



The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963

Discussion Questions

Directions: Read the book with your child and use the questions to increase his or her understanding of the book's message.

1. In the beginning of Chapter 1, Wilona calls Michigan “a giant icebox” compared to Alabama! Compare and contrast Flint, Michigan and Birmingham, Alabama.
2. Kenny is a good student at Clark Elementary, so why does he wish he “dropped [the] book and ran all the way home” when Mr. Alums asks him to read in front of the class (beginning of Ch. 2)? Find a quote from the chapter to support your explanation. If you could give Kenny some advice in that situation, what would it be?
3. When Rufus is new at school, why does Kenny call Rufus his “personal saver” (end of Ch. 2)? Has there ever been a time when you thought one way about a person (family, friend, or stranger), but after some time you changed your mind?
4. In Chapter 6, Kenny says, “Leave it to Daddy Cool to torture human kids at school all day long and never have his conscience bother him but to feel sorry for a stupid little grayish brown bird.” If you were in Kenny’s position, how would you feel about Byron as your big brother? How does Kenny feel?
5. In the beginning of Chapter 13, Grandma Sands warns the Watson children to stay away from Collier’s Landing when they go to the water. What happens when Kenny goes to Collier’s Landing? What is the Wool Pooh?
6. What does Kenny hope will happen if he stays long enough in the World-Famous Watson Pet Hospital (Ch. 15)? Why is it important that Kenny shares his feelings with Byron?

Extra! Engage with outside material to complete these related research activities!

1. **Civil Rights Timeline:** This story is based on real events that happened during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Do a little research on the following events, and then put them in chronological order (first to last):

- ___ The bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama
- ___ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers his famous “I Have a Dream” speech
- ___ The Voting Rights Act is enacted
- ___ Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a public bus
- ___ The Selma to Montgomery marches
- ___ The Civil Rights Act is enacted
- ___ The Watson’s road trip!

2. **Road Trip Research:** If you can print this map, label the states that the “Weird Watsons” drive through. Label Philadelphia on this map, and if you have family in other US cities or states, label those too!



Use an online map to find the distance and time it would take to make these trips in a car!

Flint, MI to Birmingham, AL: Distance: _____ miles, Time: _____ hrs _____ mins

Flint, MI to Philadelphia, PA: Distance: _____ miles, Time: _____ hrs _____ mins

Birmingham, AL to Philadelphia, PA: Distance: _____ miles, Time: _____ hrs _____ mins