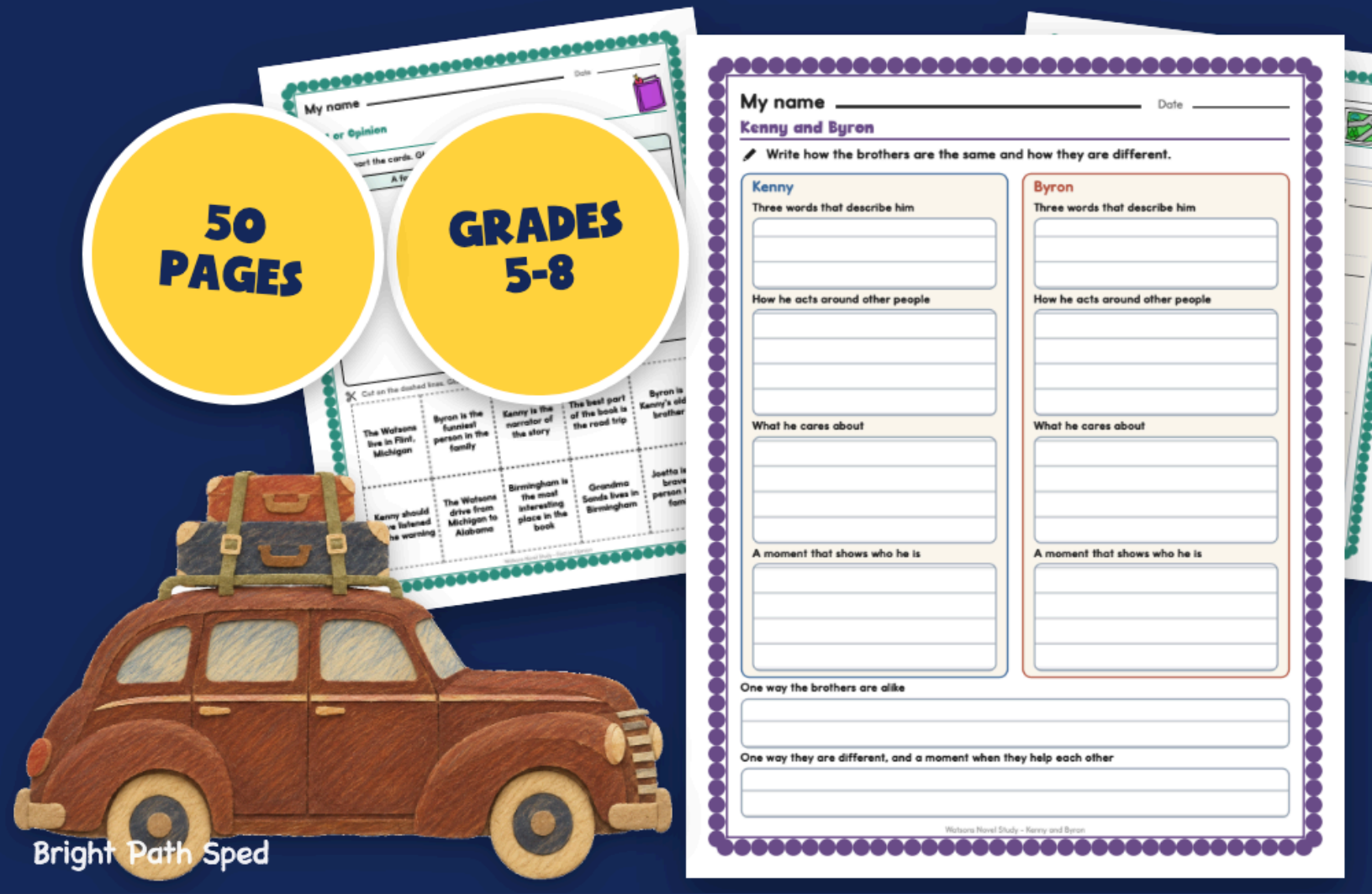
THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM

NOVEL STUDY + ANSWER KEY



Bright Path Sped

Terms of Use

Please read before you print your first page.

One classroom license

- This file is for one classroom: one teacher, one group of students.
- Please do not share it, post it online, or sell it.
- Extra licenses for a team or a school are available on the product page.

This is a fillable PDF

- Open it in a PDF reader (Adobe Acrobat Reader, Preview, or your browser), click into a line or a box, type, and Save As.
- The name line, every ruled box and every table cell are type-in fields. You can also print any page and write by hand.
- It works offline. No account, no subscription, no internet connection needed after you download it.

Print at 100 percent

Turn off fit to page and shrink to fit so the ruled lines stay 0.34 inch apart. Every student page is black and white inside a colored border, so it prints well on any printer.

About the book

You need your own copy of The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963. All questions, words and pages here are original and contain no text from the book. This resource is not affiliated with or endorsed by Christopher Paul Curtis, the publisher, or the owners of the book The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963.

Student work

A filled-in page carries a real student's name. Keep it in your records folder, and use a first name only on any page that leaves your hands.

Need help?

If a field will not behave or a page will not print right, use Ask a Question on the product page before leaving a review. A fix to the file ships as a free update: re-download from My Purchases.

Credits and fonts

Fonts are by KA Fonts (Kaitlynn Albani), used under her commercial license. Clip art is licensed from Whimsy Clips and Educlips. The credits page at the back of this file lists every source. Please keep it with the file if you pass it to a substitute.

© Bright Path Sped. For single-classroom use by the original purchaser.

PREVIEW

How to Run the Novel Study

One plan for the whole book in 9 parts, a question page for each, a 1963 background page, and pages on the characters, the conflict and the big ideas.

A plan for the whole book

Read	Part	My chapters	Page	Talk about it
Part 1	Meet the Watsons		7	What makes a family a team?
Part 2	Byron and Trouble		8	Why might a person keep getting in trouble?
Part 3	School and Friends		9	What makes a friend a friend?
Part 4	Getting Ready to Go		10	What do parents plan for before a trip?
Part 5	On the Road		11	How does where you live change what you worry about?
Part 6	Arriving in Birmingham		12	Why do places feel different when you travel?
Part 7	A Warning Ignored		13	Is it ever worth ignoring a warning?
Part 8	A Sunday Morning		14	Why would an author put a real event in a made-up story?
Part 9	Home Again		15	How do people heal after a hard thing?

The routine

- **Read a part** aloud, in small groups, or on their own. Split your copy into 9 parts of about the same length and write your chapters in the table. The part names are ours, not the book's chapter titles, so the key says what to look for.
- **Start with 1963.** Students read the background page (page 6) before part 1; your own notes are on page 40.
- **Students answer** that part's question page (pages 7 to 15). Each page has a recall, a think and a your-view question, and says it is okay to pass.
- **Keep the organizers going**: the plot path (page 16), character map (page 17), conflict chart (page 18), Kenny and Byron (page 19), cause and effect (page 22) and how Kenny changes (page 23).
- **Teach the vocabulary** with the four word pages (pages 26 to 29) and the match (page 30); **finish** with the final review (page 33), the essay (pages 34 to 36) and the project (page 37).

Before you teach it

- Read the book yourself first. It deals with prejudice and with a real church bombing in which children died, and some students may find parts upsetting. Questions are for talking, and any student may pass.
- Use the names and the order of events your own copy uses: this file has no book text in it.

Spoilers and your answer key

The answer key (pages 41 to 45) gives away how the story goes. Keep it from students until the book is finished. Most questions ask for an opinion or a detail from the student's own copy, so the key says Varies and tells you what to look for.

PREVIEW

My name _____ Date _____



Before You Read

Think about the title. Then write your ideas.

It is okay to pass on a question.

1. Look at the title, The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963. What do you think this book is about?

2. Have you ever taken a long trip with your family? Where did you go, and how did it feel?

3. Have you ever been brave when you were scared? What happened?

4. Agree or disagree: a family can joke around and still care deeply about each other.

☐ I agree ☐ I disagree

Why do I think so?

5. What do you want to find out as you read?

PREVIEW

Preview - Bright Path Shed

My name _____ Date _____

Part 2: Byron and Trouble



Read this part of the book. Then answer each question.

Questions about the book, Part 2. It is okay to pass on a question.

1. Recall: What kind of trouble does Byron get into? How do the grown-ups in the family react?

2. Think: Why might Byron act the way he does? Find a clue in how he treats Kenny and other people.

3. Your view: When a child keeps getting in trouble, what should a family do? Explain your thinking.

Starters: The book says ____. This shows ____. I think ____ because ____.

PREVIEW

Preview - Bright Path Sped

My name _____ Date _____



Part 5: On the Road

Read this part of the book. Then answer each question.

Questions about the book, Part 5. It is okay to pass on a question.

1. Recall: Where do the Watsons start and where are they headed? Tell two things that happen on the road.

2. Think: What do the Watsons have to plan or be careful about on this trip because of the time and the place? Use details.

3. Your view: Why might an author send a family on a long road trip instead of having the story stay at home?

Starters: The book says ____. This shows ____. I think ____ because ____.

PREVIEW

Preview - Not for Sale

My name _____ Date _____



Part 7: A Warning Ignored

Read this part of the book. Then answer each question.

Questions about the book, Part 7. It is okay to pass on a question.

1. Recall: Where does Kenny go that he was told to stay away from? What happens there?

2. Think: Why does Kenny go anyway? What does the scene show about him?

3. Your view: Is it ever worth ignoring a warning? How do you decide whom to trust?

Starters: The book says ____. This shows ____. I think ____ because ____.

PREVIEW

My name _____ Date _____



Plot Path

Write what happens at each step of the story.

Use: Somebody ____ wanted ____ but ____ so ____ then ____

Beginning
Who is in the story, and where?

Part _____

A problem starts
What goes wrong or what does the main character want?

Part _____

Things get harder
What makes the problem bigger?

Part _____

The hardest moment
What is the biggest choice?

Part _____

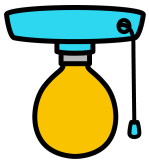
How it ends
How is the problem solved?

Part _____

PREVIEW

Preview - Bright Path Sped

My name _____ Date _____



Conflict Chart

Find the problems in the story. Write who or what each one is between.

A conflict is a problem in a story. It can be between two people, or between a person and a hard choice inside. Find at least three in the book.

Who or what is it between?	What is the problem?	How does it change?	Part

The biggest conflict is between

☐ **two people** ☐ **a person and a choice they must make** ☐ **something else**

Which conflict is hardest to solve? Why?

How is the biggest conflict solved?

PREVIEW

Preview - Bright Path Sped

My name _____ Date _____



Fact or Opinion

Cut apart the cards. Glue each card in the right box.

A fact	An opinion

PREVIEW

Cut on the dashed lines. Glue each card in a box.

The Watsons live in Flint, Michigan	Byron is the funniest person in the family	Kenny is the narrator of the story	The best part of the book is the road trip	Byron is Kenny's older brother
Kenny should have listened to the warning	The Watsons drive from Michigan to Alabama	Birmingham is the most interesting place in the book	Grandma Sands lives in Birmingham	Joetta is the bravest person in the family

Preview - Bright Path Sped

My name _____ Date _____

Traits and Proof



Pick four words. Prove each one with the book.

funny curious loyal scared thoughtful stubborn caring brave

Word I picked	Proof from the book (a short phrase)	Part

The word that matters most in his story, and why

Starters: The book says ____. This shows ____. I think ____ because ____.

PREVIEW

Preview - Bright Path Sped

My name _____ Date _____

Words: Family and Feelings

Read each word. Write a sentence. Add a word that means the same.

sibling (noun)
a brother or a sister.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

mischief (noun)
playful behavior that causes small trouble.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

delinquent (noun)
a young person who keeps breaking rules.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

stubborn (adjective)
refusing to change your mind.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

embarrassed (adjective)
feeling awkward or ashamed in front of other people.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

loyal (adjective)
staying true to a friend or family member.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

PREVIEW

My name _____ Date _____

Words: Fear, Loss and Healing

Read each word. Write a sentence. Add a word that means the same.

terror (noun)
very strong fear.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

grief (noun)
deep sadness after a loss.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

innocence (noun)
the state of not yet knowing about hard or hurtful things.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

comfort (verb)
to help someone feel calmer or less sad.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

tragedy (noun)
a very sad event that causes great loss.
My sentence

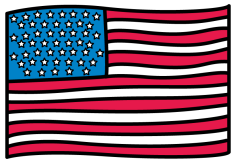
Same meaning _____

recover (verb)
to get better after a hard time.
My sentence

Same meaning _____

PREVIEW

My name _____ Date _____



Prove It With the Text

Make a claim. Back it up with evidence.

The question I am answering

My claim: my answer

Evidence 1. Part _____

The book says (a short phrase)

This shows

Evidence 2. Part _____

The book says (a short phrase)

This shows

My reasoning: how the evidence proves my claim

Starters: The book says ____. This shows ____. I think ____ because ____.

PREVIEW

Preview - Bright Path Sped

My name _____ Date _____

My Essay: Plan



Plan each part of your essay.

Opening and claim
Start with a hook. State your claim.

Reason 1
Evidence and part

Reason 2
Evidence and part

Reason 3
Evidence and part

Closing
Say why it matters.

PREVIEW

My check before I write

- ☐ My claim is clear
- ☐ Each reason has evidence
- ☐ I named the parts
- ☐ I used a vocabulary word

Preview - Bright Path Sped

My name _____ Date _____



Final Project

Check one project. Plan it, then make it.

☐ **Project A**

Make a trip map

Draw a map of the Watsons' trip. Mark five moments and write one sentence about each.

☐ **Project B**

Write a note to a character

Write a short note to Kenny, Byron or Joetta telling what you think of their choices. Use at least two vocabulary words.

☐ **Project C**

Make a book review

Give the book a rating from 1 to 5. Give three reasons and tell who you think should read it.

My project: write here

My plan: what I need and what I will do first

My checklist

☐ I used the book to check my facts ☐ I used a vocabulary word ☐ I checked my spelling

PREVIEW

1963 Birmingham: Background for You

A short timeline of well-known events that surround the book. It is a starting point, not a full history.

A short timeline

When	What happened
April 1963	Organized marches and sit-ins against segregation begin in Birmingham, with leaders including Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
April 1963	Dr. King is arrested in Birmingham and writes a long letter now called the Letter from Birmingham Jail.
May 1963	Children and teens join the marches. Police use fire hoses and dogs, and news photos spread across the country.
August 28, 1963	The March on Washington, where Dr. King gives the speech known as I Have a Dream.
September 15, 1963	A bomb explodes at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham on a Sunday morning. Four girls are killed: Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley and Denise McNair.
July 2, 1964	President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act, which made segregation in public places illegal.
1995	Christopher Paul Curtis's novel is first published.

What is real and what is made up

- The Watson family and their trip are invented. The year, the city, the protests and the church bombing are real history.
- Students read a short version of these facts on page 6. Every sentence in this file is in our own words.

Teaching it with care

- Say the names of the four girls aloud, slowly. Remind students that real families lost them.
- Give students a way to step out for a moment, and a quiet place to write instead of talk.
- Check dates and names against a trusted source before you quote them. The Library of Congress and the Civil Rights Digital Library are good places to start.

My own notes on 1963 for my class (your wording)

PREVIEW

Answer Key

Parts 5 to 9. Part 8 deals with a real tragedy: read the key before the lesson.

Part 5: On the Road (page 11)

1. **Recall: The trip.** They start in Flint, Michigan, and head to Birmingham, Alabama. Accept two accurate events from the student's copy.

2. **Think: Planning for 1963.** Varies. Look for planning about where to stop, eat or sleep, tied to the time and place and to a detail from the student's copy. The background page on 1963 helps.

3. **Your view: Why a road trip.** Varies. Look for a reason such as time together, change of scene or things going wrong.

Part 6: Arriving in Birmingham (page 12)

1. **Recall: A new place.** Grandma Sands is the grandmother the family visits in Birmingham. Comparisons vary: accept details from the student's copy such as the weather, the neighborhood or how people act.

2. **Think: How Kenny feels.** Varies. Look for a feeling named with a detail from the student's copy.

3. **Your view: Somewhere new.** Varies. A personal answer. Any student may pass.

Part 7: A Warning Ignored (page 13)

1. **Recall: The danger.** He goes to a swimming spot he was warned about and gets into serious danger. Accept an accurate retelling, in order, from the student's copy, including who helps him.

2. **Think: Why he went.** Varies. Look for a reason tied to a detail from the student's copy, such as wanting to be brave or to fit in.

3. **Your view: A warning.** Varies. Look for a clear line with a reason.

Part 8: A Sunday Morning (page 14)

1. **Recall: The church.** A bomb goes off at a church in Birmingham. This is based on the real 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church (see the background pages). Accept an accurate retelling from the student's copy, told with care.

2. **Think: How Kenny reacts.** Varies. Look for a reaction named with a detail from the student's copy and a feeling it shows, such as fear, shock or sadness.

3. **Your view: Real and made up.** Varies. Look for a reason such as making readers feel it is real, or helping readers remember. Any student may pass.

Part 9: Home Again (page 15)

1. **Recall: After the trip.** Varies. Accept an accurate detail from the student's copy about how Kenny acts and about Byron or the family helping.

2. **Think: What changed.** Varies. Two details, one early and one late, and a comparison.

3. **Your view: What I take away.** Varies. Opinion with a reason. Any student may pass.

PREVIEW

Answer Key: Vocabulary

Pages 26 to 29 cover all 24 words.

The 24 words, with a model sentence for each

Word	Model sentence
segregation	Segregation meant children of different races went to different schools in many towns.
prejudice	His prejudice melted when he got to know his new neighbors.
discrimination	The club was wrong to turn people away, and that is discrimination.
injustice	The class felt it was an injustice that one team never got a turn.
protest	The students chose to protest the new rule by writing letters.
civil rights	Civil rights belong to everyone who lives in the country.
sibling	My sibling and I share a room.
mischief	The puppy was full of mischief and chewed every sock.
delinquent	The principal did not want to call him a delinquent for one mistake.
stubborn	The stubborn mule would not cross the bridge.
embarrassed	She was embarrassed when her phone rang during the quiet test.
loyal	A loyal friend sticks with you when things are hard.

Word	Model sentence
narrator	The narrator tells the story as if he is talking right to you.
humor	Her humor made the whole room laugh.
exaggerate	He liked to exaggerate, saying the fish was as long as a canoe.
dialect	You could hear her dialect in the way she said certain words.
tension	The tension grew as the clock ticked toward noon.
symbol	The dove is a symbol of peace.
terror	A terror came over him when the lights went out.
grief	The family shared their grief and held each other close.
innocence	The story shows a child losing some of his innocence.
comfort	She tried to comfort her little brother after the storm.
tragedy	The tragedy brought the whole town together.
recover	It takes time to recover from a big disappointment.

Match the Meaning (page 30)

1 D, 2 K, 3 G, 4 B, 5 I, 6 E, 7 L, 8 A, 9 J, 10 F, 11 C, 12 H

Using the word pages

- The words are for talking about the book, its history and how it is told. They may or may not appear in your edition.
- A sentence that uses the word correctly in a new setting counts. Model sentences are samples.

Words my class needs more practice with (your wording)

PREVIEW

The Watsons at Home

Dear family, our class is reading The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963, a novel about a family from Flint, Michigan, and a trip to Birmingham, Alabama, in the year of the title. The book includes the real history of that year. Questions are for talking, not for a grade, and any student may pass.

Student _____ Part we are reading _____

Three things to talk about

- Ask your student: what is the story about so far, in three sentences?
- Ask: how do the Watsons joke with each other, and what does it show about them?
- Ask: why might an author put a real event from 1963 into a made-up story? Share a family memory only if you want to.

My words from home

One thing I learned _____

One feeling I noticed _____

A question I have _____

Words that may come up

Segregation: keeping people apart by race. **Prejudice:** an unfair opinion formed without knowing people. **Protest:** to show in public that you disagree. **Narrator:** the voice that tells the story.

Note from the teacher

Note from home

PREVIEW