

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Hoops

by Walter Dean Myers

written by May Dartez

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Chapter 1

1. The narrator, Lonnie, begins the story by recalling an important conversation he had with his father before his father moved away.

Think back on your life. Try to recall a conversation you have had with a family member that you will never forget. In dialogue form, rewrite the conversation as you remember it.

2. The narrator's father suggests that, when your days aren't kept full all the time with school and other activities, you "start dreaming about this and that" and "lay your days out in front of yourself like an imaginary road." That's when, he adds, your days start "piling up" on you.

What do you envision when you imagine all of the days left in your life, stretched out before you like "an imaginary road"? Does the thought of this road excite you, tire you, or worry you? Do you think you'll ever feel like your days are "piling up" on you? Explain your answer in a detailed paragraph.

3. The narrator likes his part-time job at a hotel because he can "crash there" if things are difficult at home. There are small perks to every job: free movie tickets if you work at a theatre, free ice-cream if you work at an ice-cream parlor, and so on. As a highschooler, would you like a job like the narrator's for the side benefits it provides, or is there another job frequently held by the average teenager (that is, *not* being in a famous band or modeling) whose perks you find more appealing? Explain.

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4. In this chapter, Lonnie reflects upon the changes in his relationship with his mother. He is upset because he and his mother do not talk easily the way they used to when he was a child, and they sometimes argue over stupid things like his leaving a teabag in a sink.

How is the relationship that you have with your family members changing now that you are older? Do you feel that you get along better or worse with your parents than when you were younger? Write a one-page diary entry in which you reflect upon any changes in your relationship with your parents.

5. Despite his uncertainty about his future, the narrator knows one thing for sure: he's fantastic at basketball. As he puts it, "My game [is] my fame, and I [know] it [is] together." From the first time he played ball as a child, he knew he excelled at it.

What's the one "sure thing" in your life—the one thing you know in your heart that you're good at (even if nobody else knows it yet)? Explain what this thing means to you and how it makes you feel in two or three paragraphs.

6. As graduation nears, the narrator becomes more anxious about what to do after high school. Do you already have plans for what you're going to do immediately after high school (go straight to college or work, for example)? If so, what are they and what are you doing now to make them happen? If not, does the lack of clear plans cause you anxiety, as it does the narrator? Explain your answer.

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7. Lonnie's girlfriend, Mary-Ann, is having problems with her mother because her mother believes she is too young to be working in a bar. Mary-Ann believes that, since her job does not require her to do anything illegal and since she is learning responsibility through her work there, the job is perfectly acceptable.

Should 16-year-olds be permitted to work around alcohol? First, create a pro/con list. Under the *pro* side, list all the benefits that Mary-Ann receives from working in the bar that grown-ups should consider important. Then, under the *con* heading, list any problems that could arise from underage youth working around alcohol.

When your list is finished, write a short letter to the editor of your school newspaper in which you address this question. Remember that your letter should clearly express one opinion (either for or against) and provide support and evidence for your ideas.

8. The author, Walter Dean Myers, uses a lot of slang to recreate the adolescent world to which Lonnie belongs. With a partner, create a slang dictionary, in which you try to define as many as possible of the slang terms that Lonnie uses. Be sure to include the following phrases: *on my back*, *booze*, *sweet*, *hightail*, *copping*, *wino*, *cats*, *cool*, *dig*, *flick*, *jive turkey*, and *chump*. Define these terms using the context from the story and your knowledge of teen culture and language. Then, add at least five words to your dictionary from your own slang that you and your friends use. Be sure to keep all entries school-appropriate and not offensive.

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9. Lonnie loses the one-on-one match with Mr. Jones, the “wino” who he ran into at the basketball court. During this game, he realizes that Mr. Jones has more talent than he had originally thought, and he says about him: “He could shoot all right. Maybe he had played some ball once.” What were your impressions of Mr. Jones? How do you think he may have become so good at basketball?

Create a fictional resume for him, listing some of the experiences he may have had in order to become such a good basketball player. Some of the following questions may help you: Do you think he has he ever been a coach before? Where? For high school or college? Do you think he played basketball in high school or middle school? Has he ever been a teacher? Include on the resume, any experiences he may have had that he may use in order to get a job as a professional coach.

10. Though the author rarely describes the narrator explicitly, we learn about him through his thoughts and actions. Free write for around five-ten minutes about what we know about Lonnie so far. Does any of his behavior surprise you? Is there anything disturbing about any of the activities in which he engages? Can you relate to him as a person? Do you think you would like to have him as a friend? Why, or why not? What does he care about? What are his goals? Do you share any of these goals?

Chapter 2

11. At the beginning of the chapter, Lonnie describes having to get dressed up to interview for a special show business recruitment program. He is disgusted about the entire idea of having to wear a hot suit in May and is also reluctant to fill out forms for a basketball tournament. For what occasions have you had to dress up nicely? What did you wear? Do you like dressing up? Write at least a paragraph about a time when you had to dress up for a special occasion.
12. In chapter one, Lonnie meets Cal lying drunk on the basketball court, and Lonnie provokes him, who then pulls a knife. Lonnie later learns that his friends are going to let Cal be their coach. He resists, and Cal challenges him to a game of one-on-one. If Cal wins, Lonnie is supposed to join his basketball team. Lonnie loses the game but chooses to stop playing with his friends rather than allow Cal to be his coach. Then at the beginning of chapter two, Cal shows up at his house to try to convince him to join the team. Lonnie says that he believes that his friend Paul must have told him where he lives.

In about half a page, write a dialogue between Cal and Paul in which Cal convinces Paul to tell him where Lonnie lives. In this dialogue, include the reasons that Cal would give Paul for so desperately wanting Lonnie to join the team and any resistance that Paul may have had.

13. Cal visits Lonnie's house and tells him that a friend of his who plays professional basketball will be at their next practice, so Lonnie shows up at practice to prove Cal is lying. Therefore, he is extremely surprised when he sees Sweet Man, a professional basketball player, at practice, just like Cal had promised.

Try to imagine how excited many of the students at your school would be if a professional athlete came to your school. Pretend you are a reporter for the school newspaper. Write an article for the paper about Sweet Man's visit to the neighborhood.