

Critical Concepts 6.2B

The Watsons Go To Birmingham Lesson Plans

Skill Focus: CC.6.2 – Determine a theme or central idea and how it is conveyed through key details; summarize the text objectively.

Text: *The Watsons Go To Birmingham* Chapters 8-14

Graphic Organizer: Refer to your Educational Epiphany Critical Concepts Binder: Graphic Organizers Tab: CC 6.2B pages 21-24

Lesson Objectives

- Students will determine a theme or central idea from *The Watsons Go To Birmingham*.
- Students will identify four key details that convey the theme or central idea.
- Students will write a summary that is objective and distinct from opinion or judgment.
- Students will use relevant academic vocabulary during discussion and writing.

Vocabulary Focus

- Theme
- Central Idea
- Convey
- Distinct
- Summary
- Opinion
- Judgment
- Key Detail

I Do (Teacher Model – 15 mins)

Text Focus: Chapter 8 (The Watsons begin their road trip south)

Steps:

1. Distribute the CC 6.2B Graphic Organizer.
2. Review vocabulary with a mini-quiz or whiteboard warm-up.
3. Read aloud excerpts from Chapter 8, especially the preparations and the start of the drive.
4. Model filling in the organizer using a think-aloud strategy.

Teacher Model Response:

- Theme or Central Idea: *Families support each other during difficult transitions.*
- Key Detail 1: Momma carefully plans every stop of the trip and packs food to avoid trouble in the South.

- Key Detail 2: Dad surprises the family by installing the Ultra-Glide for comfort.
- Key Detail 3: Byron, usually defiant, begins to show more maturity and care during the trip.
- Key Detail 4: The family works together to stay safe, obeying rules and staying on track.

Summary:

In Chapter 8, the Watson family begins their journey to Birmingham. The planning and cooperation among the family members highlight how families unite to protect and support each other, especially when entering unfamiliar or dangerous situations.

We Do (Guided Practice – 20 mins)

Text Focus: Chapter 11 (Arrival in Birmingham; meeting Grandma Sands)

Steps:

1. Read the section aloud or listen to audiobook with the class.
2. Ask students:
 - What's different about the family dynamic now?
 - What message is the author sharing through Grandma Sands?
3. Collaboratively fill in the graphic organizer.

Sample Class Response:

- Theme or Central Idea: *Respect and wisdom from elders help shape younger generations.*
- Key Detail 1: Grandma Sands welcomes the Watsons with strong presence and wisdom.
- Key Detail 2: Byron is quiet and respectful, showing unexpected maturity.
- Key Detail 3: Kenny observes the seriousness of the environment and watches Byron change.
- Key Detail 4: Grandma Sands gives firm guidance, earning Byron's respect.

Summary:

In Chapter 11, the Watsons arrive in Alabama and meet Grandma Sands, who quickly commands respect. Through her actions and presence, the author shows how elders can shape young people's behavior and outlook through love, discipline, and experience.

You Do with Partner (Collaborative Practice – 30 mins)

Text Focus: Chapters 12–13 (The family experiences the South; Byron comforts Kenny)

Steps:

- In pairs, students read or reread the chapter excerpts.
- Partners complete the CC 6.2B Graphic Organizer
- Circulate to guide, prompt, and clarify.

Possible Partner Response:

Theme or Central Idea: *Hardship reveals the strength of family bonds.*

- Key Detail 1: Kenny begins to understand racism more clearly and is emotionally shaken.
- Key Detail 2: The family keeps a close eye on him and offers comfort.
- Key Detail 3: Byron, surprisingly, becomes the one who comforts Kenny in the darkest moments.
- Key Detail 4: Kenny begins to rely on his brother in ways he never had before.

Summary: As Kenny deals with the emotional fallout of racism and violence, Byron becomes a source of strength. These chapters show that family support—especially from those we least expect—can help us recover and find our strength again.

You Do Independently (Homework or Class Wrap-Up)

Text Focus: Chapter 14 (After the bombing, Kenny's emotional turmoil)

Task:

- Students read or reflect on Kenny's behavior and emotions after the church bombing.
- Complete the CC 6.2B Graphic Organizer independently.
- Focus on one theme from Chapters 8-14

Expected Response:

Theme or Central Idea: Trauma affects people deeply, but love and support can begin the healing.

- Key Detail 1: Kenny sees the aftermath of the bombing and is haunted by it.
- Key Detail 2: He isolates himself, trying to process what happened.
- Key Detail 3: His family tries to reach out to him, especially Byron.
- Key Detail 4: Kenny starts to come back to his family emotionally by the end of the chapter.

Summary:

In Chapter 14, Kenny experiences intense emotional trauma after the bombing. His withdrawal shows how painful events can impact a child, but his family's quiet support—especially Byron's—helps begin the healing process.

Post-Lesson Writing Prompt

Prompt:

The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963 explores powerful themes through the family's journey and experiences. Choose one theme from Chapters 8-14. In a well-developed paragraph, explain how this

theme is revealed through the Watsons' actions and experiences. Use at least two key details from the text and include an objective summary statement at the end.