

Nothing But the Truth by Avi Reading Guide & Journal



“Just tell people the truth. Put your faith in that” (124).

– Anita Wigham to her sister Ms. Narwin

“Gert, you know as well as I, it doesn't matter if it's true or not true. It's what people are saying that's important” (133).

– Superintendent Seymour to Principal Doane

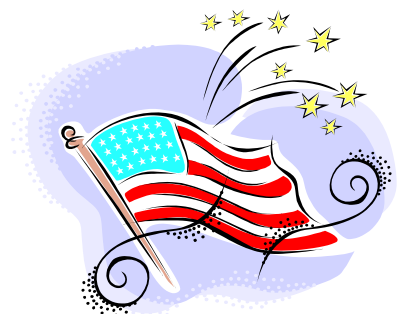
“The Star-Spangled Banner”
by Francis Scott Key

Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars thru the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore, dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream:
'Tis the star-spangled banner! Oh long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,
A home and a country should leave us no more!
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved home and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!





Reading Guide

*This reading guide includes fifty questions for the entire book. You must answer the questions that are printed in **bold**. In addition, select ten further questions to answer. Write your answers with **COMPLETE SENTENCES**. You may either type your answers or neatly write them on notebook paper; number your answers appropriately. You should be prepared to discuss your answers in class.*

Chapters 1 – 10

- 1. Using a dictionary, define “epigraph,” making sure to select the definition that relates to literature.**
- 2. Examine the epigraph of the book. Why would the author ask the “two questions” posed there?**
3. Flip through the book. What do you notice about the format of the book?
- 4. Avi calls this book a “documentary novel.” What do you think that means? How does the format of the book make this a “documentary novel?”**
5. Examine the memo, “Standard Format for Morning Announcements on Public-Address System.” What does this memo tell you about Harrison School District? What led you to these conclusions?
6. Describe the environment in Mr. Lunser’s homeroom (7 – 9).
- 7. Based on the first four chapters of the book (1 – 16), what are your first impressions of Philip and Ms. Narwin? On what did you base your opinions?**
8. What does Ms. Narwin’s memo to Dr. Doane, the principal of Harrison High School, tell you about Ms. Narwin and how she feels about her profession?
- 9. Examine Superintendent Seymour’s memo (20 – 21). What crisis does the district face?**
- 10. Use the internet to find information on The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton. Write a very brief summary of the book.**
11. How does Philip’s English grade cause a problem for him on the track team?
12. What lie does Philip tell his father (33 – 36)? Why would he tell his father this lie?
- 13. Ms. Narwin uses the phrase “bread and circuses” in her letter to her sister. Google the phrase and define it here. How does it apply to the topic Ms. Narwin is discussing?**
14. Philip’s parents dismiss him as “moody” (38 – 39). What is the real reason Philip is upset.
15. Examine the conversation between Philip and Ken Barchet (40 – 41). Explain one example of foreshadowing from this conversation.
16. How does Mr. Benison characterize Philip (43 – 45)? Does his characterization of Philip seem accurate from what we know of Philip so far? Why or why not?
- 17. The central conflict of the novel is revealed in chapter ten. What is the central conflict?**

Chapters 11 – 13

18. Define “insolence.” In what way does Philip display insolence (59 – 60)?
19. Dr. Palleni tells Philip, “To get along you have to go along” (64). What does Dr. Palleni mean?
- 20. Why do you think the author chose to include the conversation between Mr. Malloy and his boss (64 – 65) and the conversation between Philip’s parents (67 – 68)? What is Avi trying to show the reader?**
21. What information does Dr. Doane share with Ms. Narwin about Ms. Narwin’s teaching (65 – 67)? What does this tell us about Ms. Narwin?
- 22. What is ironic about Mr. Malloy’s advice to his son (69)?**
23. Both Ms. Narwin and Philip claim that they are lucky (69 – 70). For what? What do Ms. Narwin and Philip have in common?
24. Why does Philip refuse to apologize to Ms. Narwin (73 – 80)?
25. What is ironic about Dr. Palleni’s description of his job as making sure everyone “works together in harmony” (84)?
26. Both Dr. Palleni (88) and Ms. Narwin (94) suggest that Philip’s problems at school might be because of “problems” at home. Are Philip’s problems the result of issues at home? Why would Palleni and Narwin think so?
27. Examine the dialogue between Philip and his parents. Philip corrects his father when he refers to Philip’s English teacher as “Mrs. Narwin,” and Mr. Malloy says, “Figures” (96). What does his father mean? What does Mr. Malloy’s comment tell us about his bias?
- 28. Who is Ted Griffen (97 – 103) and how does his involvement exacerbate (make worse) “the situation?”**
29. Philip seems confident and self-assured in conversations, but in his diary, seems less sure of himself (103). What does this tell us about Philip and his perception of “the situation?”
30. Examine chapter thirteen. What do Jennifer Stewart’s conversations with various district personnel reveal about the adults involved in the situation?

Chapters 14 - 15

- 31. Study the newspaper article about “the situation” that is published in the Manchester Record. Using what you know about media, examine the article for bias. What do you discover?**
32. Mr. Malloy says that it will be “Good if Dexter sees it [the article]” (124). Why would it be good for Mr. Malloy’s boss to see the article?
- 33. Define “spin” as it applies to politics and the media. How does Ted Griffen “spin” Philip’s situation to his advantage in his speech (125)?**
34. Based on the information you learned about The Outsiders (question 10), why would the book appeal to Philip (125 – 126)?
- 35. In chapter fifteen, the reader meets Jake Barlow. Who is Jake Barlow? How does he portray Philip’s situation? Describe Barlow’s bias.**
36. What evidence is there in chapter fifteen that Philip’s story has spread? Give at least two examples.
37. How do the various students who are interviewed by Dr. Doane report “the incident” to her (145 – 146, 148 – 150, 151 – 153)? What is their perception of Philip’s actions?
38. Why does Dr. Doane rewrite (154 – 156) Dr. Palleni’s memo (143 – 144)? What is different about the second memo? Compare Superintendent Seymour’s memo (158 – 160) to Dr. Doane’s. How are they different? How are the “facts” in the memo different from what the reader saw of “the incident” as it happened?

39. **Dr. Doane, Ms. Narwin and Philip each receive telegrams (156 – 157). What do the telegrams tell you about the “spin” that has been put on the story as it spreads?**
40. Examine Philip’s diary entries from chapter fifteen. Does he realize the seriousness of the situation? How do you know?

Chapters 16 - 19

41. **In chapter sixteen, it becomes clear that Philip’s problem has become linked with the upcoming vote on the school district budget. How have the two issues become related? How might Philip’s story affect Ms. Narwin’s teaching career? How do you know?**
42. Philip is eventually removed from Ms. Narwin’s English class (175 – 177). How might that be “misconstrued?”
43. Philip seems not to want to talk about the situation and the effects it has had on him and the school. Why? What makes you think so?
44. **Ms. Narwin and Mr. Benison make reference to Andy Warhol in their conversation in the faculty lounge about the situation Philip has created (189 – 190). Look up Andy Warhol on the internet. Who was he? Warhol once said that, “In the future, everyone will have their fifteen minutes of fame.” What do you think that means? How does it apply to Philip, Ms. Narwin, and their situation?**
45. Examine the conversation between Philip and his coach (191 – 192). Does Philip tell the truth? Is his account of his interaction with Ms. Narwin accurate? Why or why not?
46. Study the conversation between Ms. Narwin and Dr. Doane (193 – 195). What is the real reason she is being put on “administrative leave?”
47. Both Ms. Narwin and Philip choose to stay home on a school day (201 – 204). Why?
48. **Despite all of the media attention to Philip’s story, only 22% of eligible voters participated in the school board elections (208). What does this tell you about the community?**
49. Philip’s parents choose to use the money they have saved for his college education to send him to a private school – one that does not have a track team (211 – 212). What is ironic about their decision?
50. Explain the irony of the last line of the book, “I don’t know the words” (212).



Reading Journal

According to *Writers Inc.*, keeping a reading journal is “a place to react to what you read. You can discover exactly how you feel about what you’re reading, gather new insights, and expand your enjoyment” (148). Reading journals can be an excellent place to compile ideas, memorable lines, details, questions, and personal reactions.

Select **three** of the following prompts as the focus of your reading journal. Each journal entry should be approximately one page, typed and double-spaced in twelve-point Times New Roman font. Take time to plan your responses. Use quotes from the book as support; be sure to put them in quotation marks and put the page number on which they can be found in parentheses after the quote. Do NOT write one long paragraph organize your ideas. This journal is a summative grade.

Prompts:

1. Before Philip is transferred into Ms. Narwin’s homeroom, he is a student in her English class. Philip writes about his dislike for the class. Ms. Narwin also notes her frustrations with his lack of motivation in her class. Do you think that her frustrations with Philip in English class impact the way she reacts toward him in homeroom? Ms. Narwin writes, “One has to be vigilant and firm. As well as consistent and fair” (55). Do you think that she is taking her own advice? Why or why not?
2. When Philip is sent to Dr. Palleni’s office, Dr. Palleni tells him, “Rules are rules” (62). Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not? Do you think that anything could have been done differently to help resolve the situation before it became such a huge deal? If so, what?
3. As Dr. Palleni begins to discuss “the incident,” he acknowledges that Philip is a good kid, yet he tends to blame Philip’s actions on many different things; he does not mention that perhaps Philip really was just being patriotic. He states, “Something else, I suspect. At home. Hormones. You name it” (115). Why do you think that Dr. Palleni assumes that Philip was deliberately acting out? Is it a fair assumption? Do you think that students’ actions are often blamed on those things, or do you think that many teachers and parents have a better understanding?
4. After “the incident” first happens, Philip is very bold about sticking up for himself (75). This creates quite a commotion, and the incident soon appears in the newspaper. When the article comes out, Philip’s mom mentions, “He looked like he was reading his own funeral notice” (123). Review the newspaper article on page 118. Who does the article seem to favor? Why do you think that Philip reacts the way that he does?

5. During one of his speeches, Mr. Griffen inquires why schools should make expensive advancements if “young people are not allowed to practice the elemental values of American patriotism” (125). Do you think that his reaction to the situation is justified? Is it reasonable for him to pose such a question based solely on one incident? How do you think that his stance on the issue affects his position as a school board candidate?
6. When Philip hums along to the national anthem, he is sent to the office for causing a disturbance. Consider his classmates’ reactions (145-153) to what happened. Do you stand and participate while the Pledge of Allegiance is being recited? Why or why not? What is your reaction to those who do the opposite of you?
7. After Philip is transferred out of Ms. Narwin’s class, Dr. Doane explains, “We are trying to be evenhanded here...” Ms. Narwin replies, “He’s a student. I’m a teacher. Hands are not meant to be even” (177). Do you think that moving Philip out of the class was being “evenhanded?” Why or why not? Do you agree with Ms. Narwin’s statement about the roles of teachers and students? Why or why not?
8. At the beginning of the book Ms. Narwin writes, “The truth is, Anita, I would be lost without my books, my teaching, my students” (6). Do her actions and attitude expressed throughout the book seem to support her statement? Give specific examples.
9. At various points throughout the text, both Philip and Ms. Narwin feel misunderstood. What do you think they could have done to better portray their perspectives and feelings? If they had done so successfully, do you think that it could have changed the outcome of the book? What may have happened instead?
10. Consider how Philip’s situation may have been different if he had been allowed to join the track team. Do you still think that the same things would have happened? If not, what might have changed? What would that say about some of the characters’ motives overall?
11. Which character in the text do you think influences Philip the most? Why? Is the influence positive or negative? How does that impact his actions? Think of one person in your life who influences you. How has that person had an impact on you and your actions?
12. Do you think that Nothing But the Truth adequately represents school life? Compare and contrast life at Harrison High School with life in your school. Which characters and events seem to be the same? Which ones seem to be different?

13. Abraham Lincoln once said, "I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him." Does Philip seem to be proud of the place in which he lives? Does this change at all throughout the book? Do people seem to be proud of Philip? Why or why not? Give examples.
14. American politician Adlai Stevenson stated, "Patriotism... is not short, frenzied outbursts of emotion, but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime." According to this definition of patriotism, is Philip patriotic? Why? Support your answer with specific examples from the text.
15. Consider a time when you or someone you know either told less than the whole truth, or were tempted to. Why do you think it happened? Would things have been different if that person had told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? What might have changed?

