

# Novel Study Guide: *The Cay*

## LANGUAGE ARTS 6

**Directions:** Read the novel's title, author, plot summary, setting, and characters. After each chapter, answer the study guide questions.

### Title

*The Cay*

### Author

Theodore Taylor

### Plot Summary

The Cay is narrated by Phillip Enright, a young American expatriate who moved to the island of Curaçao with his parents. His family relocated to the island following the outbreak of World War II, when Phillip's father was recruited to work for an oil company and support the war effort. However, when the Germans invade Curaçao, Phillip and his mother try unsuccessfully to return to the United States. Their ship is torpedoed, and Phillip finds himself on a raft with a stranger with whom he has nothing in common. When the two arrive on a deserted island, Phillip and his fellow castaway must learn to live and work together despite facing many challenges.

### Setting

The story takes place in Curaçao and on a cay in the Caribbean Sea during World War II.

### Characters

Phillip Enright (main character and narrator)

Timothy (Phillip's fellow castaway)

Phillip Enright, Sr. (Phillip's father)

Grace Enright (Phillip's mother)

Henrik van Boven (Phillip's friend)

### Chapter Review Questions

Respond to the following questions. Several of the questions require you to express an opinion or describe your reaction to events in the story. In these instances, there is no right or wrong answer, and responses will vary.

## Chapter 1

1. Read the first sentence from the novel.

"Like silent, hungry sharks that swim in the darkness of the sea, the German submarines arrived in the middle of the night."

What mood is communicated? How does the author establish this mood?

2. Compare and contrast Phillip's reaction toward the arrival of the German submarines to that of his parents.

3. Phillip says the following about his mother: "She was like that. One minute, shaking me; the next, holding me." What do you think he means?

4. Why is the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Enright filled with tension?

## Chapter 2

1. Why do the Germans attack the tankers that are leaving the island? What does Phillip learn as a result of these attacks?

2. Mrs. Enright believes that the family is in danger by remaining on Curaçao. Mr. Enright believes it is safer to stay on Curaçao rather than leave. Complete the chart below using reasons each parent might use to persuade the other to either stay on or leave the island.

<b>Mr. Enright:</b> "I believe it is safer to stay on the island rather than try to leave because . . ."	<b>Mrs. Enright:</b> "I believe it is safer for us to go back to the United States as soon as possible because . . ."

3. It's time to take sides! Who is right? Who is wrong? Consider the reasons listed above, and explain which parent has the more logical or reasonable argument.

4. Why does Phillip tell his friends that they are leaving Curaçao to visit family?

### **Chapter 3**

1. What caused Phillip to be separated from his mother?

2. Why does Timothy call Phillip "young boss"? What can you infer from this title?

3. What has Phillip's mother taught him about black people?

4. How do Phillip's words and actions show that he has absorbed his mother's prejudices against black people?

5. List two things that Timothy does to help them survive while on the raft.

6. How does the author use dialect to help bring the character of Timothy to life?

### **Chapter 4**

1. How has Timothy shown that he wants to protect Phillip and keep them both alive?

2. What happens to Phillip when the pain from his head injury finally goes away? How does he react?

### **Chapter 5**

1. Phillip says this about Timothy, "His eyes were becoming mine." Explain what he means.

2. How does the mood change after the plane flies away without spotting Timothy and Phillip's raft? Use text examples to support your ideas.

## Chapter 6

1. How does Phillip begin to show signs of coping with his blindness by relying on his other senses?

2. Phillip does not want to go to the island. Timothy wants to go to the island. Complete the chart below using reasons each character might use to persuade the other to guide the raft toward or away from the island.

<b>Phillip:</b> "I believe it is a better idea for us to stay on the raft because . . ."	<b>Timothy:</b> "I believe it is safer idea for us to make land on the island because . . ."

## Chapter 7

1. Phillip makes Timothy promise not to leave him alone on the island. What do you think would happen to Phillip if Timothy were to abandon him?

2. Why does Timothy withhold the whole truth from Phillip?

3. Imagine what the island looks like. Draw a picture of it based on the description in this chapter. Then add to your picture as you read more descriptive details about the island later in the book.

## Chapter 8

1. Why do you think Phillip is so willing to think poorly of Timothy, despite the fact that Timothy saved his life and has only tried to protect him?
2. Describe Timothy's plan to help them get rescued. What other things would you do to ensure rescue from the island?
3. In what ways does Phillip feel superior to Timothy? Why does he feel this way?

## Chapter 9

1. Why does Timothy expect Phillip to do his share of the work despite the fact that he is blind?
2. In Chapter 9, Timothy strikes Phillip. Were Timothy's actions toward Phillip justifiable? What was your reaction to this incident?
3. Read the following passage from Chapter 9.

"Something happened to me that day on the cay. I'm not quite sure what it was even now, but I had begun to change."

What does Phillip mean by this? In what ways does he begin to change?

## Chapter 10

1. Summarize the conversation that Phillip and Timothy have about race.
2. Why does Phillip say that Timothy "felt neither white nor black"?
3. Why won't Phillip climb the palm trees to get coconuts for them?

## Chapter 11

1. Complete the two-column chart. List the tasks that Timothy and Phillip have completed to ensure survival on one side, and list the tasks that maximize their chance of rescue from the island on the other. Then next to each item on the list, write "P" if the task mostly benefited Phillip, "T" if the task mostly benefited Timothy, or "both" if both characters benefited from the task.

Ensures Survival	Ensures Rescue

2. Analyze the information in the chart. Determine which character has made more significant contributions to this island camp. Explain.

## Chapter 12

1. When Timothy gets sick, Phillip is forced to become the caregiver. Describe how Phillip is able to help Timothy, despite his blindness.
2. How has the relationship between Phillip and Timothy changed?
3. Predict what will happen next to the characters.

## Chapter 13

1. Why does Timothy encourage Phillip to learn how to fish on the reef?
2. Why does Phillip finally decide to climb the palm tree and get coconuts?
3. Why has Timothy given up hope that they will be rescued?
4. Phillip has always described Timothy as having an ugly face. Why does he now remember Timothy's face as "kind and strong"?

## Chapter 14

1. Describe how Timothy and Phillip are preparing for the hurricane.

## Chapter 15

1. Describe what happened to Timothy.
2. Explain what Phillip means when he says that holding someone's hand "could be like medicine."
3. Use text clues to form a prediction about what will happen next to Phillip.

## Chapter 16

1. Why does Phillip seem motivated to clean up and rebuild the camp now?
2. With everything they created now destroyed, how would you prioritize the tasks that Phillip needs to complete?
3. How does Stew Cat come to Phillip's rescue? How is the "changed" Phillip's reaction to this incident different from how the "old" Phillip would have reacted?

## Chapter 17

1. Summarize the events in this chapter.

## Chapter 18

1. Explain how Phillip uses his other senses to make up for his lack of sight.
2. Why doesn't the airplane notice Phillip's first signal fire?

## Chapter 19

1. Why are the rescuers shocked by what they find on the island?
2. Why do you think the author included Stew Cat in the story?
3. In what ways have Phillip's parents changed as a result of "losing" their son?