

Teachers' Page

I hope the following discussion questions and activities will be helpful in your classroom when reading my books.

David Went Where on Vacation?:

Discussion questions:

- 1) Why do you think David's grandfather kept his invention of the time machine a secret?
- 2) Would you rather live in 1880 or 2003? Why?
- 3) Why was David upset with Jenny for wearing her tennis shoes?
- 4) Why did David show Sara the tape recorder?

Activities:

- 1) Draw a picture of a time machine that you would like to invent.
- 2) Pretend you had a time machine to take you wherever you wanted to go. Plan a vacation including where you would go and when you would arrive.
- 3) Write a paragraph about an important person you would like to meet on this vacation.
- 4) Write a new ending for the book.

David's Journey on the Underground Railroad:

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Why was it dangerous for David and his family to return to 1853?
- 2) Why didn't Peter like David at first?
- 3) Why was Peter and his family afraid of Jacob and Hattie?
- 4) Why did the slave traders think David was a runaway slave?

Activities:

- 1) Using a map of Ohio, trace the Smithers journey.
- 2) Write a letter to Harriet Tubman and thank her for leading hundreds of slaves to freedom.
- 3) Imagine your house is a stop on the Underground Railroad. Write a short story about a runaway slave who comes to your door for protection.
- 4) Draw a picture of Peter, Nate and Liza on Christmas Day with their first Christmas presents.

David's Adventures at the Chicago World's Fair:

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Why did David's grandmother want to return to the Chicago World's Fair of 1893?
- 2) Why couldn't David's family find a hotel room when they arrived in Chicago?
- 3) Why did the immigrants come to America from Germany, Sweden, Poland and Italy?
- 4) Why wasn't David impressed with the skyscrapers in 1893?

Activities:

- 1) Make a list of things at the Chicago World's Fair that you would like to see and do.
- 2) Write a short story about meeting your father when he was a young boy.
- 3) Write a description of a job that you would like to have had at the world's fair.
- 4) Make up a newspaper ad for the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.

David Experiences the San Francisco Earthquake:

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Why didn't David tell anyone about his plan to travel back to San Francisco in 1906?
- 2) Why was David willing to risk his life to warn Tony of the earthquake?
- 3) Why did some people assume David and Chin-Le were beggars or thieves?
- 4) Why was David grounded for a month?

Activities:

- 1) Write a newspaper story about the earthquake.
- 2) Draw a picture of San Francisco after the earthquake.
- 3) Pretend you were the one who traveled back to San Francisco to save Tony. Explain how you would have done things differently.
- 4) Write a short story where you are the one who experiences the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.

David Meets a Football Pioneer:

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What were Mr. Smithers' reasons for wanting to go on this vacation?
- 2) Why was William denied a haircut at the same barbershop where other Harvard students went for haircuts?
- 3) Why did David climb the tower at Harvard University?
- 4) Why did David's parents think it would be risky to take William to the future?

Activities:

- 1) Make up a game that might have been played in 1893.
- 2) Write an addition to the book where David tells Ryan and Jeff the truth about William.
- 3) Make a list of things you would want William to see and do if he came to your town.
- 4) Write a newspaper article for the sports page about one of William's 1893 football games.

General David series questions:

- 1) Where would you like to see David go on his next vacation? In what year would he arrive?
- 2) What famous person would he meet? Why?
- 3) If you were David, where would you go on vacation? In what year would you arrive?
- 4) What famous person would you like to meet? Why?

David Joins the California Gold Rush:

Discussion questions:

- 5) Why did Ben go to California to search for gold?
- 6) What kind of difficulties did the miners face?
- 5) Why did David leave the 10-pound nugget for Ben?
- 6) What would you have done if you discovered the gold?

Activities:

- 5) Invent your own mining town. Give it a name and describe what it would be like.
- 6) Look at a map of California in 1849 with names and locations of the mining towns. Pick a town where you would have lived and explain why you picked it.
- 7) Write a story in which you discover gold, and tell how and where you find it.
- 8) Create the front page of a newspaper in 1849 with the main story being about David Smithers' discovery of gold.

David Takes Part in the Battle of the Alamo:

Discussion questions:

- 5) Why didn't David's father and sister want to go to the Battle of the Alamo?
- 6) Why wasn't David's mother welcome in the chapel with the other women and children?
- 7) Why did David keep a journal during the battle?
- 8) Why did the men at the Alamo stay and fight Santa Anna's large army instead of running away?

Activities:

- 5) Pretend you were at the Battle of the Alamo. Write entries in a journal like David's that describe the battle and what is going on inside the Alamo.
- 6) Pick an historical figure and make a list of reasons why you would like to meet him/her.
- 7) Make a list of questions that you would like to ask Davy Crockett if you met him.
- 8) Write a short speech that you can read in class about Davy Crockett, James Bowie and William Barret Travis. In the speech, tell everyone how brave the men were and why they are heroes.

T.J. Westin, Man of the House:

Discussion questions:

- 1) Why did T.J. feel that he was man of the house?
- 2) If you won \$25,700, what would you do with it?
- 3) Why did T.J. want to be friends with Chad and Rick?
- 4) Who was T.J.'s true friend?

Activities:

- 1) Make up a game show and explain how it would be played.
- 2) Write T.J. a letter and tell him how you think he should spend the money.
- 3) Create a newspaper ad for the Whiz Kid game show.
- 4) Help your class sponsor a fundraiser for the ALS Association to support them in their efforts to find a cure for Lou Gehrig's disease.

Javier's Dream

Discussion questions:

- 1) Why do you think Michael was so determined to help Javier?
- 2) Why did Javier dream of coming to the United States?
- 3) What prevented Javier from coming to the United States?
- 4) What makes the Rio Grande River dangerous?

Activities:

- 1) Draw a picture of Javier and Michael playing catch across the Rio Grande River.
- 2) Using an English-Spanish dictionary, make up a sentence in Spanish.
- 3) Draw a map of the United States and Mexico with the Rio Grande River dividing the two countries.
- 4) Write a letter to the nearest Border Patrol office thanking them for risking their lives to guard the borders of our country.

My Brother, Javier

- 1) Why didn't Michael like the idea of starting a lawn service with Javier?
- 2) Why did Grady tell Krystal that Michael wanted Javier to go back to Mexico?
- 3) Why did the students laugh at Javier when he told them about his family in Mexico?
- 4) Why did Javier want to return to Mexico?

Activities:

- 1) Find Javier's hometown, Veracruz, on a map of Mexico.
- 2) Make nachos with tortilla chips, refried beans and cheese.
- 3) Listen to Mariachi music or watch a performance of ballet folklórico.
- 4) Write a story in which your family adopted Javier and he became your brother.