

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**Hoops**

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# Hoops

## Note to Teachers

*Hoops* is a realistic story of friendship, manipulation, betrayal, loss, and hope among high-school students and adults in present-day Harlem. The story includes alcoholism, sex among minors, physical violence, mental cruelty, and drug culture and use.

All references come from the Laurel-Leaf Library edition of *Hoops*, published 1983.

# Hoops

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. identify the major conflicts in *Hoops*, list the major antagonists/protagonists, and account for the major actions leading to the resolution.
2. trace the development of the relationship between Lonnie and Cal, pointing out how each of them matures, how each struggles for power in the relationship, and what emotional satisfaction each gains from their time together.
3. discuss race relations as portrayed from the perspective of a black youth, including considerations of stratifications within the African-American population and overall black/white relations.
4. analyze the varying role of women in *Hoops*, using Lonnie's mother, Mary-Ann, and Aggie as examples.
5. discuss the author's use of basketball to achieve the following goals:
  - giving structure to the story
  - adding verisimilitude to the story
  - heightening the tension of the story
6. write a character sketch of O'Donnel, the white promoter, showing how he offers black athletes genuine opportunities on the one hand and uses or manipulates them on the other.
7. define and cite examples from the text for the following literary terms:
  - irony
  - protagonist
  - tone
  - verisimilitude
8. demonstrate an understanding of the difference between round/dynamic and flat/static characters, citing the following as examples:
  - Aggie
  - O'Donnel
  - Cal
  - Tyrone
  - Jo-Jo

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## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Develop a character sketch of Lonnie, showing him as an individual reaching for a clear identity and as a symbol of ghetto youth.
2. How does the author portray the parents and their influence on their children in this story? Include the parents of Lonnie and Mary-Ann as examples.
3. How does the author represent success in the story? Discuss the following as examples of success: Sweet Man Johnson, O'Donnel, Tyrone.
4. What are the hallmarks of maturity in the story? Discuss the following characters as showing maturity: Aggie, Lonnie, Mary-Ann.
5. What has the author indicated about social conditions in Harlem? Consider how people make a living or fail to do so; what is available for recreational activities, and the overall quality of life of the characters in the novel?
6. Many critics believe that male authors create stronger male characters and female authors develop more interesting female characters. Evaluate whether this generalization holds true for the characters of Lonnie and Mary-Ann in this story.
7. If you were a book reviewer, how would you assess the novel *Hoops*?
8. Discuss the author's use of slang in this book. Does it help you understand the characters in their social setting? Does it distract you from the action? Does it make the story more or less believable?
9. If you worked in a book store, what kind of customer do you think would enjoy this book?
10. How do you think the characters are affected by the availability of alcohol and drugs in this story?

# Hoops

## Chapter 1

### Vocabulary

**get over** – advance, get an opportunity

**jiving** – kidding, teasing

**key** – painted area on a basketball court; beyond the key baskets are worth 3 points

**turnaround jumper** – a basketball shot

**wino** – drunk

1. In the second paragraph of the story, the father says, “Then after a while you gonna start dreaming of this and that,…” What is the significance of the word “gonna”?

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2. What is the narrator’s home situation? What clues do you see in these early passages about the narrator’s gender and economic situation?

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3. How does the author use language to give early clues that this is the story of an African-American youth? How are people other than African-Americans identified?

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6. What does Tyrone tell Paul about stealing the welfare checks?

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7. Why is Tyrone helping Paul? Why did Paul beat up the woman who lives across town?

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8. What does Lonnie say about Mary-Ann after they talk?

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9. What happens when Lonnie goes back to the Grant?

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**Chapter 8**

Vocabulary

skag – heroin

1. What happens in the next two games?

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2. What does Aggie tell Lonnie about life with and without Cal?

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3. What does Aggie do and say to convince Cal to go see O'Donnel?

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4. When Lonnie and Cal arrive to see O'Donnel, what happens?

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5. What order has O'Donnel issued to Cal?

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6. What does Cal tell Lonnie to do?

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