

Lesson Plan

Student Activities that Helped the War Effort

Discussion Questions for *Voices at Whisper Bend* by Katherine Ayers (Pleasant Company Publishing)

Chapter 1

1. Identify the characters: a) Charlotte Campbell, b) Ma (Mrs. Campbell), c) Pa (Mr. Campbell), d) Robbie Campbell, e) Jim Campbell, f) Betsy Schmidt, g) Mr. Roosevelt.

- a) Charlotte Campbell: 12-year old, 6th grade girl living in Bradock, PA
- b) Ma (Mrs. Campbell): Charlotte's mother, a homemaker
- c) Pa (Mr. Campbell): Charlotte's father, a tugboat captain
- d) Robbie Campbell: Charlotte's 9-year old brother
- e) Jim Campbell: Charlotte's older brother who is serving in the U.S. Navy
- f) Betsy Schmidt: Charlotte's neighbor and best friend
- g) Mr. Roosevelt: President of the United States

2. What scary event took place at school on the first day of the story?

An air raid drill with loud sirens

3. What does Mr. Roosevelt say to the people of the U.S. when he speaks to the country on the radio?

He says: "We must think of ways to help our fighting men. We must work and sacrifice [to help the war effort]."

4. What is Pa's job? How does he help the war effort?

Pa is a tugboat captain on the Monongahela River. He watches for enemy ships planes. On his boat, the Rose, he carries supplies for the steel mill.

5. How does Pa say the family, including Robbie and Charlotte, can help win the war?

He says they can save money to buy defense stamps, plant a victory garden, and preserve food for their family and to share.

6. What is Charlotte's secret fear (based on event in which she almost died)?

Drowning is her secret fear. She slipped into the river from the deck of her father's boat when she was five years old. Jim and Pa pulled her out but she wasn't breathing. They pounded her back and chest to start her breathing again. As far as her family is concerned she's fine, but she still has nightmares.

Chapter 2

1. How does Betsy suggest she and Charlotte might pitch in to help win the war?

Betsy suggests they buy an extra defense stamp, lie about their ages and get jobs at the steel mill, or roll bandages for the Red Cross.

2. What is Charlotte's genius idea to help win the war?

Charlotte suggests the students carry out a scrap metal drive.

3. How did the principal involve the whole school in the scrap drive? What did each grade do?

6th graders were to collect metal, 7th graders were to collect newspapers, 8th graders were to take scrap tires to the river where they would be taken to a factory and made into new tires

4. How did Ma plan to help the war effort?

Ma planned to work at the Edgar Thompson Steel Mill as a crane operator.

Chapter 3

1. Who is Mr. Willis?

Mr. Willis is the school Janitor who doesn't speak much because of his stutter.

2. Where will the scrap be stored?

The scrap will be stored in the school basement.

3. How did Charlotte help while Ma worked?

Charlotte cooked, cleaned up and watched out for Robbie.

4. Why did Jim's letters have holes cut in them?

Spies could figure out the location and kind of ship Jim is on from the accidental clues in his letters.

Chapter 4

1. What upsetting event occurred at the school over the week-end?

All the scrap in the basement has been stolen.

2. What did the class vote to do about the scrap drive? (continue or quit)
The class voted to continue.
3. What is the meaning of the word “treason”? (pg. 43)
Treason is betraying your country by helping its enemy.
4. Why does Charlotte believe Paul Rossi is the thief? Why does Sophie believe that Mr. Costa is the thief?
 - a) **Paul is fascinated by crime and isn't upset by the theft.**
 - b) **Mr. Costa is young and not fighting. He is Italian like Mussolini (Hitler's ally).**
5. What did the older boys say in the schoolyard that made Betsy cry?
They called her a stinking Kraut because her name is Schmidt (a German name).
6. Describe Charlotte's plan to catch the thief.
Charlotte plans to draw the thief to the alley behind her house with a huge pile of metal and capture him.

Chapter 5

1. Robbie names two more suspects in the metal theft. Who are they?
 - a) **Mr. Willis (Wagon Willie), the school janitor who sells scrap.**
 - b) **Charlie Stankowski, a 4th grader who brought a broken lunch pail (just like one the Campbell kids had collected) to school.**
2. What did two bullies do to Betsy's desk?
cabbage, a very German food.
They dumped a big, smelly can of sauerkraut all over Betsy's desk. Sauerkraut is pickled cabbage, a very German food.
3. What happened at school on Wednesday night?
Charlotte's scrap heap was left untouched, but thieves had stolen another heap of scrap from school.

Chapter 6

1. What convinced Charlotte that Paul was nice and not a thief?
Paul helped take Robbie to the doctor for stitches and then home. He has two brothers in the U.S. Marine Corps.
2. What emergency made it necessary for Charlotte to go out on the river to help Pa?
Charlotte was needed to help check the lines on the Rose. She had just finished when Robbie heard a radio message that barges had come loose upstream and had to be stopped. All tugboat captains were called to help

Chapter 7

1. What could have happened to hurt the war effort if the Campbells had not caught the barges?
The loose barges could have knocked out the railroad bridge that carried war supplies and troops.
2. What did Robbie spot on the riverbank that seemed important at the time?
Robbie saw a huge pile of metal on the river bank.

Chapter 8

1. What was Mr. Costa's explanation for not being in the U.S. Army?
Mr. Costa tried to join the army but was classified 4F (unfit to serve) because of a weak heart.
2. What names did Frankie and Pete call each other? How did each boy tell the other he didn't belong in America?
Frankie called Pete a "filthy Kraut" and "Nazi scum". Pete called Frankie a "dirty stinking Hunky". Each boy said the other should go back to where he came from.
3. Why did the boys stop fighting and all the kids stare at the brown car? Whose house did the man from the brown car visit?
The fight stopped when someone noticed the brown government car that came to tell a family that its soldier had been killed. The man from the car went to Frankie's house to tell about his brother, Tony.

Chapter 9

1. What is Robbie's idea to carry on with the scrap drive?
Robbie wants to recover the pile of metal he saw on the river bank.
2. How did Paul solve the problem of how to get the scrap metal from the river side?
Paul understood that they couldn't reach the scrap from the hill above the river bank, so he volunteered his rowboat to collect the metal.
3. What discovery did Robbie make when he looked closely at the metal?
Robbie saw that the metal was the same scrap they had already collected and had been stolen from the school.

Chapter 10

1. What two things did Paul say about a person who would steal scrap from the school's metal drive?
Paul says the thief must be connected to the school and desperately poor.

2. What do Paul, Robbie, and Charlotte plan to do to catch the metal thief?

They plan to pretend to be night fishing while they watch the metal, their bait to catch the thief.

Chapter 11

1. What did Paul say to Charlotte to get her to out into the rainy, foggy night to watch the metal pile?

Paul told Charlotte that their spying could save Mr. Willis from being falsely arrested.

2. What spooky effect did the foggy air over the water produce at the river bend?

Voices carry a long distance.

Chapter 12

1. Who are the metal thieves?

Joseph Stankowski, his little brother (Tommy), and his little sister (Tessa).

2. Why was Mr. Willis at the river bend?

Mr. Willis had also found the metal pile and had been guarding it trying to catch the thieves.

Chapter 13

1. How did Charlotte's fearful nightmare become real?

Robbie fell into the river and Charlotte had to go after him. They were both in danger of drowning.

2. How did Joseph explain his need to steal?

Joseph needed to steal to get money to take care of his orphaned family.

Chapter 14

1. What did the Campbells and Mr. Willis come up with to keep Joseph from going to war?

Joseph could be excused from the draft because of the extreme hardship his leaving would mean to his family. He could get a deferment for doing a war related job if Mr. Campbell would hire him to work on the tugboat. Finally, Robbie suggested that the Stankowski family might rent a room or two from their neighbor, old Mrs. Durben.