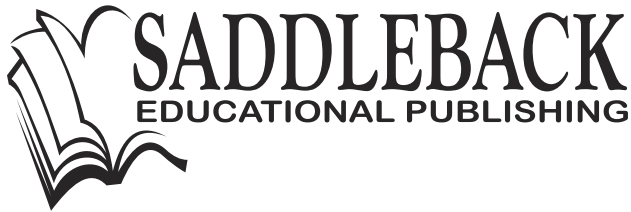


# *Focus* **ON READING**

*The Cay*

**TERRY HOUSE**

This is a sample not intended for classroom use.



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ISBN-1-59905-106-0  
Printed in the United States of America  
10 09 08 07 06 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# Introduction/Classroom Management

## WELCOME TO *FOCUS ON READING*

*Focus on Reading* literature study guides are designed to help all students comprehend and analyze their reading. Many teachers have grappled with the question of how to make quality literature accessible to all students. Students who are already avid readers of quality literature are motivated to read and are familiar with prereading and reading strategies. However, struggling readers frequently lack basic reading skills and are not equipped with the prior knowledge and reading strategies to thoroughly engage in the classroom literature experience.

*Focus on Reading* is designed to make teachers' and students' lives easier! How? By providing materials that allow all students to take part in reading quality literature. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains activities that focus on vocabulary and comprehension skills that students need to get the most from their reading. In addition, each section within the guide contains a before-reading **Focus Your Reading** page containing tools to ensure success: **Vocabulary Words to Know**, **Things to Know**, and **Questions to Think About**. These study aids will help students who may not have the prior knowledge they need to truly comprehend the reading.

## USING *FOCUS ON READING*

*Focus on Reading* is designed to make it easy for you to meet the individual needs of students who require additional reading skills support. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains teacher and student support materials, reproducible student activity sheets, an end-of-book test, and an answer key.

- **Focus on the Book**, a convenient reference page for the teacher, provides a brief overview of the entire book including a synopsis, information about the setting, author data, and historical background.
- **Focus Your Knowledge**, a reference page for students, is a whole-book, prereading activity designed to activate prior knowledge and immerse students in the topic.

The study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable sections to make it easy to plan classroom time. Five activities are devoted to each section of the novel.

## Before Reading

- **Focus Your Reading** consists of 3 prereading sections:

**Vocabulary Words to Know** lists and defines 10 vocabulary words students will encounter in their reading. Students will not have to interrupt their reading to look up, ask for, or spend a lot of time figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar words. These words are later studied in-depth within the lesson.

**Things to Know** identifies terms or concepts that are integral to the reading but that may not be familiar to today's students. This section is intended to "level the playing field" for those students who may not have much prior knowledge about the time period, culture, or theme of the book. It also gets students involved with the book, increasing interest before they begin reading.

**Questions to Think About** helps students focus on the main ideas and important details they should be looking for as they read. This activity helps give students a *purpose* for reading. The goal of these guiding questions is to build knowledge, confidence, and comfort with the topics in the reading.

## During Reading

- **Build Your Vocabulary** presents the 10 unit focus words in the exact context of the book. Students are then asked to write their own definitions and sentences for the words.
- **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** offers 10 multiple-choice, literal comprehension questions for each section.

**Check Your Understanding: Short Answer** contains 10 short-answer questions based on the reading.

## After Reading

- **Deepen Your Understanding** is a writing activity that extends appreciation and analysis of the book. This activity focuses on critical-thinking skills and literary analysis.
- **End-of-Book Test** contains 20 multiple-choice items covering the book. These items ask questions that require students to synthesize the information in the book and make inferences in their answers.

## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

*Focus on Reading* is very flexible. It can be used by the whole class, by small groups, or by individuals. Each study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable units of study.

This literature comprehension program is simple to use. Just photocopy the lessons and distribute them at the appropriate time as students read the novel.

You may want to reproduce and discuss the **Focus Your Knowledge** page before distributing the paperbacks. This page develops and activates prior knowledge to ensure that students have a grounding in the book before beginning reading. After reading this whole-book prereading page, students are ready to dive into the book.

The **Focus Your Reading** prereading activities are the keystone of this program. They prepare students for what they are going to read, providing focus for the complex task of reading. These pages should be distributed before students actually begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. There are no questions to be answered on these pages; these are for reference and support during reading. Students may choose to take notes on these pages as they read. This will also give students a study tool for review before the **End-of-Book Test**.

The **Focus Your Reading** pages also provide an excellent bridge to home. Parents, mentors, tutors, or

other involved adults can review vocabulary words with students, offer their own insights about the historical and cultural background outlined, and become familiar with the ideas students will be reading about. This can help families talk to students in a meaningful way about their reading, and it gives the adults something concrete to ask about to be sure that students are reading and understanding.

The **Build Your Vocabulary** and **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** and **Short Answer** activities should be distributed when students begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. These literature guide pages are intended to help students comprehend and retain what they read; they should be available for students to refer to at any time during the reading.

**Deepen Your Understanding** is an optional extension activity that goes beyond literal questions about the book, asking students for their own ideas and opinions—and the reasons behind them. These postreading activities generally focus on literary analysis.

As reflected in its title, the **End-of-Book Test** is a postreading comprehension test to be completed after the entire novel has been read.

For your convenience, a clear **Answer Key** simplifies the scoring process.

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# Focus on the Book

## Synopsis

Phillip Enright is an American boy living on the Caribbean island of Curaçao during World War II. When the German presence in the Caribbean threatens to escalate, Phillip's mother decides the time has come to return to the United States. She sets off on a dangerous sea voyage back to Virginia with the unwilling Phillip in tow. Within a week, their freighter is sunk by a U-boat; eleven-year-old Phillip, knocked unconscious by a blow to the head, is separated from his mother.

Phillip's life alters abruptly when he awakens on a raft, adrift in the Atlantic Ocean, and alone except for a cat and an old West Indian deckhand named Timothy. When his head injury leaves him blind, Phillip suddenly is not only lost but helpless. Thanks to Timothy's remarkable kindness and wisdom, Phillip survives and learns to overcome both his racial prejudice and his handicap.

While *The Cay* is a classic story of shipwreck and survival, it is also much more. At its core, it is a story of friendship—a friendship that not only crosses but eradicates the barriers of race, culture, age, and privilege.

First published in 1969, *The Cay* has won eleven literary awards, most notably the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award.

## About the Author

Like Phillip Enright, the “almost” twelve-year-old shipwrecked protagonist of *The Cay*, author Theodore Taylor lived an early life of striking independence and adventure. Born and raised in rural North Carolina, he spent his boyhood roaming the hills, woods, and waterways and climbing the many trees around his home. “A writer,” he has observed, “needs to explore, mentally and physically.”

Taylor's family had little money, and the Great Depression of the 1930s made it necessary for him to go to work at a very young age. He began writing when he was thirteen. Initially, he covered high school sports for a newspaper in nearby Portsmouth, Virginia. Here he heard the whistles of ships entering and leaving the port and fantasized about what it would be like to be a sailor seeing the world. Writing for the paper was just a job to

him then; being a sailor seemed like a real adventure.

Taylor finally became a sailor when he was assigned as a seaman to several different merchant ships plying the Atlantic during World War II. The first ship he served on was a gasoline tanker, not unlike the *Empire Tern* described in *The Cay*. Later in the war, he became a naval officer and served with the forces fighting the Japanese navy in the Pacific. After his military career ended, he returned to writing. His first book, an adult novel, was published in 1954. Since then Theodore Taylor has published more than fifty other books, many of them for young adult readers. “I love to write sea stories,” he has said. Indeed, the themes of adventure—particularly, adventure on the high seas—survival against the odds, and friendship form the backbone of his work.

In his critically acclaimed novel *The Cay*, Taylor adds a profound dimension to these standard themes. His dedication in *The Cay* reads, “To Dr. King's dream, which can only come true if the very young know and understand. April 1968.” The great civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in April of 1968. As a white child growing up in the South, Theodore Taylor saw firsthand the ravages of racial prejudice. The friendship Taylor has created for Timothy and Phillip embodies the spirit of Dr. King's dream of racial harmony.

## Historical Background

The primary setting of *The Cay* is World War II-era Curaçao, an island located a mere twelve degrees from the equator and less than fifty miles off the coast of South America. In 1634, the Dutch conquered the island's Spanish occupiers; since then, despite periodic changes in power, the Dutch presence and influence—from language to architecture—have remained constant.

Throughout its recorded history, Curaçao's location has played a determining role in its prosperity, sometimes tragically so. During the early years of European exploration and colonization, it served as the center of the lucrative but horrific West Indian slave trade. Captives from the surrounding islands, as well as from Africa, were brought to Curaçao to be bought and sold to work on plantations elsewhere in the Caribbean and the Americas.

(continued)

## *Focus on the Book (continued)*

In the twentieth century, with the discovery of oil in nearby Venezuela, Curaçao became home to one of the largest oil refineries in the world. This refinery, owned and operated by the Royal Dutch Shell Oil Company, had been up and running for less than a decade when, in the 1930s, World War II broke out in Europe. The refinery's presence gave the island (and its sister island, Aruba) unexpected prominence and vulnerability during these war years.

German submarines, or U-boats, soon began lurking in the once tranquil waters off Curaçao's shores; some even slipped undetected into its busy harbor. U-boats torpedoed the freighters and tankers that transported the crude oil and refined gasoline from Venezuela to Curaçao and from Curaçao to Britain. By targeting these ships, the German government hoped to cut off vital supplies of oil and gas to England as well as

supplies of aviation fuel to British General Montgomery's forces in North Africa.

To thwart the U-boats, the people of Curaçao adopted unusual and austere precautions. In Willemstad, a steel net was stretched across the bay to prevent submarines from entering the harbor. The island's ancient forts, originally built by the Dutch as a defense against pirates, the Spanish, and ironically the English now were equipped with antiaircraft artillery, observation posts, and American troops. Civilians were required to keep all lights to a minimum at night lest they unwittingly provide a target.

With the end of the war in 1945, life in Curaçao returned to normal. Today the only invaders are tourists who flock to the island to enjoy its beaches, culture, and matchless climate.

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SAMPLE

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## Focus Your Knowledge

The island of Curaçao is located in a region of the Atlantic Ocean known as the Caribbean Sea. It lies less than fifty miles off the coast of the South American country of Venezuela. The island of Aruba is its closest neighbor. Curaçao is warm and sunny all year long. For many years, it was owned and governed by the European nation of Holland, which is also called the Netherlands. During World War II, Curaçao's oil refinery was considered a vital link in the effort to defeat Hitler.

- Find Curaçao on a map of the world. Estimate the distance from there to Holland, England, Venezuela, Panama, and the American state of Virginia. Research the history of Curaçao and its connection to each of these places.
- As a Caribbean island, Curaçao is by definition a seafaring land. Use a dictionary to help define the following nautical terms: **fore**, **aft**, **bow**, **stern**, **starboard**, **bridge**, **sextant**, and **falls**.
- World War II forced the citizens of the United States and Curaçao, as well as of many other places, to make sacrifices. Interview someone in your family or community who was alive during that war. Find out as much as you can about daily life in America back then.
- Some people in the Caribbean have a different way of speaking English than do we in the United States. Read over the following glossary and refer to it during your reading.

### Glossary of Caribbean Terms

**bahss'**—boss

**bettah**—better

**blin'**—blind

**boddam**—bottom

**d'cot**—the cat

**catch**—catch

**dat**—that

**downg**—down

**d'ead**—the head

**'ear**—hear

**eben**—even

**'ere**—here

**feesh**—fish

**gibbin'**—giving

**hab**—have

**han'**—hand

**libin'**—living

**mahn**—man

**mebbe**—maybe

**motah**—motor

**d'nawth**—the north

**ovah**—over

**smahl**—small

**ting**—thing

**tink**—think

**tree**—three

**d'udder**—the other

**veree**—very

**d'wahr**—the war

**wark**—work

**d'wattah**—the water

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## Focus Your Reading

### Vocabulary Words to Know

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Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

**schooners**—two-masted sailing ships

**massive**—impressively large

**sorrowful**—full of sadness

**shimmered**—shone with a fitful light;  
glimmered

**defying**—challenging authority

**alabaster**—very white and smooth

**ebony**—black

**flimsy**—unsubstantial; not strong

**parch**—to dry or shrivel

**remote**—distant; isolated

### Things to Know

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Here is some background information about this section of the book.

A **refinery** is an industrial plant that purifies crude oil into fuel oil and gasoline.

**Blackout curtains** were used during World War II to keep light from escaping through windows at night and thus providing a target for enemy aircraft.

The **Nazis** were brought to power in Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler in 1933. The Allied nations, primarily the United States, Great Britain, and Russia, fought them in World War II.

The **V-for-Victory** sign was made by forming a “V” with the first two fingers of the hand. It was used by people during World War II as a way of showing their belief in and support of an allied victory.

**Calypso** refers to a type of music long popular in the Caribbean, particularly in the West Indies. It is upbeat in tone and relies heavily on the use of steel drums.

**Flying fish** are so called because their unusually large fins allow them to sustain brief periods of gliding flight over the water.

## Focus Your Reading

### *Questions to Think About*

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. Why does Phillip want to “join the people in shaking a fist at” the U-boat?
2. What are Mrs. Enright’s real reasons for wanting to leave Curaçao?
3. How does “victory or defeat” depend upon Curaçao and Aruba?
4. Why does Timothy call Phillip “Bahss” (Boss)?

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5. Why does Phillip think that Timothy “didn’t seem to be a mister” ?

## Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “Even the native **schooners** were quiet against the docks inside the channel.”  
schooners: \_\_\_\_\_
2. “But I couldn’t see the usual parade of ships coming toward the harbor; the stubby ones or the **massive** ones with flags of many nations that steamed slowly up the bay to the Schottegat to load gas and oil.”  
massive: \_\_\_\_\_
3. “I listened to the **sorrowful** sound of his voice until my mother’s hand switched it to off.”  
sorrowful: \_\_\_\_\_
4. “The fumes **shimmered** in the air, and one by one, they ‘topped’ her tanks, loading them right to the brim and securing them for sea.”  
shimmered: \_\_\_\_\_
5. “The ships had begun to sail again, **defying** the submarines.”  
defying: \_\_\_\_\_
6. “His face couldn’t have been blacker, or his teeth whiter. They made an **alabaster** trench in his mouth, and his pink-purple lips peeled back over them like the meat of a conch shell.”  
alabaster: \_\_\_\_\_
7. “I looked closer at the black man. . . . Muscles rippled over the **ebony** of his arms and around his shoulders.”  
ebony: \_\_\_\_\_
8. “He stripped off his shirt and his pants. . . . But soon, we had a **flimsy** shelter from the burning sun.”  
flimsy: \_\_\_\_\_
9. “I asked him for a drink of water. He nodded agreeably, saying, ‘D’sun do **parch**.’”  
parch: \_\_\_\_\_
10. “He scanned the barren sea and then looked back at me, his old eyes growing **remote**.”  
remote: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Check Your Understanding

### Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

- How does Phillip feel the morning after the submarines attacked?
  - frightened
  - anxious
  - excited
- How old are Phillip and Henrik?
  - ten
  - eleven
  - twelve
- Why do Phillip and his parents live in Curaçao?
  - His father was born there.
  - His father works there.
  - His mother was born there.
- What nationality are the Enrights?
  - American
  - Dutch
  - British
- Where does Phillip's mother want to take him?
  - to Aruba
  - to England
  - to Virginia
- What is the *S. S. Hato*?
  - a British tanker
  - a Dutch freighter
  - a German U-Boat
- What happens to the *Hato* after it leaves Panama?
  - It is torpedoed and sinks.
  - It hits an iceberg and sinks.
  - It is captured by pirates.
- What happens to Phillip in the lifeboat?
  - He is knocked unconscious by a blow to the head.
  - He is comforted by his mother.
  - He is taken prisoner by the Germans.
- Where is Timothy's home?
  - Curaçao
  - Jamaica
  - the West Indies
- Who is Stew?
  - the *Hato*'s cook
  - the cook's cat
  - Timothy's friend

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## Check Your Understanding

### Short Answer

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Write a short answer for each question.

1. To what does Phillip compare the German submarines?
2. How is Fort Amsterdam different the morning after the submarine attack?
3. How old was Phillip when his family moved to Curaçao?
4. Why are Aruba and Curaçao important to the war effort?
5. What happens to the *Empire Tern*?
6. What is the S.S. *Hato*'s first destination?
7. How does Phillip feel after leaving Curaçao?
8. Where has Phillip seen Timothy before?
9. Why does Phillip begin to dislike Timothy?
10. What has Phillip's mother taught him about people who are black?

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## *Deepen Your Understanding*

*Characterization* refers to the author's description of a character. In *The Cay*, Timothy is first introduced to us through the eyes of Phillip. How does Phillip describe Timothy? What does this tell you about Timothy? What does this tell you about Phillip? Use specific details and examples to explain your answers.

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