Studies

1. Research and report on environmental protections that apply to the Florida Everglades and the Florida Keys.
2. Post news reports about acts of ecoterrorism in your classroom for classmates to read. Then discuss the possible pros and cons involved in acts of ecoterrorism.
3. Abbey is named after one of her father’s “favorite writers.” Do some research on the Internet and report on this person. Be sure to explain why Paine Underwood would have admired this person.

Social Studies

1. Are there any gambling casinos in your state? If so, find out how your state regulates these casinos, how the revenues are shared, and what problems may be associated with the casinos, such as gambling addiction and increased crime.
2. Research and report on Florida’s Miccosukee Indians, including their history, culture, and association with casinos.
3. Noah’s father mentions Nelson Mandela admiringly. Write a biography of Mandela and explain why Paine Underwood would admire him.
4. Noah’s father claims that his action against the Coral Queen was an act of civil disobedience. Document various acts of civil disobedience, historical and current. Then discuss with classmates the philosophy and tactics of civil disobedience. Does Paine Underwood’s action fall within this tradition? Why or why not?
5. The U.S. Coast Guard has a wide range of responsibilities. Create a chart detailing these.

Geography/Mapping

1. Many places in South Florida and the Florida Keys are mentioned in the novel. As you read, locate and label, or highlight, these places on a map of the region.
2. Create a multimedia presentation on the Florida Keys.

Law/Legal Issues

1. Explain some or all of these terms: house arrest, arson, search warrant, bail.

2. In Chapter 20 of the novel, the police lieutenant begins to recite the Miranda warning to Mr. Underwood. Print out the full warning, and explain its origins and its application.
3. In poster form or a multimedia presentation, explain how electronic monitoring anklets work to tell authorities if someone is or is not violating the terms of house arrest.
4. Sometimes a court orders people accused of a violent crime to take anger management classes. Research and report on this type of class.

Language Arts

1. Read Carl Hiaasen’s novel *Hoot*. With classmates who have also read *Hoot*, compare elements of that novel with elements of *Flush*.
2. As you read this novel, compile a glossary of the many terms related to boats and boating.
3. Carl Hiaasen often uses colorful similes involving animals—for example, “Abbey was hanging like a starved alligator” and “He looked like a sick old iguana” and “She sounded like a duck swallowing a harmonica.” Write some colorful animal-based similes of your own.
4. Write an appropriate title for each chapter of the book. Share chapter titles with classmates, and vote on a favorite title for each chapter. In the spirit of the novel, have fun with the titles!

Mathematics

1. On a poster or graph paper, show the relative sizes of some of the boats mentioned in the novel, such as the *Coral Queen*, Grandpa Bobby’s *Amanda Rose*, Noah’s father’s bonefish skiff, and Rado’s blue dinghy.
2. Using what Shelly tells Noah on page 88 of the novel, create a financial report for one night’s expenses and income for the *Coral Queen*.

Student Involvement Activities

1. With classmates, act out favorite scenes from the novel.
2. Noah’s dad says that the 1980s had “the worst music and the worst hair in the history of the human race.” Create a class display of examples of this “worst hair” and play recordings of some of this “worst music.”
3. Shelly sports a barbed-wire tattoo on her bicep, and tattoos are very popular now. Discuss tattoos with classmates. How many have them? Has it been an issue with parents? with school authorities? Is any type of tattooing appropriate or inap-

- appropriate? What about tattoo regret later on?
- Investigate a pollution, or other environmental, issue in your locality/region. How can you and your fellow students get involved in trying to fix the problem?
 - Noah's father complains that having to swear not to say bad things about Dusty Muleman in public is a violation of his First Amendment right to freedom of speech. Do you agree that this is a constitutional violation? Discuss this issue with classmates.
 - Noah says that many superstitions are associated with the ocean and boating. With interested classmates, compile a list of such superstitions, including information on their possible origins.
 - With some classmates or friends, experiment with using food coloring in a variety of foods, such as cookie dough, scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, and milk. Take photos of your results to share with the class.
 - Look around your school grounds and your town for places that are liberally littered with trash. Then stage a trash cleanup event with classmates at one of these places.
 - With classmates, create a video of Paine Underwood's jailhouse TV interview.
 - Describe instances of bullying and/or harassment you have experienced or witnessed, and then discuss with classmates effective ways to deal with bullies and harassers.

Alternate Assessment

- Draw up a detailed list of the novel's characters. Next to each name, describe the person's physical and personality traits, the relationship of that person to Noah, and the part the person plays in the novel's plot.
- Create a chart of the illegal actions carried out by various characters in the novel. Describe each act, tell why it is a violation of the law, and note what the consequences of the act are for the person who acted.
- Write a script for or, with classmates, stage a "public hearing" in which Noah, Abbey, Paine Underwood, Shelly, and Grandpa Bobby describe and defend their actions and Dusty Muleman and his cronies earnestly defend themselves and their actions.

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. shortly | f. complained, grumbled | k. feeling nauseous |
| b. sarcastic | g. government official | l. harshly, sternly |
| c. long and thin | h. sinking a boat | m. foul, pollute |
| d. huge | i. unpredictable | n. guilty person |
| e. cold, hostile | j. gambling facility | o. well-justified |

- ___ 1. If the boat stayed in the harbor, the passengers would never get too queasy to party.
- ___ 2. A long silence followed, so I figured Abbey was thinking up something snarky to say.
- ___ 3. Only Indian tribes are allowed to run casino operations in Florida.
- ___ 4. "You make a valid point, Noah."
- ___ 5. Bull clambered to the back end of the boat, which turned out to be a humongous mistake.
- ___ 6. "Well, Noah, you've got to admit that your father's behavior has been erratic."
- ___ 7. The lawyer said that Dusty would never purposely contaminate the waters where his own son played.
- ___ 8. "And here I was, deprived of my freedom to speak out by some small-minded, small-town bureaucrat with a badge."
- ___ 9. "It shouldn't be hard," Mom said tersely. "Whatever it takes, I want you home."
- ___ 10. His gaze revealed nothing but icy and casual indifference.
- ___ 11. "We can't give up on this," Abbey added grimly.
- ___ 12. "So much for the First Amendment," my father griped.
- ___ 13. Dusty Muleman had agreed not to prosecute my father for scuttling the casino boat.
- ___ 14. I recognized the blue dinghy and the spindly silhouette of my sister at the helm.
- ___ 15. Naturally, Dusty Muleman believed that my father was the culprit.

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each 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. You will use each name once.

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------------|------------------|
| a. Noah | e. Mr. Underwood | h. Grandpa Bobby |
| b. Abbey | f. Mrs. Underwood | i. Jasper Jr. |
| c. Shelly | g. Dusty Muleman | j. Lice Peeking |
| d. Luno | | |

- ____ 1. Sensible, law-abiding legal secretary.
- ____ 2. Person who is supposed to have been dead for the past ten years.
- ____ 3. Hard-living, big-hearted, tattooed blonde person.
- ____ 4. Person who receives a gold coin on a chain as a gift.
- ____ 5. Person who causes the fire that burns down the casino boat.
- ____ 6. Volatile man who tends to get carried away by his emotions.
- ____ 7. Z-nosed, bald-headed casino watchman.
- ____ 8. Person who was a childhood biter, and still sometimes is.
- ____ 9. Hygiene-challenged person who runs away when threatened by the casino goon.
- ____ 10. Rich and influential person who favors Cuban cigars and Hawaiian shirts.

Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

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

- On Father's Day, Noah visits his dad in _____.
- The events of this novel take place in the U.S. state of _____.
- The casino boat that sinks is named _____.
- Dusty's crew pumps _____ into the ocean waters at night.
- The U.S. _____ shuts down Dusty's casino operation.
- When the water is polluted, officials shut down _____, a popular swimming spot.
- Lice agrees to talk about Dusty's illegal actions in return for Noah's father's _____.
- Shelly gets back her old job on the casino boat as a _____.
- Noah's father has to wear an electronic monitoring device while he is under _____.
- For the past year and a half, Noah's father has had a job as a(n) _____.
- Noah and Shelly flush _____ down the casino's toilets.
- Noah and Abbey escape from the casino boat in a blue _____.
- Instead of having a sign labeled "Ladies," the women's rest room on the casino boat is labeled "_____."
- The weapon that Luno threatens to shoot at Noah and Abbey is a(n) _____.
- Grandpa Bobby gives Abbey a gift of _____ earrings.

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

- The (**Miami, Miccosukee, Seminole, Mohegan**) Indians are Dusty's partners in the casino business.
- Members of Noah's family always hope to see the (**purple, pink, blue, green**) flash at sunset.
- The first name of Noah and Abbey's father is (**Thom, Robert, Paine, Charles**).
- Mullets and snappers are types of (**sea turtles, fish, manatees, dolphins**).
- Noah's father claims that sinking the casino boat was an act of (**heroism, ecoterrorism, temporary insanity, civil disobedience**).
- Abbey hopes to use her (**audio cassette, photographs, videotape, camera phone**) as evidence of Dusty's illegal actions.
- When he leaps off the casino boat, Noah shouts, ("**Geronimo!**" "**Stupify!**" "**Help!**" "**Don't Shoot!**")

8. Billy Babcock works for the (**IRS, sheriff's department, Coast Guard, state marine patrol**).
9. Noah borrows the small boat that belongs to his friend (**Godzilla, Rado, Bull, Miles**).
10. When Noah and Abbey are stranded in the ocean, they are threatened by (**sharks, lightning and thunder, a waterspout, Luno**).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the relationship between Noah and Abbey.
2. What plan does Noah devise to nail Dusty Muleman for his illegal actions? How does the plan work out? (Be specific.)
3. In what ways are Noah's mother and father at odds?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each quotation. Find the character who speaks the words in the list below. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. You will use each name once.

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------------|------------------|
| a. Noah | e. Mr. Underwood | h. Grandpa Bobby |
| b. Abbey | f. Mrs. Underwood | i. Jasper Jr. |
| c. Shelly | g. Dusty Muleman | j. Lice Peeking |
| d. Luno | | |

- ___ 1. "Underwood, I'm gonna kick your butt from here to Miami."
___ 2. "I know right from wrong. Good from bad. Sometimes I just get carried away."
___ 3. "Billy Babcock's waitin' on me all moony-eyed."
___ 4. "Don't shoot! We give up!"
___ 5. "Son, I heard from Jasper Jr. that you've been givin' him a hard time."
___ 6. "You ever bother these two kids again, and you'll dearly regret it. *Comprende?*"
___ 7. "I don't care to be married to a jailbird."
___ 8. "It wasn't money I stole from Dusty. It was Shelly."
___ 9. "You again! You two punks! This time you no get away!"
___ 10. "You did what? Geez, you're as whacked as Dad."

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

Write a one- or two-word answer to each of the following questions.

- Who is the author of this novel? _____
- On what holiday does Noah visit his dad in jail? _____
- What part of Florida is the setting for this novel? _____
- Where has Grandpa Bobby been living for the past ten years? _____
- What group of people are Dusty's partners in the casino business? _____
- What image is tattooed on Shelly's arm? _____
- What creatures come ashore at Thunder Beach to lay their eggs? _____
- What really caused the "bloodstains" on the front seat of Shelly's car? _____
- What does Noah's father have to wear at all times when he's under house arrest? _____
- What fruit scent is associated with Shelly? _____
- What is the name of Jasper Jr.'s bullying sidekick? _____
- What was Noah's father's job before he became a taxi driver? _____
- What type of classes does the court order Noah's father to attend? _____
- Who does the "old pirate" turn out to be? _____
- What item hangs from the gold chain that Noah receives as a gift? _____

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

- Noah's father has lost his (**captain's, driver's, commercial trucker's, electrician's**) license.
- The casino boat and the sometimes-polluted beach are in an ocean (**marina, bay, basin, channel**).
- Grandpa Bobby was involved in smuggling (**emeralds, drugs, gambling money, illegal aliens**).
- The first name of Noah and Abbey's mother is (**Sandy, Janet, Abigail, Donna**).
- Shelly's missing car is a (**Nissan Xterra, Jeep Cherokee, Ford Explorer, GMC Yukon**).
- The local newspaper is named the (**Miami Herald, Island Examiner, Key West Times, Dade County News**).
- Noah's father gets a job with a company called Tropical (**Rescue, Tours, Vacation, Fishing**).
- The food coloring that Noah and Shelly flush down the casino's toilets is (**yellow, blue, green, fuchsia**).
- Grandpa Bobby's stolen boat is named the (**Coral Queen, Abbey May, Amanda Rose, Pirate Treasure**).

10. The Underwood family's lawyer is Mr.
(**Umlatt, Shine, Babcock, Shucker**).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Why is Noah's father put in jail, twice? Why is he placed under house arrest?
2. In what ways do Abbey and Noah, individually, resemble either or both of their parents?
3. How does the theme of bullying play out in the novel?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. k | 6. i | 11. l |
| 2. b | 7. m | 12. f |
| 3. j | 8. g | 13. h |
| 4. o | 9. a | 14. c |
| 5. d | 10. e | 15. n |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. jail | 9. house arrest |
| 2. Florida | 10. taxi driver |
| 3. <i>Coral Queen</i> | 11. food coloring |
| 4. sewage | 12. dinghy |
| 5. Coast Guard | 13. Mermaids |
| 6. Thunder Beach | 14. flare gun |
| 7. bonefish skiff / boat | 15. emerald |
| 8. bartender | |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Miccosukee | 6. videotape |
| 2. green | 7. "Geronimo!" |
| 3. Paine | 8. Coast Guard |
| 4. fish | 9. Rado |
| 5. civil disobedience | 10. lightning and thunder |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

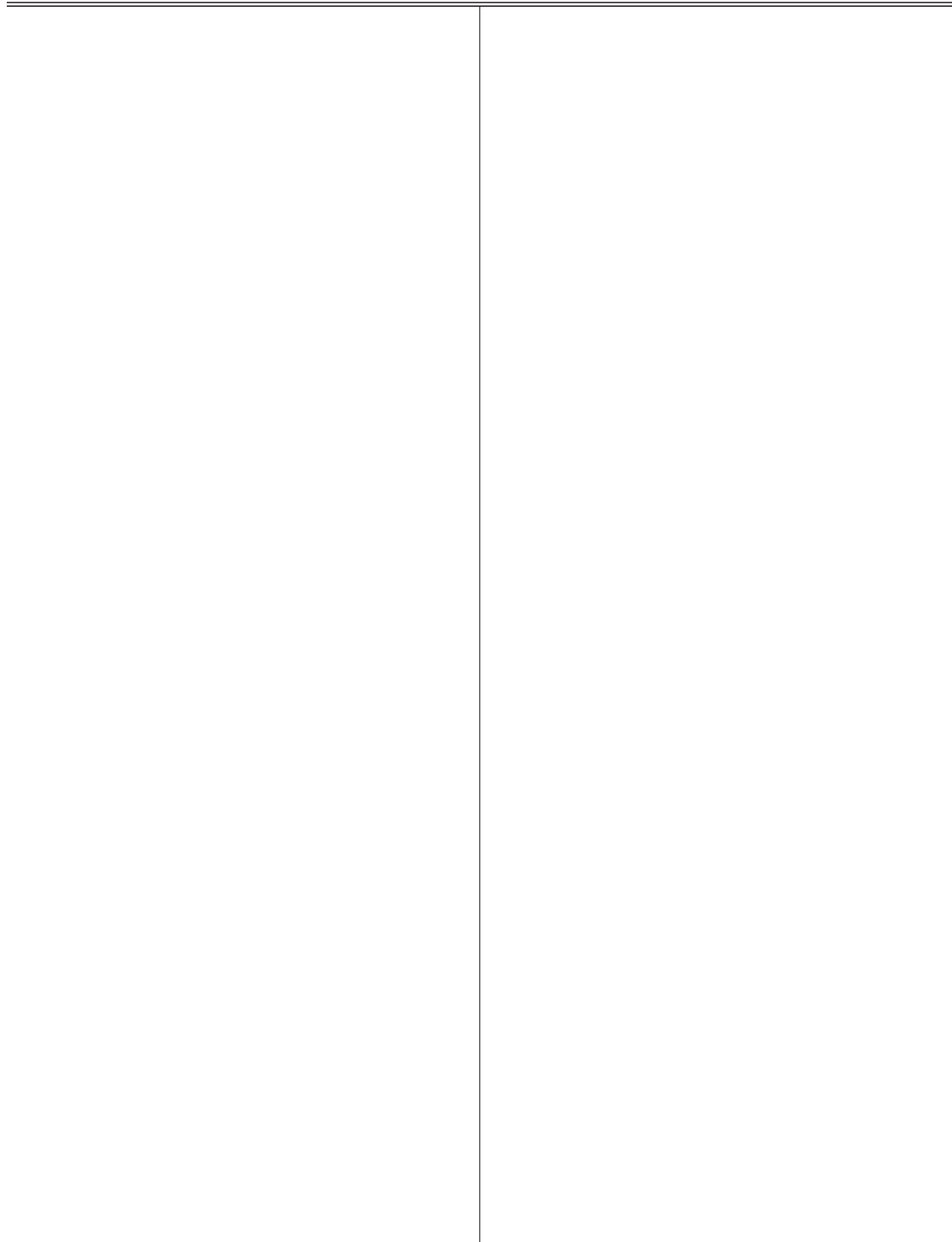
- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Carl Hiaasen | 9. electronic anklet |
| 2. Father's Day | 10. tangerine |
| 3. Florida Keys | 11. Bull |
| 4. South America | 12. fishing guide |
| 5. (Miccosukee) Indians | 13. anger management |
| 6. barbed wire | 14. Grandpa Bobby |
| 7. (loggerhead) turtles | 15. gold coin |
| 8. ketchup | |

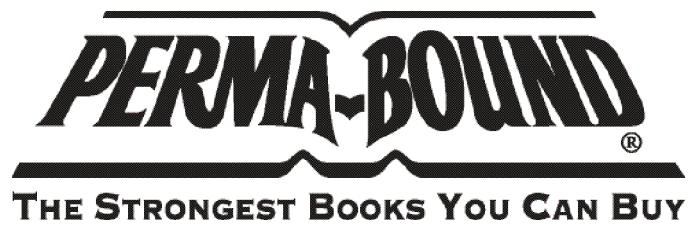
Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. captain's | 6. Island Examiner |
| 2. basin | 7. Rescue |
| 3. emeralds | 8. fuchsia |
| 4. Donna | 9. Amanda Rose |
| 5. Jeep Cherokee | 10. Shine |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.





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