



Elijah of Buxton

Christopher Paul Curtis

Teacher's Guide

By Mary Ellen Snodgrass

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Synopsis

Chapter 1: Snakes and Ma

Eleven-year-old Elijah Freeman, the first free-born child in the Buxton settlement in Canada, joins his friend Cooter Bixby in an after-church tracking expedition. Buxton is a haven created in the mid-nineteenth century for escapees from American slavery. The Right Reverend Deacon Doctor Zephariah Connerly the Third identifies the tracks in Cooter's mother's garden as "hoop snakes." Elijah's mother, Sarah Freeman, tells him the story is nonsense and urges him not to be so gullible. He and Cooter catch a frog and, that evening, terrify her by putting it in her sewing basket. Two days later, she retaliates by putting a snake in the cookie jar.

Chapter 2: Me and Mr. Frederick Douglass

The snake joke makes Elijah a figure of fun in the settlement. He recalls a story about a visit from American abolitionists John Brown and Frederick Douglass when Elijah was a year old. Inflated versions of the tale describe the baby vomiting into Douglass's beard.

Chapter 3: Fish Head Chunking

Elijah aids Mr. Segee by killing horseflies that light on Ol' Flapjack, the mule. The live ones become fish bait. The month before, the Reverend Connerly had accused Elijah of "conjury" for being left-handed. The Reverend now tests Elijah's throwing, which downs all five targets, and proclaims his aim a divine gift. At the lake, Elijah throws rocks at fish and catches three perch and seven bass. Connerly offers him a pistol for target practice and cheats him out of four fish, claiming them as a "tithe."

Chapter 4: Kidnappers and Slavers!

Late at night in 1861, Elijah alerts his father to the appearance of a white stallion, which is spotted with blood. Three days later, the Reverend Connerly reports finding a pistol and holster near the river.

Chapter 5: Sharing the Fish

Mrs. Brown, a woman who grieves for her dead son, offers Elijah a cherry pie in exchange for one fish, which he guts and scales for her. After dinner, he takes two fish to Mr. Leroy, who chops trees for Mrs. Emeline Holton until dusk.

Chapter 6: Mr. Travis Cheats Us Out of a Great Lesson

On Monday morning, Mr. Travis writes an aphorism on the classroom blackboard—"Familiarity breeds contempt." Cooter interprets it to mean a family breeding contest. The teacher grabs Cooter for smiling and for being impolite the previous Saturday.

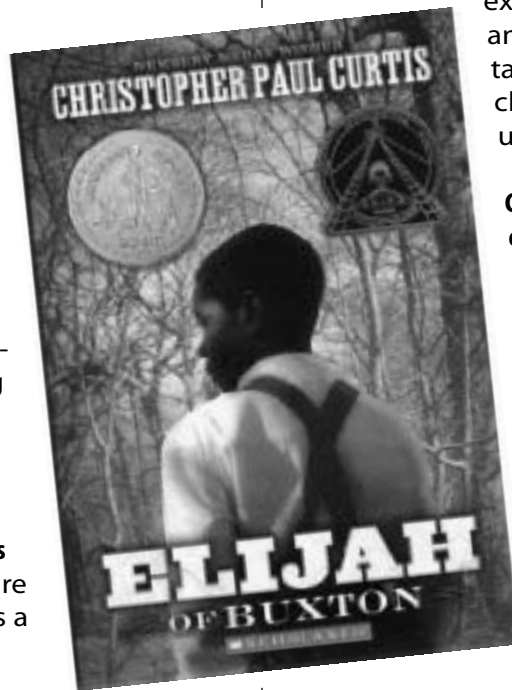
Chapter 7: Mr. Leroy Shows How to Really Make a Lesson Stick

Two nights later, Mr. Leroy backhands Elijah for starting to

say "nigger." The freedman shows a T branded on his chest and an amputated little finger, and notes that whites took away his wife and baby daughter. He believes Elijah is ignorant of slavery's cruelty because the boy is freeborn.

Chapter 8: The Most Exciting Night of My Life So Far

On Thursday, the Reverend Connerly shows Elijah a flier on the carnival and implies that, by disobeying his parents, the boy can help the settlement. Elijah agrees to meet the Reverend on Friday and accompanies him to see Madame Sabbar and the slingshot she used to kill Swedish moth lions. In a comic ambush, she faces Chief MaWee, a member of the Mobongo tribe.



Chapter 9: The Mesmerist and Sammy

The freak shows amaze Elijah. For a quarter, he sees Vaughn—the mesmerist. A white boy named Sammy joins the stage act and, under phony hypnosis, removes his clothing for a dip in an imaginary Lake Erie.

Chapter 10: Meeting the Real MaWee!

The Reverend Connerly and Elijah wander the carnival until 1 a.m., encountering Charles Vaughn, the owner. The Reverend claims that Elijah is Ahbo, a Choctaw native of Africa. The real MaWee, an illiterate boy whom Vaughn bought for \$100 in Louisiana, informs Elijah that his job involves cleaning animal cages and doing slave work for little food. Elijah bests Madame Sabbar at putting out candles. Vaughn proposes hiring Elijah, but the Reverend balks at the proposed act, which involves bombarding a “pickaninny.” On Monday morning, students cluster around MaWee, whom the Reverend frees.

Chapter 11: Emma Collins and Birdy

While removing stumps with his father, Elijah spots black strangers behind a maple tree. Emma Collins welcomes a married couple and their son and daughter, as well as a baby girl sedated by “sleep medicine.” Emma gives her doll Birdy to the new girl. Pa tolls the Liberty Bell to summon the community to welcome new arrivals.

Chapter 12: The Secret Language of Being Growned

The ritual ringing of the bell twenty times for each new runaway slave precedes the presentation of the Taylors from Arkansas. Miss Duncan—the first recognizes Liza Taylor as Alice Duncan, a younger sister sold in 1849 from North Carolina. Elijah is surprised by the deep hurt that former slaves carry north from America.

Chapter 13: Mail from America

On Wednesday, Elijah halts his trip to Chatham to fetch the mail to return the mule and get a horse. Mr. MacMahon reports that the mailman, Mr. Butler, was kicked in the head. Elijah returns with a package and a letter from America for Emeline Holton, which he and Sarah deliver. The Duncan sisters, anticipating bad news, follow with gifts of food. Elijah reads the letter aloud announcing John’s fatal lashing on May 7, 1859. Sarah reports that she and Emeline were from the same state. Elijah weeps at the emotional scene.

Chapter 14: Picnic at Lake Erie!

On Sunday, Elijah spends the ride home from church eavesdropping on adult memories of slavery. Sarah recalls traveling for three months to Flint, Michigan, as caregiver of Missy, daughter of slave owners Gwen and James Wright. On Sarah’s return, Elijah’s grandmother slapped her daughter for seeing Canada but not escaping into freedom. At the picnic, Cooter and Elijah play abolitionist and slave.

Chapter 15: Keeping Mr. John Holton Alive

At the sawmill, Mr. Leroy carves a memorial to John Holton. Elijah takes a week to edit the epitaph. Emeline Holton pays Elijah a nickel and offers Leroy \$2,200 in gold. He already has \$1,192.85 to redeem his wife, son and daughter from bondage. Elijah runs home with the news.

Chapter 16: The Preacher Comes Through

The next day, Mr. Leroy asks for help arranging the purchase of his family through the Underground Railroad. The Reverend Connerly reports that the Abrams boys, conductors from Chatham, moved back to New York. He offers to arrange passage through John Jarvey in Detroit. Spencer warns Mr. Leroy to be careful about trusting the Reverend and suggests sending Theodore Highgate along to guard the money. Elijah claims to trust the Reverend. The Reverend leaves his pistol and holster as a guarantee he will return.

Chapter 17: Bad News from a Little Village in America

Five days later, Mr. Highgate is returned on a wagon with a gunshot wound oozing on his head. On the Windsor ferry over the Detroit River, the Reverend Connerly jettisoned his pistol and pretended he didn’t know Highgate. The Reverend left during the night to gamble with Mr. Leroy’s money. Highgate aimed the shotgun, which was unloaded. The Reverend shot Highgate. Benjamin Alston’s family helped Highgate recover. Elijah blames himself for trusting the Reverend. Elijah flees Mr. Leroy’s anger.

Chapter 18: Kidnapped!

Spencer scolds Elijah for running. When the elders meet at the church that night, Sarah sends Elijah to stay with Cooter. Elijah slips out to the church, where he is kidnapped.

Chapter 19: A Ball Starts Rolling ..

The kidnapper, Mr. Leroy, promises to stalk the Reverend Connerly and kill him. Leroy needs Elijah, a free black who can read. The boy writes a note to Cooter explaining the hasty departure. Armed with Mr. Taylor’s dagger, Elijah lies to Sarah, joins Leroy, and heads southwest on Jingle Boy.

Chapter 20: The Death of Mr. Leroy

At the Windsor ferry, Elijah warns Mr. Leroy that he is pushing the horse to its limits. After an hour’s ride, they find Benjamin Alston playing dice behind the tavern and follow the Reverend Connerly’s trail to a village stable in East Lee. Mr. Leroy slides to the ground and dies.

Chapter 21: Terrorfied in America!

Elijah rides for the East Lee stable and stops a bear-fighting dog with a rock to the head. In the stable, he smells fear and spies the Reverend Connerly and six Kentucky slaves in shackles. Elijah distributes water to men who can’t reach with their hands for a drink. He learns that the Reverend was murdered that morning and resolves to free the runaways from Prayder and his men.

Chapter 22: Busting Free!

Elijah plots getting the key to the chains. He weeps at his dilemma. The slave Chloe fears he will be hanged for stealing slaves and horses from Prayder’s posse. She urges Elijah to save himself and tries to get him to take her baby girl. Elijah goes to find Benjamin Alston.

Chapter 23: Riding Hard Back to Buxton

Elijah tries to lure Alston to the stable, but the gamblers refuse to help. One man strikes Elijah on the chest. Elijah vomits and forces himself back on the road to Buxton.

Chapter 24: The Revenge of Mr. Frederick Douglass

Elijah changes his mind and returns to the slaves. At the stable, he strikes the dog with a rock and convinces Chloe to give him the baby, whom she calls Hope. Kamau says goodbye to his only surviving child. Under a beautiful sky, Elijah transports Hope to Buxton.

Timeline of the Fictional and Historical Action

1841 Miss Dot Duncan-the-second is

born in North Carolina.
1848 The Reverend William King, a Presbyterian minister from Londonderry, Ireland, uses an inheritance from his wife, Mary Phares King, to buy 9,000 acres of forested land on Lake Erie in Kent County, Ontario.
1849 Alice and Caleb Duncan are sold away from North Carolina.
December 1849 Stock owners in the Elgin settlement offer fifty-acre plots to fifteen black families at \$2.50 per acre.
1850 William King opens the Buxton Mission School.
August 1850 William King establishes a homeland at Buxton, named for Thomas Fowell Buxton, an English philanthropist.
1852 Over a four-year period, ninety families settle at Buxton. The Reverend Samuel Joseph May, an agent of the Underground Railroad, finds no sign of crime or alcohol abuse among Buxton families.
ca. 1853 Elijah is born free in Buxton, Canada West, to former slaves Sarah and Spencer Freeman.
1854 Elgin community’s 300 families operate a sawmill, plus grain and tobacco farms.
Aug. 1, 1854 Famous American abolitionist and orator Frederick Douglass, a former slave, visits Buxton.
1855 Buxton settlers install a liberty bell, a gift from black supporters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1856 William King and Martin Delany canvass English philanthropists for donations to expand Buxton. The union of the Amherstburg Baptist Association and the Canadian Anti-Slavery Baptist Association results in a coalition of slave rescuers.
ca. 1858 Five-year-old Elijah fears picking blueberries alone in the woods. Lucille Taylor is born to Liza Taylor in Fort Smith, Arkansas.
1859 Educator William Howard Day of New York City lectures in England to

raise funds for Buxton.

May 7, 1859 Tillman whips John Holton to death for stealing gold and running away.

1860 John Jarvey of Detroit helps Mrs. Lewis purchase her husband out of slavery in South Carolina. Mr. Leroy arrives in Buxton without his family.

June 16, 1860 The Brooklyn Eagle reports a census showing 45,000 refugees living in Canada West and still arriving at the rate of 10,000 per year.

A day in 1861 School lets out early on the day slave catchers arrive in Buxton.

that night Spencer Freeman locates a white stallion at Theo Highgate's yard.

3 days later The Reverend appears with a pistol he found near the river.

1862 Mrs. Brown sinks into grief after her two-year-old dies of fever.

Jan. 1, 1863 President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation.

1863 Mrs. Jacob Poole writes a letter to Emeline Holton announcing John Holton's death.

A day in 1864 The Reverend Connerly cheats Elijah out of four of his ten fish.

Monday a.m. Mr. Travis punishes Cooter Bixby for disrespect.

Wed. p.m. Mr. Leroy backhands Elijah for starting to say "nigger."

Friday p.m. At the carnival, Elijah and the Reverend view Madame Sabbar's slingshot act.

Saturday a.m. The Reverend Connerly refuses to employ Elijah at a racist carnival.

Monday a.m. Students cluster around MaWee, whom the Reverend freed.

Wednesday Elijah fetches the mail from Chatham informing Emeline Holton that Tillman lashed her husband John to death.

Sunday Sarah reminisces over her mother's anger that Sarah didn't flee to Canada while she was in Flint, Michigan.

Days later Mr. Leroy begins carving an epitaph for John Holton.

A week later Elijah finishes editing the epitaph, which earns Mr. Travis's approval.

The next day Mr. Leroy wants to buy his family from Dillon, their owner, and sends

the Reverend with the money. The following night, the Reverend Connerly shoots Theodore Highgate in the head in a Detroit alley.

5 days later Theo Highgate returns by wagon with a bandage on his head.

that night Mr. Leroy kidnaps Elijah and heads for the Windsor ferry on Jingle Boy.

shortly after Outside an East Lee tavern, Mr. Leroy falls dead.

later Elijah finds the Reverend murdered in a stable and transports Hope to Buxton.

1866 Buxton consists of 190 log houses overlooking Lake Erie.

Author Sketch

Christopher Paul Curtis was born in 1953 and grew up in Flint, Michigan, one of five children of auto worker and chiropodist Dr. Herman E. Curtis, Jr., and Leslie Lewis Curtis, a graduate of Michigan State University who lectured on black history. His parents were locally active in the Civil Rights movement. Though mainly interested in comic books, by age twelve Curtis was writing with the facility of an adult. In addition to his formal schooling, he heard first-hand accounts of black history and struggles from such family members as his grandfathers: Earl "Lefty" Lewis, a railroad red cap, union promoter, and pitcher for the Negro Baseball League during the 1930s; and Herman E. Curtis, Sr., a conservatory-trained instrumentalist and bandleader who headlined the band Herman Curtis and the Dusky Devastators of the Depression.



In eighth grade, Curtis attended a mixed-race school where he experienced racism and was called "nigger." "The impotent rage I'd feel after these verbal assaults has never left me," he has said. Like the father in his debut novel, he worked continually at a variety of jobs—grocery bagger, maintenance man, lawn mower, warehouse clerk, garbage hauler, and census taker. After graduating from high school, he worked from 1972 to 1985 at the historic Fisher auto body assembly plant in Flint, hanging and screwing into place 80-pound doors on Buick Le Sabres at the rate of around 300 per day. He also ran political campaigns in Flint

and Saginaw and served as aide to Democrat U.S. Sen. Don Riegle of Lansing, but concluded that politics was too money-oriented to suit his tastes.

He attended the University of Michigan part-time while working, eventually graduating in 1996 with a B.A. in political science. While at the university, Curtis won the Hopwood Prize for an early draft of what became his first novel, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*. Encouraged by his wife, Kaysandra, Curtis took a year off from his job to write full-time and complete the novel—which he did, in longhand, in the children’s section of his local public library. He entered the finished novel in a young adult contemporary fiction contest sponsored by Delacorte Press, landing a publishing contract. The book subsequently won a Coretta Scott King Honor and a Newbery Honor award, among many others; it was followed by *Bud, Not Buddy* (the only book in history to win both the Newbery Award and the Coretta Scott King Award), *Elijah of Buxton*, and his newest novel about loan-sharking in Flint, Michigan, *Bucking the Sarge*. Curtis is actively involved in promoting children’s reading and has said that one of his motivations is “to bring joy to children through their love of reading.” He lives with his family in Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

Critic’s Corner

Known for historical fiction that displays empathy for children, expert use of humor, and a keen insight into the African-American experience, Christopher Paul Curtis ranks among such celebrated writers as Sherman Alexie, Joseph Bruchac, Virginia Hamilton, Walter Dean Myers, Gary Paulsen, Gary Soto, Mildred Taylor, and Laurence Yep. His works employ the intimacy and immediacy of first-person reportage, presenting historical fiction as a gateway to interest in world history and current events.

From the start, his winsome fiction has wowed young readers, parents, teachers, librarians, reviewers, and booksellers, and netted him a shower of honors. These include the Newbery Medal and the Coretta Scott King Medal for *Bud, Not Buddy* (the only book in history to win both honors), a Coretta Scott King honor citation for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, and Newbery Honors for both

The Watsons Go to Birmingham and *Elijah of Buxton*. Other honors Curtis has received include the Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction, the Gregory Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People, the 2009 Anne V. Zarrow Award for Young Readers’ Literature, the TD Financial Group Canadian Children’s Literature Award for best English-language book (for *Elijah of Buxton*), and best book for young readers designations from both the *New York Times Review of Books* and *Publishers Weekly*.

During the writing of *Elijah of Buxton*, Curtis says he obeyed a voice in his head that prodded him to record the fictional boy’s perceptions and experiences. The perceptions of a young protagonist, and his jovial repartee, won the novel a top spot in Curtis’s pick of his favorite works. For language, he assigned Elijah a blend of Canadian English dialect and the Afro-American speech of Mississippi. Curtis won recognition in Canada for his highlighting of this aspect of Canadian history. Says Curtis, “I think Canadians in particular need to be proud of what happened” in the Buxton community.

Despite his success and numerous awards, Curtis say, “The highest accolade comes when a young reader tells me, ‘I really liked your book.’ The young seem to be able to say ‘really’ with a clarity, a faith, and an honesty that we as adults have long forgotten. That is why I write.”

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- Mr. Chickee's Funny Money*, 2007
- Elijah of Buxton*, 2007

Media Versions

- Audiobook: Audio CD, Audio Download
Elijah of Buxton, read by Mirron Willis,
Listening Library, 2009
- Large print book: *Elijah of Buxton*, Thorndike, 2008
- Play: *Bud, Not Buddy*, adapted by Reginald Andre
Jackson, 2008
- Spanish Translation: *Elias de Buxton*, Punto de
Encuentro, 2009

Related Reading

- Natalie Babbitt, *Tuck Everlasting*
- Octavia Butler, *Kindred*
- Paula Fox, *Slave Dancer*
- Jean Craighead George, *Julie of the Wolves*
- Virginia Hamilton, *The House of Dies Drear*

Walter Dean Myers, *The Glory Field*
 Scott O'Dell, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*
 Gary Paulsen, *Nightjohn and Sarny*
 Conrad Richter, *The Light in the Forest*
 Yoko Kawashima Watkins, *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*
 Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie*

Cross-Curricular Sources

For related reading and more information about *Elijah of Buxton*, the Underground Railroad, Buxton, Detroit, Frederick Douglass, bondage, and abolitionism consult these sources:

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Audiocassette

The Life of an American Slave
Slave Dancer
Slaves in the Family
To Be a Slave

Audio CD

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

Audio download

Slave
A Slave No More
Fiction
Kindred
Slave Dancer
Nonfiction

Days of Tears
Escape from Slavery
Frederick Douglass in His Own Words
Freedom Roads
Middle Passage: White Ships/Black Cargo
Moses
So Far from the Bamboo Grove
To Be a Slave
The Underground Railroad

Poems

"Between the World and Me," Richard Wright
 "Christmas Bells," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Reference

Before the Ghetto, Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century
The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922
Crossing the Border: A Free Black Community in Canada
Elgin: An American History
From Midnight to Dawn: The Last Tracks of the Underground Railroad
Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk about Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation
The Underground Railroad: Its Plan and Its People

Short stories

"Almos' a Man," Richard Wright
 "Desiree's Baby," Kate Chopin

Videos

Amistad
Beloved
Enslavement: The True Story of Fanny Kemble
Except for Me and Thee
Huckleberry Finn
The Light in the Forest
Little House on the Prairie
North and South
Queen
Roots
Watership Down

Websites

"Buxton Museum,"
<http://www.buxtonmuseum.com>
 "Settling in Ontario,"
<http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/english/exhibits/mccurdy/mccurdy5.htm>

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Christopher Paul Curtis's *Elijah of Buxton* should include these aspects:

Themes

- family
- striving
- challenge
- ridicule
- loss
- trickery
- separation
- regret
- danger
- rescue
- liberty

Motifs

- rural family values
- assisting community members
- acquiring manhood
- judging character
- viewing bondage

General Objectives

1. To list incidents illustrating regret and yearning
2. To characterize expected behaviors
3. To discuss the rescue of family members from bondage
4. To outline the relationship between adult and child
5. To contrast types of endangerment
6. To note the indecision accompanying dilemmas
7. To read aloud examples of advice, superstition, tradition, vernacular speech, and humor
8. To study the literary convention of foreshadowing
9. To enumerate examples of heroism
10. To explain the universality of freedom fighters in literature

Specific Objectives

1. To describe the Buxton welcome to the Taylor family
2. To recount how and why Elijah takes responsibility for Hope
3. To discuss public opinion of the Reverend Connerly

4. To explain how and why the mission to Detroit fails
5. To account for Sammy's willingness to be enslaved to the carnival
6. To characterize Buxton kindness to Emeline Holton and Mrs. Brown
7. To discuss the formation of black communities
8. To evaluate changes in Mr. Leroy and Kamau
9. To account for Chloe's trust in Elijah
10. To assess the roles of Cooter, Theodore Highgate, gamblers, and Prayder
11. To analyze the symbolism of the names Elijah and Hope
12. To contrast Elijah as son, student, friend, farm worker, and rescuer

The Importance of Setting

The placement of *Elijah of Buxton* among rural people explains the need for farm chores—chopping trees and stumps, cleaning fish, stable chores, delivering mail from town, and cooking for a community picnic. Elijah Freeman, an eleven-year-old charged with regular responsibilities, enjoys both working late with his father and with Mr. Leroy and having private time to fish, catch frogs, and practice rock-throwing. Home and the classroom form a significant part of his daily interaction with authority figures like Mr. Travis, neighbors, and schoolmates. At home, he learns that playing tricks on his mother invites revenge via a snake in the cookie container. His ventures into the woods for blueberries and into the night to round up a white stallion force him to face terrors, foreshadowing even greater terrors to come as he accepts the challenges of manhood.

When Mr. Leroy kidnaps Elijah and takes him southwest across the Detroit River into Michigan, the boy faces adult fears of slave seizure, as well as the capture of the Reverend Connerly, who stole Leroy's money for the purpose of gambling. Because Elijah speaks with the confidence of a freeborn black, he finds himself in the role of adviser to Leroy on the crossing by the Windsor-to-Detroit ferry and on watering Jingle Boy, who pants from the gallop from Buxton. The immediate encounters with gamblers behind the East Lee tavern, with a chained guard dog, and with six shackled fugitives in the stable, force the boy to assess dilemmas and determine how he can free run-

aways so they won't be returned to Southern bondage. Following Mr. Leroy's unforeseen collapse and death, Elijah's outsized aspirations give way to more sensible solutions to the overwhelming challenges he faces. After the return to Benjamin Alston fails to rouse interest in freeing desperate captives, Elijah whittles his plan to a workable aim—the rescue of Hope, a single baby whom he can transport on horseback to Buxton.

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Christopher Paul Curtis's style, present the following terms and applications to *Elijah of Buxton*:

Foreshadowing is a series of hints at themes and events yet to develop in the story. Curtis builds intensity through hints that children like Elijah Freeman are sheltered from the realities of slavery only twenty miles away in Michigan. The desperation in Mr. Leroy, Emeline Holton's sorrow, and the quivering joy in the Taylors fail to prepare Elijah for the Reverend Connerly's grotesque murder or for the hopeless task of freeing six black captives from Prayder's posse.

Symbolic names are names derived from allusions or concrete objects that stand for complex or abstract ideas or relationships. For instance, Elijah is the premier prophet in the Old Testament, a liberator and miracle-worker who confronts an evil king; in the New Testament, he is also seen as the herald of the Good News of God's coming kingdom. The Elijah in Curtis's story confronts evil and tries to liberate slaves, and his very existence (as the first free-born child of his community) points the way to a coming new order when all black children will be born free. The allusion takes on added depth when the boy gallops home with "Hope," a symbolic addition to the Buxton community. Conversely, the Reverend Connerly's inflated titles, and the humorous connection between his surname and "con man," imply a shady and dishonest character. The surnames "Brown" and "Freeman" reflect the need of former slaves to rid themselves of the names of masters and to select family names suited to their new status.

Universality is a quality or theme that applies to all people at all times. The cyclical humanistic motifs of growing up, getting an education, selecting friends, accepting responsibilities, and growing to manhood precede the greater theme, which is the value of liberty to an enslaved race. The impact

of Elijah's shock at inhumane bondage indicates that even the first generation of freeborn blacks has no direct witness of the perils faced by his enslaved predecessors.

Meaning Study

Following are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the author's note of *Elijah of Buxton*. Explain each in context. Page numbers pinpoint each entry so you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. They fought and worked hard to maintain the promise of the North Star. (p. 342)
(Because plantation slaves seldom travelled and received no training in geography or map skills, they relied on the heavens for direction to the north. The North Star, also called Polaris, Alpha Ursae Minoris, or the "evening star" for its early rise on the horizon, figures prominently in the abolitionist press and in songs and narratives of slaves and Underground Railroad conductors. In line with the Big Dipper, the star is a dependable sky mark that looms all night above the azimuth. By sighting off the two stars at the far end of the handle, watchers can discern the shape of Polaris, the pole star.)
2. They took themselves from the horrors of southern American slavery into the land of the free, Canada. (p. 342)
(Dubbed "freedom land," "heaven," "Jordan," "Canaan," and the "Promised Land," Canada extended a second chance at life for refugees. After the American Revolution, Nova Scotia welcomed the first sizeable influx of former slaves. In 1783, the Black Pioneers regiment mapped the communities of Birchtown and Shelburne, home to 3,000 freed bondsmen. A decade later on July 9, 1793, when Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe abolished slavery throughout the nation, news of a free land spread by slave grapevine as veterans returned south from the War of 1812. Black pioneers provided cheap labor, as well as protection from a U.S. invasion of British territory. Freed slaves found jobs as cobblers, chimney sweeps, carpenters, bricklayers, tailors, barbers, gardeners, cooks, servants, launderers, and maintenance staff. Contributing to the area's welcome were the African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1840, and the Common Schools Act of 1850,

which provided literacy training to all citizens throughout Ontario. Aiding the adaptation of newcomers to a challenging environment was the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, established in Toronto in 1851.)

3. The second reason the Buxton Settlement thrived is the set of strict rules that were instituted by Reverend King. (p. 343)
(The Reverend William King (1812-1895), a Scots Presbyterian minister from Newton-Limavady in Londonderry, Ireland, mapped and initiated the black community of Buxton. It became reality a few miles from Chatham, along Lake Erie in southern Ontario. He financed the endeavour with a legacy from his wife, Mississippi heiress Mary Phares King. After her death, in 1848, he purchased 9,000 acres of heavily forested government property, which required one year to shape into the Elgin settlement. Also called the King's Settlement, the project offered a haven for runaways who reached the last stop on the Underground Railroad. As a beginning, King allotted fifty acres to each of his fifteen slaves, who operated sawmills and grain and tobacco farms. To lure more black escapees, he sold lots at \$2.50 per acre to worthy applicants. For social stability, he centered the layout with a church and, in 1850, opened the Buxton Mission School. When the Reverend Samuel Joseph May, an agent and promoter of the Underground Railroad, toured the project in 1852, he found 90 black families enjoying liberty, health, and a steady income in a town devoid of alcohol abusers and criminals. By 1854, the community expanded to 333 percent of its former census.)

4. Frederick Douglass actually did visit Buxton, as did abolitionist John Brown, though not at the same time. (p. 343)
(A prestigious figure in the drive for human equality, activist and spokesman Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) fled slavery at age 21 via the Underground Railroad. Born in Talbot County, Maryland, he was the son of a white owner sired on his slave, Harriet Bailey. At age eight, Douglass left the plantation to board and work in Baltimore with Hugh Auld, whose wife, Sophia Keithley Auld, taught the boy to read. Eight years later, Douglass returned to Talbot County to the misery of meager food and con-

stant whippings. After five years of bondage, he slipped away in September 1838 and renamed himself Frederick Douglass. In 1841, abolitionist editor William Lloyd Garrison trained Douglass as a platform orator in service to the American Anti-Slavery Society. Douglass composed an autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845), toured Great Britain, and lectured on the evils of bondage as the basis of the Southern plantation system. He settled near the Canadian border in New York at Rochester to manage the American Anti-Slavery Society and issue a libertarian newspaper, the North Star. Of his work for the Underground Railroad, he described it as a rewarding experience. In June 1850, he co-formed the American League of Colored Laborers, an outreach to freedmen workers. He also urged President Abraham Lincoln to recruit ex-slaves for the Union army.)

5. One of Buxton's earliest inhabitants, a young girl, made the journey to freedom in the same way Elijah's ma did, by escaping from her mistress on her second trip to Detroit. (p. 343)
(The first American civil rights movement, the Underground Railroad was a phenomenon of civil disobedience—a covert, loosely organized network of volunteers. Among some 3,000 conductors, many devoted themselves to religious convictions and defied unjust laws. They freed and transported runaway slaves and offered temporary housing in residences, sheds and barns, shops, mills, and churches. The routes succeeded through liberal territory as well as within the racist suburbs of Georgetown and Washington, D.C. Within blocks of the U.S. Congress, Quakers and Unitarians concealed refugees while legislators fought to protect the profits of human breeding, bondage, and sale. At way stations, refugees received housing and clothes, nourishment, medical care, directions, and cash distributed by altruistic families. The ad hoc system acquired railway vernacular—passengers, cars, fare, freight, route, express, station or depot, conductor, and switchman. Planners mapped open land into sectors and canvassed for a way station every fifteen or twenty miles. Escaping through fourteen Northern states to Canada or west and south to Indian Territory, Texas, Mexico, Florida, or the West Indies, runaways often switched routes to

avoid pursuers, kidnappers, or slave catchers. Both educator Horace Mann and Rabbi Leibman Adler of Detroit honored the rescue effort by comparing it to the flight of the Hebrew children from bondage in Egypt to liberation in Canaan. By 1844, Canada had received around 40,000 runaways; within fourteen years, the number rose to 75,000.)

6. It's almost impossible not to be deeply moved while looking out on fields that were cleared by people who risked their lives for the dream of freedom. (p. 344)
- (Slaves prized opportunities to escape bondage. Increasing their willingness to run was the terror of the trading or auctioning of themselves or their family to settle an estate or to bail an owner out of debt. Human chattel had reason to fear lashing, torture and amputation, sexual abuse, branding, or a vindictive sale into even more brutal slavery and a shortened life span in Louisiana's cane fields. Self-respecting blacks abhorred the degradation of being plantation breeders to new generations of slaves. Owners and slave traders responded by preventing widespread slave insurrection or the unlawful flight of their "property." To cover their tracks and to cloak the human scent from dog packs, escapees adopted trickery, including wading in streams, stilt-walking, and the soaking of feet and shoes in pepper, onions, garlic, skunk musk, camphor, and asafetida. Some runaways rested from exhaustion and near starvation or recovered from sickness or accidents under rock ledges or in caves, abandoned mines, and Indian villages. Because of icy winters and spring floods, vulnerable escapees tended to die of pneumonia from exposure and from inadequate boots and warm clothing. Some ran with their shackles intact and hid in buckboards, boats and barges, church towers, graveyards, cisterns and drain lines, cellars, log piles, and outbuildings until dark. Their routes extended into free territory, usually over unpredictable terrain, streams, canals, or fens. Those who reached safety often arrived with pitiable wounds and bodies depleted by starvation, blood loss, infection, or gangrene.)*

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is

important. Be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the novel.

Structure

1. Why does the action end with the ride home from Detroit?
(Elijah's attempt to rescue six shackled slaves ends in failure, causing him to doubt himself. Nonetheless, Chloe understands and appreciates his good heart and courage. Because of his character and scholarship, she trusts him. She exhibits motherly love by passing Hope to Elijah's care. The return on Jingle Boy from Detroit to Buxton ends Elijah's daring search for justice with an awareness of life's fragility and the evils of bondage. With Hope, an aptly named child, he carries new blood to the free community and achieves at least one slave rescue that he himself initiated.)

Exposition

2. How does rock chunking set Elijah apart?
(From the beginning, Elijah stands out from other Buxton residents by his ability to fish with rocks. At the river side, he enjoys solitude and the anticipation of providing fresh fish to his family and to Mr. Segee and Mr. Leroy. The boy's rapid fire style of alternating left and right hands draws the attention of the Reverend Connerly, who reveals his duplicity by considering Elijah's aim both conspiracy and a gift from God. The juxtaposition of the good-hearted child and the conniving, possibly murderous preacher sets in motion the plot contrasts that conclude with the Reverend's murder and Elijah's heroism.)

Humor

3. What bits of humor lighten the mood?
(Christopher Paul Curtis injects moments of comic relief, such as Sarah's placement of the snake in the cookie jar and Cooter's misinterpretation of "Familiarity breeds contempt" as a sex education lesson. Additional humor derives from contrasts of Cooter's simplicity with Elijah's clever mind and intellectual curiosity. Implied comedy springs from the posturing of the Reverend Connerly and Mr. Travis, who manipulate gullible illiterate and semi-literate community members by posing as know-it-alls.)

Characterization

4. Why is Mr. Leroy foolhardy?

(Mr. Leroy's work removing stumps from Emeline Holton's property and laying floors for the Freemans indicates his urgent need to earn money to reunite with his wife and children, particularly his 15-year-old son 'Zekial. The addition of \$2,200 in gold from Emeline Holton to Leroy's \$1,192.85 in savings dizzies the lonely man into believing that redemption of his family is immediately possible. The Reverend Connerly exploits Leroy by saying and doing what the man needs to hear and see to make an immediate decision about venturing into U.S. territory. Spencer Freeman, who already harbors suspicions of the Reverend Connerly's mysterious disappearances and his shifty language, tries to intercede on Leroy's behalf, but the bait is too strong for Leroy to pass up. By allowing the Reverend to ride into Michigan with the cash and with Mr. Highgate as a companion, Mr. Leroy abets a tragedy of surprising proportions that wastes the money on gambling and results in the Reverend's shooting Mr. Highgate in the head. The debacle concludes with the Reverend's murder by Prayder's men and with Mr. Leroy's collapse and immediate death from unspecified cause.)

Action

5. What events hasten Elijah's maturation?

(Elijah's naiveté stems in part from his birth in free territory and his inability to understand the wisdom and caution of black adults who came of age under slave masters. His tender heart and "fra-gility" weaken his self-esteem and establish doubts about his manhood. As he manages the dilemma of East Lee, he witnesses bondage firsthand, as well as the grotesque murder of the Reverend Connerly. Mr. Leroy's sudden demise and Benjamin Alston's decision to gamble with slackers rather than rescue six runaways force Elijah to focus his limited resources on the dire situation at the stable. Elijah's rescue of baby Hope, at once tragic and triumphant, illustrates to him the power inherent in the choice to do right, despite human limitations. It is his moment of growing up.)

Interpretation

6. Why does Christopher Paul Curtis indicate that Elijah is less confident on horseback than

muleback?

(The choice of Mr. Segee's Ol' Flapjack for transportation suggests a mindset in Elijah that requires steady progress rather than slap-dash adventures. Because the boy trusts the mule, he builds his self-confidence by traveling into the woods to the river bank to fish. Contributing to his security is the special communication between boy and mule that alerts Elijah to danger. When the action shifts to the kidnapping and gallop to Detroit, Elijah must depend on Mr. Leroy and Jingle Boy, neither of whom suit the boy's needs. Mr. Leroy is too angry, too unbalanced emotionally to think rationally about overworking a horse. Elijah must take an adult role and chastise Leroy for failure to rest and water Jingle Boy. After the disastrous events at the East Lee stable, Elijah gallops confidently home elated by his effort to save at least Hope, the most vulnerable of the slaves.)

Vernacular

7. How does language establish time and place?

(Christopher Paul Curtis overburdens the reader with too much dialect. The blend of Southern slave lingo with Canadian English attempts to inform the audience of the lack of standard speech and diction among people who receive spotty education. The rural confines of Buxton limit Elijah's interaction with formal English and reduce his education to meaningless Latin lessons. His need of pragmatic, everyday communication skills reminds 21st-century readers that the emancipation of slaves did not end the damage caused by bondage. Only access to full citizenship and schooling completed the full liberation of slaves from second-class citizenship.)

Theme

8. What does the novel reveal about scarring?

(Elijah treads a sobering path among people who know from experience how it feels to live without liberty. Evidence of old hurts, regrets, and terrors crops up at unforeseen moments, particularly Mr. Leroy's slap for Elijah's bandying of "nigger," a term that Leroy connects with branding and the amputation of his little finger. The boy's eavesdropping on adult conversations after church enlightens him to the miseries that Sarah endured while babysitting Missy Wright. The three-month trip to Flint, Michigan, filled Sarah with longing for home rather than a

yearning to flee to Canada. Her mother's smack to the face illustrates a parent's need to spare children lives of toil, thanklessness, and suffering from overseers and slave owners. Only when Elijah views the torn flesh on Kamau's leg and the biting iron around wrists and ankles does he experience the urgency of rescue.)

Tone

9. What is the tone of the Taylors' arrival in Buxton? *(The mixture of Elijah's naiveté and his respect for terror and joy in the freeing of fellow black families reminds readers that crossing into Canada does not wipe clean the slate of experience. The tone of the Taylors' arrival to the maple grove implies timidity, suspicion, and anticipation that approaches the level of fantasy. The family creeps into the bosom of the black settlement as though walking on a minefield. Spencer's 100 pulls on the Liberty Bell rope honor their caution, the attitude toward others that keeps runaways alive among strangers, both black and white. The gift of the doll Birdy breaks through to the newcomers with the promise of charity and acceptance. Gradually, the Taylors exert their humanity as members of the Buxton settlement and as newcomers to Canada and freedom.)*

Propriety

10. Why is this novel targeted for censorship? *(Readers who protest realism in language mistake primness and political correctness as a means of fighting bigotry. Elijah's toying with "nigger" as an epithet is a necessary part of his understanding of the older generation. However, Elijah, as a fictional character, must understand that freedmen like Mr. Leroy bear indelible scars of the flesh trade that never fade. The touchiness of an adult male prefigures Leroy's faulty trust in the Reverend Connerly and the naiveté of thinking that ample cash can end family separation. Not only does Elijah learn to respect Leroy's hardships, but the boy also abandons games of abolitionist and slave as inappropriate ways of comprehending black history.)*

How Language Works

Christopher Paul Curtis expresses his attitude

toward characters and themes through the dialogue of key characters. Some examples:

1. Sarah Freeman teaches her young son about tolerance by introducing him to ants: "They's some of God's hardest workers and just 'cause you's bigger don't make it right to mess with 'em."
2. Curtis acknowledges the role of storytelling in recovering a lost culture and pride in ethnicity: "They 'specially love telling you how their great-great-grampa or gramma use to be the king or queen of Africa."
3. The price of living in a planned community emerges in the Reverend Connerly's choice to reside apart from Buxton: "Him and a few other escaped people lived just outside our land 'cause they didn't want to follow all the Settlement's rules."
4. The downside of arbitrary liberation derives from Sammy's fear of leaving Vaughn: "If Massa cut me a'loose, what's i gunn eat? Where's I gunn sleep?"
5. Sisterhood among freedwomen takes the form of private exchanges of personal, but universal, significance: "The body don't never endure, do it? ... Something inside all of us be so strong it caint be stopped. It fly on forever."

Across the Curriculum

Vocabulary

1. Compose a three-columnar wall chart aligning these words beside an antonym and a synonym. MODEL: skill—dexterity—ineptitude. Use these words: prestidigitation, feat, commence, refuge, bondage, sullied, entrails, bizarre, conjure, heathen, bevy, infirmary, blaspheming, daft, damsel, enquiry, brogans, rapsallion, missive, environs, jackleg, yoke, humbug, retaliation, descendants, refugees, and rigor.

Psychology

1. Lead a debate about Elijah's concern that he is weepy and "fra-gile." What does he learn about black storytelling styles and about the exaggeration of his episode of vomiting in infancy on Frederick Douglass? How does Chloe elevate Elijah's pride in manhood?
2. Analyze character interaction in a single uplifting scene. For example, give a detailed sketch

of a Sunday picnic, sharing food with widow Emeline Holton, receiving praise for literacy, delivering fried fish and cherry pie to Mr. Leroy, taking water to shackled slaves, grooming Ol' Flapjack, and gently welcoming the Taylor family to freedom.

3. Describe in a short speech the effects of regret, anticipation, suspicion, loss, failed plans, grief, and threats of slave catchers on young and adult characters in the novel. How do community members comfort people who suffer, particularly Mrs. Brown, Emeline Holton, Theodore Highgate, Mr. Leroy, and Mr. Butler? Why does Sarah Freeman suggest to Emeline that John Holton's spirit flies free?
4. Discuss with a group the theme of family love. Why do the characters omit mention of love, yet show affection, such as hugs, courtesy, shared memories, and gifts of a carved epitaph and fried fish and cherry pie? How does the ringing of the Liberty Bell remind community members of their shared history?

Research

1. Explain why slaves take comfort in the biblical account of Joshua's triumph at the wall of Jericho.
2. Explain with art, improvisation, or oral reports the meaning of these terms in the novel: paddy-rollers, Underground Railroad conductor, paupers' field, muzzle-loader, Order of the Bath, truck patch, midwife, gut-shoot, caliope, tithing, legacy, ferry, academy, potash mill, dagger, and pickaninny.

Geography

1. On a timeline of events from the Underground Railroad, report episodes involving the Detroit River; South Carolina; Flint, Michigan; Canada West; Buxton; Lake Erie; Fort Smith, Arkansas; Alabama; Kentucky; Toronto; Windsor, Ontario; North Carolina; Elgin Settlement; Detroit; New York City; Raleigh; Chatham; and East Lee.

Journalism

1. Propose news coverage of the arrival of a posse at East Lee village outside Detroit. Include radio spots with breaking news throughout the late afternoon and next morning, newspaper interviews with the sheriff and rescue team members, television coverage of the

murder scene and investigation of Prayder's gang, and Internet maps of the nearness of the stable to the Detroit-to-Windsor ferry.

2. Review a stage, TV miniseries, or film adaptation of *Elijah of Buxton* for a school newspaper. Note differences between the book and the performance, such as deletion of key scenes, or changes in character roles or significance. For instance, sometimes, to fit the shorter format, movie adaptations eliminate some characters while giving other characters more dialogue than they had in the original story.

Religion

1. Plan Scripture to read at Mr. Leroy's funeral and burial. Choose verses as well as hymns that stress goodness, acceptance, forgiveness, friendship, appreciation of family, and courage, such as "A Mighty Fortress." Compose additional verses and phrases to adorn commemorative plaques at his home and at the Buxton church.
2. Debate the use of the Buxton church as a meeting house for the discussion of serious issues, particularly the Reverend Connerly's ambush and shooting of Theodore Highgate, the white twins' murder, a reception for Frederick Douglass and John Brown, the birth of the first freeborn black citizens, a white stallion with blood on its flanks, and the arrival of Hope and the Taylor family.

Gender Studies

1. Summarize gender relationships in the novel, particularly husband/wife, father/daughter, mother/daughter, male and female students, sisters, sister/brother, male slave owner/slave owner's wife, male rock thrower/female sling-shot expert, grandmother/daughter, rescuer/rescuer's wife, female neighbor/overnight male guest, and female welcomer/male runaway. Determine why Elijah's grandmother slaps Sarah and why Emma Collins's gift of a doll eases the fears of newcomers to freedom.
2. Compose a short outline for an oral report on these female roles: Lucille Taylor, Mrs. Jacob Poole, Sarah Freeman, Emma Collins, Miss Duncan-the-first, Dot Duncan, Emeline Holton, Mrs. Benjamin Alston, Gwen Wright, Missy Wright, Madame Sabbar, Liza Taylor/Alice Duncan, Mrs. Bixby, Chloe, Mrs.

Brown, and Hope. Determine which characters Elijah is most comfortable with and which consider him mature and trustworthy.

Reading

1. Read aloud other literary descriptions of siblings, neighbors, rural life, or newcomers. Include Ted Taylor's *Timothy of the Cay*, Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*, Conrad Richter's *The Light in the Forest*, Yoko Kawashima Watkins's *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*, Walter Dean Myers's *The Glory Field*, Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*, Gary Paulsen's *Nightjohn*, Scott O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, Virginia Hamilton's *The House of Dies Drear*, and Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves*. Discuss examples of cooperation and shared values, for example, unsettling family problems in *The Glory Field* and *Timothy of the Cay*, sibling relationships in *The Light in the Forest* and *Little House on the Prairie*, and surviving loss in *Julie of the Wolves* and *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*.

Literature

1. With a group, list and explain significant details. Include these: bear-fighting dog, Latin test, playing abolitionist, Abrams boys, sleep medicine, perch and bass, secret hurt, Mobongo tribe, mesmerism, white stallion, grapes, con-jurer, Mrs. Brown's black dress, sullied dagger, Jingle Boy, dicing, Mrs. Poole's letter, saying "nigger," Liberty Bell, hoop snakes, T brand, chunking stones, MaWee's enslavement in Louisiana for \$100, conductors of the Underground Railroad, pickaninnies, and Tillman's punishment of John Holton.
2. Explain to a small group why Mr. Leroy's haste leads him to errors in judgment about trusting the Reverend Connerly. Why is Spencer more rational and more suspicious? Suggest ways that the community can help Theodore Highgate recover from the ambush and from attempting to shoot the Reverend with the unloaded shotgun.
3. Contrast minor characters in terms of action, commentary, and significance. Include Mr. MacMahon, Charles Vaughn, Tillman, Hope, Kamau, Prayder's gang, Jimmy, Mr. Butler, Madame Sabbar, John Brown, Dillon, Abrams boys, Mrs. Jacob Poole, gamblers, John Jarvey, Missy Wright, Dot Duncan, Elijah's

grandmother, Sammy, Mrs. Gwen Wright, dicers, and 'Zekial. Which characters are stereotypes? Which seem like characterizations of real people? Which have the most influence on the story? on Elijah? on the gallop to Detroit with Mr. Leroy?

4. Write a paragraph in which you explain the purpose of a minor incident in the story. Choose from these: Mr. Travis preaches a Sunday sermon, Elijah fears picking blueberries, Mr. Taylor's dagger is "sullied," Cooter falls behind in Latin, Elijah grooms Ol' Flapjack, Sarah runs to embrace her mother, Elijah is dressed like a girl, and the shotgun is unloaded.
5. Compile and discuss a list of images from the story that appeal to the five senses, for instance, the sight of freedom under a blue sky, the smell of cherry pie or fear in the East Lee stable, the taste of fried perch, the feel of cotton in the ears or a ferry ride from Windsor to Detroit, and the sound of Jingle Boy's hooves or of Mr. Leroy's axe biting into a tree trunk.
6. Suggest ways this novel could be written as a play. Flesh out action scenes for stage, for example, delivering water to shackled slaves in the stable, lying to Sarah about staying with the Bixby family, ringing the Liberty Bell, hiding in the drainage ditch, target practice with the rusty gun, and locating a drunken paddy-roller. Create more realism in the text by pitying Elijah for swooning or weeping, picturing the capture of live horseflies for fish bait, explaining Elijah's regret for concealing the Reverend Connerly's faults, eavesdropping on adult conversations in the wagon, accepting Birdy as a gift, and giving Hope a new life in Buxton.

Math and Computer Art

1. Use internal data to make a time line of events in the novel. Emphasize the period of time that the Reverend Connerly and the Freemans are acquainted, Charles Vaughn's consideration of hiring Ahbo of the Chochates, John Holton's recapture, and the brief relationship between Chloe and Elijah. Insert specific dates, such as John Holton's death from lashing, the founding of Elgin settlement, Frederick Douglass's visit and speech, and the birth of Lucille to Liza Taylor at Fort Smith, Arkansas.
2. Draw a poster or an animated television or

Internet advertisement for *Elijah of Buxton* emphasizing the crucial roles of the Reverend Connerly and Mr. Leroy. Indicate the importance of compassion toward separated families like the Leroy's, toward victims like Theo Highgate, and toward newcomers to freedom like the Taylors and Hope.

Social Studies

1. Compose a short speech in which you describe the function of each community member. Comment on help and advice that fathers and mothers give their children, such as Mrs. Bixby's scolding of her "dunce" son Cooter. Note the family response to the missing money for the Leroy family's purchase. List behaviors that cause harsh words, quarrels, worries, or scolding, such as not fleeing to freedom in Canada, lying about spending the night with Cooter Bixby, talking to the Reverend Connerly about tithing, returning to Chloe and Kamau at the stable, interrupting Benjamin Alston's dice game, riding Jingle Boy too hard, concealing the reunion with the Duncans' younger sister, chastising schoolboys for disrespect to their elders, and the unexplained pistol and holster that the Reverend wears.
2. Explain in a theme how the author portrays Buxton community concerns. How do neighbors comfort Emeline Holton? Why does Mr. Leroy need Elijah as a proofreader? Why do people gather at the church? How does the Liberty Bell acknowledge emancipation? Why do adults welcome the Taylors gently to freedom in Canada?
3. Draw a web representing the parallel lifestyles and activities of freed slaves and freeborn children. Note the aspects they share, for example, residence in a settlement, children in school, lengthy Sunday services, good deeds, pride in homes, shared food, volunteer service to neighbors, and sorrow for memories of slave times. List their differences, particularly professions, styles of discipline, size of families, losses, education, and revenue.
4. Define abolitionism. Explain why Elijah decides never again to playact as abolitionist and slave.

Cinema

1. Draw settings for a film, puppet show, or out-

door drama of *Elijah of Buxton*. Diagram the placement of actors, music, costumes, props, sound effects, and lighting. Include classroom discussions of how to stage scenes in the stable, on the river bank, on the ferry from Windsor to Detroit, among stumps and maples, on horseback with Hope, behind the wagon seat, behind the tavern at East Lee, under the church, and at the Bixby residence.

2. Describe aspects of the novel that are more suited to radio, film, tableau, illustration, cartoon, and pageant than to a novel, for example, pulling on chains in the wall, treating Theodore Highgate's head wound, firing an old pistol, carrying Hope, examining blood on a white stallion, chunking rocks at a bear-fighting dog, and watching Sammy take off his clothes on stage.
3. View various films featuring rural and community life, e.g. *And Now, Miguel*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Except for Me and Thee*, *Little Women*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *Ellen Foster*, *The Friendly Persuasion*, *Watership Down*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Cross Creek*, and *Babe: Pig in the City*. Discuss why filmmakers focus on the meaning of camaraderie, kindness, justice, fairness, loss, faith, and courage on ordinary people.
4. Compose an informal essay on writing teleplays or screenplays. List situations you would like to describe in a TV miniseries, scenario, tableau, stage musical, blog, or outdoor drama, such as the collapse of Mr. Leroy from Jingle Boy's back and the Reverend's tossing of his pistol into the water. Explain to a small group how your cast of characters would comfort the bereaved, share food and news, and talk about letters from slave owners.

Science and Health

1. Discuss why iron shackles cause pain and bleeding, how a gunshot to the head might kill Theodore Highgate, and why juggling a baby could cause vomiting.
2. Diagram the difference between the gaits of Ol' Flapjack and Jingle Boy.
3. Debate the use of cardiopulmonary resuscitation of Mr. Leroy. How might quick action save him from sudden death?

Language

1. Form a team of readers to tape expanded, historically accurate episodes of *Elijah of Buxton*

that capture rural manners, family life, and vernacular, such as choring, riled, l'm-a, 'specting, swah, wahren't, paddy-rollers, growned folks, blanged, chunking stones, and conjuration. Create scenes in which Mrs. Brown adopts Hope, the Taylors welcome the next new family with pulls on the Liberty Bell, Elijah reports to his parents how Mr. Leroy and the Reverend died, Emeline Holton remarries, Emma Collins gets a new rag doll, and 'Zekial escapes to Buxton.

2. Define the novel as a form of storytelling. Express what you learn from the novel about black history, camaraderie, dialect, cooperation, risk-taking, caution, silent suffering, character judgment, skepticism, dilemmas, and courage.

Art, Costume Design, and Music

1. Using desktop publishing or other media, compose an extended definition of abolitionism or tithing or design a mural of the Windsor-to-Detroit ferry or a dicing game, a layout for a village tavern or a Sunday picnic, a banner announcing the birth of the first freeborn black child or the arrival of Hope from East Lee, a business card for an abolitionist orator or a new mailman, a lesson in respect for elders or in writing epitaphs, first aid for head wounds or for swooning or sudden collapse, an epitaph for Mr. Leroy or Mrs. Brown's baby, a list of items needed for a school or horseback journey to Detroit, a chart of landmarks on both sides of Lake Erie or in Flint, an advertisement for runaway slaves or for an interim mailman, and a chart of Underground Railroad routes through Michigan and into Canada West.
2. Create a bulletin board illustrating visual scenes from the story. Include the carving of an epitaph, delivering fresh fish to Mr. Segee, receiving a pistol and holster, meeting an African who speaks little English, writing a note to Cooter or Emeline Holton, being kidnapped or strung up in a stable, wrapping a dagger, spying on a classroom or church meeting, watering Jingle Boy, cleaning Ol' Flapjack's feed, felling trees and removing stumps, giving a rag doll to a child, holding an infant on horseback, sleeping in an alley, and delivering the mail to Buxton.
3. Use desktop publishing, plaster of paris, masks,

brown bag puppets, collage, fabric banners, mural, watercolor, chalk, or sculptor's clay to create scenes from Black history depicting abolitionism, posses, slave lashing, the Underground Railroad, anti-slavery, oratory, shackling, branding, amputating a little finger, selling young girls to another buyer, contacting a rescuer, and hiding from slave catchers.

Drama and Speech

1. Write several conversations that are only implied, such as exchanges among the students concerning Mr. Travis's lesson on respect, the Reverend Connerly's encounter with white twins, discussion in Chatham of Mr. Butler's injuries, the Taylors' decision to hide in the maple trees, Dot Duncan's discussion with her sister of their younger sibling Alice, spending a nickel, and Sarah's return to caring for Missy Wright. Pantomime or act out your dialogue for an audio or video taping or live presentation.
2. Role-play the part of Benjamin Alston in joining a dice game behind the East Lee tavern, in treating Theo Highgate for a head wound, and in refusing to help Elijah free six shackled slaves from the Prayder gang.
3. Discuss your reaction to Buxton. What role would you play in the community, for example, a relative, abolitionist orator, slave catcher, neighbor, family friend, physician, mail carrier, teacher, philanthropist, farmer, conductor of the Underground Railroad, or minister? Would you choose community life over city life in Detroit or Flint? fishing with stones rather than a fishing pole and line? being a male or female character? being a respected free black or a white or native American outsider? Which characters would you choose for friendship? How would you ask for directions? What advice would you give Elijah on gaining maturity? on being kidnapped? on atoning for his character assessment of the Reverend Connerly?

Composition

1. Make an oral report on the theme of living in an experimental community. Summarize lines that urge the reader to enjoy history, farming, land clearing, and daring missions. Explain the attraction of the river to Elijah and the

need to share fresh fish with Mr. Segee and Mr. Leroy.

2. Compose a first person account of Elijah's arrival at the East Lee stable. Make a list of questions for him to ask Chloe, such as Kamau's wish to give up Hope, the situation she returns to in slavery, Prayder's supply of water and food to the six slaves, her inability to read and write, and the reason for the Reverend Connerly's murder.
3. Compose an extended definition of regret in which you compare Mr. Leroy to the focal characters in Ted Taylor's *Timothy of the Cay*, Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*, Conrad Richter's *The Light in the Forest*, Yoko Kawashima Watkins's *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*, Walter Dean Myers's *The Glory Field*, Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*, Gary Paulsen's *Nightjohn*, Scott O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, Virginia Hamilton's *The House of Dies Drear*, and Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves*.

Education

1. Compose an introduction to *Elijah of Buxton* for reluctant or ESL readers. Explain how the story develops sympathy for former slaves, separated families, maimed or mistreated blacks, terrified newcomers, and survivors of deceased mates or children.
2. Describe aloud the prestige of a literate boy like Elijah. Why does he learn faster than Sarah, Cooter, or Emeline Holton? Why does his literacy make him a prime candidate for kidnap?

Alternate Assessment

1. List in chronological order and describe significant events from the story. Mention a snake in the cookie jar, touching the bell with the left hand, tending Missy in Flint, watching Mr. Leroy die on the ground, swatting flies on Ol' Flapjack, dicing behind the tavern, punishing boys for disrespect, picnicking after church, carving an epitaph, fearing Elijah will be hanged for theft, being shot in the head, attending a carnival, writing a note to Cooter, losing a little sister in North Carolina, playing abolitionist and slave, ambushing Chief MaWee, buying a boy for \$100, tithing four fish, inflating stories about Frederick Douglass, laughing at Sarah from a hiding

place in the ditch, refuting the Reverend Connerly, replacing Mr. Butler, sharing memories of slave times, wearing black, moving back to New York, branding with a T, locating a stable in East Lee, paying the ferryman, standing in the corner as a punishment, distributing water to six shackled slaves, and riding home with Hope.

2. List events from the novel that express the uniqueness of Chloe, Elijah, Mr. King, Frederick Douglass, Birdy, Ol' Flapjack, Emeline Holton, the Reverend Connerly, Mr. Travis, Emma Collins, Elijah's grandmother, 'Zekial, the third child born free in Buxton, and Mr. Leroy.
3. Compose brief definitions of foreshadowing, humor, and symbol as they apply to *Elijah of Buxton*. What changes in the plot would ease Elijah's regret and anxiety? Why does Sarah urge her son to recognize exaggeration in storytelling?
4. Summarize scenes that depict conflict, particularly gossip about slave catchers, guilt at not rescuing the six shackled slaves, confusion about hoop snakes, avoiding the Reverend Connerly, wanting to find the thief, gambling with gold, removing Hope from her parents, lying to Mrs. Bixby, weeping over slave sufferings, fear that danger lurks near the river bank, complaints about disrespectful boys, opinions about a fragile boy, wearing girlish clothes, observing two corpses, returning home on Jingle Boy, observing Emeline Holton's grief for John, and questions about the Reverend Connerly's connection with the death of white twins.

Vocabulary Test

Choose words from the list below that complete each list of synonyms below.

academy, bevy, bizarre, blaspheme, bondage, brogan, calliope, commence, conjure, daft, damsel, descendant, dexterity, enquiry, entrails, environs, feat, ferry, heathen, hewed, humbug, infirmary, jackleg, legacy, midwife, missive, pauper, potash, prestidigitation, rascalion, retaliation, refuge, rigor, sullied, tithe, tram, yoke

- _____ 1. deranged, stupid, demented, goofy, idiotic, inane, witless
- _____ 2. company, troupe, gathering, assemblage, cluster, coterie
- _____ 3. pledge, assessment, tribute, tenth, levy, collection, levy
- _____ 4. enterprise, exploit, attainment, deed, pursuit, endeavor
- _____ 5. asperity, severity, sternness, ruggedness, trial, tribulation
- _____ 6. illusion, deception, legerdemain, dissimulation, dupery
- _____ 7. defiled, befouled, tainted, corrupt, marred, contaminated
- _____ 8. milieu, ambience, vicinity, context, habitat, locale, terrain
- _____ 9. bequest, heirloom, heritage, birthright, portion, patrimony
- _____ 10. rogue, knave, scoundrel, varmint, perpetrator, lowlife
- _____ 11. issue, scion, progeny, inheritor, successor, lineage, stock
- _____ 12. text, correspondence, dispatch, memorandum, epistle
- _____ 13. subjugation, duress, serfdom, captivity, servility, thrall
- _____ 14. embark, initiate, originate, instigate, inaugurate, rouse
- _____ 15. facility, proficiency, adroitness, ingenuity, aptitude, craft
- _____ 16. asylum, sanctuary, shelter, harborage, haven, sanctum
- _____ 17. mendicant, derelict, indigent, outcast, vagabond, vagrant
- _____ 18. query, petition, solicitation, appeal, application, bid, plea
- _____ 19. viscera, innards, vitals, guts, intestines, internals, refuse
- _____ 20. counterblow, reprisal, reciprocation, payback, requital

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Complete the following statements.

- _____ 1. Elijah and Cooter get into trouble
- A. by laughing at Emma's doll.
 - B. by humiliating Mr. Travis.
 - C. during the dicing game.
 - D. after the picnic by eavesdropping on MaWee.
- _____ 2. Chloe honors Elijah
- A. with an African name, Uh-san-tay.
 - B. by entrusting him with Hope.
 - C. as a rescuer of six blacks from Prayder's gang.
 - D. for murdering the Reverend Connerly in the stable.
- _____ 3. The Duncan sisters
- A. bake cherry pies for the support of the community.
 - B. help Mrs. Brown recover from her child's death from fever.
 - C. conceal their relationship to Alice.
 - D. recognize the white twins' second pistol and holster.
- _____ 4. Madame Sabbar
- A. loses to Elijah's marksmanship.
 - B. deliberately knocks out candles to startle Charles Vaughn.
 - C. claims a win over Sammy's competitor.
 - D. prefers to hire a pickaninny.
- _____ 5. Mr. Leroy slaps
- A. the Reverend Connerly and demands the return of the gold.
 - B. Theo Highgate for losing the moneybags in the alley.
 - C. the bear-fighting dog.
 - D. Elijah for starting to say "nigger."
- _____ 6. Elijah feels
- A. regret for leaving Kamau with the Reverend Connerly.
 - B. blocked from the adult church service.
 - C. sorry for the first free child born in Buxton.
 - D. special affection for Hope.
- _____ 7. Sarah surprises
- A. Emeline with memories of Missy Wright.
 - B. Spencer by allowing Elijah to keep the dagger.
 - C. her son with a snake in the cookie jar.
 - D. the class by escorting students to safety from gunmen.
- _____ 8. Elijah attests to
- A. the Reverend Connerly's character.
 - B. a black student's skill at Latin.
 - C. Mrs. Holton's generosity toward Mr. Leroy.
 - D. Tillman's savagery with a lash.
- _____ 9. Ol' Flapjack
- A. carries the Taylor children from the maple grove.
 - B. brings the carved epitaph of John Holton.
 - C. alerts Elijah to the Reverend Connerly's murder of slave catchers.
 - D. takes the boy to fish for bass and perch.
- _____ 10. Spencer fears
- A. for Missy's safety in Flint, Michigan.
 - B. Butler's head injury is fatal.

- C. Mr. Leroy's hasty decision.
- D. that Elijah is too fragile to ride the white stallion.

_____ 11. Mrs. Bixby welcomes

- A. an overnight guest.
- B. Benjamin Alston.
- C. a chance to tie up a drunken slave catcher in the stable.
- D. Vaughn's offer of a job in the carnival.

_____ 12. The ride to Detroit requires

- A. payment of a quarter each on the ferry.
- B. rest and water for Jingle Boy.
- C. a night in the East Lee alley for Elijah and Mr. Leroy.
- D. an adult who can read and write.

_____ 13. Mr. Butler's injury

- A. results from a rusty pistol.
- B. occurs during the dicing game behind the tavern.
- C. requires a wagon ride home from Chatham.
- D. delays the Buxton mail.

_____ 14. Mr. Leroy suspects that

- A. John Jarvey whipped John Holton to death.
- B. Liza Taylor was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas.
- C. Dillon may raise the price on family members.
- D. 'Zekial will say too much in front of the kidnappers.

_____ 15. Mrs. Jacob Poole hints that she

- A. blames Sarah for staying too long with her mother in the fields.
- B. wants Emeline to pay for the grave marker.
- C. gave the Liberty Bell out of gratitude to former slaves.
- D. summoned Prayder and his posse to the tavern outside Detroit.

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Which character makes the following statements:

- _____ 1. The Liberty Bell ain't no regular schoolhouse bell.
- _____ 2. You wants to be keeping they hate alive?
- _____ 3. He done shot me.
- _____ 4. These are my woods, I know what's what out here.
- _____ 5. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.
- _____ 6. You got to try hard to understand if what folks are telling you make any kind of sense.
- _____ 7. You's got to leave it like ain't no one been in here.
- _____ 8. You needs to get to Canada and tell your people 'bout that man what die.
- _____ 9. Please, ma'am, caint I see my mama for just a minute?
- _____ 10. He already killed a full-growed Indian man!

Part III: Identification (10 points)

Explain the significance of each term below:

- 1. Ahbo

2. T

3. Vaughn

4. family breeding contest

5. girl's clothes

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. Account for the departure of Elijah from Mrs. Bixby's house.
2. Defend Elijah's need to feel like an adult.
3. Compare the experience of two families fleeing slavery.
4. Express the author's attitude toward judging character.
5. Describe the circumstances that precede the Reverend Connerly's death.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: True/False (30 points)

Mark each statement either T for true or F if any part is false:

- _____ 1. Elijah aids Mr. Segee by killing horseflies that light on Ol' Flapjack.
- _____ 2. The Reverend Connerly implies that going to the carnival will help the settlement.
- _____ 3. Madame Sabbar describes Chief MaWee as a member of the Mobongo.
- _____ 4. Grapes strike Jimmy Blassingame, who poses as Sammy.
- _____ 5. Birdy Taylor receives Emma's rag doll.
- _____ 6. Alice Duncan left North Carolina in 1849.
- _____ 7. Emeline reads Mrs. Jacob Poole's letter aloud.
- _____ 8. Elijah's grandmother slaps Sarah for not fleeing slavery.
- _____ 9. At the picnic, Cooter and Elijah play abolitionist and slave.
- _____ 10. Elijah refuses to take a nickel for editing the epitaph.
- _____ 11. Theo Highgate's hand injury prevents him from working.
- _____ 12. The Reverend Connerly throws the pistol in the river.
- _____ 13. Elders kidnap Elijah, who hides under the church.
- _____ 14. Kamau halts the bear-fighting dog with a blow to the head.
- _____ 15. Sarah believes that former slaves embellish stories.

Part II: Identification (30 points)

Identify the characters indicated below.

- _____ 1. walks toward the unidentified newcomers to welcome them
- _____ 2. accuses Elijah of conjury
- _____ 3. is left-handed
- _____ 4. examines the bloody white stallion
- _____ 5. grieves for a child who died of fever
- _____ 6. forces Sarah to sleep near Missy
- _____ 7. loses a little finger to amputation
- _____ 8. cleans animal cages
- _____ 9. recognizes Liza
- _____ 10. lashes John to death
- _____ 11. gives Mr. Leroy \$2,200 in gold
- _____ 12. is gone from home three months
- _____ 13. aims an unloaded shotgun
- _____ 14. defends the Reverend Connerly of a charge of cheating
- _____ 15. is a full-blooded African

Part III: Essay Questions (40 points)

- 1. Explain why Elijah must accompany Mr. Leroy to Detroit.
- 2. Compare Cooter, John Holton, and Mr. Taylor as minor characters.
- 3. Give reasons for Chloe's respect for a literate black like Elijah.
- 4. Explain how the Reverend Connerly acquires two pistols with holsters.
- 5. Predict how Hope will survive the loss of both parents.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|----------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. daft | 6. prestidigitation | 11. descendant | 16. refuge |
| 2. bevy | 7. sullied | 12. missive | 17. pauper |
| 3. tithe | 8. environs | 13. bondage | 18. enquiry |
| 4. feat | 9. legacy | 14. commence | 19. entrails |
| 5. rigor | 10. rascalion | 15. dexterity | 20. retaliation |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. D | 11. A |
| 2. B | 7. C | 12. B |
| 3. C | 8. A | 13. D |
| 4. A | 9. D | 14. C |
| 5. D | 10. C | 15. B |

Part II: Quotations (20 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Elijah | 6. Sarah |
| 2. Mr. Leroy | 7. Chloe |
| 3. Mr. Highgate | 8. Benjamin Alston |
| 4. Reverend Connerly | 9. Sarah |
| 5. Spencer | 10. Sammy |

Part III: Identification (10 points)

1. Elijah's pseudonym at the carnival
2. the brand on Mr. Leroy's chest
3. carnival owner and mesmerist
4. misunderstanding "familiarity breeds contempt"
5. Elijah's garments when he meets Frederick Douglass

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: True/False (30 points)

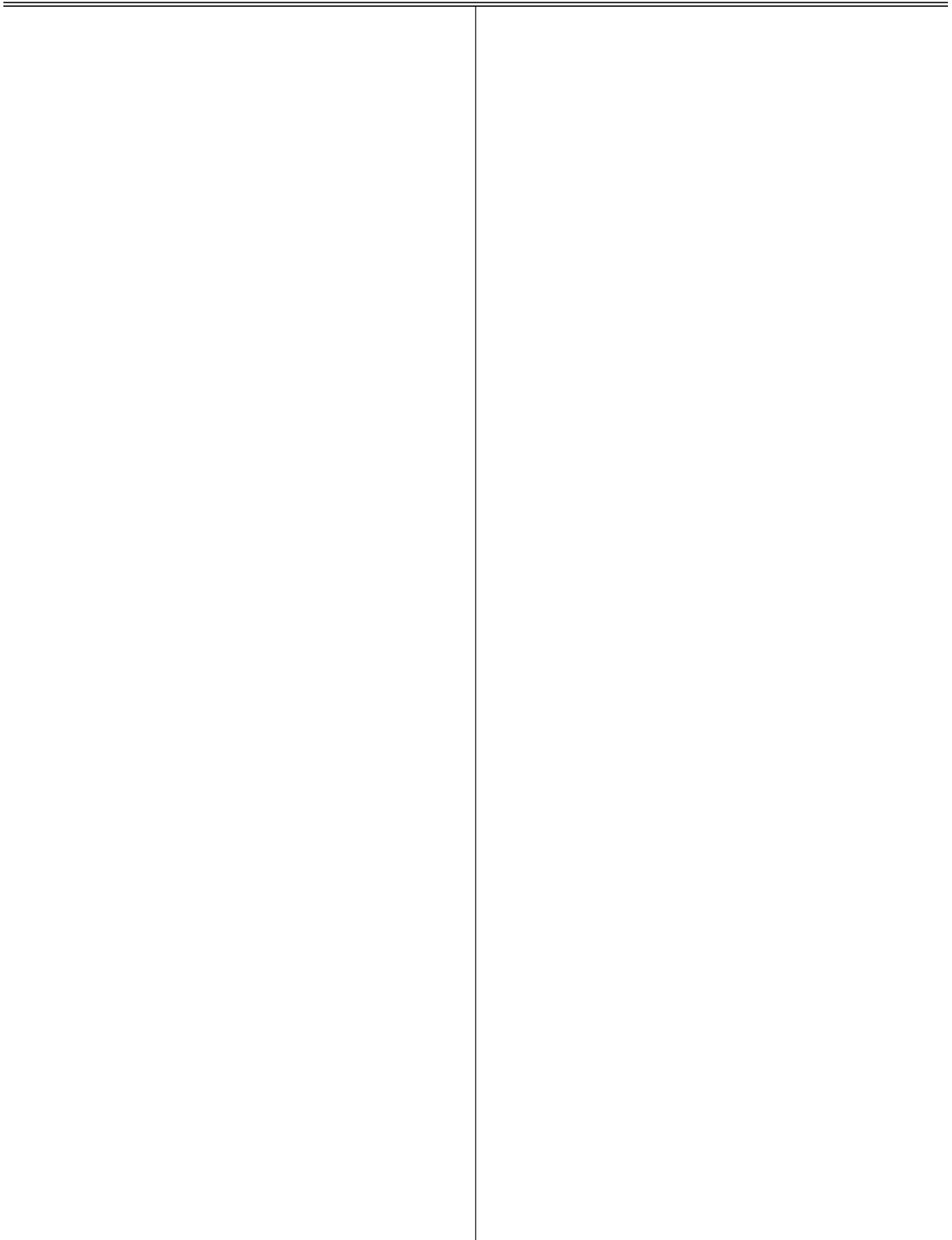
- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T | 11. T |
| 2. T | 7. F | 12. T |
| 3. T | 8. T | 13. F |
| 4. F | 9. T | 14. F |
| 5. F | 10. F | 15. F |

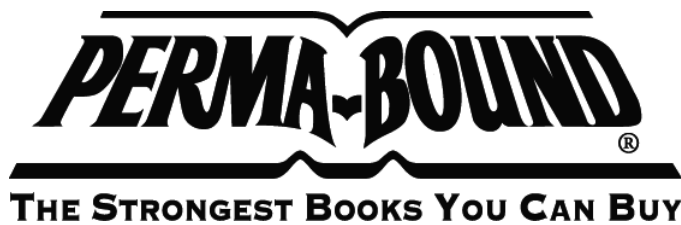
Part II: Identification (30 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Emma | 9. Miss Duncan-the-first |
| 2. Reverend Connerly | 10. Tillman |
| 3. Elijah | 11. Emmeline Holton |
| 4. Spencer | 12. Sarah |
| 5. Mrs. Brown | 13. Theodore Highgate |
| 6. Gwen Wright | 14. Benjamin Alston |
| 7. Mr. Leroy | 15. Kamau |
| 8. Sammy | |

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.





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