

Focus ON READING

Vocabulary

READING
COMPREHENSION

When Zachary Beaver
Came to Town

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ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Reproducible Activities

Focus Your Reading (continued)

Paulie Rankin acts like a **carnival barker**, someone who advertises at the entrance to a show. In this case, Zachary Beaver is the show.

Casey Kasem and **Wolfman Jack** were DJs on pop music stations.

Dry goods include clothing, fabrics, and other household items that are not hardware or groceries. A dry goods store is a general store.

Shriners are members of a men's group that supports charities.

Ebenezer **Scrooge** is the main character in Charles Dickens's novel *A Christmas Carol*. Scrooge is a miser, or someone who piles up his money and spends very little.

Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. How is Toby's family different from Cal's family?
2. How are Toby's parents different from each other?
3. How does Toby feel about Antler, Texas?
4. How important are dreams in life?
5. How do people react to Zachary Beaver?

Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

- Where is Toby's mother?
 - Amarillo
 - Nashville
 - Austin
- How did Cal get his black tooth?
 - from a football injury
 - from his sister hitting him
 - from a bicycle accident
- Who is Scarlett Stalling?
 - a beautiful girl who Toby likes
 - the next-door neighbor
 - a waitress at the Bowl-a-Rama
- Who is Juan?
 - the owner of the Bowl-a-Rama
 - Scarlett's boyfriend
 - Tara's babysitter
- What does Cal's brother Wayne write about in his letters from Vietnam?
 - home
 - the war
 - his girlfriend
- Why is Zachary Beaver on display?
 - He has a dog with two heads.
 - He has two heads.
 - He is the fattest boy in the world.
- What is noticeable about Zachary's trailer?
 - It is very clean.
 - It is very dirty.
 - It is painted black.
- Besides being the postmaster, what job does Toby's father do?
 - He is a cook at the Bowl-a-Rama.
 - He sells snow cones in the summer.
 - He is a worm farmer.
- What do people in town say about how Ferris got his limp?
 - that he shot himself in the leg to avoid going to war
 - that it was an accident that happened while he was cleaning his gun
 - that one of the sheriff's dogs injured him badly
- What does Toby keep track of on his calendar?
 - the days until his mother comes home
 - the days until he can release the ladybugs
 - the days until Wayne comes home

Check Your Understanding

Short Answer

Write a short answer for each question.

1. How did Toby's mother get to Nashville?
2. Why does Scarlett come over to Toby while he waits in line at the trailer?
3. What does Cal do when he gets into Zachary Beaver's trailer and sees him?
4. How does Zachary react when he realizes that Tara has had an accident in his trailer?
5. What does Miss Myrtie Mae ask Zachary Beaver?
6. What makes Juan different from the other boys?
7. Why has the number of people in Antler dropped?
8. What is the free entertainment at the Bowl-a-Rama?
9. From your reading so far, how is Toby like his father?
10. From your reading so far, how is Toby like his mother?

Focus Your Reading

Vocabulary Words to Know

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

averts—turns away (the eyes)

serial—happening in a series

postponed—put off until a later time

confess—admit to something

intimidating—frightening

offend—cause difficulty or discomfort

abandoned—left behind

orphan—a person without living parents

twinge—an emotional pang (pain)

eternity—endless time

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

The *Guinness Book of World Records* is a reference book that tells about all sorts of records. Many of the records are for strange behavior.

Proverbs is a collection of moral sayings that forms a book of Jewish and Christian Scripture. Ferris had once wanted to be a preacher, and he posts religious sayings from the Bible on the board at the Bowl-a-Rama.

Emphysema is a serious lung disease that makes it very difficult to breathe. It is often caused by smoking.

A **Sugar Daddy** is the brand name of a caramel lollipop.

Paulie Rankin is supposed to be Zachary's **legal guardian**. This means that Paulie has the legal responsibilities and rights related to taking care of Zachary.

Focus Your Reading

Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. Why is Toby uncomfortable talking about his Mom and the contest?
2. Why is Toby so interested in Wayne and his letters?
3. Why does Toby think that standing up for Zachary Beaver is different from fighting for himself?
4. How does the sheriff treat Zachary?
5. What is the relationship between Zachary and Paulie?

Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

- Why does Miss Myrtie Mae act surprised to see Toby and Cal in the library?
 - They do not know how to read.
 - They are usually afraid of her.
 - They haven't been to the library in at least ten years.
- Why do the boys go to the library?
 - They want to talk to Miss Myrtie Mae about her photos.
 - They want to check the *Guinness Book of World Records* to find out if Zachary Beaver really is the fattest boy in the world.
 - They want to ask Miss Myrtie Mae to visit Zachary Beaver.
- How does Miss Myrtie Mae know what the boys are looking for?
 - Many people have been looking for the *Guinness Book of World Records*.
 - Toby's father has told her.
 - Cal's brother Wayne wrote her a letter.
- What does Miss Myrtie Mae ask Otto if Toby may do?
 - mow her lawn
 - go with her to Nashville
 - check out some library books for Zachary
- What does Cal's sister Kate finally get after trying for a long time?
 - a date
 - a new Carole King album
 - her driver's license
- What item of Cal's does Toby keep?
 - a letter from Wayne
 - his bike
 - his baseball glove
- How does Zachary's window get broken?
 - Toby accidentally hits it with a rock while chasing away some kids who were bothering Zachary.
 - Cal breaks it while trying to look in the window at Zachary.
 - Some neighborhood kids throw rocks at the trailer and hit the window.
- What does Zachary claim he has done?
 - traveled widely
 - shot at cans
 - gone bowling
- What does Toby do rather than call his mother to find out when she is coming home?
 - He writes her a letter.
 - He writes to Wayne about it.
 - He imagines what life would be like for him on the road with her.
- What does Scarlett ask Toby to do when she finds him at the lake?
 - She asks him to give a message to Juan.
 - She asks him to dance.
 - She asks him to spray some bug spray on her to keep away the mosquitoes.

Check Your Understanding

Short Answer

Write a short answer for each question.

1. Why do you think Miss Myrtie Mae is protective of Zachary?
2. What is Toby's attitude toward fighting?
3. Why does it seem all right to Toby to fight for Zachary Beaver?
4. Why is Zachary rude to people, such as the sheriff, who are trying to help him?
5. Why is Zachary sure that Paulie will come back?
6. What leads Cal to think that Zachary has not been baptized?
7. Why do you think Toby writes to Wayne—and signs Cal's name?
8. Why does Toby not call his mother to find out when she plans to come home?
9. Why does Toby ride out to the lake after mailing the letter to Wayne?
10. On his way to the lake, Toby thinks of Antler as “this stinking town.” On his way home from the lake, he decides that he agrees with Wayne: “Antler is the best place on the face of the earth.” Why has his outlook changed so dramatically?

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Vocabulary Words to Know

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optimum—ideal; especially, the best condition for growing something

verdict—judgment

proceeds—moves forward along a course

daintily—gracefully

notify—to inform

pining—longing for something that cannot be had

traipse—to wander with a purpose

devour—to eat hungrily

despising—hating

dictate—to speak or read aloud for another person to record

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

A **tiara** is a jeweled or flowered headband or circle worn by women for formal wear.

A **gazebo** is an outdoor structure with a roof and, usually, open sides.

Scarlett wants to become a model or a **stewardess**. Nowadays, stewardesses are usually called flight attendants.

Toby's mom used to make him a breakfast that will “**stick to your ribs**.” This expression means a filling meal that will provide a lot of energy.

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Questions to Think About

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1. Why does Zachary insult Cal and Toby, who try to be friendly?
2. Why does Toby lie about the contest?
3. How important are places to the characters?
4. Toby's mother's dream is to become a country music singer. What is Toby's dream?
5. What has Toby's relationship with his father changed since his mother left for Nashville?