

## Critical Concepts 6.3B Literary Texts: Plot Episodes & Character Change; *Watsons Go To Birmingham* Lesson Plans

**Objective:** Students will explain how a key event (episode) in a story moves the plot forward and causes the character to respond or change.

**Text:** *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* – 1963

**Graphic Organizer:** Critical Concepts Literary Organizer from Page 31 (Episode | Character Response | Character Change as Plot Moves to Resolution)

### I Do Teacher Model – Think Aloud

**Episode:** The scene where Kenny almost drowns at Collier's Landing.

**Teacher Think Aloud (Model using the Organizer):**

- "Let me fill in the title and check off 'Story' since this is a novel. Now for the first episode box, I'll write: 'Kenny goes to Collier's Landing even after being warned and nearly drowns.'"
- "Now I need to think about how Kenny responds to this event. Well, he's terrified, but he also starts to feel invisible and unimportant. I'll write: 'Kenny feels scared and begins to pull away from his family emotionally.'"
- "Next, how does this help move the plot toward the resolution? Kenny's withdrawal shows us that this moment changed him deeply. I'll write: 'Kenny becomes quieter, confused, and begins to question the world. It sets up his later emotional breakdown and the family's attempts to help him recover.'"
- "I'm noticing that the episode not only shows us something new about Kenny, but it also adds tension and sets up the next part of the plot—his emotional struggle. That's how episodes reveal character and move the story along."

### We Do – Guided Practice with Class

**Episode:** The church bombing scene in Birmingham.

Ask students to open to the chapter following the church bombing. Project or display the graphic organizer.

**Guided Questions:**

- What happens in this scene?
- How does Kenny *respond*?
- How is this event part of the larger plot?
- What does this tell us about Kenny's *emotional or psychological change*?

**Class Response (Fill in together):**

- **Episode:** Kenny enters the church and believes he sees Joey in the rubble.
- **Character Response:** Kenny is confused, panicked, and emotionally traumatized.

- **Character Change:** Kenny starts believing the world is unsafe and that nothing makes sense. He isolates himself emotionally and retreats to the "World-Famous Watson Pet Hospital."

### You Do with Partner

**Episode:** The family road trip to the South (focus on the journey itself before the major events). Students choose an episode from the road trip scenes (e.g., Byron helping Kenny at rest stops, Dad driving nonstop) and complete the next row of the organizer with their partner.

#### Partner Prompts:

- What does this part of the road trip show about the family's bond or stress level?
- How does Kenny or Byron respond?
- How does this moment build toward what's coming in Birmingham?

Encourage citing small moments, such as Byron quietly looking out for Kenny—early signs of his transformation.

### You Do Independently

Students choose *one additional episode* from the novel to analyze on their own using the final row of the organizer. Suggestions:

- Byron giving up his "tough guy" role and comforting Kenny
- Kenny hiding behind the couch at home after the bombing
- The family talking at the end of the book about healing

Students must:

- Describe the episode
- Explain the character's response
- Analyze how the episode moved the plot and led to a change in the character

### Formative Assessment (Options):

- **Graphic Organizer Completion** – collect and review
- **Exit Ticket** – "What was one episode that changed Kenny, and how did it push the story forward?"
- **Think-Pair-Share Reflection** – "Which character changed most throughout the story and why?"