

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Durango Street

by Frank Bonham

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ISBN: 978-1-60389-540-8

Item No. 201565

Chapter 1

1. In this chapter, we meet Rufus Henry, the main character in *Durango Street*. Imagine you are Rufus' Parole Officer. Your job upon first meeting him is to write up your impressions of what kind of young man you think he is for his case file. Try to include the things he values and the things that make him angry. Begin your write up with the words: Rufus Henry is...
2. Rufus keeps a scrapbook of his hero, the football player Ernie Brown. Have you ever had a hero? Is there someone you look up to in the way that Rufus looks up to Ernie Brown? A good way to tell about your hero is to write it as a news story for your local paper. In your story write about why you respect this person so much. The title of your story would be, "Everyone Needs a Hero and Mine Is..."
3. Mr. Rubio informs Rufus that Rufus will be going home to a different place. He tells Rufus "Your mother's moved, by the way. Do you know the Durango Housing Project?" What if this happened to you? Complete the following dialogue that you might have with Mr. Rubio after he told you that you have to go live in a new place:

Mr. Rubio: I know, I know, this is tough...

Me: Tough! Tough! You don't know what the word tough means...

Chapter 2

4. Mr Rubio has told Rufus that he must not join a gang. However, Rufus thinks to himself, "...every boy at Pine Valley knew that the only way to stay alive in a big-city jungle was to join a fighting gang – before some other gang decided to use you for bayonet practice." Rufus thinks he is right in needing to belong to a gang to survive. But there are many dangerous things that can happen to gang members. Make a list of **eight** reasons why you would tell Rufus that belonging to a gang is dangerous. Each one of the items on your list must be written in a complete sentence.

5. Rufus tells his parole officer, Mr. Travers, that the boys who don't join a gang are constantly bullied. Many boys end up joining a gang in order to be protected from such bullying. Being bullied is no picnic. Imagine you are a teacher in charge of a playground where one boy or girl is bullying a smaller child and imagine that you are telling the story of how you handled the bully to your best friend. Begin your story with: I walked over to the...

Chapter 3

6. The author describes Rufus' new neighborhood in detail. Draw a map of your neighborhood. Label the place where you live, your friends' homes, streets, stores, buildings, parks, fields, etc. Think about how your neighborhood is similar to or different from Rufus' neighborhood. Make a list of **four** ways your neighborhood is similar to Rufus' and four ways in which it is different.

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7. Rufus feels happy when he arrives home. “A joyful melting feeling came up through him. He was home. The place everybody only had one of.” Write a paragraph describing what “home” means to you. You may want to write about how you feel when you are at home or what it feels like for you to be away from home. The title of your paragraph should be, “Why My Home is Home.”

Chapter 4

8. Rufus knows that he does not want to end up stuck in a dead-end job. He wants to go to school, possibly to become a teacher. He thinks to himself, “Without education, a boy was dead...” Do you agree with Rufus? When you think about what job you may want to have later in life, do you find that you need a good education to have that job?
9. Rufus’ little brother Curtis confides in Rufus that he has been thinking about joining a gang called the Little Warriors. What would you say to your little brother or sister if he or she said they wanted to join a gang? Write the conversation you might have. Begin your conversation as follows: You: Listen, little bro,...

Chapter 5

10. The Gassers throw a sack of bottles at Rufus and his sister Janet. When a policeman asks Rufus and Janet who threw the bottles, Rufus tells Janet, “For Pete’s sake, girl! Don’t you know you never tell a cop *anything*?” Most people have feelings one way or the other about the police. Imagine you are running for mayor and are being interviewed on a television program. The reporter’s question is: “If you were mayor would you give the police more power or cut back on the power they have now and why?” your answer should begin with; “That is a very important question. I feel...”
11. After the incident described above, Rufus hides his tension by walking with a bouncing stride, as if the incident had not bothered him. Write a **six-sentence** paragraph about what tactics you use to hide your tension or your fear so that others cannot see it?

Chapter 6

12. The Gassers all have the same orange-red hair. They also tend to dress alike. Do you see groups of kids in school or elsewhere who strive to have the same “look”? Choose **four** groups you can readily identify by their dress and style. Write about each one giving them an interesting name and a full description of their clothing and other similarities in complete sentences.
13. Sometimes Rufus describes his neighborhood as a “jungle.” Write a **six-sentence** paragraph explaining how Rufus’ neighborhood might be like a jungle in some ways.

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14. When Rufus and Janet go inside Chang's Grocery, Mr. Chang is impatient with them. He tells them to "buy what you want and get out. You no good!" When Rufus asks Mr. Chang how he can say that Rufus is no good without even knowing him, Mr. Chang replies, "I know you, all right. Know one boy, know all boys." It seems that Mr. Chang has pre-judged Rufus and has assumed that Rufus will cause trouble. Imagine that you are Rufus. You want everyone to know that at Chang's Grocery store they may be pre-judged as "no good." Make a sign (with pictures and words) that you might demonstrate with in front of the grocery store.

15. At the end of the chapter, the Gassers have spotted Rufus and Janet. Rufus tells Janet to run home, but he himself does not run home. He stays to confront the Gassers. Think of a film or television program that you remember as having a vivid confrontation scene. Write about that scene as if it were part of a review for that film or program which you would share with the class.

Chapter 7

16. Rufus faces six Gassers in the alleyway, all carrying weapons of some kind. It seems that Rufus will lose this fight, but surprisingly, he doesn't. He uses logic and reason while speaking with the Gassers in order to remain neutral. When that fails, he threatens Simon with a broken bottle and demands that Simon hand over his car keys. This gives Rufus a chance to get away without a fight. Rufus has clearly won this challenge. Do you think Rufus has now decided to join a gang? Explain why or why not in a conversation Rufus might have later with his sister Janet.

Rufus: You should have been there! Those Gassers...