

Grade 3

Flora and Ulysses:
The Illuminated Adventures
by Kate DiCamillo

Novel Guide

ISBN 978-1-68391-726-7

© 2019 Amplify Education, Inc., and its licensors
www.amplify.com

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, transcribed, stored in a retrieval system, or translated into any other language in any form or by any means without the written permission of Amplify Education, Inc.

Core Knowledge Language Arts and CKLA are trademarks of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

Trademarks and trade names are shown in this book strictly for illustrative and educational purposes and are the property of their respective owners. References herein should not be regarded as affecting the validity of said trademarks and trade names.

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to the Amplify CKLA novel study guide for *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*. We know that you do a nearly impossible job, and we hope this guide helps make that job a little easier.

This guide contains nearly everything needed to facilitate a novel study—the only thing you will supply is the book. This novel study will help your students grow in their reading abilities and their enjoyment of authentic texts, but—crucially—it will also help them grow as individuals. *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* will challenge students to be true to themselves in spite of how the world may view them, believe in the impossible, and develop and deepen their relationships with others.

They will also, of course, develop their skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. Each set of activities offers opportunities for students to practice each skill, and activities are designed for flexible implementation and differentiation. The following pages contain more detail about how to use this guide.

Thanks for all you do to enhance and enrich the lives of students.

The **Amplify**CKLA Team

About the Book

Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures, published by Candlewick Press in 2013, is a novel by Kate DiCamillo. It has earned the following recognition:

- Newbery Medal recipient 2014
- National Book Award Longlist for Young People's Literature 2013
- Guardian Children's Fiction Prize Shortlist 2014

Why We Selected It

Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures tells the story of Flora Belle Buckman, a self-proclaimed “natural born cynic” whose love of comic books and thwarting evil has her at odds with her romance novel-writing mother. When a birthday present goes haywire, Flora becomes sidekick to a superhero of her own, and together they work to identify and overcome an arch-nemesis.

Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures relies heavily on comic book-style scenes, making it entertaining for a wide range of readers. Students will fall in love with the quirky characters while at the same time suspending their disbelief for an unbelievable adventure.

About the Author

Kate DiCamillo is the author of several novels, chapter books, picture books, and short stories. As a child, she suffered from chronic pneumonia, which caused her family to move to Florida. DiCamillo spent hours in bed, reading and observing others. In 1994, she moved to Minnesota, where she worked in a book warehouse and developed a love for children's fiction. Her first novel, *Because of Winn Dixie*, won a Newbery Honor and solidified her path as a writer.

Connections to CKLA Domains

A core foundation of Amplify CKLA is developing content connections throughout all units and domains, within and across grades. As students work through *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*, you may choose to relate the subject matter to the following domains Amplify CKLA students have encountered previously and/or make references to future domains.

- Grade 1, Domain 6, *Astronomy*
- Grade 1, Domain 8, *Animals and Habitats*
- Grade 1, Domain 9, *Fairy Tales*
- Grade 2, Domain 1, *Fairy Tales and Tall Tales*
- Grade 3, Unit 7, *Astronomy*
- Grade 4, Unit 3, *Poetry*
- Grade 4, Unit 6, *Contemporary Fiction with Excerpts from The House on Mango Street*
- Grade 5, Unit 3, *Poetry*

Things to Know

A few themes throughout *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* may provoke strong emotional responses in students. These are opportunities to offer students information for coping and the strategies for developing social-emotional learning capacities.

- Flora's mother and father are divorced.
- Flora's mother struggles to quit smoking cigarettes.
- William Spiver's father died, and due to new family dynamics, he has been sent to live with a relative.
- This book includes some harsh language spoken by various characters, including the word "idiotic."

Additional Resources

As students read this book, you may wish to facilitate discussions of family dynamics and addiction. The following resources may aid in your preparation and help further your own understanding of the subjects.

- **Welcoming Schools**, a project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, has many opportunities for incorporating family diversity into the classroom. Their resources include checklists, lesson plans, and children's book selections that reflect almost every home situation imaginable.
- **KidsHealth** and **Smarter Than Smoking** both offer tips for parents, educators, and students about the dangers of smoking and how to quit.

If students finish the book early, or if they enjoy it and want to read further, they may enjoy some of Kate DiCamillo's other novels, as well as the following recommendations, which are also located in the "Student Resources" Blackline Master. We recommend that you review texts and use your discretion to choose those that will be most effective and appropriate for your classroom.

- *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

Implementing Novel Study

Amplify CKLA novel studies are designed for flexible implementation. They may be used for an entire class, or they may be assigned to individuals or groups of students. The following list contains some possible scenarios for implementing a novel study:

- **Dedicated classroom reading time**—Many schools have dedicated reading time set aside throughout the school day or week.
- **Enrichment or extension**—Students in need of an additional challenge may benefit from the novel study materials, which they may pursue independently if desired.

- **Gifted and Talented Instruction**—Novel studies may be used in pull-out time for students.
- **After-school or summer programs**—Students in these programs may benefit from novel study, as it offers engaging and flexible materials designed around authentic texts.
- **Flex unit**—Teachers who already designate some classroom time to novel study may enjoy having more text options without having to create their own scaffolding.
- **Post-Assessment unit**—Novel studies offer a way to capitalize on classroom time after high-stakes assessments without leaving students burned out on learning.



In the Classroom

For each reading selection, this guide contains a Blackline Master of activities, divided into five categories.

- **Ask** contains questions for discussion, reflection, or brief written responses. These questions cover information all students should understand as they read the text.
- **Explore** offers students brief research opportunities centered around items mentioned in the text. These opportunities help students build background knowledge and deepen their understanding of what they have read. If you would like to assign students activities from this category, assemble resource materials for them to consult as they research.
- **Imagine** activities allow students to use creativity to develop themes and ideas from the text through further reflection. They may write new scenes, explore character motivation, visualize a setting from the text, or consider how they would respond to characters' ideas.
- **Observe** prompts students to take notes or make other kinds of observations about what they have read. Students analyze characters' conclusions, explore the use of text features, make Venn diagrams and T-charts, and use other forms to gather and interpret information.
- **Understand** questions push students to explore Social-Emotional Learning connections to the text. Sometimes they consider a character's emotional or behavioral response, weighing possible alternative actions a character could have taken. At other times,

students reflect on their own understanding of and response to challenging situations or experiences. These questions, which we recommend a teacher facilitate, offer a springboard to help students develop social-emotional learning competencies.

These activities are designed for customization and flexible implementation to best fit your students' needs. They may be conducted as whole- or small-group activities, or students can pursue them individually or with a partner. Teachers may wish to have students respond to the activities in writing, orally, or in other formats (such as multimedia).

Although teachers may use discretion to have students write about or discuss any of the prompts, those marked with  are particularly well-suited for writing, while those marked with  are especially useful for discussion.

Students who are ready for a challenge may complete each type of activity for every set of assignments; however, this is not a requirement. We suggest that students always start with the “Ask” activities to ensure that they understand a sufficient portion of the text. Then teachers may allow students to customize their experience with the book. If a student needs to build confidence, you may wish to assign them the activity type with which they are most comfortable. Conversely, you may wish to help students build particular skills by focusing on an activity type that targets those skills. We do suggest that students attempt each activity type at least once throughout the novel study experience.

Many of these questions are designed to be open-ended; however, questions for which specific answers exist have those answers provided in the Answer Keys located in the Teacher Resource section of this guide.

Fluency Practice

Students who need additional practice in fluency may benefit from any of the following options.

- **Read-Alouds**—Ask students to read the text aloud. This may be employed as a routine part of reading and works well in a whole- or small-group setting. Students may read chorally or individually.
- **At-Home practice**—If classroom policies allow, students may take the novel home to read aloud to a family member, pet, or any other listener.

- **Performance**—Students should pick (or you may assign) a passage from the text that they will practice reading, then read aloud to the class or other audience. We recommend a short passage of approximately 150 words. In this performance, students should read the text rather than memorizing it; reading, rather than reciting, is an important criterion of fluency practice.
- **Five-Day Fluency Routine**—Have students practice the Amplify CKLA Five-Day Fluency Routine with a passage from the text. We recommend a short passage of approximately 150 words for this routine. A detailed description of this routine appears near the end of this guide.

Vocabulary Acquisition

Students may use any of the following strategies to develop their vocabulary during the novel study.

- **Vocabulary notebooks**—Students may list unfamiliar words they encounter in the text, then research and record definitions for those words.
- **Amplify Vocabulary App**—Students may gain additional vocabulary knowledge through the Amplify Vocabulary App.

Additional Prompts for Longer Assignments

The following suggestions pertain to longer assignments you may wish to assign in conjunction with this text.

Writing

- **Narrative Writing:** Over the course of *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*, our heroes work to overcome evil. Create a new adventure for Flora and Ulysses that features a new arch-nemesis for Ulysses to battle. What is the arch-nemesis after? What problem is he or she causing, and how do Flora and Ulysses work together to vanquish this villain?
- **Informative Writing:** *Terrible Things Can Happen to You!* gives extensive critical advice, including how to survive in the South Pole, how to administer CPR and the Heimlich Maneuver, and how to stall. Create your own version of *Terrible Things Can Happen to You!* Research several different emergency situations and give real, researched suggestions on how to survive them.

- **Opinion Writing:** After reading the novel, do you believe Blundermeecen is real or make-believe? Use evidence from the text to support your opinion.
- **Opinion Writing:** Which is better, romance novels or comics? Make a claim and support your opinion with evidence from the text.
- **Writing about Literature:** After reading *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* by Kate DiCamillo, what do you think is the main idea the author is trying to get across? Is there a moral or a lesson to be learned? What details does DiCamillo put in the novel that show this main idea? Write a five-paragraph essay describing the lessons you believe the author is trying to communicate to her readers, as well as details from the text that support that belief.

Research

Ask students to research in depth a question they have derived from a topic in the text, using resources found in the classroom, school library, or (with proper supervision) the Internet. Students may share their research in different ways—writing reports, recommending changes they would like to see in their community based on what they have learned, poster presentations, short presentations to peers or community members, a blog post or school newspaper article, and so on. It is important to help students determine an appropriate application and venue for their research.

Potential research questions include:

- Flora's mom writes romance novels on a typewriter. Have students research the history of printing, from movable type to the present day.
- Heroes are a big part of our culture. Who are some of the first widely known heroes? How does having heroes in the world make our lives better?

Performance Task

One idea of a culminating activity for students after they finish reading the novel is to have them create a podcast to discuss the novel. The purpose of this activity is to have students facilitate an intelligent discussion about the book and its elements. If resources are not available to do a voice-only recording, students could also do a video-based podcast. Students should come up with a catchy name for their podcast as well as an introduction. They should include their initial thoughts about the novel and how they changed (or didn't) over the course of the book. They should also discuss key elements of the text, such as the characters, setting, plot, theme, and style of the book.

In addition to the items above, students may also choose to include information about the author, a recommendation or rating system for the text, and a possible discussion of how aspects of the novel connect to other texts, current or historical events, and/or the lives of the members of the group in meaningful ways.

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?
» She received a Ulysses 2000X vacuum cleaner.
- 2) What household items does the Ulysses vacuum up?
» It vacuums up Mr. Tickham's pants, a book of poetry, and a box of snacks.
- 3) What does the vacuum cleaner suck up in the Tickham's backyard?
» It sucks up a squirrel.
- 4) What does Mrs. Tickham think has happened to the squirrel?
» She thinks it's dead and that she has killed it.
- 5) Who helps Mrs. Tickham with the squirrel? How?
» Flora comes to help the squirrel by giving it CPR.
- 6) According to Flora, what does a squirrel taste like?
» A squirrel tastes "fuzzy, damp, slightly nutty."

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.



Suggest that students write the steps down in order. Ask students to identify the most important part of each step, and suggest that they make the most important part the focus of each panel.

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?

Ask students to consider their thoughts about the cover, the summary from the back of the book, and the characters and plot so far.



Observe

- 1) Is Mrs. Tickham excited to receive the Ulysses 2000X for her birthday? What evidence in the text lets the reader know this?
 - » No, she isn't excited. She doesn't want to try it out, she goes back to reading her book, and she says, "Goody" and "For heaven's sake, Donald."
- 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?
 - » Their views are similar because neither of their genres represent classic literature, but they differ in that Flora enjoys the comics and the knowledge she gleans from them, while her mother views them as not real writing.
- 3) Flora thinks, "For a cynic, I am a surprisingly helpful person." Look up *cynic*, then explain why a helpful cynic would be surprising.
 - » A cynic is someone who doesn't trust others and who believes that people only do good or helpful things to get something for themselves. In this case, Flora is helping without hope for personal gain, which goes against the definition of the word.
- 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?
 - » Flora is serious and a cynic. She prefers the straightforward, no nonsense "Flora." Her mother is a romance novel writer, flowery and romantic, and prefers to think of her daughter as such, thus preferring "Flora Belle."

Ask students how they think Flora's mother sees Flora and how Flora sees herself.



- 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?

» The words in quotation marks are words Flora actually says. The bold, centered font is comic book style as she imagines herself in her own comic adventure. The words that are in italics are words she thinks.

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?



Ask students if they have ever prepared for an emergency that would not affect them in any way. For example, there have been very few hurricanes in Montana. Would people in Montana spend a lot of time preparing for a hurricane? Why or why not? If someone is preparing for a variety of emergencies and disasters, what might that mean?

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?
 - » He is able to lift the heavy vacuum cleaner over his head with one hand.
- 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?
 - » Flora thinks her parents speak "idiotic words" to each other, and her mother says that Flora's comics were full of "idiotic high jinks."
- 3) Why does the squirrel start noticing the beauty around him?
 - » Something happened when he got sucked up in the vacuum. He stopped breathing, was somewhere "beautiful," and came back with a new appreciation of the world.
- 4) How does the squirrel get his name?
 - » Flora names him Ulysses, after the vacuum cleaner that sucked him up.
- 5) Who is Mary Ann?
 - » She is the little shepherdess lamp Flora's mother bought.

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.



Instruct students that this story will be fictional. First have them decide on the secret Mary Ann is keeping. Then have them try to construct believable circumstances surrounding that secret.



Have students consider how their own parent or guardian would react if they walked into the kitchen cradling a squirrel in their arms.

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?
 - » About Mary Ann, she has said “she's so beautiful” and “I love her with all my heart.” About Flora, she has said, “It's hard to concentrate with you standing over me breathing like that” and “Don't be ridiculous.”
- 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?
 - » Mrs. Tickham lost control of the vacuum, ran over a squirrel, called for help, and kept repeating herself. Flora took control of the situation, performed CPR, and got the squirrel breathing again. She is calmer in a crisis.
- 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.



Have students reread Flora's description of the lamp, and use how Flora acts toward the lamp for evidence.

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?

Ask students if it's ever okay to use someone else to get what you want. How could you get what you want from someone in a positive way?



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?
 - » He was transformed after being sucked up by the vacuum and brought back by Flora.
- 2) Where is Flora's father?
 - » Her parents divorced, and he now lives in an apartment.
- 3) What did Flora and her father do before her parents divorced?
 - » Her father used to read *The Illuminated Adventures of the Amazing Incandesto* out loud to her.
- 4) What does Ulysses do in the middle of the night while Flora is sleeping?
 - » He goes downstairs into the kitchen. He eats a bag of cheese puffs and types on Flora's mom's typewriter.
- 5) Who is coming to visit Flora?
 - » Her dad is coming over to see 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?



Have students imagine this is the first time anyone has ever communicated with this species. What would they consider the most important information to communicate to someone else?

- 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?
 - » It allows the reader to feel as if he or she is there, looking at the comic with Flora and Ulysses.

Have students find examples of things Flora and her mother have said (and not said) to each other, as well as the way they have said them.

Direct students to the description of the doorbell ringing, as well as how Flora feels about the things and people within her home, to construct their response.

Ask students to read the sentences aloud and think about their tone. Does "really" seem sincere or not?

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?
 - » Mrs. Tickham is ringing the doorbell. She wants to know if the incident with the squirrel really happened or if she was just imagining it.
- 2) Why do Tootie and Flora's mother scream?
 - » They scream because Ulysses flew down the stairs and landed on Mary Ann, which scared them.
- 3) Flora's mother doesn't want anyone to touch Ulysses. Why not?
 - » She thinks the squirrel has a disease and is rabid.
- 4) Someone else rings the doorbell to Flora's house. Who is he, and what does he want?
 - » He is William Spiver, Tootie's great nephew, and he has come to find Tootie.
- 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?
 - » They go to Tootie's house. They are going to see if Ulysses really can type, by having him try to type something on Tootie's computer.

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.



Provide students with specific things to research about flying squirrels, such as habitat, diet, etc.

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 Siver 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 Siver 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 Siver as "unnecessarily cryptic." Using a dictionary, determine what Flora means by this and then give examples of William Siver's behavior that support this description.
- 3) William Siver has come to live with his Great Aunt Tootie. How does Tootie feel about William Siver's arrival compared to how Flora's mother feels about it?

Remind students to make a claim and support it with evidence.



Have students look at characters' words and their behaviors as they formulate their answers.



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?

Remind students of the definition of *treacherous* (unreliable, dangerous, or could lead to disaster) and have them brainstorm treacherous things in the world.



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?
 - » She faints and hits her head on the counter.
- 2) Why does Flora try to remove William Spiver's glasses?
 - » She thinks he might be Ulysses's arch-nemesis and wants to look into his eyes to see the truth.
- 3) Why does Flora return home?
 - » Her father has arrived for their visit.
- 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?
 - » She is pretending to be a Giant Ear. She is listening to hear what her parents have to say.
- 5) What does Flora's mom ask Flora's dad to do?
 - » She asks him to put Ulysses in a sack, hit him with a shovel, and then bury the sack with Ulysses inside it.

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.



Review the difference between figurative and literal language. Provide several examples of each.



Let students know that their poems do not have to rhyme, but they should be written in lines and use sensory details.

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?

Encourage students to think about the activities that he may do and the thoughts and feelings he may have.



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?
 - » Answers will vary; however, any reasonable response based on the illustration is acceptable.

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?

Have students brainstorm important things people say, then consider whether or not they are reflections of the speaker's heart. Based on this, can they make a more generalized statement about the words people say? For example, "Most words, most of the time..."



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?
» She keeps him in a shoebox with a washcloth that she got from her mother.
- 2) What is George Buckman's "annoying and extremely persistent habit"?
» He introduces himself to every person he comes into contact with, whether he already knows them or not.
- 3) What does Tootie read to Ulysses?
» She reads him a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke.
- 4) How does George Buckman avoid answering questions?
» He avoids answering questions by responding to a question with a question.
- 5) Why does Flora agree to go to a restaurant for breakfast?
» She agrees to go because it will allow her stall. Also, eating breakfast will help Ulysses regain his strength for the battle ahead.

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.



Ask students to use similes or metaphors to compare the smell of the sky to things with which they are familiar.

- 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?
 - » Ulysses is a squirrel and cannot communicate, other than through gestures and what he types on keyboards. By putting some chapters in his point of view, we are able to know what he is thinking and feeling.
- 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?
 - » Any reasonable answer is acceptable. One possible response is tension. The Giant Do-Nut is looming over Flora's head, and Flora is looking sideways out of the corner of her eyes.



Ask students what “Flare up like flame!” may mean. Have them brainstorm a list of things that might “flare up like flame,” then ask them to consider the question.

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?



If students are unable to think about things that cheer them up, have them think about the things they do in their free time or things they dream of doing as possible answers.



Help students think about the kinds of things they have said or done when they have been confused. Which ones made the situation better and which ones made it worse?

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?
 - » She thinks Flora has a baby doll in her shoebox. Rita uses a pencil to push away the washcloth that is covering Ulysses and scares him.
- 2) How does Ulysses respond when Rita screams?
 - » He screams back, then jumps into Rita's big hair.
- 3) What does Flora say to Ulysses to change his response?
 - » She says, "Remember who you are. You are Ulysses. Act!"
- 4) Ulysses changes his action. Instead of hiding, what does he do and why does he stop?
 - » He flies around the restaurant. Ulysses stops when he crashes into the glass door and knocks himself unconscious.
- 5) Where do Flora and her father go after leaving the restaurant?
 - » They head to Flora's father's apartment.

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?



Ask students what qualities make a good waitress. What kind of person would they want to wait on them and the people they care about?

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.

Ask students to think about the physical events that happened in the story and to consider what would have happened between Flora and her father, if anything. Would Flora's father have still tried to kill Ulysses?

Observe

- 1) List the different situations in which Flora's father has introduced himself. What might he feel in each situation?
 - » Responses may vary; however, any reasonable answer is acceptable.
- 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?
 - » Flora's father is serious, sad, and worried before Ulysses flies and amazed, happy, and imitating Dolores after. Flora and her father don't talk much before, and Mr. Buckman has plans to kill Ulysses. After Ulysses flies, Flora slips her hand in her father's and allows herself to feel hope, and her father agrees not to kill the squirrel.
- 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"?
 - » Flora and Tootie are no longer the only two people who have seen Ulysses do amazing things. Now Flora's father, as well as all of the people at the restaurant, have witnessed one of Ulysses's superpowers.
- 4) Look at the comic panels in Chapter 32. How do the people in the Giant Do-Nut respond to Ulysses's action?
 - » Most adults respond with shock or fear, whereas the children and George Buckman respond with joy and delight.

Ask students to focus on how his day began, sighing on Flora's couch, to the more substantial events of being asked to kill a squirrel and seeing Ulysses fly in the restaurant.

Ask students to pay attention to how the author describes the introduction, as well as Flora's father's body language. For example, does he shout? What kinds of emotions usually accompany shouting? This will help them narrow their focus.

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?
 - » The Blixen Arms is the name of George Buckman's apartment building. People run through it because there is a cat named Mr. Klaus who attacks people.
- 2) Where does Flora go to get help for Ulysses?
 - » She goes to Dr. Meescham's apartment to get Ulysses medical help.
- 3) What kind of doctor is Dr. Meescham?
 - » She is a doctor of philosophy.
- 4) How does Dr. Meescham help Flora and Ulysses?
 - » She checks Ulysses over and determines that he is alive, his pupils are not dilated, and he is not nauseated. She says he does not seem to have a concussion, and that he may just be hungry. She makes them jelly sandwiches.
- 5) What kinds of things does Dr. Meescham tell Flora about Blundermeecen?
 - » She tells Flora that lies were sometimes written on the signs there, that there were trolls, and that the trolls often gifted the people there with concussions.

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



Provide students topics about which they could write euphemisms, such as getting a failing grade, getting fired, or being old.

- 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



Ask students if they would feel safe, comfortable, and welcome there, and why or why not.

- 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.
 - » The mood is dark, dirty, scary, and dangerous. Mr. Klaus, the angry cat, tries to attack people. He pees on the doors and vomits in the stairwells, and the hallways are lit in green.
- 2) How can Dr. Meescham describe Flora when they have never met?
 - » She calls Flora “Little flower, Flora Belle. Beloved of your father.” Dr. Meescham learns these things from George Buckman. It means her father loves her a lot and must talk about her often.



Ask students how changing the point of view can change the version of a story.

- 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?
 - » Flora thinks about the people onboard the tiny boat. She sees them all as victims in need of a superhero to rescue them from the evil squid. Dr. Meescham thinks about the squid and how he is the loneliest creature on the planet. She thinks that loneliness will make someone do terrible things.

- 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?
 - » Flora sees everyone as a potential criminal, thinks that there is danger and deceit everywhere, and believes that she must always be cautious and careful.
- 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?
 - » Answers will vary; however, any plausible answer should be accepted.

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?
 - » Dr. Meescham's grandmother was born on the sofa, Flora's dad has sat on the sofa and cried, and the sofa is good for tears because the tears just roll off.
- 2) How does Dr. Meescham respond when Flora tells her she is a cynic?
 - » Dr. Meescham says that, "Cynics are people who are afraid to believe."
- 3) How does Ulysses prove that he is a superhero?
 - » When Mr. Klaus attacked George Buckman, Ulysses grabbed the cat and threw it down the hallway, thus saving Flora's father.
- 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?
 - » Answers may vary, but possibilities include that the mood is peaceful or loving. The looks on the faces of Flora and her father, and the fact that Ulysses is sleeping peacefully beside Flora, support this.

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?



Ask students to write a small moment story, such as about a time when one of the signs Dr. Meescham read was a lie or about why her grandmother is buried in the woods, as opposed to writing about Dr. Meescham's whole life.

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?
 - » Answers may vary, but students should craft plausible reasons for each character in the category.
- 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?
 - » Her home was lonely. The only things she had were her mother and her comics. Now Flora has Ulysses, and her father is back to the way he used to be before the divorce. She has a lot of things she needs to protect, and she’s worried because her mother wants to destroy them.
- 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.

Remind students that the people in Blundermeecen are not sure if they will see each other again. Ask, “If they turn back toward each other, what does that mean they are planning to do?”

Have students consider if thoughts alone can make one “capacious of heart” or if they must act upon that capaciousness.

Ask students to consider how William Spiver feels right now, how Tootie makes him feel, and how he feels when he is around Flora’s mother.

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?
 - » She says that she knows her mother asked her father to kill Ulysses. Flora calls her mother a villain, and she says she wants to go live with her father.
- 2) How does Flora's mother respond when Flora tells her where she wants to live?
 - » Flora's mother says, "It would certainly make my life easier."
- 3) What does Flora mean when she says that William Spiver's words "make her heart squinch up?"
 - » She means it makes her heart feel a kind of sadness and loneliness, which she's not used to feeling.
- 4) What does Ulysses do to cheer up Flora?
 - » He flies around the kitchen doing flips.
- 5) Why is William Spiver at his Great Aunt Tootie's house?
 - » His mother banished him because of an incident between his stepfather and himself.

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?

Ask students how Flora's mother changes her words and behaviors. How can you use these changes to make your journal entry sound genuine?

Instruct students to include feelings William Spiver has about his father, his mother, Tyrone, and living with Great Aunt Tootie.

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?
 - » He sells the piano that belonged to his father, does not share or engage William Spiver in any of his interests, and calls him Billy, despite William Spiver repeatedly asking him not to.

Point students toward the beginning of the novel, when Flora describes herself as a cynic. Ask them how having a heart that rises up "joyfully inside of her" is an act of treachery.

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?
 - » Flora's mother has started smoking again, her father has his arm around her mother, and her father says, "Good news, Flora Belle."
- 2) How does Flora's dad respond when she asks if she can live with him?
 - » He says, "Absolutely you can come live with me, but your mother needs you now."
- 3) Why does Flora think her mother might be possessed?
 - » She is talking in a robotic voice and saying things she would never say, like she needs a nap, Ulysses should sit at the kitchen table with them, and Flora should eat more.
- 4) How does Flora feel after her mother goes to lie down for the evening?
 - » She is lonely for her father, for William Spiver, and for her "normal" mother.
- 5) What does Ulysses do after Flora goes to bed for the night, and how would Flora feel about it?
 - » He flies downstairs and starts to type poetry on Phyllis' typewriter. Flora would not be happy because she asked him to stay in her bedroom for the night.

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?



As an example, remind students of the procedures in place if there is a fire at school. What procedures would be ideal at home or in other public buildings?

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.

Tell students that they can arrange Ulysses's words and phrases in any order they'd like. They may also add words of their own that would clarify or enhance the poem.



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?
 - » Phyllis likes structure and control. Even though she makes things up for a living, she dislikes "idiotic high jinks." George loved comics and the possibility of the impossible before the divorce, so Ulysses's presence reminds him of who he is deep down.
- 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?
 - » Flora's mother works to create polished, flowery responses. This is not always possible or useful in the real world.
- 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?
 - » Answers will vary but should be supported by textual evidence. Flora's hand seems to hover tentatively over her fork. Ulysses's eyes look up hungrily and hopefully at the food, and Flora's mother's sharp fingernails point down towards Ulysses's head.

Have students consider George and Phyllis' personalities before the divorce. What does George enjoy and believe in, and what does Phyllis enjoy and believe in?



Direct students to reread the section of the novel in which William Spiver helps Flora's mother to write her romance novel. Ask if people in real life are always able to craft the perfect responses.



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"?
 - » She would name it the Incandesto because she has never before seen anything as bright as that river.
- 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?
 - » At first, he thinks it is a cat, or Mr. Klaus the cat, but it is actually Flora's mother.
- 3) Summarize the message that Flora's mother forces Ulysses to type.
 - » It says that he is going back to his life in nature, and thanks Flora for the food.
- 4) How does Flora know the typed words aren't from Ulysses?
 - » She knows because it is not written in his voice or using the kinds of words he usually writes, and it is signed "Mr. Squirrel" instead of Ulysses.
- 5) Who does Flora ask for help, and who comes to the rescue?
 - » Flora asks William Spiver for help, and Tootie Tickham comes to the rescue.



Share the definition of *incandescent* (strikingly bright, radiant, and clear) and ask students to reread the description of the river from the text.

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?



Ask students what Flora could say to William Spiver that may make him move more quickly and what William Spiver could say to Flora to help her calm down.

- 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



Ask students to reread the description of her mother at dinner. They should think about how she speaks, what she says, and how she acts.

- 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?



Have students reread Chapter 21, where Flora considers William Spiver's actions and character.

- 2) How have Flora's feelings about William Spiver changed over time?
 - » Initially, Flora viewed him as a possible villain and a would-be arch-nemesis for Ulysses. Now, however, she trusts him in an emergency.

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?



Ask students why someone might think it is safer to love something inanimate.

- 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?
 - » Answers may vary, but students should craft plausible responses.

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?
 - » Flora's mother loves Flora and wants her to have friends, be loved, and be happy. Her actions don't match her feelings, because the way she goes about this is to remove something that loves her very much and keeps her company.
- 2) What words inspire Ulysses into action in the woods, and how does he act?
 - » He remembers Flora's words to him at the Giant Do-Nut restaurant, and Tootie's poem that said, "Flare up like flame and make big shadows." He flies up, grabs the shovel, drops it, and flies away.
- 3) What did William Spiver do to get himself banished?
 - » He pushed Tyrone's truck into a sinkhole in a fit of anger.
- 4) Where does Flora want to go, and whom does Ulysses see through the darkness?
 - » Flora wants to go to her father's apartment, and Ulysses sees Dr. Meescham in her window.
- 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?
 - » William Spiver's version is based on his experience and feelings. Tootie's version is based on what she has been told about the situation from William's mother.

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.

Remind students that sailors used to navigate without the use of technology, as did early explorers. Point them toward some of the methods these people used.



- 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?
 - » Answers may vary, but students may reference when William Spiver said, “I want to go home,” “But will you return?” or “I came looking for you.”
- 2) How are William Spiver’s emotions about being banished like drowning? How does holding on to Flora’s hand help?
 - » William Spiver is overcome by emotion like one may be overcome by the water. Holding on to Flora’s hand helps anchor him in the present and reminds him that he is not alone.
- 3) Look at the comic strip panel in Chapter 60. How do the words and images work together in this section?
 - » Ulysses thinks about Tootie’s poem, “Flare up like flame and make big shadows.” He flies in front of the moon, arms stretched out in front of him like Superman, and makes a big shadow, literally.

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?



While we know the physical details of what happened, we don’t know the thoughts that were going through William Spiver’s head, why he picked the truck, or the conversation between his mother and himself when she discovered what he had done.



Direct students to reread Chapter 61 and other portions of the novel in which Flora thought about William Spiver.



Discuss the meaning behind the phrase *Don’t get your hopes up*. What are the potential consequences of hoping and how can one temper their disappointment should things not work out the way they’d hoped?

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?
 - » First, they will eat sardines and crackers, then they will go to George Buckman's apartment, and together, the three of them will figure out where Flora is and why Ulysses is there.
- 2) What miracle happens as the group walks along the road?
 - » William Spiver falls, and his glasses break. He discovers that he can see. He is no longer temporarily blind.
- 3) When Flora knocks on the door to her father's apartment, he doesn't answer. Where is he, and who is with him?
 - » He is at Dr. Meescham's apartment with Dr. Meescham and Ulysses.
- 4) What is the first thing Flora says when she finally gets Ulysses into her arms?
 - » She tells him that she loves him.
- 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?
 - » Flora thinks her mother is looking for Mary Ann, but in actuality she is looking for Flora.

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?

Specifically, have students research qualities each flower is associated with and the conditions it needs in order to grow and thrive.



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?

» In the beginning, she is distant and demanding, then she is robotic and insincere, then evil and calculating, and finally terrified, relieved, and appreciating Flora.

- 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?

» William Spiver feels better after he tells the truth about what happened with his mother.

- 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.

» Dr. Meescham checked him for a concussion, fed him jelly sandwiches, and believed in him as a superhero.

- 4) How does Flora change over the course of the novel? Use evidence from the text to support your response.

» Answers may vary, but responses should be based on textual evidence.

- 5) William Spiver doubts that Flora will ever get the truth about what happened to Ulysses. Why might the truth be difficult to establish in this situation?

» Ulysses will have experienced it from a different point of view than Flora's mother experienced the incident.



How might telling others about his choices and crying create a change?



Ask students to consider all of the different ways Dr. Meescham helped Ulysses earlier in the day.



Ask students if they have ever had a disagreement with someone in which both people had a different version of what happened. Ask students how another person could have a different version of the same event that happened to both people.

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?

Overview of the Five-Day Fluency Routine

Research demonstrates that fluency practice produces gains in reading comprehension. Amplify CKLA's fluency instruction includes modeled reading, assisted reading (such as choral or paired reading), and independent reading, along with breadth of text encounters and extended deep reading of selected texts. This multi-faceted approach ensures that students receive low-stakes practice along with engaging, authentic fluency tasks, such as performances. Daily instruction regularly provides students with fluency practice. Additionally, each unit includes at least one extended fluency performance, which requires students to spend five days with a single short text, culminating in a performance. The program also includes supports for students to practice fluency at home.

It is important to remember that the primary goal of the five-day fluency routine is to equip students to read the passage accurately and with expression. As they gain accuracy and confidence, they will naturally begin to read more quickly. However, because students who are pushed to read more quickly often sacrifice accuracy, it is important not to pressure students to race through the text or to read with undue speed. Because this is not a memorization drill, students should read the text as they perform; even if students say they have memorized the passage, encourage them to read the words rather than recite them from memory.

The five-day fluency performance routine includes the following components.

- **Day 1:** Teacher introduces text and reads it aloud several times, modeling different tones or inflections and encouraging students to reflect on each one. For example, if the teacher reads in a monotone, students should realize that this is not a stellar reading; they may suggest better approaches, such as reading in a happy tone, an excited tone, a nervous tone, or other tone appropriate to the selected text.

During this week, students are encouraged to start reading the target text aloud at home using reading logs to record each session with a student's "Happy Hearer." Alternatively, students may create their own log page in their reading journals.

- **Day 2:** Students practice reading the text chorally, with varying inflection, tone, or other elements.

- **Day 3:** Students practice both choral and paired readings, continuing to develop tone, inflection, and expression.
- **Day 4:** Students continue practicing paired readings in preparation for the following day's performance.
- **Day 5:** Student pairs perform their reading.

If you choose to evaluate students' performance at this stage, you may use the Fluency Passage Performance Rubric to evaluate each performance. Students who still struggle with fluency at this stage in the year may benefit from additional practice with the materials in the Fluency Supplement, available on the Amplify CKLA website.

Fluency Passage Performance Rubric

	Advanced	Proficient	Basic
Accuracy	Reading contains no errors in pronunciation.	Reading contains minimal errors in pronunciation.	Reading contains numerous errors in pronunciation.
Rate	Reading is conversationally paced or paced to show appropriate emphasis and inflection.	Reading is uneven, with interspersed periods of speed and sluggishness.	Reading is labored and slow.
Expression	Expression is strong throughout the reading. While the tone and volume may vary, they do so in keeping with the student's understanding of the piece.	Reading generally sounds like everyday speech, with possible lapses into expressionless speech.	Words are pronounced, but they are not spoken in a manner that indicates an understanding of their meaning.

Dear Family Member,

Along with this Amplify CKLA unit, your child will be assigned a Fluency Performance Passage. 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, babysitters, 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

Core Knowledge Language Arts Amplify.

Senior Vice President and General Manager, ELA

Alexandra Clarke

Vice President, Elementary Literacy Instruction

Susan Lambert

Editorial

Elizabeth Wade, PhD, Managing Curriculum Developer

Patricia Erno, Managing Curriculum Developer

Kristen Kirchner, Content Writer

Amber McWilliams, Product Manager

Christina Cox, Copy Editor

Project Management

Jennifer Skelley, Director, K-8 ELA Print Production and Operations

Leslie Johnson, Associate Director

Zara Chaudhury, Associate Project Manager

Design and Production

Erin O'Donnell, Art Director

Contributors

Bill Cheng

Ken Harney

Molly Hensley

David Herubin

Ian Horst

Sara Hunt

James Mendez-Hodes

Christopher Miller

Tory Novikova

Sheri Pineault

Diana Projansky

Todd Rawson

Julia Sverchuk

Elizabeth Thiers

Jeanne Thornton

Amanda Tolentino