

Nothing but the Truth

Whole-Novel Discussion and Activities

BURNING ISSUES

1. Do you consider either Philip or Miss Narwin “right” or “wrong” in the situation in this novel? What mistakes do you think each character made? Who do you blame for the problems that arise between the two?
2. Neither Philip nor Miss Narwin end up getting what they want; in fact, at the end of the novel both are unhappy. How could the story have ended with one or more characters happy? What would it taken for the characters to have gotten what they wanted?
3. This novel is structured in a very different way than most novels. What did you think of this structure? What effect does the structure have on the reader? Why do you think the author chose to use it?
4. In the novel, the main characters get emails, phone calls, and even telegrams from people across the country who have heard about the incident on the radio. Do you think those people should have written to Philip and Miss Narwin? Why or why not? Did they know enough about the situation to offer their opinions? In your own life, how can you be sure you have enough information to comment wisely on events in the news?
5. Miss Narwin and the school administration at times suspect that Philip has a problem at home. What do you think of Philip’s family and their interactions? Did they seem realistic? Do you think Philip’s parents handled the situation responsibly? What could they have done better?

CHOICES ACTIVITIES

1. **Discussion Getting Along.** Both Philip and Miss Narwin make mistakes in getting along with each other. Review Chapters 1–10 with a few classmates, and look for examples of missed communication and misunderstanding between the two characters. As you find examples, discuss what each character could do to improve the working relationship. For example, was there a better way for Miss Narwin to handle Philip’s humming? What should Philip have done? Have a recorder write down your group’s suggestions, and then share them with the class.
2. **Language Play Idiom Dictionary.** Idioms are sayings that cannot be interpreted literally, such as *kicked me out*, *chewed out*, *Don’t bug me*, and *Stick up for yourself*. Make a list of idioms that you have found in the novel so far. Write a definition for each one. If you don’t know what one idiom means, talk to a classmate or find it in a reference book. If you speak a language in addition to English, write how you express the same ideas in that language.
3. **Art See You in the Funny Pages.** Choose one of the **scenes** from the novel—for example, Jennifer Stewart’s interview of Dr. Doane or Jake Barlow’s handling of callers to his radio show. Create a comic strip about that scene. Use speech balloons to show the character’s words and thought balloons to show their inner thoughts.
4. **Creative Writing The New Kid.** Pretend that you are one of the students in Philip’s homeroom at Washington Academy. Write a letter to a friend about Philip Malloy, your new classmate. Tell about what happened when Miss Rooney asked him to lead in the singing of the national anthem. Also tell what you know about the situation at Harrison High. You might want to save your finished letter in your writing portfolio.