

Grade 4

The Season of Styx Malone

by Kekla Magoon

Novel Guide

ISBN 978-1-68391-730-4

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Dear Teachers,

Welcome to the Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) novel guide for *The Season of Styx Malone*. 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. *The Season of Styx Malone* will challenge students to reflect on their relationships with their families and friends, examine their beliefs of right and wrong, and develop their social and emotional well-being.

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

The Season of Styx Malone, published by Wendy Lamb Books in 2018, is a novel by Kekla Magoon. It has earned the following recognition:

- “Best of the Year” (2018) Lists by NPR, *Horn Book*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *School Library Journal*, and *Shelf Awareness* (2018)
- Starred reviews on *School Library Journal*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *Publisher’s Weekly*

Why We Selected It

The Season of Styx Malone tells the story of Caleb Franklin, his big brother Bobby Gene, and a seemingly magical young man, Styx Malone, whom they meet at the beginning of summer. Caleb, the protagonist, longs to leave their small town of Sutton, Indiana, but his father believes the world is too dangerous for them to stray too far from home. He wants his family’s world to stay ordinary.

When the brothers meet Styx, he turns their world upside down. In addition to being older, cooler, and whip-smart, Styx has a remarkable plan for the summer. He teaches the brothers about the Great Escalator Trade: “a way to turn one small thing into more, and more,” until they can buy the moped of their dreams.

But Styx has secrets that even Caleb doesn’t know, and when one trade goes wrong, their plan and their friendship are put to the test. Can Caleb make things right and prove to his father that he is more than ordinary?

About the Author

Kekla Magoon is the multi-award winning author of nine novels, including *The Season of Styx Malone*. In addition to writing, Magoon serves on the Writers’ Council for the National Writing Project and teaches at Vermont College of Fine Arts.

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 *The Season of Styx Malone*, you may choose to relate the subject matter to the following domains Amplify CKLA students have encountered previously.

- Kindergarten, Domain 4, *Plants*
- Kindergarten, Domain 5, *Farms*
- Grade 2, Domain 12, *Fighting for a Cause*

Things to Know

- A few themes throughout *The Season of Styx Malone* 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. For example, students will encounter two characters (Styx and Pixie) who are part of the foster care system. During the novel, one child is rehomed by the Department of Child Services (DCS).
- This book includes some strong language. Characters use the word *damn* twice and the word *hobo* once.
- The three main characters spend an afternoon hopping a train without tickets or parental knowledge, then trespassing on someone's property.
- One of the main characters, Styx, keeps packs of candy cigarettes on him at all times. He and the other two main characters discuss smoking, revealing that Styx believes smoking is cool. The other boys do not like it.
- One of the main characters is involved in a motor vehicle accident while driving a moped. Though he has a valid driver's license, he decided to drive while angry. The book acknowledges the error of this choice.

Additional Resources

As students read this book, you may wish to facilitate discussions about the foster system, the effects of smoking, or how students can save money. The following resources may aid in your preparation and help further your own understanding of the subjects.

- If students are interested in learning how they can save money without needing to do a “Great Escalator Trade,” **InCharge Debt Solutions** has a page dedicated to Financial Literacy for Kids, broken up into lesson plans for each grade level. Videos about saving money are also available through many online sources such as **YouTube**.
- **Kids Matter Inc.** is an organization dedicated to helping children who have been through traumatic experiences prior to and during foster care. Among their many resources is a web page with guidance for discussing the foster care system with children, along with some helpful questions and answers.
- **The American Lung Association** includes several tips for talking to children about smoking and the effects it will have on their lives. These discussion points also include vaping, juuling, and e-cigarettes.

If students finish the book early, or if they enjoy it and want to read further, they may enjoy 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.

- *Merci Suárez Changes Gears* by Meg Medina
- *The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise* by Dan Gemeinhart
- *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang
- *The Bridge Home* by Padma Venkatraman

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:** Ask students to compose a new scene for the book. Perhaps they might write a scene showing Styx and Pixie at their foster home in the woods, one depicting Mr. Franklin growing up in the city, a recreation of a scene in the book in which the students write themselves into the story, or a scene showing the Franklin brothers visiting Styx at his new home. The idea is to have students consider a part of the book that could be elaborated with a new scene, then to craft that scene logically based on what they already know about the book's characters.
- **Informative Writing:** Ask students to consider one place they would like to visit in the world (it could be as small as a museum or as large as an entire city or country). Have them research this place and write an informative essay using the information they find.
- **Opinion Writing:** As students read the novel, have them keep track of the story's major events. When they reach Chapter 28, reread the passage about Mr. Franklin's positivity scale, and have students place major book events on the scale from optimistic to pessimistic. When you are finished reading the novel, have students write an essay about one of the story's major events, explaining why they placed the event where they did on the scale. Remind them to use textual evidence in their essay.
- **Writing about Literature:** Many opportunities exist for applying literature standards to writing. For example, you may wish to have students choose one setting from the story (e.g., Oasis Pond, Mr. Pike's Auto Shop, the Franklin household, etc.) and describe why it is important to the main characters.

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:

- Have fossils been found in your area? What types of creatures were fossilized, and what kind of life did they live? If no fossils have been discovered in your state, have students find the closest state where fossils have been found.
- If you wanted to save for a big purchase, what steps would you need to take to do so?

Performance Task

After students have read the novel, ask them to develop a poster or book trailer for it. This is similar to a movie poster or trailer, in that it is meant to interest others in reading the book. Students should think about how best to make others curious about the book without giving away the most important parts of its plot. They should think about the tone they want to convey about the book—whether it is exciting, scary, heartwarming, or something else. We recommend you base your assignment on the tools typically available to your students. If video cameras or phones are available, you may wish to let them write, rehearse, and perform their trailer for recording and sharing. If these tools are not available, you may prefer to ask them to create book posters for the halls of your school.

For additional metacognition, we recommend you ask students to reflect on their work, including explaining why they decided to present the text in the manner selected. Their decisions will likely reveal insights about the text and its significance to them.

Reading: Chapters 1-4

Ask

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

- 1) What is the cardinal rule of the Franklin household? What does that rule mean?
 - » The rule is to “leave well enough alone”; it means that if a situation is okay, you shouldn’t try to change anything about it.
- 2) Caleb says Independence Day might be the reason he decided to become more than ordinary. Why would that holiday be the reason for his plans?
 - » Answers may vary but could include that Caleb is trying to become independent from his father and his town, just as the colonists decided to become independent from the king and Britain.
- 3) What does Caleb tell his mother they traded Susie for? Why does he tell her that?
 - » He tells her they traded Susie for basketball lessons, because he did not want Cory to get in trouble for the illegal fireworks.
- 4) Why don’t Caleb and Bobby Gene stop Styx from looking in their bag?
 - » They could tell that there was something special about him.



Remind students that Independence Day celebrates when America became its own nation, no longer ruled by Britain. Have students consider the steps leading up to the American Revolution and how pressure built up over time.

Explore

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


- 1) What did Caleb’s father mean when he called Caleb “extraordinary”? What does Caleb think he means? Using a dictionary, find the definitions for the words *ordinary* and *extraordinary*.
- 2) Caleb keeps pictures of places he wants to visit taped above his bunk bed: the Grand Canyon, the Milky Way, Victoria Falls, and Table Mountain. Research one of these places to learn more about it.



Gather images of each place to show students what they look like.

Imagine


- 1) Caleb says that every once in a while, he sees something on television that makes him “want to reach through the screen and touch it.” If you had the power to do that, what show or place on television would you want to interact with?
- 2) When Styx holds Bobby Gene hostage, neither brother knows what to do. How would you react if you were in Caleb’s shoes?



Have students brainstorm a list of television shows or places they have seen on television, then have students decide who, what, or where they would want to visit.

Observe

- 1) What does Caleb’s dad say “ordinary folks” are like? List Mr. Franklin’s descriptions of “ordinary folks” in Chapter 1.
- 2) Throughout Chapter 4, Caleb remembers three pieces of advice his dad has given him. Find those pieces of advice, written in italics. What does this advice say about Mr. Franklin?



Ask students questions, such as “Is Mr. Franklin cautious or outgoing?” or “Does he worry, or is he laid back?”

Understand

- 1) Caleb and Bobby Gene try to hide the fireworks after they get caught trading Susie. Have you ever tried to hide something? Would you make that choice again?
- 2) When Mr. Franklin talks about being ordinary, Caleb finds it difficult to listen. Have you had trouble talking to someone about a topic you disagree on?

Reading: Chapters 5-8

Ask

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

- 1) What is on Styx's business card? What does Caleb notice is missing?
 - » The card reads, "Styx Malone: Anything Man," but Caleb notices that the card does not have any contact information.
- 2) How will Styx help the Franklin brothers?
 - » He will mediate between the brothers and Cory Cormier, then he will help the brothers sell or trade the fireworks.
- 3) What types of tomatoes did Mrs. Franklin plant for each of her children? Why might she have chosen those names for each child?
 - » She planted Big Boy for Bobby Gene, Morning Glory for Caleb, and Early Girl for Susie. Answers may vary but could include that Bobby Gene is tall, Caleb is a morning person, and Susie is the family's first daughter.
- 4) What did the Franklin brothers do when their school went on a field trip to the Children's Museum? What do you know about their household that would explain this?
 - » They were not allowed to go, so they stayed at home. Answers may vary, but students should recognize that Mr. Franklin likes his children to stay close to home.
- 5) What is the Great Escalator Trade?
 - » It is when you take something of little value, trade it for something bigger, and continue the process until you get your desired prize.



Ask students to consider who made that decision for the brothers (Mr. Franklin) and the reasons he might have for that decision.

Explore

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

- 1) Bobby Gene doesn't understand when Styx calls himself a "mediator." Look up the word in a dictionary, then write a definition of *mediator* in your own words that Bobby Gene might understand better.
- 2) Cory notices that the Franklins have a lot of clay in their garden. Is clay good soil for growing plants?



Provide resources that list which plants grow well in clay soil and which do not.

Imagine

- 1) Look at Styx's business card. If you were designing Styx a new business card, what would it look like? What would it say?
- 2) The boys start picking up rocks they think might potentially be fossils. Imagine you were digging (with an adult's permission) in your backyard or around your school and found a fossil. What might it be a fossil of? What was the creature's life like?

Provide a list of ancient creatures that have been fossilized to aid students in their decision.



Observe

- 1) List the types of crops that the Franklins are growing. Based on this list, are the Franklins eating healthily or unhealthily?
- 2) What does Caleb say that makes Cory want to fight? What does Cory say that makes Caleb want to fight? Why do each of these topics make the boys angry?

Understand

- 1) Why does Caleb find it strange that Cory loves playing with Susie? Have you ever had an interest that someone else has found strange?
- 2) Bobby Gene and Caleb have had a lot of trouble with Cory, but after Caleb makes them all laugh, they do not seem to be angry with each other anymore. Why might that be?

How does Caleb feel about Cory, and why would that make him think Cory is strange for loving Susie?



Reading: Chapters 9-12

Ask

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

- 1) What does Styx show the Franklin brothers at the hardware store?
How do they plan to get it?
 - » Styx shows them a moped, which Caleb calls the Grasshopper. They're going to use the Great Escalator Trade to get it.
- 2) Caleb and Bobby Gene finally explain to Styx why they've never gone to Indianapolis—their dad won't allow it. What reason does Mr. Franklin give? Why might he feel that way?
 - » He says, "The world is a dangerous place. We're safe here. People know us." Answers may vary but could include that Mr. Franklin does not want his sons put in dangerous situations, which he believes are usually found in cities.
- 3) Caleb says the three boys are "technically delinquent." What does *delinquent* mean? Why does Caleb describe them that way, and why would he use the word *technically*?
 - » *Delinquent* refers to a young person doing things that are illegal or morally wrong. Answers may vary but students might note that his use of *technically* means he knows what they are doing is wrong, but he is doing it anyway.
- 4) What does Caleb notice about his mother's reaction when he quotes his grandmother? Why might she react that way?
 - » She smiles, but her eyes are full of both love and sadness. Answers may vary but could include that she's glad her traditions are being passed on to her sons, that she misses her mother, that she was glad to be spending that moment with Caleb, etc.
- 5) Why do Caleb and Bobby Gene start fighting over their allowances? Why do you think each brother feels the way he does?
 - » Bobby Gene does not think they should trust Styx with their money, but Caleb feels the opposite. Answers may vary but could include that Bobby Gene is more practical than Caleb.



Have students consider why happy feelings sometimes make them feel sad too, and ask why Mrs. Franklin might feel that way.

Explore

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

- 1) One of Caleb and Bobby Gene's traditions is to slap "the atlas guy" Rand McNally's sign for good luck. What is a road atlas? What types of things is it helpful for?
- 2) Research a Children's Museum in your town or state that is similar to the museum Caleb wants to go to.

Imagine

- 1) If you were going to pull off a Great Escalator Trade, what would your ultimate prize be? What item would you start off with?
- 2) If you were able to get a moped like the Grasshopper, where would you go? Who would you bring with you?

Ask students if they would visit any of the places in Caleb's pictures.



Observe

- 1) Caleb tells Styx that he and his brother can tell him all about the flora and fauna of the area. What kind of flora—plants, crops, etc.—have you observed so far in the novel?
- 2) How does Caleb describe his mother's voice when she asks to meet Styx Malone? What does that say about her intentions?
 - » He says her voice is "as creamy as the hot polenta." Answers may vary but students may realize her voice and intentions do not match; her voice might sound "creamy," but she does not trust Styx.

Have students think about a time when an adult's tone let them know something about the situation.



Understand

- 1) Caleb thinks he and Bobby Gene live in a "small world." Do you ever feel like your world is too small? How could you make the world feel bigger?
- 2) Why might Mrs. Franklin be nervous about her sons being friends with Styx Malone?

Help students think of new activities they could do at home or at school or new places they could visit in their town.



Reading: Chapters 13-16

Ask

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

- 1) What is the first thing Mrs. Franklin says when she sees Styx? Why might she say that?
 - » She calls him a “handful of trouble.” She might say that because he doesn’t act as politely as she might have expected.
- 2) What “guy” does Styx know who will help them with the fireworks? What do they get in return?
 - » Styx’s friend, Robo, buys the fireworks in exchange for some car parts and \$150.
- 3) What does Bobby Gene say when Styx offers to hold the money? Why might he say that?
 - » Bobby Gene wants to split up the cash. Answers may vary but could include that Bobby Gene does not completely trust Styx.
- 4) What does Caleb find interesting about the way Styx shrugs?
 - » Caleb believes the shrug is Styx’s way of getting out of questions.

Explore

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



Ask students if hitting the birdie is a good thing or a bad thing.

- 1) Caleb says watching Styx negotiate was like watching a tennis match or someone playing badminton. What is badminton? What does Caleb mean when he says Styx “hit the birdie”?
- 2) Cory’s family has a compost pile that the boys turn as part of their chores. Research what composting is, how it works, and why it would be useful to Cory’s family.

Imagine

- 1) Imagine you went with Styx to Robo's junkyard. What types of equipment would you look for? What would you try to fix or build with that equipment?
- 2) Caleb does not agree with his mother's description of Styx. Instead, he calls him "a pile of sand, slipping through our fingers." How would you describe Styx based on what you have read so far?

Have students consider what equipment would be helpful in a Great Escalator Trade.



Observe

- 1) What name does Styx call Bobby Gene? What does he call Caleb? Why might he choose those names for each boy?
 - » Styx calls Bobby Gene "B.G.," but he does not have a nickname for Caleb. Answers may vary but may include that "B.G." is shorter and may sound cooler, but Caleb's name is difficult to shorten.
- 2) What types of escalator trades has Styx pulled before? List the trades Styx mentions in Chapter 15.

Understand

- 1) When Bobby Gene has a problem with the fireworks plan, Styx tells him, "If all of us only ever did what we were allowed to do, the world would be a pretty boring place." Do you agree with what he says? Why or why not?
- 2) Styx says that "sometimes doing wrong feels right, and vice versa." What is a time when doing something wrong feels right? What is a time when doing something right feels wrong?

Have students think of a time they did something they were not allowed to do. Did it make their world a little more interesting? If so, was it interesting in a good way or a bad way?



Gather a list of situations (playing games instead of doing homework, eating a lot of ice cream, talking back to a family member, etc.) and have students state whether that situation feels wrong or right.



Reading: Chapters 17-20

Ask

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

- 1) How does Caleb describe Styx's first dinner at the Franklin household? Why does he describe it that way?
 - » He calls it a "disaster," because Styx does not use his manners and Caleb almost gets into a fight with his father.
- 2) What does Caleb purposely not tell his mother about their fishing trip?
 - » He leaves out the fact that Styx would be joining them.
- 3) What does Styx's house look like? Why are the Franklin brothers nervous about knocking?
 - » The house looks more like a clubhouse than the houses the brothers are used to. They are nervous about knocking because they feel like they are trespassing.
- 4) Who is Pixie? What is her real name?
 - » Pixie, whose real name is Penny, is Styx's foster sister.



Help students understand why the Franklin brothers might feel nervous. Is it because Styx prides himself on being mysterious?

Explore

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

- 1) Caleb says that even though Bobby Gene is built like a linebacker, he does not enjoy playing football. What is a linebacker? What is a linebacker's job?
- 2) Styx is impressed with the Franklin brothers' knowledge of flora and fauna. What are some examples of flora and fauna where you live?

Imagine

- 1) If you found the pond in the woods, what would you do there? Would you tell anyone about it?
- 2) Bobby Gene and Caleb play an ongoing game of Who Would Win at the pond. If you were to add two characters to their game, who would you choose?

Ask students if they would pretend to fish and play games like Bobby Gene and Caleb or if they would come up with their own games.



Observe

- 1) What questions does Mrs. Franklin ask Styx over dinner? If you could add any question to her list, what would it be?
- 2) Use a T-chart to compare and contrast how Styx talks to Mr. Franklin versus how Caleb talks to him. Why do they act so differently around him?

Encourage students to think of ideas other than Caleb being related to Mr. Franklin. For example, you might ask them to think about how Styx talks to other adults.



Understand

- 1) Caleb says that once Styx found something to like about you, “he had your back for life.” Who is someone who has your back for life? What are some things they like about you?
- 2) Even though he and Pixie are the same age, Caleb assumes she is younger because of the way she dresses and acts. Have you ever thought something about someone but learned you were wrong once you met them?

Have students consider family members or friends who care about them.



Reading: Chapters 21-24

Ask

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

- 1) What does Styx want to use to trade for a motor? How do the Franklin brothers feel about it?
 - » He wants to clean up an old lunch box and use it to trade. The brothers do not think it will work.
- 2) What does Styx say when Caleb asks him if he's ridden in a limo? Why do you think his answer is different from all the times he's told his grand stories?
 - » All he says is, "Once." Answers may vary but could include that he might not want to tell the story, or it is painful for him to remember.
- 3) How did Mr. Davis get the Grasshopper? Why isn't he keeping it?
 - » Mr. Davis bought it for his son, but his son wanted a motorcycle and did not think the Grasshopper was good enough.
- 4) Where do the brothers find out Styx has lived before?
 - » He used to live in Indianapolis.



Have students consider why Caleb and Bobby Gene were in a limo. Could Styx have gone through something similar?

Explore

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

- 1) As the boys think about Mission: Grasshopper, Caleb calls them "stealth agents on reconnaissance." What does *reconnaissance* mean? Why is it important to a mission?
- 2) Styx is named after the river in the Underworld from Greek mythology. What can you learn about the River Styx?

Imagine

- 1) When Bobby Gene and Caleb tell Styx some of their crazy stories, Caleb begins one with, “This one time, we took a jar of lightning bugs into the grocery store...” but he does not finish the story. What might have happened next?
- 2) Caleb and Bobby Gene spend part of their evening imagining what they would do if they lived by themselves: they would eat candy at midnight and ice cream for breakfast, have a twenty-four-hour video game marathon, eat pizza and no vegetables, etc. What would you do if you made your own rules?
- 3) What would you name the pond if you were there with the group?

As a class, have students take turns adding a new sentence to the story.



Observe

- 1) Styx says he will give Mr. Davis the thing he wants most. Reread the beginning of Chapter 22 and list some ideas about what this might be.
- 2) What questions does Bobby Gene ask Styx about his home? Why doesn't Styx want to answer?

Ask students to consider how Bobby Gene is asking these questions. Is he being thoughtful as he does so? Why might that affect how Styx feels about answering?



Understand

- 1) Why does the waitress get upset with Styx in Chapter 22, and what does Styx do to make the situation better? How would you respond if you were in Styx's situation?
- 2) When the group talks about their names, Bobby Gene mentions that Caleb's name doesn't mean anything. Why does that upset Caleb? How could not being named after something or someone be a good thing?

Ask students if Caleb would prefer a blank slate for the future instead of being named after someone else's story, based on what they have read about him so far.



Reading: Chapters 25-28

Ask

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

- 1) How does Cory respond when the Franklin brothers ask him to cover for them and Styx?
 - » He won't cover for them.
- 2) Why doesn't Pixie come with Styx to his office?
 - » She was taken to another foster home by the Department of Child Services (DCS).
- 3) How can Caleb tell Styx has never been to a bonfire before?
 - » Styx does not get close to the fire and he holds his hot dog skewer far away from him.
- 4) What does Mr. Franklin say when Styx drops his hot dogs into the fire? How does Styx react?
 - » Mr. Franklin says the hot dogs will be fine and that he will eat them himself. Styx looks surprised that it is okay.



Ask students why Styx might react that way: does this make it seem like adults often tell him it is okay to make a mistake?

Explore

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

- 1) Caleb's father helps them build "the good kind of fire," where logs are stacked in a certain way. Research the safest way to stack logs for a fire.
- 2) Research how to plan your own model made of building blocks. How would you decide on the types of blocks needed for the project and how many blocks you would need in each color?

Imagine

- 1) Caleb and Bobby Gene are working on a building block version of the Grasshopper. If you could choose one object, person, or place from *The Season of Styx Malone* to make out of building blocks, what would you choose and why?
- 2) The Franklin family introduces Styx to s'mores. What kind of food would you most want to introduce a friend to, and what sort of meal would it be part of? Where would you eat it?

Provide students with a list of possible options, such as Oasis Pond, the train, Styx's office, etc.



Observe

- 1) Styx describes Mr. and Mrs. Franklin as “cool,” even though Caleb and Bobby Gene don't believe him. Name some examples from this section of the book that illustrate why Styx might feel this way.
- 2) How does Mr. Franklin describe his positivity scale? Where do you think he puts most events, based on evidence in the book?

Understand

- 1) Why might Styx find it difficult to talk about Pixie moving to a different foster home? What could Bobby Gene and/or Caleb do or say to help him feel better?
- 2) Styx says that the “only person you can ever count on is yourself.” Do you agree or disagree? Use textual evidence to support your answer.

Ask students when it is better to leave someone alone and when it is better to talk to them about their problems.



Have students consider which characters in the book want to help Styx.



Reading: Chapters 29-32

Ask

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

- 1) How do Bobby Gene and Caleb convince Cory to help them get out of chores?
 - » They tell Cory that he can play with Susie.
- 2) What does Cory's uncle have all over his house?
 - » His house is full of Harley-Davidson paraphernalia.
- 3) Who is Styx with when the brothers go to his house?
 - » He's sitting with a girl named Lisa, who treats them like they are children.
- 4) How does Caleb feel after Bobby Gene jumps off the train? How does Caleb change the way he feels?
 - » He starts to feel like he is not being a good brother to Bobby Gene, but he tells himself it's because following Styx makes anything possible.



Ask students to consider why Caleb's relationship with Styx might affect his relationship with Bobby Gene.

Explore

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

- 1) What is the difference between a boxcar train, which the boys ride, and a passenger train, which is what people normally use to travel?
- 2) Research passenger trains in your town or state. If your family were to plan a trip by train, where would you go?

Imagine

- 1) Bobby Gene thinks it's "crazy" to get onto the train. Would you go along with Styx's plan? If so, how would you convince Bobby Gene? If not, what new plan would you suggest?
- 2) Styx believes that the cleaned-up lunch box will be the perfect trade for a motor. Are the two things a fair trade, or would you trade something different?

Observe

- 1) Reread the scene where the boys pack their food for the day. What do we know that Caleb does not when he asks, “What are we gonna do, hop a train and ride off into the sunset?”
 - » Students know that Caleb is going to hop on a train, but Caleb does not.
- 2) What does Caleb observe about Styx’s behavior when they go to his house? How is it different from how he has acted in the past?
 - » He is casual and aloof about the Grasshopper plans, and he does not want to spend time with Caleb and Bobby Gene that day.

Ask students to think about what the boys do next in the chapter.



Understand

- 1) Caleb says that the way Styx says, “Yeah” makes it sound as though he is letting people believe what they want to believe. Why might that be a good thing, and why might it be a bad thing?
- 2) Styx and Caleb talk Bobby Gene into jumping on and off the train, even though he does not want to. When is a time someone tried to pressure you into doing something you didn’t want to do? How did you respond?

Ask students to consider if Styx’s actions are truthful or not.



Reading: Chapters 33-36

Ask

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

- 1) What happens when the three boys finish their trade?
 - » A man comes out of the house yelling at them.
- 2) Why does Caleb yell at Styx?
 - » Bobby Gene is out of breath, but Caleb can tell he is angry and decides to get an answer for him. He is also standing up for his brother.
- 3) How does Bobby Gene feel about their adventure that day? How does Caleb feel?
 - » Bobby Gene thinks the adventure was scary, but Caleb thinks it was cool.
- 4) What does Styx do to help Caleb enjoy basketball more?
 - » He gives him encouragement both when Caleb makes baskets and misses them.



Ask students what Styx says differently than Mr. Franklin when he talks about Caleb and sports.

Explore

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

- 1) Styx says that the vintage Superman lunch box is worth just as much as the motor. Do people collect vintage lunch boxes? Why might someone want one?
- 2) What is a phone book? How is it used?

Imagine



Ask students how they would feel if another friend got them into trouble.



Answers may vary, but you may wish to remind students about seeking adult help in emergencies.

- 1) Imagine you were with Bobby Gene and Caleb during their discussion about the train adventure. Whose side would you be on? What would you say?
- 2) Bobby Gene decides to call Pike's Place Auto Parts to sort out the problem, but it does not go as planned. What are some other ways the boys could fix their problem?

Observe

- 1) Caleb begins to wonder if Styx's stories are true. Think about some of the stories Styx has told the Franklin brothers, and sort them based on whether or not you think they are true, giving reasons for your choice.
- 2) In Chapter 36, Caleb lists the good things that could come out of bending the rules. What does he list?

Understand

- 1) Caleb is convinced that Styx deserves their trust, but Bobby Gene isn't sure. Has there ever been a time when you weren't sure if you could trust someone? How did you decide what to do?
- 2) Bobby Gene makes up with Caleb by telling him he won't stand in Caleb's way. What could Caleb do to make up with Bobby Gene?

Ask students if they were unsure about a new friend the first time they met.



Reading: Chapters 37-40

Ask

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

- 1) How does Styx act when the Franklin brothers tell him they called Pike's Place?
 - » At first he is casual and makes the brothers feel guilty, but then he starts to get angry.
- 2) When does Caleb take the lead on their trade? Do his actions resemble those of any other characters?
 - » Caleb identifies the trade's missing link, so he takes the lead, acting a lot like Styx does.
- 3) What does Caleb call his brother instead of "Bobby Gene"? Why might he do this?
 - » He calls him "B.G." just like Styx does, because he wants to be like Styx.
- 4) What does Bobby Gene say when Styx says, "Can't count on nothing but your own smarts. Can't count on nobody but yourself"? How does he say it?
 - » He tells Styx he's wrong, but he says it softly and Styx pretends not to hear.



Ask students to think of a time when Styx has walked away from the Franklin brothers without giving them a straight answer.


Explore

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


- 1) What is Grand Theft Motor? What kind of consequences come from it?
- 2) Pretend you had to travel by something other than by foot, car, or train. Research a lawnmower and other options (e.g., a skateboard, rollerblades, a scooter, etc.) and decide which you would use and why.

Imagine

- 1) Caleb uses a simile when he says, "Cory might have been as tough as a Harley fender, but he was just about as bright." Think about the other characters in the novel and write a simile that describes one of them.
- 2) Based on how the boys act and the events of the novel so far, predict what will happen when they go to trade for the Grasshopper.



Remind students that similes use the words *like* or *as* to compare two different things.




Have students use textual evidence to support their answers.

Observe

- 1) What are the big differences between the words *swag* and *memorabilia*? Consider each word's definition, and explain why the boys chose to use *memorabilia* in their sales pitch.
- 2) What does Styx mean when he says, "Equal risk, equal rewards"? What are some ways the three boys have lived by this motto throughout the book?

Understand

- 1) Bobby Gene tells Styx that they are not mad at him, they are just disappointed. Has anyone said this to you before? How did it make you feel?
- 2) Styx says there are no such things as miracles. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?



Have students define *miracle*, give examples of things that might be miracles, or use *miracle* in a sentence.

Reading: Chapters 41-44

Ask

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



Remind students that Styx looks at Caleb when he talks to Mr. Davis about fathers and sons. Why would Caleb know about these troubles best?

- 1) What does Caleb tell Mr. Davis he wants the most? Why is Caleb the character who realizes this?
 - » He helps Mr. Davis realize he wants a better relationship with his son. Caleb realizes it because he and his father also have trouble in their relationship.

- 2) What do the Franklin brothers and Styx buy with their money other than the Grasshopper?

» They buy an extra helmet, gas, and strawberry milk.

- 3) Where does Styx drive them on the Grasshopper? Why?

» He drives them to Mr. Pike's house to apologize for stealing the motor.



Ask students how Bobby Gene has felt about Styx's decisions in the book so far.

- 4) What does Bobby Gene do when he sees Styx running from DCS? How is this different from how Bobby Gene has acted before?

» He stands in front of the DCS workers so that Styx can get away. Before, he worried about breaking rules, but now he breaks them to help Styx.

Explore

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

- 1) What are some important rules for bike or moped safety? Are the boys following those rules?

- 2) What does DCS stand for? What is their job?

Imagine



Have students consider what Styx and Bobby Gene say when they get off of the Grasshopper.

- 1) The scene where the boys ride the Grasshopper is told from Caleb's perspective, but Bobby Gene and Styx are riding too. Think about how that ride must have felt from their perspectives. Would they feel the same as Caleb?

- 2) Imagine Mr. Pike was home when Styx and the Franklin brothers came to his house. What would their conversation be like?

Observe

- 1) What are some of Styx's strange behaviors that Caleb notices after their Grasshopper ride?
- 2) What snapshots does Caleb remember about Styx in Chapter 42? What emotions does he notice in each snapshot?

Understand

- 1) Why would Styx lie to the Franklin brothers, his friends, about what he really wants to do with the Grasshopper?
- 2) Styx gets onto the Grasshopper while he is still angry. Is it a good idea to do things while you're mad? If yes, why? If no, what can you do instead?

Ask students what Styx has said previously about who he can trust.



Reading: Chapters 45-48

Ask

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

- 1) Caleb picks up a piece of the Grasshopper. What does it have written on it?

» It has "S375-681W" printed on its side.

- 2) Does Caleb answer his mother's questions out loud? What evidence from the text makes you think so?

» Answers may vary, but they should include that he is not answering out loud, because his answers are in italics instead of quotation marks.

- 3) What promise does Caleb say Styx has kept?

» He kept his promise to get the Franklin brothers to Indianapolis.

- 4) Who reported Styx to the DCS?

» Mr. Franklin reported Styx.

Explore

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

- 1) What is the real city name for Indy? What does its skyline look like, and what interesting things are there to do in the city?
- 2) What does *EMT* stand for? What is an EMT's job?

Imagine

- 1) Imagine you are Caleb or Bobby Gene, and you are trying to stop Styx from getting onto the Grasshopper while angry. What would you say to him? What else would you do?
- 2) Caleb says he wishes he had a nickname. What nickname would you give him, based on what you know about him?



Help students think about how punctuation is used in those lines. Are italicized words without quotation marks said out loud?



Ask students if it is easy to make mistakes when they are angry. What could someone say to help them feel better?

Observe

- 1) What does Caleb think has happened to Styx? What does Bobby Gene think? What evidence do the two boys have for their opinions?
- 2) The phone number on Styx's driver's license calls an auto repair business. Why might that be? Use textual evidence to support your answer.



Ask students where they have read about an auto repair shop in the novel. What does that shop have to do with Styx?

Understand

- 1) Mrs. Franklin brings her sons to the hospital and lets them stay there as long as they can. How do you help someone who is hurt? How do you help someone whose friend or family member is going through a tough time?
- 2) Caleb considers himself one of Styx's "loved ones," even though they are not related. Who are some of your loved ones, related or not?
- 3) How does Bobby Gene feel about being called "B.G."? What is a good way he could have told Styx and Caleb how he feels?



Ask students what a hurting person might need. How might they feel?

Reading: Chapters 49-52

Ask

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

- 1) What does Caleb say about hindsight? Use context clues to determine what *hindsight* might mean.
 - » He says that hindsight is 20/20, which means that “when you look back at things, you can see their meaning more clearly, like you have perfect 20/20 vision.” Caleb realizes he understands things differently after they have happened than he does while they are taking place.
- 2) What does Bobby Gene notice about the piece of Grasshopper that originally said “S375-681W”?
 - » He cleans off the piece and notices it now looks like it says “Miracles.”
- 3) What promise does Mrs. Franklin make Caleb? What happens when he reminds her of that promise?
 - » She promises to take him to the hospital again to see Styx, but when he reminds her of that promise she tells him they will not go back.
- 4) How does Caleb describe the distance between him and his brother in Chapter 50? How does that distance change in Chapter 51?
 - » Caleb says there is a canyon or an ocean between them, but eventually he realizes Bobby Gene isn’t on the other side of a canyon, he’s a bridge.



Have students write S375-681W on a piece of paper and flip it upside down, revealing that it looks like the word *Miracles*.

Explore

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

- 1) What does it mean when a person has 20/20 vision?



Provide a diagram of the eye and its parts for students to consult as they research 20/20 vision.

Imagine

- 1) If you were Mrs. Franklin, would you respond differently when Caleb asks to go back to the hospital? Think about the ways Mrs. Franklin has acted before in the book.
- 2) Consider the actions Caleb and Bobby Gene take to see Styx. Would you act the same way, or would you come up with a different plan?



Remind students of Mrs. Franklin’s hesitation about letting Styx play with her sons. Do they end up breaking her rules or following them?

Observe

- 1) What does Caleb observe about the piece of the Grasshopper in the bathtub? Why might he see it this way?
 - » He says it looks “ugly and messy and small,” possibly because the situation also feels ugly and messy and Caleb feels small.
- 2) Mrs. Franklin tells her sons that they are out of chances. How many chances have she and Mr. Franklin given them so far? Is it reasonable that she has decided not to give them any more?
 - » Mr. and Mrs. Franklin gave them chances after they traded Susie, after Caleb talks back to them on many occasions, after they found out the boys stole from Mr. Pike, after the boys snuck out to see Styx again, etc. Answers may vary regarding whether students believe her response is reasonable.



Ask students about the plans Caleb had for the Grasshopper, how he initially felt about them, and how he might feel about them now that the Grasshopper is destroyed and Styx is hurt.

Understand

- 1) Caleb's belly starts to roll when he thinks about Styx and when his mother won't let him go see Styx. Has your belly ever felt wrong when you weren't actually sick? How did you help it feel better?
- 2) Caleb realizes he never told Styx how special he is. Who in your life needs to hear how special they are?



Ask students to consider a time when something went wrong. How did they physically feel when it happened?

Reading: Chapters 53-54

Ask

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

- 1) What idea do Bobby Gene and Caleb present to their parents? What do Mr. and Mrs. Franklin say?
 - » They ask their parents if Styx can live with them instead of another foster home, but their parents say no.
- 2) What does Mr. Franklin buy his sons? What does that say about him?
 - » He buys them six tickets to the Children's Museum in Indianapolis to show how much he loves them.
- 3) Why was Caleb upset when his father called him "extraordinary"? How has his opinion changed since then?
 - » He thought his father was telling him he was especially ordinary, but later he realizes Mr. Franklin meant he was more than ordinary.
- 4) How have the pictures on Caleb's ceiling changed?
 - » Before, they all showed places Caleb had never been, but now he is in some of the pictures.



Ask students to think about Mr. Franklin's feelings about Indianapolis. If he is doing something he is afraid of to make his sons happy, what does that say about him?



On a board or a piece of paper, write the word *extraordinary*, showing students how Caleb might have mistaken it for *extraordinary*.

Explore

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

- 1) How much does it cost to raise one child per year? Do you think Bobby Gene and Caleb can afford that number using their allowance?
- 2) Caleb adds new pictures of places he has visited to those taped above his bunk bed: the Children's Museum in Indianapolis, Chicago, and Lake Michigan. Choose one place to research, and find at least three new facts about it.



Gather images of each of these places to help students visualize what they look like.

Imagine

- 1) Imagine you are Styx Malone seeing Mr. Pike's truck there to pick him up. How does Styx feel: nervous or excited? Is he sad to leave his friends?
- 2) Caleb wants to know if there are more happy endings in his future. Think about one happy ending, based on textual evidence, that Caleb might have.

Review the passage where the boys see Mr. Pike's truck, asking students to pay attention to Styx's actions and body language.



Observe

- 1) What does the group of friends see at the Children's Museum in Indianapolis? List what they see and choose which exhibits you would like to see yourself.
- 2) How does Styx pronounce *extraordinary*? How does Bobby Gene pronounce it? Why was Caleb confused about his father calling him *extraordinary*?

Understand

- 1) Do you think it was difficult for Mr. Franklin to buy the tickets to the Children's Museum in Indianapolis after he spent so long telling the boys the city was dangerous? Why might he have changed his mind?
- 2) Caleb eventually realizes that he is more than ordinary: He is extraordinary. How are you extraordinary too?

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 each 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

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