

A Curriculum Guide to

Call Me By My Name

By John Ed Bradley

About the Book

Tater Henry defied the odds. From the very beginning, he seemed destined to shake up his small Louisiana town. With the help of some unlikely friendships, Tater opened previously closed doors in sports, friendship, and love. The novel brings beauty and courage to the side effects of America's diversity and sheds light on its most culturally rich cities. Tater's rebellious and courageous nature is perfectly combined with the integrity and charisma that make his character a true legend.

Prereading Activities

1. To increase background knowledge, have students do research about segregation and integration in southern Louisiana's past. How has southern Louisiana played an important role in America's diversity and culture?
2. Hold a class discussion to decide how sports bring people together. How are athletes treated when they play sports? How are players judged? For example, does skin color, educational background, or social status matter when athletes are on the playing field? What does matter on the playing field? Are some sports more prone to prejudice than others? Why?

Discussion Questions

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.11 – 12.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9)

Chapter One

1. What does "Redbone" mean? Why would Curly Trussell want to grab his bat?
2. Who is Rodney Boulet? Analyze many aspects of his character. How does the author portray him as a protagonist? What other characters could be portrayed as a protagonist in the story? Why?
3. How does the first chapter introduce the novel's conflict? What is the conflict in the exposition? What details and/or situations does the author use to present the rising action?
4. In the first chapter, Tater has various physical altercations. What are some examples of the altercations and what are the outcomes? How does Tater react to the altercations? What does this say about his character?

5. From Rodney's point of view there are many differences in the world that he lives in versus the world that Tater lives in. What are some of those differences? What are the similarities? What is ironic about his point of view? How does Rodney coming home to his mom frying pork chops after he declined Tater's invitation for dinner add to the irony in the novel?

6. What risk do Rodney and Angie take for Tater in Chapter One? Which character is at risk the most? What might happen to each one of them if they were caught? How might the punishment be different for each one of them? Why?

7. How does Rodney's dad's behavior and attitude contribute to the theme of the novel? Analyze the dad's word choice and dialogue. What impact does this choice of words have on the novel? What is the theme of the novel thus far?

8. Predict what might happen on the first day of school before moving to Chapter Two. Make an inference concerning what actions may occur. Why do you think this action may occur? Combine textual evidence with your previous knowledge to support your prediction.

Chapter Two

1. Even though the high school has been forced to integrate, in what ways does the high school keep the kids separated? How does the school's actions compare to the actions of schools today? What do schools use today to base their decisions on how to group students? Combine evidence from the text and your own background knowledge to support your answer.

2. How does Coach Cadet's actions and feelings towards the players change from the beginning of the season to the end of the season? How does this change of heart propel the change of direction in the novel?

3. Analyze the names of the minor characters in the novel. What do the names suggest about the characters? How do names contribute to the culture represented throughout the novel? What other details does the author use to represent the culture of southern Louisiana?

4. How does the setting contribute to the novel? What impact does the setting have on the novel?

5. How does the author's choice of words help to form the characters? How does the word choice and pronunciation stressed by the author create authentic characters?

6. Analyze how Rodney feels about Patrice Jolivet. What is so complicated about how he feels towards her? Why can't he ask her out? Research the Jim Crow laws of Louisiana in regards to interracial couples to find out more information to support your claim.

7. How does "all kinds" represent Angie's feelings of people? How is the picture symbolic? How does the picture build upon more than one theme throughout the novel?

8. When Tater and Rodney are on the Ferris wheel, they have a discussion about Tater's mother. What does Rodney learn about Tater's mother? Why would Tater withhold this information from

Rodney? What does this suggest about their friendship? What other information does Rodney confront Tater with?

9. Consider how each of the following characters relates to Tater. How does each character interact with him? How are their feelings complicated and how does each really feel about him? How do you know?

- A. Rodney
- B. Angie
- C. Coach Doucet
- D. Angie and Rodney's dad
- E. Angie and Rodney's mom

Chapter Three

1. How does Rodney and Angie's relationship begin to change? How are Angie's feelings towards Rodney developing and why? What example best shows how their friendship is changing?

2. During the awards ceremony, Tater and Rodney talk about their ambitions. Race has been a major obstacle for Tater. He states that the only time he feels things are fair is when he is on the playing field. How has race played an important part in Tater's life? What are some examples where the color of Tater's skin dictated what happens to him? How would Tater's life be altered if he was white? How does this contribute to the overall novel? How does this contribute to the theme?

3. The author makes a biblical reference to Cain and Abel. How does this relate to Tater and Smooth? Why does the author draw upon this story from the Bible?

4. Why doesn't the author reveal what really happened between Angie and Tater while camping? What does the author suggest may have happened? How do you know?

5. What happens to Tater when Rodney and Angie drive Tater home from their birthday party? How does this scene propel the action of the story forward?

6. How does Rodney feel about Tater and Angie being together? Why does he have conflicting emotions? Do you think he is a racist? What other emotions could Rodney be feeling?

7. Rodney sticks up for Tater throughout the whole novel. However, how does the way Rodney sticks up for Tater with the LSU coach let the reader know he really cares about him?

8. What does Mama mean by the phrase, "Don't forget who you are," when she is talking to Angie and Rodney about going to Richard's with Miss Nettie. How do you know?

9. What is meant by the phrase "Cut a rug with me,"? What figurative language device is being used here?

Chapter Four

1. How does the tone change in the beginning of Chapter Four? How does the author create tension throughout the novel?
2. Who is Huey Long? What does he say before he dies? Why do you think Tater mentions this on the ride home from the game?
3. The story of Romeo and Juliet surfaces throughout the novel. Why might the author use this Shakespearean play? How is the play *Romeo and Juliet* important to the plot of *Call Me By My Name*?
4. Why is Patrice shocked when she comes home from the university? What does she learn that upsets her? Do you think she has a reason to be shocked?
5. Rodney and his dad share a moment while moving the hi-fi to Angie's room. What transpires in this moment? What does this moment say about Rodney's father? How is Pops a dynamic character?
6. How is Tater Henry different from Rodney Boulet? How are they similar? Do you think they are more alike than different? Explain.
7. What does Curly Trussell do to Angie and Tater at the park? How was an event like this foreshadowed earlier in the novel? What role does Curly Trussell play in the novel?
8. Why does the author choose to end the novel with a tragic resolution? How does this affect the overall structure of the novel? What impact does Chapter Four have on the novel?
9. Why do you think the author doesn't name the town in the novel? Do you think he did this on purpose?

Postreading Activities

1. Analyze Norman Rockwell's painting, *The Problem We All Live With*. What elements in the painting are represented throughout the novel? Compare and contrast the themes of the painting to the themes in the novel. How are they similar? How are they different?
2. In the opening lines of the novel, the author states "it made him hard to categorize." In what ways does Tater Henry live up to that phrase? Write a short essay on how Tater Henry was a legend larger than life.

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