

Erin Williams  
English 378  
9/24/02

### ***The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis**

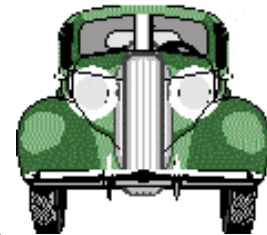
**Title of Strategy:** Reading Road Map

**Purpose of the Strategy:** The Watson family takes a literal road trip from Michigan to Alabama in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*. Students will be better able to comprehend the sequencing of events at the climax of the novel. This is a during reading activity.

**Context:** At this point in the novel, the Watsons have completed their trip to Birmingham, Alabama. Their vacation is interrupted, however, by a church bombing. Joetta is assumed to be in the building at the time the bomb explodes. Kenny rushes to the church to find his little sister. He sees the harsh reality of dead bodies and injured children. The family immediately returns to Michigan, but Kenny is forever changed. These chapters describe surreal images that Kenny experiences and surreal images that Joetta experiences. The reader will most definitely need to reread these pages in order to fully understand what is happening in reality. The reading road map will aid in the student's rereading, and help the student in better understanding the characters' emotions as they deal with this tragic event.

**Directions to Students:** After reading the final two chapters, go back and create a reading road map from what you have read. This map will help you to better understand the main character's feelings preceding, during, and immediately following the tragic church bombing. Determine the sequence of events leading up to that fateful event, the events that follow and end the novel, and the emotions and feelings of the main character both before and after. Write the event with page references on the left of the page, and write the main character's emotion(s) at the corresponding moment on the right of the page. In the center of the page, draw a map of the storyline, a reading road map. The map or drawing should correspond with the events you have written on the left. Answer the following questions at the bottom of the page: Is their resolution at the end of the novel? What is the author trying to say by recreating this tragic event and explaining its impact on a young boy?

**Assessment:** Assessment will be determined by the reading road map created by each student. The sequence of events, the emotions listed, the map or picture drawn, and the text references written by the students will allow the teacher to assess their understanding of the climax of the novel and its emotions.



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***The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963***  
**By Christopher Paul Thomas: Reading Road Map**

Directions: Create a reading road map for chapters 14 and 15. Determine the sequence of events leading up to the church bombing, the events that follow and end the novel, and the emotions and feelings of the main character both before and after. Write the event with page references on the left of the page, and write the main character's emotion(s) at the corresponding moment on the right of the page. In the center of the page, draw a map of the storyline, a reading road map. The map or drawing should correspond with the events you have written on the left. Also, answer the questions at the bottom of the page.

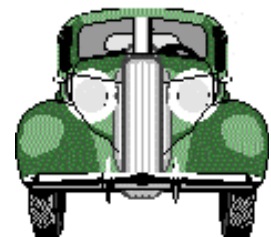
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**Event and Page Reference**

**Corresponding Emotion**

— Is their resolution at the end of the novel? If so, what?

— What is the author trying to say by recreating this tragic event and explaining its impact on a young boy?



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**Event and Page Reference**

**Corresponding Emotion**

Kenny wakes up on Sunday morning.(p.180)

Content

Joetta leaves for church, and Kenny tells her good-bye. (p.180)

Content, Happy

Kenny finishes breakfast and goes outside to rest in the shade. (p. 181)

Content, Tired

Kenny hears a large noise that shakes the ground. (p. 182)

Confused, Frightened

Kenny learns the sound was a bomb that exploded in the church (p. 183)

Confused, Anxious

Kenny goes to the church. (p. 184)

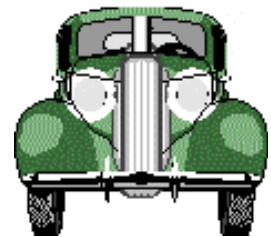
Confused, Anxious

Kenny sees a shoe and tugs at it. The shoe is connected to a body buried in the rubble. (p. 185).

Confused, Frightened

Kenny walks home to Grandma Sands. (p. 186)

Confused, Floating



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Joetta walks into the room where Kenny is sitting. (p. 187)

Confused, Sad,  
Frightened

The Watsons left Birmingham that night. (p. 192)

Confused, Depressed

Kenny spends his time behind the couch at the "Watsons' Pet Hospital." (p. 193)

Confused, Depressed

Kenny goes to the bathroom to see Byron's chin hair. He sees himself in the mirror and breaks down in tears. (p. 198-199)

Confused, Frightened,  
Sad

Kenny questions the events at the church, wondering how someone could ever intentionally hurt anyone else. (p. 199)

Confused, Sad

Kenny is confused about what he thinks happened in the church, and what Byron says is the reality of what happened. (p. 201)

Confused, Adamant

Kenny listens to Byron explain that Kenny saved Joetta that day by just being born. Joetta thought she saw Kenny in the street, and left the church to follow him just before it was bombed. (p. 202)

Confused, but slowly  
Understanding

Kenny realizes there is magic in the world -

Content,  
Resolve

there is magic in families. He decides everything will be okay. (p. 204-205)

— Is their resolution at the end of the novel? If so, what?

— What is the author trying to say by recreating this tragic event and explaining its impact on a young boy?



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