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**Study Guide**

for

**The Glory Field**

by Walter Dean Myers



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New York, New York   Columbus, Ohio   Woodland Hills, California   Peoria, Illinois

# Meet Walter Dean Myers



[Writing for black children] . . . meant capturing the subtle rhythms of language and movement and weaving it all, the sound and the gesture, the sweat and the prayers, into the recognizable fabric of black life.

—Walter Dean Myers, *New York Times Book Review*, 1987

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Walter Dean Myers was born in 1937 and grew up mostly in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. He moved there as a young child, after his mother's death, to live with Herbert and Florence Dean, whom he calls his foster parents. The Harlem of Myers's childhood was a close-knit community with a strong church presence, many artists, and an abundance of hardworking families. His foster mother taught him to read at the age of four, and soon he was reading the daily newspaper to her. "I sensed a connection between myself and the worlds I read about in books," said Myers. When he was ten- or eleven-years-old, he began to write fiction, filling up notebooks with his stories. Although Myers won several writing contests during high school, family members did not take his writing seriously because they did not consider writing to be a "real" job.

Myers's teenage years, like those of the main characters in *The Glory Field*, contained an important turning point. He began to feel during high school that his career choices were defined not so much by his abilities as by his family's finances and by his race. He saw few opportunities for an African American male who was good at writing. As Myers faced this moment of compromise, he became angry. He left school to join the army, though years later he did complete college.

After the army, Myers worked at a series of jobs to keep a roof over his head. He married and had two children. He also committed himself to a writing career, writing every day and trying to get published. Myers got his big break in 1968 when his book *Where Does the Day Go?* won a contest for African American writers.

An encounter at a party was the next important turning point for the author. An editor who had enjoyed one of Myers's short stories, but thought it was the opening of a novel, asked him how the story continued. Myers made it up right there at the party. That novel, *Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff* (1975), was the first of the many young adult novels that have made Myers so popular. Many of Myers's books have won awards, including *Somewhere in the Darkness* (1992) and *Now Is Your Time!: The African-American Struggle for Freedom* (1991).

Most of Myers's novels deal with the lives of African Americans living in cities, and many are set in the Harlem the author knows so well. Myers has tried to show the variety of people and experiences in these communities. Many of his novels, such as *The Glory Field*, address the tough problems of life. According to the author, "[W]hat I want to do with my writing is make the connection—reach out and touch the lives of my characters and share them with a reader."

# Introducing the Novel

*The Lewis family . . . owes its growth—indeed its very survival—to the fortitude of several remarkable teenagers, whose sacrifices and decisions throughout the family’s 250-year history are highlighted in six self-contained but seamlessly interrelated tales. . . .*

—Elizabeth Bush, *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*, 1994

For many readers, as for the reviewer above, the attraction of *The Glory Field* is in these young people and the turning points they face. All members of the same family, these young characters appear in six separate sections of the novel, each of which takes place in a different time in American history. Many elements link the young people, though the time changes and sometimes the place changes as well. In the words of another reviewer, all six main characters face challenges and “problems of racism, poverty, and identity. The anchors in their lives are family and their love for one another and their land.” Some reviewers have criticized Walter Dean Myers for taking on too much with *The Glory Field*. You may, in fact, find the novel a bit challenging to read because of its unusual structure and large, fluid cast of characters. But the novel is made more accessible by the author’s straightforward style and the book’s division into six separate stories.

*The Glory Field* begins in 1753 when eleven-year-old Muhammad Bilal is kidnapped by slave traders who attack his African village. Though fictional, the character Muhammad could be one of the more than eleven million Africans taken from their homes between the 1400s and the 1800s. Muhammad is forced onto a slave ship, where he struggles to survive a horrific journey that eventually takes him to a plantation on an island off the South Carolina coast. There, as an enslaved worker, he labors on the land that later is called the Glory Field by his descendants. Many of these descendants use the last name of Lewis.

The novel travels through five other time periods. In each, the central character is a young member of the Lewis family who faces a turning point in his or her life. As you meet the Lewises and the many other characters in the novel, they will come to life through Walter Dean Myers’s skillful use of dialogue. Myers has been much praised by critics for his “use of the rhythms of black speech” and for defining characters through dialogue. The author also has been praised for “bringing history to life through stories of ordinary people.” After reading each of the stories that make up the novel, you are likely to feel that you have actually visited these times and places. You will come to understand the challenges facing these young African Americans, as well as how these challenges change and how they stay the same over time.

## THE TIME AND PLACE

*The Glory Field* spans the years from 1753 to 1994. The novel is set in three primary locations: coastal South Carolina, Chicago, and New York City. One location—the South Carolina land that the Lewis family calls the Glory Field—is central to the novel. Family members first work this land as enslaved people on the Live Oaks Plantation.

The plantation economy in America began when the southern colonies were first settled. Fertile lands were made into large farms of between two and ten thousand acres. Main crops included tobacco, cotton, sugarcane, rice, hemp, and indigo. To grow these cash crops (those sold for money rather than used by the farmer), planters needed many workers. By the mid-1700s, plantation owners were getting these workers largely through the trade in enslaved Africans. More than five-thousand newly enslaved Africans arrived each year. A typical large Southern plantation usually housed between fifty and two hundred enslaved people.

Plantations were mini-villages. Crops were processed through milling or grinding; lumber was treated at the sawmill; and animals were raised, housed, and slaughtered. Enslaved people, some of whom became quite skilled, performed these tasks. They also cleaned the planter's large manor house, cooked his family's food, washed the clothing, and performed scores of other daily tasks. Finally, enslaved people did most of the field work—planting, tending, and harvesting the crops. Because the planter wasn't paying his workers, he made a great deal of money selling his crops and could then buy the manufactured goods he needed. Thus, the South had few factories or cities. Its

people, both black and white, lived in scattered groups throughout the vast, open farmlands.

In the novel, after the Civil War, the Lewis family stays on a piece of land its members farmed as enslaved workers. They become landowners, as some historical African Americans did. These new landowners received their land in one of several ways. Sometimes plantations were split up among formerly enslaved workers. At other times, the government helped freed African Americans buy land at reduced costs. A large number of African Americans ended up working the land but not actually owning it, paying rent or a share of the crops to the former slaveholders.

### Did You Know?

The first Africans brought to this continent came to what is now South Carolina as early as 1526. Over the next three centuries, millions of others were brought by force primarily to the West Indies and to the southern United States. They came from many different nations and cultures within Africa, each with unique characteristics. Once in North America, nearly all became enslaved workers in farming communities.

Even after the Civil War ended slavery, African Americans in southern states often faced racism, limited job opportunities, and difficult living conditions. To try to escape these problems, many African Americans left rural areas and moved to northern cities. They went to such places as Chicago's South Side and New York City's Harlem, where they built strong and vital communities. These communities have nurtured scores of African Americans

who have made enormous contributions to American culture and society.

Although life was better in many ways for African Americans who moved north, they still faced racism and discrimination. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s arose in response to the injustices African Americans faced in their everyday lives, both in the South and in the North. African Americans struggled to gain their full civil rights; a number of whites and people of other races joined in the struggle. The civil rights movement resulted in the passage of new laws designed to ensure full civil rights to Americans of all races.

Many African Americans have reached back into the past to connect with some of the African traditions of their ancestors and to learn about the difficult roads those ancestors traveled. *The Glory Field* is a story that touches on many parts of that long journey.

# Before You Read

*The Glory Field July 1753 through April 1900*

## FOCUS ACTIVITY

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What personal characteristics might have helped enslaved African Americans find the courage to survive brutal and dehumanizing conditions? How much courage do you think it took to try to escape from slavery and find freedom?

### Journal

In your journal, explore your responses to the questions above. Try to imagine what it was like to be considered the lawful property of a slaveholder and to have none of the rights that Americans today take for granted.

### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Muhammad, Lizzy, and Elijah cope with enslavement and freedom.

## BACKGROUND

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### Time and Place

The African slave trade reached its peak in the mid-1700s, not long after colonies such as Virginia passed laws allowing enslaved Africans to be owned as property. Most enslaved workers lived on plantations, often in tiny, poorly built shacks. Both house and field workers spent their days serving their owners, from dawn until the work was done—often eighteen hours, no matter the weather. For field workers, this meant backbreaking labor caring for crops. Food supplies from the owner were small, so workers were often hungry. Most of all, they had no control over their own lives. Families could be separated at the owner's whim. Enslaved people could not marry without the owner's consent. They were not allowed to learn to read, nor could they leave the plantation, or gather in a group, or even hold religious rituals, without the owner's permission.

Following the Civil War, all enslaved African Americans were finally freed. Though African Americans gained many legal rights in the years after the Civil War, they were not always able to truly exercise these rights. "Jim Crow Laws" legally kept African Americans and whites segregated in many parts of the South. For example, African Americans could not attend the same schools as whites or sit with whites in restaurants and theaters. It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that most laws supporting racial segregation were struck down.

### Did You Know?

South Carolina borders the Atlantic Ocean. Its coastline wriggles in and out as peninsulas and inlets alternate with hundreds of islands not far offshore. Though the climate is generally mild all year, the state is sometimes hammered by fierce tropical storms. These furious storms, which sometimes reach hurricane strength, can bring strong winds and very rough seas to the South Carolina coast and its many islands.

## VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**contraband** [kɒn'trə bænd'] *n.* during the Civil War, an enslaved person who escaped behind Union lines

**forage** [fɔr'ij] *v.* to search for food

**roil** [roil] *v.* to move angrily

**sporadic** [spə rad'ik] *adj.* occurring occasionally

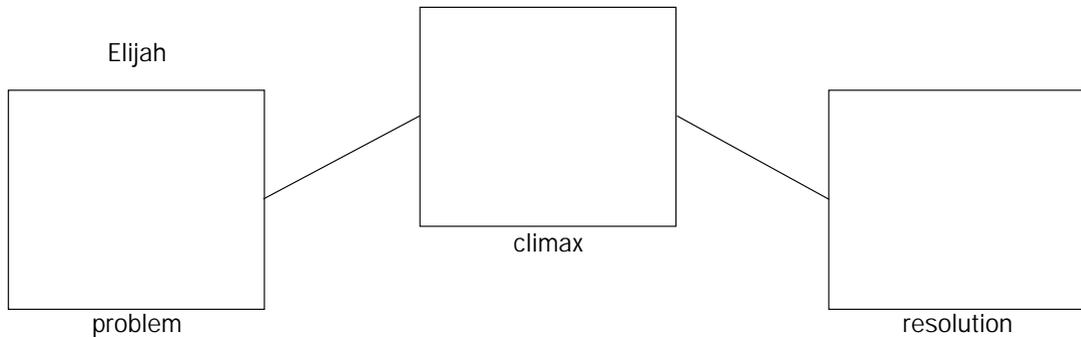
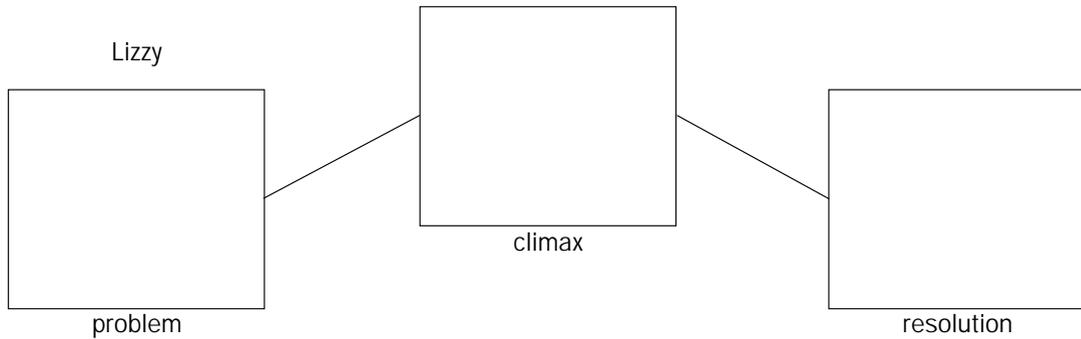
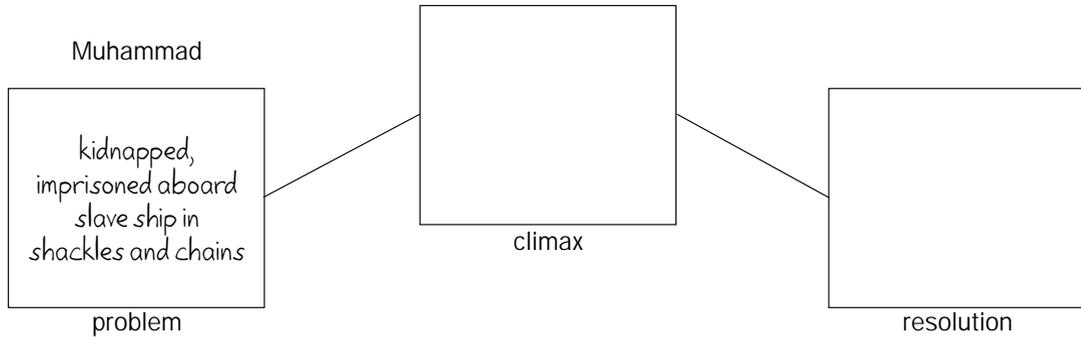
**treacherous** [trech'ər əs] *adj.* marked by hidden danger

**tussle** [tus'əl] *n.* a physical struggle

# Active Reading

## *The Glory Field July 1753 through April 1900*

Muhammad, Lizzy, and Elijah each face a challenging obstacle. As you read, identify the main problem each character faces, note the climax of each character's battle to overcome the problem, and record how each problem is resolved.



# Responding

*The Glory Field July 1753 through April 1900*

## Personal Response

What did you think of the risks Lizzy and Elijah took? Were their goals worth these risks? Explain.

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## Analyzing Literature

### Recall and Interpret

1. Explain what has happened to Muhammad. What do you learn about his character from his reactions to the experience? Does he exhibit any of the characteristics you described in the **Focus Activity** on page 12? Explain.

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2. What happens at Live Oaks Plantation to change Lizzy's life? How does she feel about her place on the plantation before and after this event?

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3. What does Elijah do to try to prove his independence and maturity? How does his behavior affect those around him?

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# Responding

## *The Glory Field July 1753 through April 1900*

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. Why do you think it is so important to Elijah to feel like a man? What does he learn from his experiences?

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5. Does it surprise you to learn that the practice of slavery still exists in some parts of the world today? How can individuals and governments work to eliminate this abominable violation of basic human rights?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Letter Home

In the first three sections of the book, the three main characters are forced to leave home. What might Muhammad, Lizzy, or Elijah say to their family and friends about their journeys? How might they view the events that took them from home? In the voice of Muhammad, Lizzy, or Elijah, write a letter home describing your experiences, as well as your reactions to those experiences.

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

In the first three sections of the novel, characters are trapped in various ways. Many of the African American characters are physically or economically trapped, while many of the white characters are trapped by their prejudices. In your group, skim the first three sections of the text to find examples of the different kinds of shackles—both literal and figurative—that imprison different characters. Share your examples with the members of another group.

##### Science Connection

Elijah and Abby battle a fierce storm as they try to find and rescue David Turner. Do research to learn about severe coastal storms and the conditions they can create for people on land and at sea. Create a diagram showing the forces affecting the *Pele Queen* during its journey, as well as the rescuers on the island.



*Save your work for your portfolio.*

# Before You Read

*The Glory Field* May 1930 and January 1964

## FOCUS ACTIVITY

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What are some of your goals and dreams? Do you think they will be easy or difficult to achieve? What might be some obstacles or choices you'll face along the way?

### List It!

On a sheet of paper, list some of your goals and dreams. Next to each one, list reasons you think you can attain that particular goal; also list possible obstacles you may encounter. In addition, list decisions and choices you may have to make as you pursue your ambitions—for example, you might have to give up one goal to fully pursue another.

### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Luvenia and Tommy respond to the obstacles and decisions they face on the road to reaching their goals and fulfilling their dreams.

## BACKGROUND

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### The Great Migration

In the early 1900s, many African Americans left the South for northern cities such as New York City and Chicago. While Elijah left to escape an angry mob, others left in search of better jobs, more education, and greater opportunity. Migrating African Americans found some, but not all, of what they sought. They certainly found jobs, though racism limited the kinds of employment and education African Americans could obtain. Housing was scarce and very expensive. Unlike their southern relatives, African Americans in the North could legally go anywhere. Still, they lived in segregated communities and often were unwelcome in white-owned businesses. For Elijah's daughter, Luvenia, whose story begins in 1930, Chicago seems to offer more obstacles than opportunities.

### Did You Know?

During the 1950s and 1960s, Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders organized non-violent protests in the South. Often, police and angry whites responded violently to peaceful protesters. Marchers were attacked and often arrested. The year 1964, when Tommy's story takes place, held both disaster and triumph for the civil rights movement. Civil rights workers were murdered in Mississippi, while the Civil Rights Act of 1964 brought legal protection against many kinds of discrimination. In South Carolina, where Tommy is growing up, the first African American college student had only the previous year been admitted to a local university. There was relatively little violence, but much resistance. Tommy, like others of his generation, now must find his own way through these troubled times.

## VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**careen** [kə rēn'] *v.* to move in a jerky and uncontrolled way

**integration** [in tə grā'shən] *n.* process of opening schools, businesses, and communities equally to citizens of all races

**intimidate** [in tim'ə dāt] *v.* to frighten

**predominantly** [pri dom'ə nənt lē] *adv.* mostly

**puckish** [puk'ish] *adj.* fun; mischievous

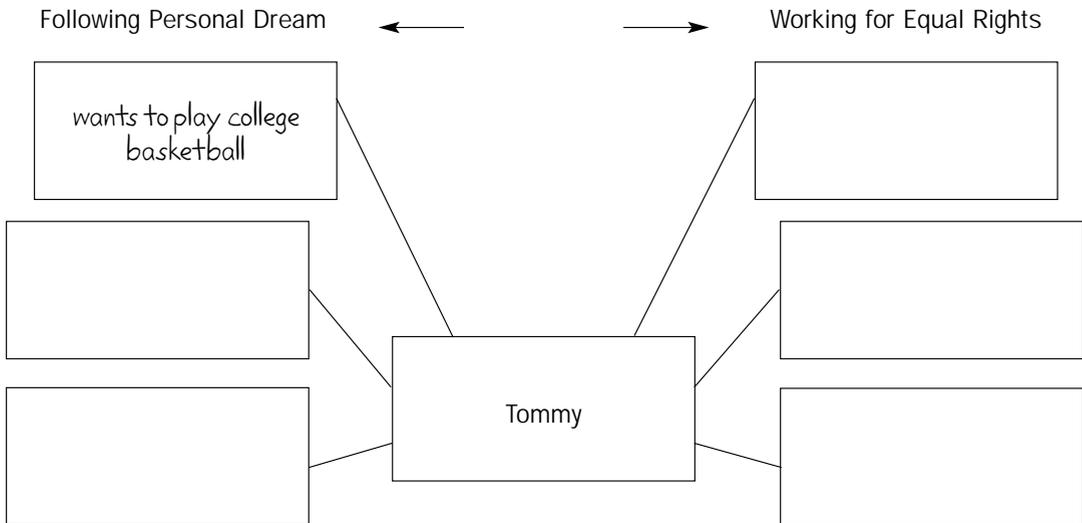
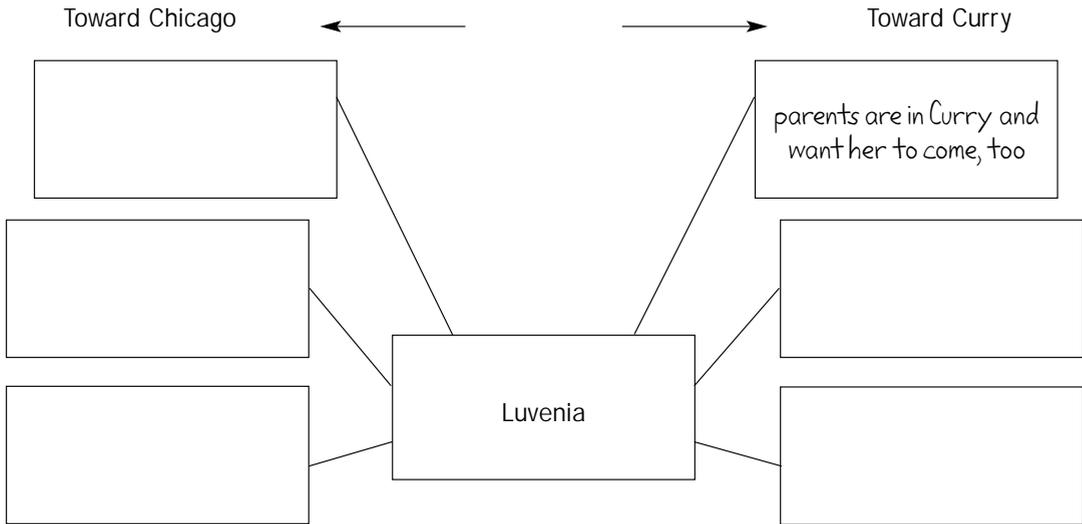
**raucous** [rō'kəs] *adj.* loud and harsh, but fun

**vitality** [vī tal'ə tē] *n.* quality of liveliness

# Active Reading

## *The Glory Field May 1930 and January 1964*

In both “May 1930” and “January 1964,” the main characters are pulled in opposing directions. Luvenia feels the pull to leave her Chicago life for the family land on Curry Island. Tommy must choose between personal opportunity and taking a political stand for equal rights. As you read about Luvenia and Tommy, note some of the forces that pull them in these opposing directions.



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# Responding

*The Glory Field* May 1930 and January 1964

## Personal Response

How did you respond to the obstacles and limitations Luvenia and Tommy faced?  
How do you think you might have behaved in their situations?

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## Analyzing Literature

### Recall and Interpret

1. What does Elijah want Luvenia to do? How do Elijah's goals differ from those of Luvenia?

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2. What steps does Luvenia take to try to achieve her goals? What is the outcome of these efforts? From these events, what do you learn about the whites and African Americans in Luvenia's community?

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3. What important decision does Tommy face? How do the events in Johnson City affect his decision?

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# Responding

## *The Glory Field* May 1930 and January 1964

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. Do you think Mr. Deets treats Luvenia fairly? Give reasons for your answer.

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5. Evaluate the important choice Tommy makes. What does he sacrifice? What does he gain? Do you think he made the right choice? Why or why not?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Letter to the Editor

In “January 1964,” Walter Dean Myers includes what might be a newspaper account of Sheriff Moser’s press conference and the treatment Tommy receives while in jail. Imagine that you are a citizen of Johnson City who has read this account. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper that expresses your views about these events. Support your views with facts and valid reasons.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

How do the two societies in which Luvenia and Tommy come of age differ from each other? What has changed between 1930 and 1964? What has stayed the same?

Discuss these questions in your group, using facts and details from the novel to support your ideas. Consider the issues of racial equality, equal opportunity, and how whites and African Americans view and treat each other. Share and discuss your ideas with the members of another group.

#### Mathematics Connection

At Luvenia’s rent party, the guests contribute ten cents a drink to help Luvenia. The fifteen-plus dollars she takes home seems like a fortune to her. What could you buy today with fifteen dollars? How much would it cost to rent a small apartment? If someone threw a rent party today, how much might they charge for a soft drink? You might want to do research to find out how the cost of living in 1930 compares with the current cost of living. Share your findings with the class.



Save your work for your portfolio.

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# Before You Read

## *The Glory Field August 1994 and Epilogue*

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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When someone in a family has a problem, are other family members obligated to help that person? What if the person doesn't want to be helped? What if the problem is the result of bad choices the family member has made?

#### Think–Pair–Share

Think about your responses to the questions above. Then meet with a partner to discuss your opinions and ideas. Finally, share your thoughts with the class.

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Malcolm behaves toward a family member with a serious problem.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Time and Place

Malcolm Lewis, the main character in the last part of the novel, lives in Harlem, a neighborhood of New York City. Like Chicago's South Side, Harlem expanded rapidly during the Great Migration. African Americans from the South flooded into the neighborhood between 1910 and 1930. They created an incredibly vital community, filled with a mix of wealthy professionals, entertainers, and struggling working people. One successful Harlem businesswoman was Madame C. J. Walker, who, like Luvenia Lewis, made her fortune creating beauty products for African American women. Harlem offered African Americans a sense of belonging and of community.

A center for African American culture, Harlem was home to many artists, writers, and performers. African Americans all over the country wanted to visit Harlem or to create communities in its image. Over the years, however, the quality of life in Harlem declined. According to one of the novel's characters, integration caused this decline by making it possible for wealthier African Americans to leave Harlem. Malcolm Lewis has benefited from his neighborhood's proud history. Yet, in the early 1990s, he finds himself living in a Harlem that is sadly deteriorated. A number of buildings are in disrepair, and many people are unemployed. Drug abuse is a serious problem for some people, including a member of Malcolm's own family.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**ensor** [sen' sər] *v.* to remove things that might offend

**fidget** [fij' it] *v.* to move or act restlessly

**frantically** [fran' tik lē] *adv.* in a nervous and unsettled manner

**illuminate** [i lōō' mē nāt] *v.* to make light

**miff** [mif] *v.* to put in a bad mood; to offend

**mode** [mōd] *n.* particular form or style

**parched** [pärchd] *adj.* dried, from heat and lack of water

**perishable** [per' i shə bəl] *adj.* likely to spoil or decay

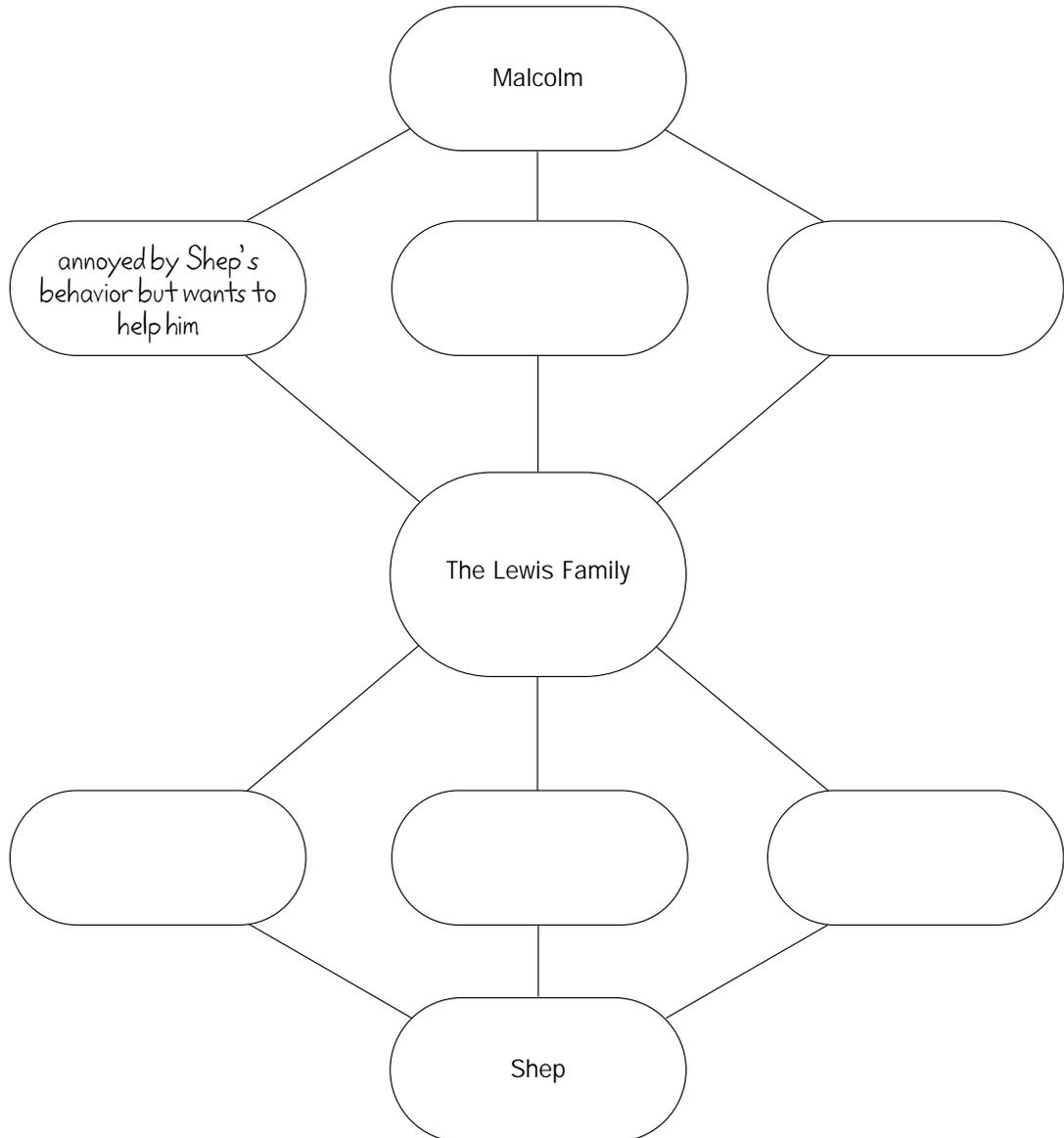
**swagger** [swag' ər] *v.* to walk with exaggerated self-confidence

**ventilator** [vent' əl ā' tər] *n.* tool or device for letting in fresh air and removing stale air

# Active Reading

## *The Glory Field August 1994 and Epilogue*

In the last part of the novel, two young men must define their relationship to the Lewis family. Each has had a different experience with the family and has a distinct view of his link to it. As you read, record some of the ways Malcolm and Shep relate to the Lewis family. What do they want from the family? How do they feel about the family and about their connection to it?



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# Responding

## *The Glory Field August 1994 and Epilogue*

### Personal Response

How did you react to Malcolm and Shep? Which boy do you think faced the more difficult challenge? Why?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. What does Luvenia want Malcolm to do? How does he feel about the task she has assigned to him? What conflicts does it create for him?

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2. Describe Malcolm's and Shep's life situations. How are the two similar and different? What do the two boys share?

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3. What do Malcolm and Shep each learn during their trip and their time on Curry Island?

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# Responding

## *The Glory Field August 1994 and Epilogue*

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. Why do you think memory and remembering are so important to the Lewis family?

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5. Do you think Shep and Malcolm are believable characters? Why or why not?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Analyzing Sensory Details

In the last part of the novel, the action occurs in several different settings. One way that the author brings these settings to life is by using sensory details—words that appeal to the sense of sight, hearing, taste, touch, or smell. Find a passage in which sensory details help the reader better understand the setting. Explain how specific details allow the reader to imagine what it is like to see, hear, taste, touch, or smell what is being described.

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

Like other members of the Lewis family before him, Malcolm has to make a series of tough decisions. In your group, go through “August 1994,” looking for times when Malcolm weighs different choices. What factors influence his decisions? Do you agree with the choices he ultimately makes? Why or why not? As you discuss Malcolm’s choices, recall your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 20. Has reading Malcolm and Shep’s story changed your ideas about the obligations that family members have to each other? If so, how? Share your opinions and ideas with the members of another group.

##### Agriculture and Nutrition Connection

In the last part of the novel, members of the Lewis family gather to harvest the last crop of sweet potatoes from the Glory Field. Do research to learn more about the sweet potato. Use questions like these to guide your research: What are the leading sweet potato-growing states? When were sweet potatoes first grown in the American South? Have cultivation and harvest methods changed much over the years? If so, how? In what ways are sweet potatoes commonly prepared and eaten in the South? In other regions of the country? What important nutrients do sweet potatoes contain? Share your research findings with the class.



*Save your work for your portfolio.*

# Responding

## *The Glory Field*

### Personal Response

At the end of the novel, Malcolm Lewis inherited the shackles that bound his ancestor Muhammad Bilal. Do you think Planter made the right choice in deciding to entrust the shackles to Malcolm? Why or why not?

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What important themes, or messages, does the author develop in the novel? Do the shackles help you better understand those messages? If so, how?

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### Writing About the Novel

The novel covers nearly 250 years of the Lewis family's history, skipping over large periods of time. On a separate sheet of paper, analyze the novel's structure. How does the author link the separate stories in the book? How does he use family trees to help the reader keep track of the different characters? Which characters appear in more than one section of the novel? How does the reappearance of certain characters help reinforce the themes, or messages, the author wants to convey? What problems, if any, are created by the novel's structure? Use specific examples from the novel to support your ideas and opinions.



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# Inheriting Slavery

Katie Bacon

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What are some reasons a person may want to know about painful aspects of his or her family's history?

### Background

For generations, Edward Ball's ancestors enslaved people on South Carolina plantations. Ball researched and wrote about that part of his family's history in a book called *Slaves in the Family*, which won a National Book Award. In this interview, he talks to journalist Katie Bacon about his reasons for writing the book.

## Responding to the Reading

1. What kind of family stories did the Ball family pass down through the generations?

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2. What is one major difference between the stories the Ball family passed down and the facts that Edward Ball discovered in his research?

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3. What responsibility does Edward Ball accept for the actions of his ancestors? Does he believe that he should be held accountable for their actions?

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4. **Making Connections** Imagine that Edward Ball's ancestors owned Live Oaks before the Civil War. How do you think the Lewises would have responded if Edward Ball had approached them in the course of researching his family's past?

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## Conducting an Interview

Imagine that a member of the Lewis family has written a book, composed a piece of music, or designed a museum about the Lewis family history. Working with a partner, discuss what the project is and what it might include. Then decide who will take on the role of an interviewer and who will take on the role of the Lewis family member responsible for the project. The interviewer should prepare a list of questions about the project. The Lewis family member should prepare to answer questions. When you are ready, conduct the interview in front of the class.

# *Glory* Roger Ebert Federal Accounts of the July 18 Assault on Wagner

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What do you know about the African American soldiers who fought in the Civil War?

### Background

Journalist Roger Ebert is one of the United States's premier movie critics, and the only one to win the Pulitzer Prize. In the following review, he writes about a movie that is based on the first battle that African Americans fought in the Civil War. Two eyewitness accounts from survivors of the assault on Fort Wagner remember details of this battle.

## Responding to the Reading

1. Why was the battle in Charleston, South Carolina, such a pivotal point in the Civil War?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the major question Roger Ebert has about the movie? Does this question ruin the movie for him? How would he like the subject of the film to be treated in the future?  
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3. According to the firsthand accounts by eyewitnesses, did the 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment win the battle at Fort Wagner? Why or why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. **Making Connections** In *The Glory Field*, Lem and Joshua join the Northern Army. What differences might they have found between the situations and treatment of the African American soldiers and the people enslaved at Live Oaks?  
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## Creative Writing

Imagine that you were a soldier present at the attack on Fort Wagner. Write a letter home describing the attack and your part in it. You may want to start by making a list of the details mentioned by both eyewitnesses. You can use some of those details in your letter, but restate them in your own words. Make sure the tone of your letter is appropriate to the person who will be receiving it. For example, if you write a letter to a younger sibling, you may want to leave out descriptions of violence. Instead, you can focus on the positive aspects of the battle. If you write to a friend your own age, you may want to be blunt about the harsh realities of war.



# Runagate Runagate Robert Hayden

# Lay Freedom Among Us Rita Dove

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What words come to mind when you think of the word *freedom*? What does the word mean to you today? What might it have meant to an enslaved person before emancipation?

### Background

In 1976 Robert Hayden became the first African American to be appointed Poet Laureate, a position that then was called Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. Nearly two decades later, Rita Dove also received that honor. Both poets touch on themes of freedom and racial justice in their works.

## Responding to the Reading

1. How does the first stanza of “Runagate Runagate” convey the experience of escaping from enslavement?

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2. How is part II of “Runagate Runagate” different from part I? How is it similar?

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3. Whom do you think the speaker of “Lay Freedom Among Us” is addressing? Use quotations from the poem to explain your answer.

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4. **Making Connections** Which character or characters in *The Glory Field* do you think would best relate to “Runagate Runagate”? Which character or characters do you think would best relate to “Lay Freedom Among Us”? Why?

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## Art Connection

Based on Rita Dove’s poem, what do you imagine the *Freedom* statue looks like? Make a drawing or painting of the statue. On the same piece of paper, write down the quotations from the poem that inspired your artistic interpretation of the statue.

# from *The Promised Land*

Nicholas Lemann

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Under what situations might people be willing to leave their homes and settle far from their families?

### Background

In his book *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*, Nicholas Lemann covers the history of African American migration from the 1940s to the 1980s. He focuses on the stories of people who moved between two locations—Clarksdale, Mississippi, and Chicago, Illinois. This excerpt appears toward the beginning of the book.

## Responding to the Reading

1. Why did Uless decide to make Chicago his home? What made Chicago a more desirable place for him to live than Clarksdale?  
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2. Would you say that Chicago, as it is described in this excerpt, was segregated? Why or why not?  
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3. What was the one advantage and the one disadvantage that every poor person had who moved to Chicago? Was Uless more affected by the advantage or the disadvantage? Explain.  
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4. Before World War II, what attitude did people who lived on the South Side of Chicago have about the future? What were some reasons people felt this way?  
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5. **Making Connections** One section of *The Glory Field* takes place in Chicago in the 1930s. How does the Chicago described in the novel compare to the 1940s Chicago described in the excerpt from *The Promised Land*?  
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## Researching a Topic

Chicago's South Side was home to many important religious leaders, political figures, sports heroes, writers, and musicians. Nicholas Lemann mentions some of these people, such as heavy-weight boxing champion Joe Louis and singer Mahalia Jackson. Other figures include blues musician Muddy Waters and writer Richard Wright. Research one of these people or someone else from Chicago's South Side. Find out about his or her background, connection to Chicago, and contribution to society. Present your findings to the class.

# The Sit-in Movement

Belinda Rochelle

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Do you think high school students can help bring about important social and political changes? How?

### Background

“The Sit-in Movement” is one chapter from a book called *Witnesses to Freedom: Young People Who Fought for Civil Rights*. Author Belinda Rochelle wanted to write a book that shows how children and teenagers can affect history.

## Responding to the Reading

1. What was the goal of the sit-ins?

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2. What made the sit-ins a nonviolent form of protest?

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3. What inspired Harvey Gantt to organize a sit-in movement in Charleston? What was he risking by doing so? Do you think his efforts were successful? Explain.

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4. **Making Connections** Imagine that Tommy Lewis was present at the NAACP Youth Council meeting when Harvey Gantt suggested that the students begin a sit-in movement in Charleston. Would Tommy have participated in the sit-in even if it meant risking his chance to go to college? Explain.

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## Performing

With a small group, discuss what might have happened at the meeting during which the Charleston NAACP Youth Council debated whether or not to start a sit-in. Do you think all the members of the group agreed that the sit-in was a good idea? Might some people have been reluctant to start a sit-in? What do you think were the hopes and fears of different individuals? Prepare a skit showing what you think might have happened at the meeting. Assign roles to different students. Perform your skit for the class.