

Grade 3

Flora and Ulysses:
The Illuminated Adventures
by Kate DiCamillo

Novel Guide

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Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures

by Kate DiCamillo

Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures tells the story of Flora Belle Buckman, a “natural born cynic,” whose love of comic books and fighting evil makes her romance novel writing mother upset. An out of control birthday present leads Flora to become the sidekick to a superhero squirrel, and together they work to overcome evil.

Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures is part graphic novel, part chapter book, and completely entertaining. The quirky characters are funny and lovable in this unbelievable adventure.

Additional Resources

- If you like this book, you may enjoy other books that Kate DiCamillo has written. You might also like...
 - *Starry River of the Sky* by Grace Lin
 - *Ophelia and the Marvelous Boy* by Karen Foxlee
 - *Unusual Chickens for the Exceptional Poultry Farmer* by Kelly Jones
 - *The Year of Billy Miller* by Kevin Henkes
 - *The Secret of Platform 13* by Eva Ibbotson

- To learn more, you might look at these resources. Remember to get permission from an adult before using the Internet.
 - If you would like to learn more about families like yours, Welcoming Schools has lots of resources about all kinds of different families.
 - If you would like to learn more about how to help someone you love stop smoking, check out KidsHealth and Smarter Than Smoking.

Reading: Chapters 1-4

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) What did Mrs. Tickham receive from Mr. Tickham for her birthday?
- 2) What household items does the Ulysses vacuum up?
- 3) What does the vacuum cleaner suck up in the Tickham's backyard?
- 4) What does Mrs. Tickham think has happened to the squirrel?
- 5) Who helps Mrs. Tickham with the squirrel? How?
- 6) According to Flora, what does a squirrel taste like?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Flora describes Alfred T. Slipper, a janitor who transforms into Incandesto. Research other superheroes' ordinary, non-hero identities.
- 2) Flora knows CPR. Research the American Red Cross and CPR and create a comic that illustrates how to perform CPR on someone.

Imagine

- 1) Mrs. Tickham receives a vacuum for her birthday, and it goes crazy. Think about a present you have received. How could it have gone haywire? Use this as the beginning of a short, make-believe story.
- 2) Flora pictures the thought she has in bubbles above her head, like a character in a comic book. Create a comic strip about the thoughts you have as you begin to read this book.

- 3) The beginning of the book—the prologue—has no title. What would you title this section? Why would you select this title?

Observe

- 1) Is Mrs. Tickham excited to receive the Ulysses 2000X for her birthday? What evidence in the text lets the reader know this?
- 2) Flora's mother has her sign a contract that says that Flora will "work to turn her face away from the idiotic high jinks of comics and toward the bright light of true literature." How are Flora's ideas about what is worth reading similar to and different from her mom's ideas?
- 3) Flora thinks, "For a cynic, I am a surprisingly helpful person." Look up *cynic*, then explain why a helpful cynic would be surprising.
- 4) Flora likes to be called "Flora," but her mom prefers to call her "Flora Belle" even though Flora doesn't answer to it. Why do you think they each prefer their version of her name?
- 5) Flora says, "Watch out! You're going to vacuum up that squirrel!" She also sees the words hanging over her head and thinks about saying the words. All three of these instances are in a different writing style. Some are big, bold, and in the middle of the page, while others appear in italics or blend in with the rest of the paragraph. What does each style of writing mean in the novel?

Understand

- 1) Flora sometimes ignores her mother. Why might someone ignore another person, especially their mother?
- 2) Flora thinks it is good to prepare for unpredictable things. How do you decide what to prepare for? What is the difference between being prepared for a disaster and worrying about it?

Reading: Chapters 5-10

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) How does the squirrel shock Flora and Mrs. Tickham after he wakes?
- 2) Flora judges her parents' words, and her mom judges what Flora reads. Reread the sections about the contract from Flora's mom and about Flora's parents' arguments. What do the judgements have in common?
- 3) Why does the squirrel start noticing the beauty around him?
- 4) How does the squirrel get his name?
- 5) Who is Mary Ann?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Flora thinks Mrs. Tickham is having a seizure. What is a seizure? What are its symptoms, and how can you help someone having a seizure?
- 2) Mary Ann is a shepherdess. What would a typical day as a shepherd or shepherdess look like?
- 3) Flora's comics say "superheroes...were born of ridiculous and unlikely circumstances." List how different superheroes got their powers.

Imagine

- 1) The squirrel is somewhere else, somewhere where the light is beautiful, and then he returns. Using the description from this scene, draw an illustration of the squirrel in this other place.
- 2) Mary Ann has always looked to Flora as if she is "keeping some dark and terrible secret." What kind of dark, terrible secret could a lamp have? Compose a short story about the lamp and its secret.

- 3) How would the scene between Flora and her mom change if her mom had noticed the squirrel? Rewrite the scene to have her see Ulysses.
- 4) Look at the illustration of Flora holding Ulysses in Chapter 9. If you could write thought bubbles above each of their heads, what would you write? What do you think each one is thinking in this illustration? Use evidence from the illustration to support your answer.

Observe

- 1) Using a T-chart, compare what Flora's mother has said to or about Flora versus what she has said to or about Mary Ann. Whom does Flora's mom seem to prefer?
- 2) Mrs. Tickham does whatever Flora tells her to do. Look back through the text and compare Mrs. Tickham's actions to Flora's. Why might Mrs. Tickham follow the directions of a child?
- 3) Flora's mom says that she loves Mary Ann, her lamp, "with all my heart"; however, she has never said that about Flora, her daughter. Flora claims that she doesn't care whether her mom loves her or not. Is this true? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Understand

- 1) Flora feels very proud that she is able to bring the squirrel back with CPR. What makes you feel proud?
- 2) Flora's parents pretend to talk to Flora while arguing, using her to get back at each other. How might it feel if someone speaking to you was really trying to send a message to someone else?
- 3) Flora dislikes "the kind of idiotic words her parents spoke." What kinds of statements do you find idiotic?

Reading: Chapters 11-15

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) How is Ulysses suddenly able to communicate with and understand Flora?
- 2) Where is Flora's father?
- 3) What did Flora and her father do before her parents divorced?
- 4) What does Ulysses do in the middle of the night while Flora is sleeping?
- 5) Who is coming to visit Flora?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Alfred T. Slipper's pet parakeet, Dolores, can speak. How are parakeets able to speak? How do they learn to talk?
- 2) Flora's mom writes on a typewriter, not on a computer. Who invented the typewriter, when was it invented, and how does it work?

Imagine

- 1) If you were a superhero, what would your name be? What power would you choose for yourself and why?
- 2) Ulysses types a message on Flora's mom's typewriter. If you gained the power to communicate with another species, what would you say?
- 3) Flora knows that Ulysses is strong and can type, but she wonders what else he can do. What superpowers would you give Ulysses, and how would you have him fight evil?

Observe

- 1) Flora and her mother have a complex relationship. How do they feel about each other? Support your answer with evidence.
- 2) What is the mood or feeling in Flora's home? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- 3) Flora says that Ulysses did not look heroic sleeping on her pillow. Using a T-chart, write down on one side what Ulysses looks like based on the descriptions in the book, and on the other side write what physical qualities you think of when you think about more traditional superheroes. Does it matter what a superhero looks like? Why or why not?
- 4) The book says that ever since her parents' divorce, Flora's dad has become "sadder and quieter. Which was fine with Flora. Really." Based on these sentences, does it seem like Flora is really okay with her father being this way?
- 5) The illustration in Chapter 11, where Flora shows Ulysses how Alfred T. Slipper got his superpowers, is done in bird's eye view, which means the perspective looks down from above. How does an illustration with this viewpoint affect readers?

Understand

- 1) Flora's mom doesn't always treat her the way she wants to be treated. List at least five ways you would like people to treat you.
- 2) Why would someone say they are okay with something, even if they are not?

Reading: Chapters 16-19

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Who is ringing the doorbell at Flora's house, and why are they there?
- 2) Why do Tootie and Flora's mother scream?
- 3) Flora's mother doesn't want anyone to touch Ulysses. Why not?
- 4) Someone else rings the doorbell to Flora's house. Who is he, and what does he want?
- 5) Tootie, Flora, and William Spiver say they are going to return Ulysses to the wild. Where do they really go and what do they do there?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) William Spiver claims to be temporarily blind. People with visual disabilities have many things they can learn, use, or do to help them better adapt to the world. Research the resources available to those living with vision loss.
- 2) Flora's mother thinks that Ulysses has rabies. What is rabies, how is it transferred from animals to people, and how is it treated?
- 3) Ulysses is an ordinary squirrel with powers that enable him to fly. There are, however, flying squirrels. Research them to find out where they are found and how they fly.

Imagine

- 1) So far, the setting for the story has included Flora's house, Tootie's house, and Tootie's backyard. Use details from the story to create a map or diagram of the setting. Be sure to label your diagram so that others can read it.
- 2) The reader gets a great deal from the novel about what Flora and William Spiver are thinking and feeling on their walk along the road, but what about Tootie Tickham? Write a scene about what Tootie thinks and feels during this time.
- 3) Chapter 16 includes an illustration of Ulysses perched on top of Mary Ann. Describe the looks on each character's face. What do you think each of them would say in this moment if they were able to speak?

Observe

- 1) Flora and William Spiver are two of the main characters in the novel. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast their similarities and differences. Are these two characters more alike or more different? Be prepared to defend your conclusion with evidence from the text.
- 2) Flora describes William Spiver as "unnecessarily cryptic." Using a dictionary, determine what Flora means by this and then give examples of William Spiver's behavior that support this description.
- 3) William Spiver has come to live with his Great Aunt Tootie. How does Tootie feel about William Spiver's arrival compared to how Flora's mother feels about it?

Understand

- 1) Flora's mother describes Flora as "lonely" and "strange." How would it feel to have someone who is closest to you describe you in this way?
- 2) Flora thinks that "the world was a treacherous place when you *could* see." Why might the world feel treacherous to someone?

Reading: Chapters 20-24

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) How does Tootie react to Ulysses's poem?
- 2) Why does Flora try to remove William Spiver's glasses?
- 3) Why does Flora return home?
- 4) When Flora goes upstairs to change out of her pajamas, she stops at the landing. What does she pretend to be, and what is she doing?
- 5) What does Flora's mom ask Flora's dad to do?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Every hero has an arch-nemesis. List several superheroes. For each one, research their arch-nemesis and list the arch-nemesis's powers.
- 2) Ulysses has written poetry. Flora thinks the last line of the poem is literal, but William Spiver thinks it is figurative. Find a poem with a phrase or line that can be either literal or figurative.

Imagine

- 1) Ulysses writes a poem about the things he loves. What things do you love? Write a poem about them.
- 2) The Amazing Incandesto's arch-nemesis is the Darkness of 10,000 Hands. Draw what you think this villain looks like and what superpowers it might have.

- 3) Flora's father is described as possibly "the world's loneliest man." What would a day in the life of the world's loneliest man be like?

Observe

- 1) How would you describe the relationship between Flora's mom and Flora's dad? Use evidence from the text to support your description.
- 2) Compare the piece of writing Ulysses made on Flora's mother's typewriter to the second piece of writing he wrote on Tootie's computer. Why is each piece of writing important? Is one more important than the other, or are they both of equal importance?
- 3) Chapter 23 includes a picture of Flora's mother and father. Compare and contrast how these two characters appear in the illustration. How would you describe each of them, based on how they are drawn?

Understand

- 1) Flora believes that her father is deeply lonely. How could someone who is lonely begin to change their situation? What could they do to build relationships with others?
- 2) Flora was lonely until Ulysses showed up in her life. Who do you have in your life that keeps you from feeling lonely?
- 3) *The Criminal Element* states that "All words at all times, true or false, whispered or shouted are clues to the inner workings of the human heart." Do you agree with this statement? Are words always a direct reflection of what someone thinks or how they feel?

Reading: Chapters 25-28

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Where does Flora keep Ulysses while on her visit with her father?
- 2) What is George Buckman's "annoying and extremely persistent habit"?
- 3) What does Tootie read to Ulysses?
- 4) How does George Buckman avoid answering questions?
- 5) Why does Flora agree to go to a restaurant for breakfast?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Rainer Maria Rilke was a famous German poet. Research him, his life, and his poetry.
- 2) When Flora, Ulysses, and George Buckman arrive at the restaurant, there is a sign outside that says "Giant Do-Nuts Inside." Research donuts. Where did they originate, how are they made, and what are some of the most popular donuts?

Imagine

- 1) Ulysses believes he can "smell the blue of the sky." What would this smell like? Write a description about what sky blue smells like, or challenge yourself and put your description in the form of a poem.
- 2) When Flora sees the sign outside of the restaurant, a giant donut being dunked into a giant cup of coffee, she wonders, "Who is doing the dunking?" Create an explanation or write a story about the individual behind the dunking of the donut.

Observe

- 1) Some of the chapters in the book are written from Flora's point of view, while others are written from Ulysses's point of view. What information do we learn by having Ulysses's point of view that we can't get from Flora's point of view alone?
- 2) Reread the lines from the Rilke poem that Tootie shares with Ulysses. Ulysses identifies with the poem's line "Flare up like flame!" How does it apply to Ulysses? Why might it be important to him?
- 3) Look at the image of Flora carrying Ulysses in his shoebox in Chapter 28. What is the feeling or mood of the illustration? How does the illustrator create this mood through his picture?

Understand

- 1) Thinking about seal blubber cheers Flora up. What cheers you up when you are upset about something?
- 2) In Chapter 25, Flora considers the "random and confusing nature of the universe." When have you felt confused about the world, and what did you do about that confusion?
- 3) Ulysses's world in its "smelly glory" includes raccoons, trashcans, and earthworms. What is the "smelly glory" of the world in which you live? What smells bring you joy?

Reading: Chapters 29-34

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) How and why does Rita set off a chain of events in the restaurant?
- 2) How does Ulysses respond when Rita screams?
- 3) What does Flora say to Ulysses to change his response?
- 4) Ulysses changes his action. Instead of hiding, what does he do and why does he stop?
- 5) Where do Flora and her father go after leaving the restaurant?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) The “calm before the storm” is not just a metaphor, it is a real thing that sometimes happens before severe weather strikes. Research the calm before the storm, why it happens, and what conditions are present to allow it to happen.
- 2) Flora thinks Rita looks like Marie Antoinette. Use the resources your teacher provides to research Marie Antoinette. Does Rita resemble her? Would Marie Antoinette have made a good waitress?

Imagine

- 1) Using details from the text, draw a scene from the restaurant that is not already illustrated in the novel.
- 2) How would the restaurant scene change if Ulysses stayed in his box?
- 3) Write a journal entry of the day so far from Mr. Buckman's point of view.

Observe

- 1) List the different situations in which Flora's father has introduced himself. What might he feel in each situation?
- 2) How does Flora's father behave before Ulysses does something amazing at the restaurant compared to after? How do his behaviors affect his relationship to Flora?
- 3) Create a timeline of major events in Chapters 29-34. How do they prove that Tootie Tickham is not "the victim of an extended hallucination"?
- 4) Look at the comic panels in Chapter 32. How do the people in the Giant Do-Nut respond to Ulysses's action?

Understand

- 1) Rita's screams frighten Ulysses. How do you calm yourself down when you are scared?
- 2) Flora gives Ulysses good advice when he needs help. What is the best piece of advice you've received, and who gave it to you?
- 3) Ulysses recalls who he is in a stressful situation. What would you remember about yourself in a stressful situation?

Reading: Chapters 35-38

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) What is the Blixen Arms, and why do people run through it?
- 2) Where does Flora go to get help for Ulysses?
- 3) What kind of doctor is Dr. Meescham?
- 4) How does Dr. Meescham help Flora and Ulysses?
- 5) What kinds of things does Dr. Meescham tell Flora about Blundermeecen?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Dr. Meescham hopes her husband is singing something from Mozart, wherever he is. Research Mozart, his life, and his music.
- 2) Dr. Meescham uses a magnifying glass to help her see Ulysses better. How does a magnifying glass work, who invented it, and what is the science behind it?
- 3) Flora learns that the giant squid may be the world's loneliest creature. Research the giant squid. Where does it live, how long does it live, and why might it be lonely?
- 4) Flora and Ulysses may have a concussion, amnesia, and/or shock. Research the signs and symptoms of one of these conditions.

Imagine

- 1) A euphemism is a kinder, gentler way to say something. For example, Dr. Meescham says her husband “has passed away” instead of died. Think of three euphemisms you have heard or create three new ones.
- 2) When Flora’s father goes into his apartment, he says “I’ll join you in a bit,” and he is still laughing softly. Write a scene about what he is doing at his apartment while Flora is at Dr. Meescham’s.
- 3) Using just the illustration of Dr. Meescham and her apartment from Chapter 36, what inferences can you make about her? What does she value? What kind of person is she?

Observe

- 1) Reread the parts of the chapters that talk about the Blixen Arms. What is the mood there? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- 2) How can Dr. Meescham describe Flora when they have never met?
- 3) Using a Venn diagram, compare Flora’s interpretation of the giant squid painting with Dr. Meescham’s interpretation of it. How can two people look at the same thing and see something completely different?
- 4) How do *The Criminal Element Is Among Us* and *Terrible Things Can Happen to You!* shape how Flora thinks about the events of her life?
- 5) Compare Flora’s comics to her mother’s romance novels. How are they similar and how are they different? Is one better than the other?

Understand

- 1) Ulysses awakes and finds “he had stopped worrying.” How would your life be different if you didn’t worry about anything?
- 2) Dr. Meescham says, “Sometimes, it is safer not to see.” What does she mean? Why might someone find it safer not to be able to see?

Reading: Chapters 39-43

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) What kinds of things does Flora learn about Dr. Meescham's horsehair sofa?
- 2) How does Dr. Meescham respond when Flora tells her she is a cynic?
- 3) How does Ulysses prove that he is a superhero?
- 4) Look at the illustration in Chapter 41. What is the mood inside George Buckman's car? What details from the picture support your answer?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Flora feels the beating of Ulysses's and her father's hearts in the car. Research to find out what you can about the heart. What body system is it a part of, what is its job, and what causes the heartbeat sound?
- 2) When Dr. Meescham was a girl, she spent her days knitting. What can you find out about this craft? What tools are needed, and what kinds of things do people usually knit?

Imagine

- 1) Dr. Meescham talks a lot about Blundermeecen. She says the gloom was always descending, there were trolls for whom she knitted outfits, and there were dark woods. Use what you know about Blundermeecen to write a story about Dr. Meescham when she was a girl.
- 2) Create a map of Blundermeecen. Illustrate it with all of the things and places that Dr. Meescham has spoken of in the last several chapters.

Observe

- 1) When people in Blundermeecen leave each other, they say, “I promise to always turn back toward you.” How is this different from goodbye or other similar farewells?
- 2) Dr. Meescham describes George Buckman as being “capacious of heart.” Using the definition in the novel, review the thoughts and actions of the other characters in the book, including Flora, her mother, Ulysses, Tootie, William Spiver, and Dr. Meescham. Who is and who is not “capacious of heart” and why?
- 3) As Flora, Ulysses, and her father pull up to Flora’s home, she has a sense of foreboding. Compare how she felt about her home prior to Ulysses’s arrival to how she feels now. What is different for Flora personally now?
- 4) Flora says that she is a cynic. Is this true? Support your decision with details from the book.
- 5) When Flora returns home, she finds William Spiver in the kitchen with her mom. Why is he helping Flora’s mother work on her romance novel? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Understand

- 1) Dr. Meescham says that she has nothing to lose by believing in something that gives her hope and makes her happy. What do you choose to believe in that makes you happy, regardless of whether or not it is real?
- 2) Blundermeecen seems like a pretty unbelievable place. If it is not real, why might someone make up such a detailed and extraordinary tale about their past?

Reading: Chapters 44-48

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Flora's mother gets angry with Flora's father for not handling the "squirrel situation." How does Flora respond?
- 2) How does Flora's mother respond when Flora tells her where she wants to live?
- 3) What does Flora mean when she says that William Spiver's words "make her heart squinch up?"
- 4) What does Ulysses do to cheer up Flora?
- 5) Why is William Spiver at his Great Aunt Tootie's house?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) William Spiver is interested in dwarf stars, quarks, black holes, and the expanding universe. Research one of these celestial features.
- 2) William Spiver's father played piano. Research the piano. When was it invented, who invented it, and how does it work?

Imagine

- 1) William Spiver likes science fiction stories. Create a science fiction story of your own that William Spiver would like to read.
- 2) Flora's mother changes after she sees Ulysses in action. Pretend you are Flora's mother, and write an entry in your journal about the experience.

- 3) William Spiver's father died, and his mother has remarried. What do you think William Spiver would say to his father if he could? Write a letter from William Spiver to his father.
- 4) Chapter 44 includes an image of Flora confronting her mother. The image presents things from Flora's point of view. What would the image show if it was from Flora's mother's point of view? What emotions do you think would be on the faces of Flora and Ulysses?

Observe

- 1) Flora calls her heart "treacherous." Look up the definition of the word *treacherous* and, using support from the text, explain why she describes her heart this way.
- 2) What evidence from the text shows that Tyrone does not respect William Spiver?

Understand

- 1) There are times when our brain tells us one thing and our heart tells us another. How do you know what to do or what decision to make when your head and your heart tell you two different things?
- 2) Sometimes, people say hurtful things to the people they love. How might you handle it if someone you love said something hurtful to you?
- 3) William Spiver is having trouble getting along with Tyrone. What are some things an adult who is new to your life could do to get to know you and make you feel cared for and appreciated?
- 4) Flora and William Spiver both feel strongly about what the people in their lives call them. Why does it matter what we call people?

Reading: Chapters 49-52

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Flora finds several things about her mother and father's appearance in the kitchen alarming. What are they?
- 2) How does Flora's dad respond when she asks if she can live with him?
- 3) Why does Flora think her mother might be possessed?
- 4) How does Flora feel after her mother goes to lie down for the evening?
- 5) What does Ulysses do after Flora goes to bed for the night, and how would Flora feel about it?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) *Terrible Things Can Happen to You!* tells about how people acting strangely have been thought to be possessed by aliens. Do aliens exist? Research to find out.
- 2) Flora worries that her mother's smoking may lead to a fire. Research fire prevention and safety. What are some of the best ways to prevent a fire, and if one does occur, what actions should one take?

Imagine

- 1) Ulysses hasn't written another poem, but he makes a list of words that are meaningful to him that he'd like to turn into a poem. Using as many of Ulysses's words as you can, create a poem that would make sense to Flora.

- 2) Flora personifies Mary Ann, giving the lamp thoughts and feelings of her own, as though she were human. Pretend she is human, and write an account of the day from Mary Ann's point of view.

Observe

- 1) Compare and contrast how Ulysses's presence has affected George Buckman versus how it has affected Phyllis Buckman. Why do you think their responses are so different?
- 2) George Buckman says that he thinks that Flora's mother has lost her ability to say what she means. Look back through the text and think about why she might have stopped communicating clearly. For example, how might her job have affected her ability to say what she means?
- 3) Chapter 51 includes an illustration depicting dinner at the Buckman house. The illustrator has only shown pieces of each character. What does the illustration suggest about each character?

Understand

- 1) Flora's mother states that she is under a lot of pressure and that it seemed the wrong time to quit smoking. What are some better, healthier ways to cope when feeling stress and pressure?
- 2) Flora's father asks Flora to give her mother another chance. What are the potential rewards and consequences of opening yourself up again to someone who has hurt you?
- 3) Ulysses, in thinking about all the things he'd like to write about, struggles to find the right words for some of the things he'd like to describe. Have you ever struggled to find the words for something you wanted to say? If so, how did you solve that problem?

Reading: Chapters 53-57

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Why would Flora name her dream's river "the Incandesto"?
- 2) Ulysses feels uncomfortable at the typewriter, like he's being watched. Who does he think is watching? Who does it turn out to be?
- 3) Summarize the message that Flora's mother forces Ulysses to type.
- 4) How does Flora know the typed words aren't from Ulysses?
- 5) Who does Flora ask for help, and who comes to the rescue?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Flora dreams that William Spiver compares the universe to an accordion. Who invented the accordion? When and where? How does it work?
- 2) Ulysses takes dictation from Flora's mother. Some people learn shorthand, a code for writing quickly. Research dictation and shorthand and write a sentence in shorthand.

Imagine

- 1) Ulysses decides the words Phyllis has him write have no joy or love. Write something with no joy or love. Then revise to include joy and love. Which words or changes show those emotions?

- 2) Flora believes she is in the middle of an emergency, but William Spiver believes he has time to express himself and get his bathrobe. Rewrite the scene between Flora and William Spiver, but this time have them communicate with each other in a way that is clear, calm, and leaves neither one of them frustrated.

Observe

- 1) When Flora's mother appears in the kitchen, she is no longer a robotic version of herself, but a full-fledged arch-nemesis. Contrast Flora's mother before she goes upstairs to when she finds Ulysses at her typewriter again. How is she different?
- 2) How have Flora's feelings about William Spiver changed over time?

Understand

- 1) Flora dreams of sitting by a river, holding William Spiver's hand, and feeling happy. What setting would make you happy? Who would be there? What would you be doing?
- 2) Flora realizes she loves Ulysses, and she is upset that she never told him. What important things do you need to say? To whom?
- 3) When in danger, Flora's comics suggest finding "a safe port in a storm." Whom do you trust? To whom do you go when things are difficult, and how does that person help you?
- 4) Ulysses feels as if he is made of stone and cannot move, much like William Spiver felt as if his sunglasses were glued to his head. Why might someone feel frozen when they need to do something?
- 5) Flora believes that her mother loves Mary Ann more than she loves Flora. What does it say about someone that the thing they love the most in the world is an object?

Reading: Chapters 58-62

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Phyllis Buckman tells Ulysses that she doesn't want Flora to grow up unloved and lonely. Why does Flora's mother care if Flora grows up unloved and lonely? Do her actions match her feelings?
- 2) What words inspire Ulysses into action in the woods, and how does he act?
- 3) What did William Spiver do to get himself banished?
- 4) Where does Flora want to go, and whom does Ulysses see through the darkness?
- 5) As William Spiver explains how he was banished by his mother, Tootie interrupts with her version of the story. Why do they have different versions?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Flora describes a few strategies to find your way when you are lost. Research ways to navigate without technology.
- 2) William Spiver would prefer if they rescued Ulysses in a logical, methodical, and scientific way. Research the scientific method and list the steps of the process.

Imagine

- 1) William Spiver is upset that he was banished by his mother. Write a letter from William Spiver to his mother, telling her how he feels.
- 2) William Spiver was banished for his irrevocable actions. Write an extra scene for the novel about what William Spiver did and how he did it.

Observe

- 1) Flora wishes that William Spiver would say something “meaningful and helpful.” Reread Flora’s encounters with William Spiver. When has he said things that have affected her in a meaningful way, and what were they?
- 2) How are William Spiver’s emotions about being banished like drowning? How does holding on to Flora’s hand help?
- 3) Look at the comic strip panel in Chapter 60. How do the words and images work together in this section?

Understand

- 1) Both William Spiver’s mother and Flora’s mother have banished their children when they were upset. Why do people sometimes choose to push others away when they are angry or hurt?
- 2) Flora tries to keep herself from hoping but admits she has been hoping the whole time. Why might someone not want to hope or think about good things that could happen?

Reading: Chapters 63-Epilogue

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) What is Dr. Meescham's plan for Ulysses?
- 2) What miracle happens as the group walks along the road?
- 3) When Flora knocks on the door to her father's apartment, he doesn't answer. Where is he, and who is with him?
- 4) What is the first thing Flora says when she finally gets Ulysses into her arms?
- 5) Flora's mother comes to the Blixen Arms. Who does Flora think she's there to get? Who is Flora's mother really there to see?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) What other places have a "sepulchral gloom," other than the hallway of the Blixen Arms?
- 2) Flora's father and Dr. Meescham refer to Flora as a flower. If she were a flower, what kind of flower would she be? Why?

Imagine

- 1) Write the scene of Flora's mother returning to the house to find that Flora is not there. What would Phyllis have said and done?
- 2) Ulysses writes a poem based on words and phrases he hears throughout the day. Craft words and phrases from your day into a poem.

- 3) What do you think happens after the poetry reading? Do you think Flora's relationship with her mom changes? Do you think Flora's mom and dad get back together? Write a scene that takes place one month later, and tell what has happened to each of the characters since the end of the novel.
- 4) Chapter 67 illustrates the book's major characters. Use thought bubbles to show each character's thoughts about others or Ulysses's poem.

Observe

- 1) How do Phyllis's personality and behavior change over the course of the novel?
- 2) William Spiver tells Flora why he was banished. Shortly after, he regains his sight and begins to act differently. Compare his behavior before and after his glasses get broken. How has telling Flora about his actions helped him?
- 3) Ulysses goes to Dr. Meescham for help. Review the last time he was with her. Why would he go to her for help? Support your explanation with examples from the text.
- 4) How does Flora change over the course of the novel? Use evidence from the text to support your response.
- 5) William Spiver doubts that Flora will ever know what happened to Ulysses. Why might the truth be hard to establish in this situation?

Understand

- 1) Flora is complimented in Chapter 65. What compliments have you gotten?
- 2) Dr. Meescham leaves her window open for something wonderful to make its way into her life. How can you "leave a window open," and what would like to enter your life?
- 3) Flora filters everything that happens to her through her comics. Is this a good way to live? Why or why not?

Dear Family Member,

Your child has been assigned a Fluency Performance Passage in conjunction with the texts we are studying in class. This passage will be introduced in class, and students will spend several lessons practicing reading this passage aloud. On the fifth day, students will perform a reading of this passage. We follow this routine because repeated readings of text help build reading fluency, which includes automatic word recognition, expression, accuracy, and speed. Additionally, over one hundred studies have shown that deep reading, in which students spend time reading and rereading a single text, has a dramatic impact on reading comprehension. In fact, it is such an important impact that it helps students better comprehend the passage they have practiced as well as passages they will read in the future.

As part of our in-class practice, students study and discuss this passage. I will demonstrate different ways of reading it aloud, and students will analyze what makes a good reading. They will also practice reading this passage aloud in various ways.

You can assist your child by asking him or her to read the passage aloud at home. Even if your child remembers some or all of the words, remind him or her to read the passage rather than recite it from memory. Children may practice by reading to family members, caregivers, or even the family pet. Please log each reading your child completes in the Happy Hearers Log, which accompanies this letter.

Thank you for your help!

Happy Hearers Log

An important way to prepare for your Fluency Passage Performance is to practice reading the passage to others. They may be your parents, your siblings, another family member or friend, or even the family pet. Whoever they are, they're sure to be a Happy Hearer when they get to listen to you read your passage!

Each time you practice reading your Fluency Passage to a listener at home, record it in the Happy Hearers Log.

Day of the reading	Name of the Happy Hearer	Notes

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