



## Walter Dean Myers

### Activities for Specific Books

#### *Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary*

1. Prepare a time line of the main events in the life of Malcolm X. Indicate people, decisions, or events that had an impact on his life. Discuss how Malcolm X was changed by these people, events, or decisions.
2. Read a short biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. Using a Venn diagram, compare the beliefs and actions of these two Black leaders.
3. Look at video clips of the civil rights movement. Summarize the key issues that were central to this movement. Discuss Malcolm X's responses to these issues. Cite references from the text that support or explain your ideas.
4. Brainstorm information you already know about the civil rights movement. Record your knowledge in the first column of a KWL chart. As you read this biography, note any new knowledge that you gain.

#### *Somewhere in the Darkness*

1. Discuss if Jimmy has any obligations to his father, who deserted him long ago.
2. Describe the relationship that Jimmy has with his father. Note the changes in the relationship as Jimmy learns about his father. Discuss how each of them is affected by this new relationship.

#### *Scorpions*

1. Relate an experience in which peer pressure influenced your decision or action. Discuss the peer pressure that Jamal Hicks faced. Discuss the dangers of peer pressure and ways to deal with such pressure.
2. Using a Venn diagram, compare Jamal to another character who is dealing with peer pressure. Show how these characters are similar and how they are different. Discuss the actions that these characters took to handle peer pressure.

#### *Fallen Angels*

1. Television, newspapers, and magazines provided information about and pictures of the Vietnam War. Music also reflected this war. View a collage of these images and listen to music that was popular at this time. What are your reactions to this war? How did the American population view this war? After reading *Fallen Angels*, what are your reactions to this war? Did your reactions change? Why?
2. Interview a Vietnam veteran. Compare his or her experiences with those of the characters in *Fallen Angels*.
3. Discuss what the author is telling you about the Vietnam War. What is the author saying about courage? About war?



4. Think about the words and images that made the strongest impressions on you as you read the book. Which part of the novel made the strongest impression? Why? What words or phrases did the author use to create those impressions?

*Now Is Your Time! The African American Struggle for Freedom.*

1. Design a newspaper that includes articles reporting on the African American struggle for freedom.
2. Search newspapers and magazines for current articles on African American life.
3. Create a graphic of influential African American leaders. Describe their contributions.
4. Describe the defining events of African American history that Mr. Myers has related in his book. Discuss why these are significant.

*The Mouse Rap*

1. Mouse's nickname is based on his physical traits. What other characters in this book have nicknames that are based on physical traits? Write descriptions of these characters based on their nicknames.
2. Freddie is called Mouse by his mother, friends, and acquaintances. He refers to himself as The Mouse. Why do you think the author makes this distinction?
3. Walter Dean Myers starts each chapter with a rap. This prologue gives clues to the chapter's content. Think about a famous American you have studied in school. Write a rap that includes the person's achievements but not his or her name. Perform the rap for your classmates and ask them to guess the subject of your rap.
4. Each generation coins new phrases and word usages and changes the vocabulary of the American people. As you read *The Mouse Rap*, write down the slang words used by Mouse and other characters in the book. Draw a star beside slang words that you don't know. Compare your list with your classmates' lists. Do they know the meaning of the words you have starred?
5. When Mouse's mother responds to Mouse with the phrase, "Right On," he has no idea what she means. Use the survey on the next page to interview as many adults as possible (parents, grandparents, neighbors, teachers, older siblings, etc). Write down each of their responses. Compare your survey with your classmates' surveys. Are there similarities? What are the differences? Are there any words on the list that you use today?



## Survey

I have read a book by Walter Dean Myers called *The Mouse Rap*. In the book, the main character, Mouse, uses a lot of street words or slang. For instance, instead of saying he was calling his friend, he would say he was touch-toning his friend. When you were my age, what street words did you use for the following:

|                       |  |  |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| being embarrassed     |  |  |
| best friend           |  |  |
| boy                   |  |  |
| boyfriend             |  |  |
| calm down             |  |  |
| car                   |  |  |
| clothes               |  |  |
| father                |  |  |
| feeling good          |  |  |
| food                  |  |  |
| girl                  |  |  |
| girlfriend            |  |  |
| hat                   |  |  |
| home                  |  |  |
| I agree               |  |  |
| looking nice          |  |  |
| make a telephone call |  |  |
| money                 |  |  |
| mother                |  |  |
| nice                  |  |  |
| school                |  |  |
| sick                  |  |  |
| ugly                  |  |  |



## Suggested Activities for Books by Walter Dean Myers

1. Prepare reader responses to the novel. Possible prompts are:
  - a. Describe one character's problem or choice to be made. What advice do you have for the character?
  - b. Explain why you think a character is acting the way that he or she is acting.
  - c. Make predictions about what could happen next, explaining the reasons for your predictions.
  - d. Do any of the characters grow up over the course of this book? What changes do they make? What kinds of challenges do they face?
  - e. Do any of the characters display courage? Describe that courage and your response to it.
2. Read two books and compare the main characters. Make a Venn diagram listing their characteristics. How are they different and how are they alike?
3. Use a character map to give examples of your favorite character's traits.
4. Write an autobiography of a character.
5. Sketch pictures that represent important elements in the book.
6. Character analysis:
  - a. Choose a character and find information in the book about the character.
  - b. Write an in-depth study of a character describing his or her physical appearance, past, behavior, purpose, and relationship to other characters.
  - c. Create an artistic representation of the character.
7. There are only four basic plots in literature: romance, tragedy, satire or irony, and comedy. After learning about plot, use a plot chart to review novels read. Complete the required information. Compare the plots of the various novels.
8. Select an incident in the novel to write about from the character's point of view.
9. Make a list of the decisions the characters had to make in the book. Do you agree with their choices? What would you have done?
10. Write a book review. This review should include the title, the name of the author, a brief summary of the book, and a personal reaction.
11. Use a plot relationships chart to review the problem-solution elements in a novel.