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## Study Guide

for

# The Friends

by Rosa Guy



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# Meet Rosa Guy



*I do write about people I know and many times situations that I am close to and I observe because that is the only way that you can write. You can only write bout what you know. . . . [Writing is an] emotional experience of a time and a place and a people.*

—Rosa Guy, *Los Angeles Sentinel*,  
October 18, 1995

Rosa Cuthbert Guy (pronounced gē) was born in 1928 in Trinidad, an island in the Caribbean. In 1932 her parents immigrated to the United States, leaving Rosa and her sister Ameze with relatives. The parents, seeking a better life for their family, settled in New York City's Harlem—at the time, a flourishing African American community. Eventually, they sent for Rosa and Ameze.

Rosa's life as a young immigrant child was turbulent. West Indians suffered discrimination from the white community because of their skin color, and from the African American community because of their speech and customs. Two years after Rosa arrived in Harlem her mother died. Her father, whom Guy says came to the United States "to make money," was feeling the economic hardship of the Great Depression. When he later became ill he sent Rosa and Ameze to a New York City orphanage. It was there, Guy says, on the verge of becoming an orphan, that she had

a haunting vision of a child through whose eyes she "glimpsed a depth of yearning" and a loneliness that was a reflection of her inner self:

*This was my summons—my call to conscience, if you will—which through the years has structured my life. That vision . . . gave me an urgency that remains with me always. It is an urgency that keeps me searching for myriad ways to relate the plight of the poor, the young, the lonely and the damned in our society.*

After the death of her father, fourteen-year-old Rosa dropped out of school and went to work in a factory in New York City's garment district. At the age of sixteen, she married.

**A Writer's Life** If it is true that every choice a person makes helps to determine her destiny, then Rosa Guy's wish to be an actress led to her destiny as a writer. In 1950 virtually no roles existed in white productions for African American actors, so Guy wrote her own role in a one-act play, *Venetian Blinds*. She had discovered her calling.

Guy's involvement with the arts had also put her in contact with other notable African American writers who shared her growing passion for writing. Together, they formed the Harlem Writers Guild, and Guy was its founding president. From its inception in 1951, the Harlem Writers Guild has continued to attract creative, passionate writers of African descent.

**A Life's Work** In 1966 Rosa Guy's first novel *Bird at My Window* was published. Her award-winning novels that followed helped establish Guy as a compassionate, sensitive writer of young adult fiction. While most of her books are focused on the concerns of young adults, the author says that she writes for a universal audience. She admits, however, that "young people like my work because I don't talk down to them."

Guy, who has traveled around the world to enrich her own understanding of people of African descent, lives in New York City.

# Introducing the Novel

*I'm a storyteller. I write about people. I want my readers to know people, to laugh with them, to be glad with, to be angry with, to despair with people. And I want them to have hope with people. I want a reader of my work to work a bit more and to care.*

—Rosa Guy, from “I Am a Storyteller,” reprinted in *The Horn Book Magazine*, March–April 1985

In *The Friends*, Rosa Guy asks readers to care about two very different characters: Phyllisia Cathy and Edith Jackson. Fourteen-year-old Phyllisia is a properly dressed and somewhat prudish West Indian immigrant who is the daughter of a beautiful, intelligent woman and an arrogant, ambitious father. Edith, Phyllisia’s classmate, is a tough, gum-chewing ragamuffin who is always late to class, wearing unpressed clothes and baggy stockings with holes in them. Her mother is dead, and her father is unable to provide for the family.

The vast social and economic gap between these two girls makes their friendship unlikely. Guy, however, wants readers to look beyond the obvious—past clothing, possessions, and mannerisms—to see what is in the heart and soul of each girl.

As a West Indian immigrant who lived in Harlem as a child, Rosa Guy has drawn upon her own background to create the characters and events in *The Friends*. She is quick to point out, however, that her work is not autobiographical. Still like any good writer, Guy writes about what she knows. Several years before the publication of *The Friends*, she said:

*Tiptoeing my way through the casualties of poverty in the ghettos—an orphan in New York, ostracized for those traits which being West Indian and Catholic had etched into my personality—wasn't easy. . . . But I never looked back in hate—but with a kind of*

*sadness, a regret that there had been no books yet written, no guidelines from caring adults who might have made a difference, guiding us over the deep but narrow ravines dividing us.*

## THE TIME AND PLACE

*The Friends* takes place in Harlem, a section of New York City, in the early 1960s. The civil rights movement was under way in the United States, and African Americans were engaged in a momentous struggle to wipe out segregation and discrimination. Complaints of police brutality toward African Americans were rampant and, in many cases, justified.

In Harlem as in other African American communities around the country, the pent-up anger and frustrations of the people sometimes led to the eruption of riots. Although Rosa Guy does not make the civil rights movement central to the plot of *The Friends*, her description of Harlem in the 1960s helps readers understand what compelled many African Americans to join the struggle for equality.

Within Harlem a disparity existed between people like Edith Jackson, who lived in poverty amid squalid apartments, and people like Phyllisia Cathy, who lived in well-kept, middle-class neighborhoods. Nevertheless, segregation and bigotry were not limited to poor African Americans; business owners and educated professionals in the African American community also felt its effects.

In spite of the racial ferment of the 1960s, a renewed energy to redefine and reshape their art arose among African Americans, and it was based on a long and rich cultural heritage. Rosa Guy, whose work reflects the tone set by the Black Arts movement, has described the 1960s as “one of the most beautiful periods in American history.”

### Did You Know?

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, large numbers of African Americans from the South migrated to the North. Racial discrimination prevented many from settling in the white areas of New York City, so they settled in Harlem. As immigrants from the West Indies arrived in New York, they, too, were drawn to Harlem. By the 1920s, the Harlem community, which had been primarily Dutch, then Irish, then Jewish, was primarily African American.

Even within Harlem, however, social distinctions existed in one neighborhood located

along West 138th and 139th Streets. Houses stood that had been built for the wealthy. Their beauty and style attracted successful African American doctors, lawyers, artists, and other striving professionals. Eventually, the area became known as “Strivers Row.” In *The Friends*, the protagonist lives in a neighborhood of doctors, lawyers, and business owners. Although Guy does not name the street or the neighborhood where the main character lives, she may have had Strivers Row in mind.

### CRITIC’S CORNER

*Rosa Guy has written a real novel about real people in a real world. The characters’ problems arise naturally from their background, circumstances, personalities and relationships; they are not problems imposed by an author who wants to write about problems. The story is full of incident; the life of Harlem is ever-present, though rarely obtrusive; the writing is alive, with extra richness in the West Indian speech. Highly recommended.*

—**Michael H. Miller, in Children’s Book Review**

# Before You Read

## *The Friends* Chapters 1–8

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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Can a person judge a book by its cover? Recall a time when you formed a judgment about a person that proved to be wrong. How did you feel afterward?

#### Share Ideas

In a small group, discuss an instance in which you judged a person based on his or her outward appearance and the judgment proved to be wrong. How did you feel about your mistake? What lesson did you learn?

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to learn how the main character judges a potential friend based on her appearance and behavior.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Did You Know?

The West Indies encompasses all the islands that lie in the Caribbean Sea from the southern tip of Florida to South America's northern coast. Because of their location and smallness, these islands were easily dominated and colonized by many powerful nations, including Spain, Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, millions of Africans were enslaved and brought to the West Indies to work on sugar and tobacco plantations owned by these foreign powers. By the end of the nineteenth century, slavery had been abolished throughout the West Indies. Descendants of African slaves make up a large percentage of the population of the West Indies today. Many West Indians have immigrated to the United States in search of a better life.

#### Hyperbole

Writers sometimes use **hyperbole**—a figure of speech in which great exaggeration is used to express a strong emotion, make a point, or evoke humor. In *The Friends*, for example, Miss Lass uses hyperbole:

*If some of you would follow Phyllisia's example and study your books, then perhaps the intelligence rate in this room might zoom up to zero (pages 5–6).*

In this example, the teacher uses hyperbole to express her opinion that most students in the class are not very intelligent. The exaggeration reveals her contempt for the students. As you read *The Friends*, look for other examples of hyperbole and consider its effect.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**belligerent** [bə lij'ər ənt] *adj.* eager or willing to fight (p. 6)

**compress** [kəm'pres'] *n.* pad or cloth used to apply cold, heat, moisture, medication or pressure to some part of the body (p. 19)

**furtively** [fur'tiv lē] *adv.* done stealthily; secretly (p. 23)

**haughty** [hō'tē] *adj.* having or showing excessive pride in oneself and great disdain for others (p. 3)

**horde** [hōrd] *n.* a large group; swarm; multitude (p. 33)

**ragamuffin** [rag'ə muf'in] *n.* ragged, unkempt person, esp. a ragged, dirty child (p. 12)

**straggler** [strag'lər] *n.* one who strays from or lags behind the main course or body (p. 7)

# Active Reading

## **The Friends Chapters 1–8**

As you read chapters 1–8 of *The Friends*, jot down details to help you compare and contrast the persons and places below. Pay special attention to the comparisons Phyllisia makes as she narrates the story. Consider how these comparisons help establish conflict in the story and help you better understand why Phyllisia behaves as she does.

Phyllisia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-haughty; proud</li> <li>-wears well-ironed blouse; neat hair</li> <li>-jumps up in class to give answers</li> <li>-has an accent but speaks proper English</li> <li>-plain and tall</li> <li>-lonely</li> <li>-annoyed by Edith's shabby appearance</li> </ul>

Edith

The Island

Harlem

Cathy Family/Cathy Home

Jackson Family/Jackson Home

# Responding

## *The Friends* Chapters 1–8

### **Personal Response**

What is your opinion of Phyllisia and Edith? If you had to choose one of them as a friend, whom would you choose? Explain your response.

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### **Analyzing Literature**

#### **Recall and Interpret**

1. What problems does Phyllisia have at school? How does her attitude toward the other students create those problems?

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2. Why doesn't Phyllisia like Edith? Does Edith seem to realize how Phyllisia feels about her? Explain.

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3. What does Edith do for Phyllisia that seems to make their friendship inevitable? How does Phyllisia's visit to Edith's home seem to change Phyllisia's attitude toward Edith?

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4. How does Calvin react to Phyllisia's friendship with Edith? What does his reaction reveal about his character?

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# Responding

## The Friends Chapters 1–8

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

5. What do you think was the **author’s purpose** for describing the fight between Phyllisia and her classmates in such vivid detail? In your opinion, how important is this scene? Why?

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6. Think back to the **Focus Activity** on page 16. With which of the two characters do you sympathize most—Phyllisia or Edith? Why?

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### Literature and Writing

#### A Friendly Contrast

Review your **Active Reading** chart. Then write an essay about the budding friendship between Phyllisia and Edith. What qualities draw them to each other? How might their differences drive them apart? What roles do their families and backgrounds play in their friendship? Who might benefit most from the friendship—Phyllisia or Edith? Support your ideas with details from the novel.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

What do you think of the adults who did not intervene when Phyllisia faced the mob of angry students? Should they have stepped in and stopped the fight? Why or why not? Are bystanders who refuse to get involved in stopping an act of wrongdoing as guilty as the perpetrators are? Why or why not? Debate this question in your group, then share your ideas with the members of another group.

#### Performing

Today, if a teacher spoke to students the way Miss Lass does on pages 26 and 27, he or she would probably be severely disciplined. Imagine that parents have complained to the principal about Miss Lass’s behavior. In a small group, role-play a scene in which the principal meets with the following characters and asks them to give their versions of the incident: Miss Lass, Carole Smith, Phyllisia, and Edith. Afterward, have the principal render a decision. You may videotape the performance, if you wish.



**Save your work for your portfolio.**

# Before You Read

## *The Friends* Chapters 9–15

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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What do you think is the most important thing that a parent can teach a child to help him or her grow into a responsible adult? Why do you think it is the most important thing?

#### Journal

In your journal note specific ways in which your relationship with your parents or guardians has changed as you have matured. What is the most important thing you have learned thus far from those who raised you? What do you think they have learned from you?

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how the relationship between Phyllisia and her mother deepens.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Did You Know?

In the 1960s, a new type of novel for young adult readers began to be published. It dealt openly and honestly with controversial topics such as racism, child abuse, death, poverty, and substance abuse. Although they were technically classified as realistic fiction, these novels have also been called “problem novels.” They often include realistic language that, while shocking to many, contributes to their authenticity. The most successful problem novels tend to share features much in common with good fiction: compelling characters, a vivid setting, and a well-developed plot. They also provide insight into the problems that are central to each novel as well as a sense of hope. As you read *The Friends*, decide whether it meets the criteria of a well-written problem novel.

#### Central Park

In this section of the novel Phyllisia and Edith spend summer afternoons in New York City’s Central Park. Set amid concrete and steel skyscrapers and high-rise buildings, Central Park offers a peaceful retreat from the hectic pace of one of the world’s busiest cities. The park, which was designed in 1858 by landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, covers 843 acres and was the first major park in the country, planned specifically for use by the general public.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**bier** [bēer] *n.* a movable stand on which a coffin or corpse is placed before burial (p. 55)

**frivolous** [friv’ə ləs] *adj.* of little value or importance; trivial; petty (p. 50)

**oppressive** [ə pres’iv] *adj.* cruel and unjust; tyrannical (p. 55)

**philosophically** [phil’ə sof’i klē] *adv.* according to what is presumed to be true; theoretically (p. 45)

**suppress** [sə pres’] *v.* to prevent or prohibit the publication, circulation, or expression of, keep secret (p. 59)

**swanky** [swang’kē] *adj.* having or characterized by elegance, luxury or pretension; stylish (p. 45)

**translucent** [trans lōō’sənt] *adj.* allowing light to pass, but diffusing it so that objects on the other side cannot be clearly distinguished (p. 71)

**wistfully** [wist’fəl ē] *adv.* pensively or sadly longing; yearningly (p. 43)

# Active Reading

## The Friends Chapters 9–15

Readers make predictions based on what they learn from a story and on what real-life experience has taught them. They revise these predictions as they read. As you read this section of the novel, use the chart below to make predictions about each event listed. As you continue to read, check to see if your predictions were accurate. Then add to your predictions, revise them, or make new ones.

Event: Ramona asks Phyllisia to bring Edith to visit.

What I know from the story Phyllisia is ashamed of Edith. Calvin has forbidden her to see Edith. Phyllisia thinks it's a trap, she promises her mother but crosses her fingers.	+	What I know from real-life experience
Prediction:		

Event: Everyone but Randy promises not to tell that the children's father is missing.

What I know from the story	+	What I know from real-life experience
Prediction:		

Event: Ramona reveals her secret to her children.

What I know from the story	+	What I know from real-life experience
Prediction:		

Event: Phyllisia needs a friend who understands what she's going through at home. She wants Edith to come home with her.

What I know from the story	+	What I know from real-life experience
Prediction:		

# Responding

## *The Friends* Chapters 9–15

### **Personal Response**

Did Phyllisia’s behavior in this section disappoint you? If you were Phyllisia, what might you have said or done differently? Explain your response.

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### **Analyzing Literature**

#### **Recall and Interpret**

1. What do Phyllisia and Edith talk about in the park? What insights do you gain into the girls’ personalities from their conversations?

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2. In her mind, to what fairy tale character does Phyllisia compare Edith? Why might Phyllisia prefer to think about Edith in this way?

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3. What does Phyllisia discover when she visits Edith after the rainstorm? Why does Edith insist that no one reveal what has happened?

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4. Describe the changes in Phyllisia’s attitude toward New York and her neighbor Marian when high school begins. What might be the reason for these changes?

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5. How do Edith and Phyllisia’s situations change during the summer and early fall, and how is their friendship affected?

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# Responding

## The Friends Chapters 9–15

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

6. Describe Phyllisia and Calvin’s reactions to Edith’s presence in their home. Did their reactions surprise you? Why or why not?

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7. Review the conversations between Phyllisia and her mother in chapters 9 and 14. Then review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 20. What might you change or add to your response, based on these conversations?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Character Reference

Imagine that Phyllisia has asked you to write a character reference for her to the admissions office of an exclusive high school. Examine what Phyllisia says, does, and thinks in this section of the novel. Consider also what she doesn’t say or do. Be as honest as possible while still trying to persuade the admissions officer that Phyllisia would be a valuable asset to the school. Use details and examples from the novel to support your statements and opinions.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

Do you think Edith should have notified the authorities about her father’s disappearance? In your group, weigh the argument that Edith presents to justify her decision. Also examine the reasons Phyllisia gives for supporting that decision. Then debate the wisdom of Edith’s choice. What are the possible consequences of her decision? What might have happened if Edith had notified the authorities, do you think? Use evidence from the novel and from your own knowledge to support your opinion of Edith’s decision.

#### Internet Connection

In this section of the novel Edith’s father disappears, and Phyllisia’s mother reveals that she has cancer and later dies. Use the Internet to identify groups and organizations that might help Edith and Phyllisia cope with the consequences of these life-changing events. Try to find a site with valid information about state or foster care that could help Edith make the best decision for her family. Look for groups that counsel children and families of cancer patients that could help Phyllisia deal with her fears and her grief.



**Save your work for your portfolio.**

# Before You Read

## *The Friends* Chapters 16–23

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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Have you ever made a decision that you wish you could change? What was the decision, and why would you want to change it?

#### Quickwrite

Write about an important decision that you made that has affected your life and the lives of other people. What was the decision, and what effect did it have on all concerned?

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how the important decisions that Phyllisia makes affect her life and the people close to her.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Did You Know?

In chapter 17, Phyllisia says she would rather stay home and read *Native Son* than go to a party. Richard Wright's 1940 novel tells the compelling story of Bigger Thomas, a poor African American who is arrested for the accidental murder of a white girl and the intentional murder of his own girlfriend. While Bigger sits in jail he becomes keenly aware of the bigotry, hatred, and racial injustices in America. According to critic Irving Howe, the publication of *Native Son* "brought out into the open, as no one ever had before, the hatred, fear and violence that have crippled and may yet destroy our culture." Richard Wright was born in 1908 and died in 1960.

#### Rising Action and Falling Action

In a novel or short story, **rising action** refers to the series of events that lead up to the **climax**—a highly dramatic moment when the story's central conflict reaches a peak. The climax is often a turning point in which the main character must face an important truth or make an important decision that will determine the outcome of the story. **Falling action** refers to the series of events that follow the climax and may be the result of it. Falling action also includes the **resolution**, the point at which the central conflict of the story is resolved. As you read chapters 16–23, look for events that are part of the rising action and falling action. Try to identify the novel's climax and its resolution.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**convalescence** [kon'və les'əns] *n.* gradual recovery of health and strength after illness (p. 88)

**deprivation** [dep'rə vā'shən] *n.* act of depriving or being deprived (p. 115)

**formulating** [fôr'myə lāt'ing] *v.* devising or developing (p. 104)

**gallivanting** [gal'ə vant'ing] *v.* wandering about or traveling in search of fun or excitement (p. 102)

**indifference** [in dif'ər əns] *n.* lack of feeling, concern, or care (p. 84)

**insipid** [in sip'id] *adj.* lacking qualities that arouse interest or excite (p. 88)

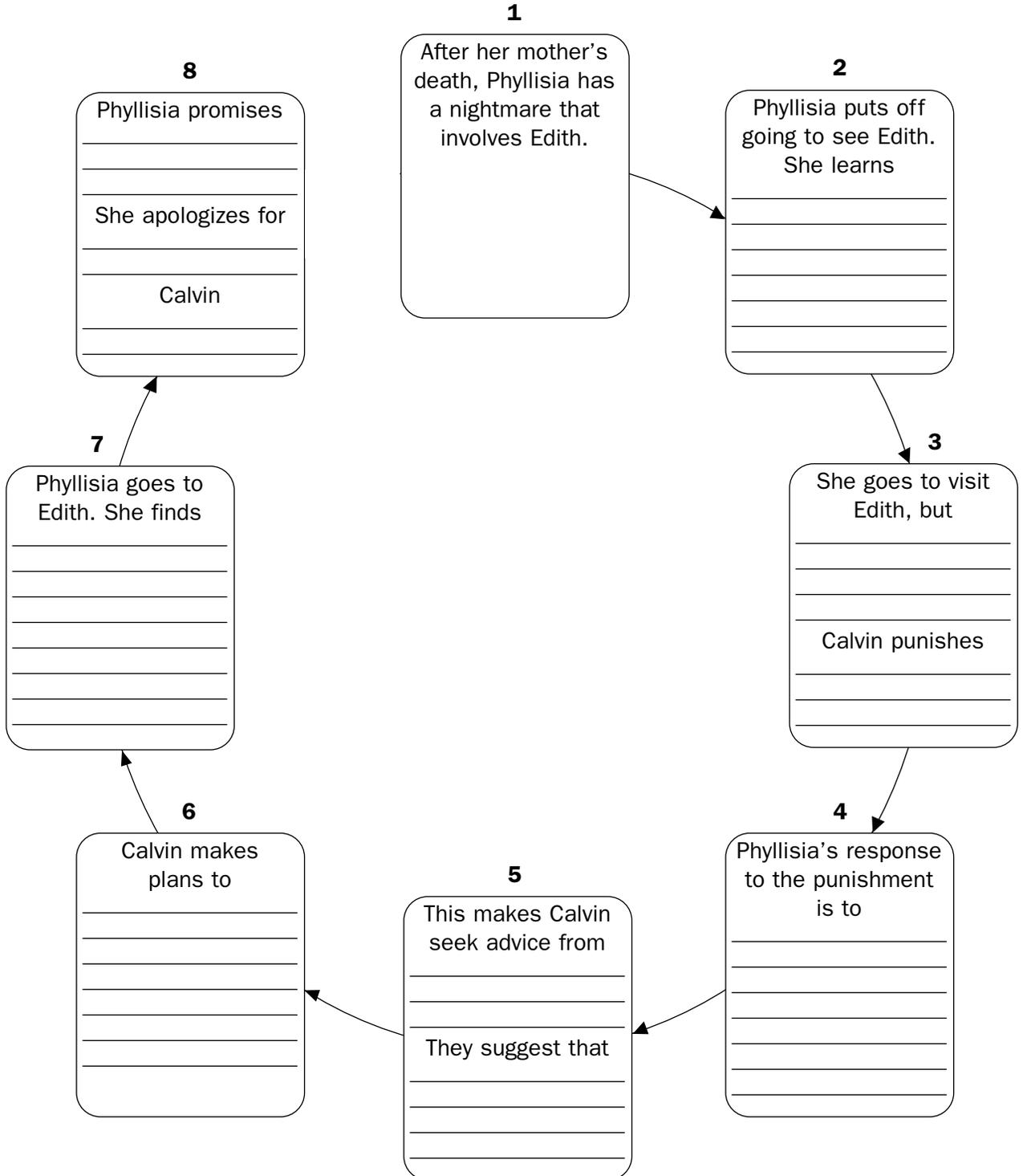
**intervened** [in'tər vēnd'] *v.* came in as a mediator; came between opposing forces (p. 102)

**vindictive** [vin dik'tiv] *adj.* strongly inclined toward revenge (p. 83)

# Active Reading

## The Friends Chapters 16–23

A plot consists of a sequence of events that lead to the resolution of the story’s central conflict. One way to identify sequence is to follow the order of cause-and-effect relationships. As you read the last section of the novel, complete the sentences in each box that makes up the causal chain.



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# Responding

## ***The Friends* Chapters 16–23**

### **Personal Response**

What is your opinion of the way the novel ended? Did you like or respect the main characters more at the end of the novel than you did at the beginning? Explain.

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### **Analyzing Literature**

#### **Recall and Interpret**

1. What reason does the doctor give for Phyllisia's not eating? What reason does Calvin give? Why do you think Calvin begins what Ruby calls "operation foodstrap"?

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2. What news about Randy does Phyllisia hear at Marian's party? What reason does Phyllisia give for not seeing Edith? What do you think is the real reason?

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3. What happens when Calvin sees Ruby with Orlando? How does Phyllisia react to Calvin's new rules? How has this incident changed her view of Calvin?

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4. How does Phyllisia discover Calvin's true feelings toward her and Ruby? How does she use this knowledge? At this point, what emotions seem to be controlling Phyllisia?

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5. What does Phyllisia see her father doing at his restaurant? What important truth does she face after this visit? How does it represent the **climax**, or turning point, of the novel?

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# Responding

## The Friends Chapters 16–23

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

6. Do you agree with Phyllisia that Calvin had “implied” that he was rich and that his restaurant was fancy? Do you think you would have reached the same conclusions if you were in Phyllisia’s place? Why or why not?

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7. Review your answer to the **Focus Activity** on page 24. What impact will Phyllisia’s decision have on her life, Edith’s life, and her father’s, do you think?

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### Literature and Writing

#### How to Be a Friend

Based on what you have learned about friendship from reading *The Friends*, write an essay that describes how to be a friend. Discuss the qualities that you think are essential for a lasting friendship, and those that endanger a relationship.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

In your group, discuss the novel’s final scene in which Phyllisia confronts her father. Do you agree with Phyllisia when she says that she is “much older today than I was yesterday” (page 120). What did she mean by the statement, do you think? What do you think Phyllisia’s relationship with her father will be like after the story ends? Compare your opinions and ideas with those of another group.

#### Learning for Life

Imagine that you write an advice column for your local newspaper. If Ruby Cathy were to send the following letter to you, what advice would you give her? Write a response to the letter. Then share and compare your advice with that offered by your classmates.

*My sister has a terrible relationship with our father. He has a violent temper and uses his belt on us when he gets angry. My sister makes things worse by lying to our father and defying him. Our mother died recently, and we all miss her so much. I love my father and my sister, but I’m afraid that if she continues to defy him, he will send us to live with relatives. What can I do to keep our family together?*



**Save your work for your portfolio.**

**Gwendolyn  
Brooks**

**Audre Lorde**

# A Song in the Front Yard *and* Hanging Fire

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Do you sometimes feel as though you are missing out on what life has to offer because of restrictions that others place on you? What do you think you are missing?

### Background

In 1950, Gwendolyn Brooks became the first African American writer to win the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Brooks was born in Kansas in 1917 and has made her home in Chicago. Audre Lorde, like Rosa Guy, is a writer of West Indian descent who grew up in Harlem and also is a member of the Harlem Writer's Guild.

## Responding to the Reading

1. In Brooks's poem the speaker says she has "stayed in the front yard all my life" and wants to go in the backyard. What do the front yard and backyard seem to symbolize to her?

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2. How would you describe the speaker's mother in Brooks's poem? How would you describe the speaker? What words in the poem give you clues to their personalities?

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3. Describe how the speaker of "Hanging Fire" sees herself. Is she is confident or insecure? Why?

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4. In "Hanging Fire," what is the speaker's attitude toward growing up? What do the last two lines of each stanza reveal about the speaker's emotional state and level of maturity?

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5. **Making Connections** The speakers of both poems express frustration with their mothers. In your opinion, for which speaker might Phyllisia feel more sympathy? Explain.

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## Writing a Dialogue

Write a dialogue between the speaker of "A Song in the Front Yard" and her mother, in which the speaker tries to convince her mother to let her stay out later than usual, or to go play down the alley.

**Clarice  
Lispector**

# A Sincere Friendship

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Why do you think some friendships seem to “run out of gas”?

### Background

Clarice Lispector, who was born in the Ukraine in 1925, is a respected Brazilian writer whose works are intensely personal and introspective. In this story, Lispector explores the subject of maintaining a friendship.

## Responding to the Reading

1. How would you characterize the narrator’s early relationship with his friend? What tensions soon appear in the friendship? How does the narrator account for them?

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2. What expectations do the two friends have when they begin living in the same apartment? Are these expectations met? Explain.

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3. What effect does the trouble with the authorities have on the friendship?

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4. Describe the friends’ attitude toward the friendship at the beginning and at the end of the story. How does this change in attitude reflect the change in the friendship?

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5. **Making Connections** The narrator says, “Friendship is a question of salvation” (page 129). How do you think Phyllisia might respond to this statement?

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## Literature Groups

At the end of the story, the narrator says, “We knew that we would never see each other again, unless by accident. More than this: that we did not wish to see each other again. And we also knew that we were friends. Sincere friends.” Debate the meaning of this passage. Is the narrator contradicting himself? Do you think the two were “sincere friends”? Why or why not? Give evidence from the story and from your own experience to support your ideas.

**Sherwood  
Anderson**

# from *Winesburg, Ohio*

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What would you say to comfort someone your age who has lost a parent or a close relative?

### Background

Short-story writer and novelist Sherwood Anderson achieved wide recognition with the 1919 publication of *Winesburg, Ohio*. In the excerpt you will read from that book, eighteen-year-old George Willard must come to terms with the death of his mother, Elizabeth.

## Responding to the Reading

1. What range of emotions does George experience after his mother's death? Do these emotions seem normal to you? Why or why not?

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2. What goes through George's mind as he sits next to his mother's body? How does he react when he realizes where his thoughts have taken him? What new thought grips him?

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3. What kind of relationship do you think George and his mother had? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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4. George and other characters frequently go in and out of rooms. What might these entrances and exits symbolize? Explain your answer.

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5. **Making Connections** George finds it difficult to believe that his mother is dead. Describe Phyllisia's initial reaction to her mother's death. Why do you think George and Phyllisia react the way they do?

### Learning for Life

Imagine you are Phyllisia Cathy. Write a condolence letter to George Willard, expressing your sympathy about the death of his mother. Consider how Phyllisia's loss of her own mother might help her understand George's grief.

**F. Scott  
Fitzgerald**  
**Anne Sexton**

# To His Daughter “Pie” *and* To Her Daughter Linda

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Recall a time when you received a letter from a family member or friend that included advice. Did you find the advice helpful? Why or why not?

### Background

F. Scott Fitzgerald sent his daughter Scottie, nicknamed “Pie,” away to schools and camps when his wife became seriously ill. During their time apart, the novelist and short-story writer corresponded with his daughter, offering parental advice through his letters. The American poet Anne Sexton belonged to a group whose works are intensely probing and personal and usually described as “confessional.” In a letter to her daughter, Sexton offers advice and makes a confession.

## Responding to the Reading

1. What is Fitzgerald’s purpose in writing this letter? How do the lists that he includes help serve that purpose?

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2. What does Fitzgerald’s postscript seem to suggest about him and his relationship with Pie?

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3. What prompted Sexton to write this letter to her daughter? What message does she convey to “the 40-year-old Linda”?

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4. What confession does Sexton make about her own mother? How would you interpret the reason Sexton gives for lying to Linda about her relationship with her mother?

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5. **Making Connections** If Calvin had written letters like these to Phyllisia, what difference might they have made? Give reasons for your answer.

## Responding to a Letter

How do you think the recipients of these letters might have responded to them? Choose a letter and write a response to it. Include your reactions to the advice given, as well as anything else in the letter that interests you. In a small group, compare your responses to the letters.

**Naomi Shihab  
Nye**

# Linked

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Recall a time when a family member or friend helped you feel comfortable in new surroundings.

### Background

This poem—like many of Naomi Shihab Nye’s works—reflects the influence of her Palestinian-American heritage. Nye has said that for her “the primary source of poetry has always been . . . our own ancestry sifting down to us through small essential daily tasks.”

## Responding to the Reading

1. What did the speaker want that she didn’t have? Why do you think she wanted it?

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2. What role do the speaker’s parents play in her adjustment to life in America? In your opinion do they make it easier or harder for her to adjust? Explain.

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3. Is “Linked” a good title for this poem, do you think? Why or why not?

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4. **Making Connections** Compare and contrast the way the speaker’s teachers treat her with the way Miss Lass treats Phyllisia and the other students.

### Multicultural Menu

With a small group of classmates, plan, design, and create a dinner menu that includes traditional foods from the Middle East and the West Indies. Try to incorporate traditional foods cited in the poem as well as any that are mentioned in the novel. Look in cookbooks and search the Internet for additional ideas. For each dish you choose, provide a brief description of its ingredients.