

## UNIT ONE

### Chapters 1 and 2

#### COMPREHENSION SKILL QUESTIONS

##### A. Vocabulary in Context

1. In the following excerpt, what does the word *wavering* mean?

"I'll miss you, man," Darrell said, his voice wavering.

- a. loud
- b. unsteady
- c. angry
- d. choking with laughter

2. In the following excerpt, what does the word *retaliate* mean?

[Darrell] knew he did not stand a chance against Jermaine in a fight, and he knew if he told one of the adults, Jermaine would retaliate the next time no one was watching.

- a. get back at him
- b. tattle on him
- c. apologize to him
- d. run away

##### B. Supporting Details

3. The following words were said by

- a. Uncle Jason.
- b. Travis.
- c. Malik Stone.
- d. Tyray Hobbs.

"You wanna build up your muscles, Darrell, do push-ups, run, whatever it takes. . . . You are gonna have to work extra hard, though, 'cause your arms are really skinny. You look like you could get hurt if somebody tried to high-five you."

4. The following words were said by

- a. Uncle Jason.
- b. Travis.
- c. Malik Stone.
- d. Tyray Hobbs.

"We thought you'd make us a loan, so we don't put your scrawny butt in that trash dumpster over there."

##### C. Main Idea

5. The main idea of the excerpt below is that

- a. one neighbor, Mrs. Morton, baked sweet-potato pies.
- b. the houses in Darrell's neighborhood were rundown.
- c. there were always people to turn to in the neighborhood.

Inside the rundown homes that lined Darrell's block, there were always people to turn to in times of trouble. Across the street was old Mr. Corbitt, who sat on his porch each day and waved at everyone who passed by. And in the corner house was Mrs. Morton. She made sweet-potato pie for people in the neighborhood, especially Darrell and his mother.

6. The main idea of the excerpt below is that
- Darrell's bad memories of camp make him think things wouldn't be fine.
  - one summer, Darrell's mother sent him to a camp outdoors for city kids.
  - the camp director's promises did not come true.

Darrell was not so certain about his own future. The days ahead stretched out before him like a dark road filled with dangerous shadows. It would be like the summer Mom sent him to a camp for inner-city kids. The camp director promised Darrell and his mother that he would experience adventures in the outdoors away from the dangers of the city. What Darrell ended up experiencing was torment from a kid who wanted nothing more than to make anyone weaker than him feel as miserable as possible.

7. The main idea of the excerpt below is that
- Darrell saw two boys standing in front of a sandwich shop.
  - Malik was big and burly and wore his baseball cap backwards.
  - seeing the boy reminds Darrell how much he misses Malik.

Two boys were standing in front of a sandwich shop at a street corner. One wore a Los Angeles Dodgers baseball cap backwards. That is how Malik always wore his baseball cap. The kid was built like Malik too—big and burly. He even leaned against the wall like Malik used to, one leg crossed at a funny angle. A bolt of sadness shot through Darrell.

8. The main idea of the excerpt below is that
- Darrell likes to look at his reflection.
  - Darrell hopes no cats could see him.
  - Darrell thinks he looks weak and scared to others.

Darrell caught his reflection in a store window as he walked. He reminded himself of a rat scurrying down an alley, hoping no cats could see him. He figured that to the rest of the world he looked like a little kid afraid of his own shadow.

#### D. Conclusions

9. You can conclude from the following excerpt that
- Malik is Darrell's actual brother.
  - Malik thinks Darrell is acting like a baby.
  - Malik shares Darrell's feelings.

"You been a real brother to me," Darrell said. "I . . . I love you, man," Darrell blurted, his voice melting into embarrassing sobs.

Malik grabbed Darrell and gave him a bear hug.

10. You can conclude from the following excerpt that
- Uncle Jason thinks Darrell is currently too small to play sports.
  - Uncle Jason hopes Darrell will focus on academics rather than athletics.
  - Uncle Jason is impressed with Darrell's build when he sees Darrell.

[Uncle Jason said,] "There's your new high school. Bluford High. They got some fine sports teams there, Darrell. As soon as you get big and strong, you'll be wearin' a jersey with your name on it. You'll see."

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Where are Darrell and his mother moving from? Where are they moving to? Why?

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How does Darrell feel about moving? Why does he feel this way?

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Where does Darrell recall being bullied in the past? Who was the bully? How did Darrell respond?

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What comments does Uncle Jason make when he sees Darrell? How does Darrell feel about how Uncle Jason regards him?

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What happens when Darrell attempts to be friendly toward the group of boys standing outside the sandwich shop?

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Darrell doesn't like his mom to call him "baby"? Give reasons for your response.
2. Do you agree with Mom's advice that Darrell should smile to make friends? Explain. How else might Darrell make new friends?
3. Darrell thinks he'll never be able to replace Malik and his other good friends in Philadelphia. What qualities do you look for in a close friend? Make a list of these qualities, and then compare your list with those of your classmates.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Darrell and Malik have a hard time saying goodbye when Darrell has to move to California. Imagine that your best friend is moving to a state far away. Write your friend a letter describing how you feel about your friend having to move and about your friendship in general. You should also suggest ways your friend can go about making new friends.
2. Although Darrell's old neighborhood is "not one of Philadelphia's best," to Darrell it is home. Write about what does or doesn't make your own neighborhood feel like home. As you make your point, describe what your neighborhood looks like, what kind of people live there, and, most importantly, what kind of feeling the neighborhood gives you.
3. Although Darrell wants to be angry with his mother about having to move, he knows she is right and feels that he can't be mad at her. Write about a time when you felt angry about a decision your parent(s) or guardian(s) made even though you knew it was probably the right decision. Be sure to explain what happened and to describe how you felt and reacted at the time. Looking back, what do you think about how you and your parents handled the situation?