

***Gage the Flying Whippet* Discussion Questions and Activities**

PREVIEWING THE TEXT

Look at the front-cover picture, the title, and the synopsis (plot summary) on the back cover. Make a **prediction** about what the book will be about. What do you think you'll like about this book?

PROLOGUE

1) MAKING INFERENCES/CONNECTIONS

Why does Sammie think change is about to happen? Does Sammie want her life to change? Have you ever felt nervous because your life was about to be different, even though you knew the change might be good for you? Explain.

2) SETTING

The **setting** is when and where a story takes place. After reading the prologue, complete the below setting graphic organizer.

TIME	PLACE
Date?	City and state?
Season/part of school year?	Rural (country) or urban (city)?

3) COMPREHENSION CHECK

What is Sammie worried about in the prologue?

4) IDENTIFYING FORESHADOWING/MAKING PREDICTIONS

Foreshadowing is when an author provides clues as to what might come later in the story. Where do you see foreshadowing in the prologue? Then make a **prediction** about how you think the main character might change by the end of the story.

5) POINT OF VIEW

When a story is told from a **first-person point of view**, the narrator is a character in the story and uses pronouns like *I*, *me*, *we*, and *us*. In a story told from a **third-person point of view**, however, the narrator is not a character in the story, and the pronouns *he*, *she*, *it*, *they*, and *them* are used.

- What point of view is used in *Gage the Flying Whippet*, and how do you know?
- What are some other books you've read that are written in the same point of view? Do you have a preference for first person or third person? Explain.

CHAPTERS 1-3

1) MAKING INFERENCES

How does Sammie feel about Mr. D as a teacher? How do you know?

2) MAKING INFERENCES

Though people with dyslexia have normal intelligence, reading may be hard for them. What clues from the first chapter suggest that reading is extra difficult for Sammie?

3) EXTENSION

If you could talk to Mr. D, what would you tell him?

4) CHARACTER

In Mr. D's class, Sammie and the other students are reading the book *The Outsiders*. How does Sammie feel like an outsider?

5) AUTHOR'S STYLE: METAPHORS

An author's writing style often includes metaphors, which are comparisons of two things that have some quality in common. For example, in the metaphor "His eyes were flames," eyes are being compared to flames, perhaps to show that the character is angry. Find a metaphor on pg. 4 and explain how the metaphor affects the reader. In other words, how does the metaphor help the reader understand how the character is feeling?

	METAPHOR	IMPACT ON READER
Example	"My feet were lead weights . . ."	The metaphor shows the reader that Sammie is scared to read in front of the class because her dyslexia embarrasses her.
Your turn		

6) CONNECTIONS

- What animal does Sammie want to be, and how does the class react to Sammie's choice?
- What animal would *you* want to be and why? Would it bother you if your classmates didn't approve of your choice? Why or why not?

7) SYMBOLISM

A **symbol** is a person, place, or object that represents an abstract idea beyond itself. For example, a flag is a symbol that could represent freedom. Birds are mentioned three different times in the prologue and first chapter. What could each bird symbolize? Discuss and complete the graphic organizer below.

BIRD SYMBOL	WHAT COULD THE BIRD REPRESENT?
Fledgling bird in prologue	The baby bird represents Sammie's fears of finding her own strength; she doesn't want to learn to "fly from the nest," or become independent, as she becomes older.
Bird that hits the window while Sammie is reading to the class	
Eagle from Sammie's imagination	

8) CHARACTER/THEME

What is another reason Sammie feels different from her peers in Bernardsville, aside from her dyslexia?

9) CHARACTERIZATION METHODS/MAKING INFERENCES

We learn about Sammie's character based on her actions, her appearance, and what she says. What inferences can we make about Sammie in Ch. 1-3?

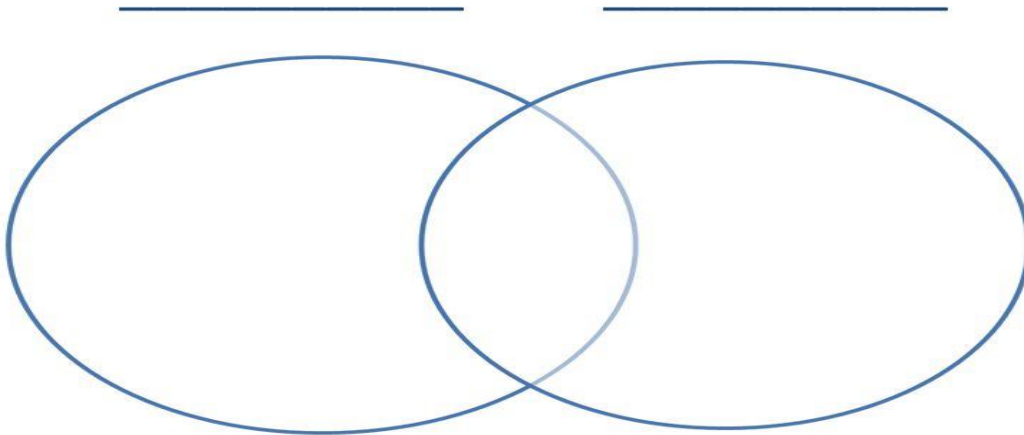
	EVIDENCE FROM THE STORY	METHOD OF CHARACTERIZATION	MY INFERENCE ABOUT SAMMIE
Example	Wears a baseball cap; likes to carry a slingshot and have a wild imagination	How Sammie looks/acts	I can infer that even though Sammie cares about being like the other kids in school, Sammie's true nature is to be unique. She likes to dress in her own style and have different hobbies because being atypical is what makes Sammie who she is.
Your turn		What Sammie does	

Your turn		What Sammie says	
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10) COMPARE/CONTRAST

How are you like or unlike Sammie?

Venn Diagram



11) CHECKING COMPREHENSION

What are two reasons that summer school isn't as bad as Sammie thought it would be?

12) COMPARE/CONTRAST

What do Jake and Sammie have in common?

CHAPTERS 4-6

1) CONFLICT/CONNECTIONS

A **conflict** is a problem in the story. Describe the conflict between Sammie and her mother in chapter four. Have you ever felt like your parents or teachers don't recognize the value of a certain talent you have? Explain.

2) CAUSE/EFFECT AND CONNECTIONS

What does Sammie do in response to the argument with her mother? How do you usually react to conflict in your life? Do you face the problem or try to escape? Explain.

3) AUTHOR'S STYLE: SIMILES

In addition to metaphors, authors often use similes as part of their writing style. A **simile** is a comparison using "like" or "as." On pg. 21 in chapter four, find one more simile and discuss how the simile might impact the reader. (Is the simile positive or negative in tone? Is the author trying to depict Gage as an average dog or a unique dog?)

	Simile	Impact on Reader
Example on pg. 21	"His coat . . . smelled like fresh raindrops."	"Like fresh raindrops" is a positive description, so I think Sammie no longer feels afraid of the dog.
Your turn		

4) MAKING INFERENCES

What are some clues on pgs. 22-23 that Gage might not be your typical dog? Why do you think Gage appears in the woods at this particular time in Sammie's life?

5) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Why do you think Sammie bonds so quickly with Gage in chapter four?

6) MAKING JUDGMENTS

What discovery does Sammie make about Gage? If you were Sammie, would you return Gage or keep him? Explain.

7) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

How are whippets unusual dogs? Why do you think the author chose such an unusual dog to be Sammie's friend and mentor?

8) MAKING INFERENCES

Why doesn't Sammie want to go to Leslie's birthday party? What would you say to Leslie if you could talk to her?

CHAPTERS 7-9

1) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

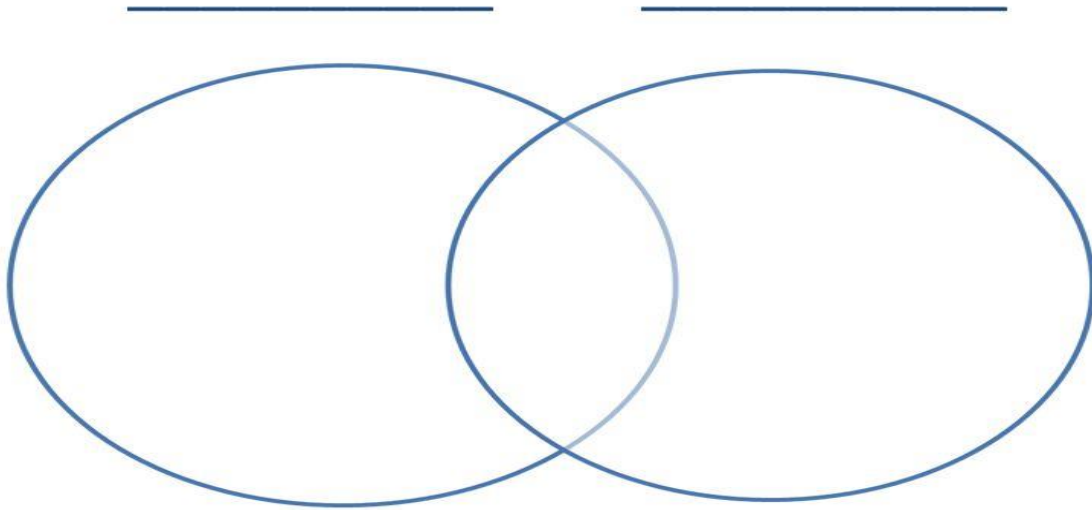
In chapter seven, Gage chooses not to help Sammie with her math work.

- a) Why do you think Gage doesn't help Sammie, even though he's a magical dog and could solve her problem instantly by taking away her dyslexia?
- b) In your opinion, what message is the author trying to convey by including a magical dog who doesn't use his magic to make the protagonist's life immediately better for him or her?

2) COMPARISON/CONTRAST

After reading chapter nine, use the Venn Diagram below to explore how Sammie and Nancy are similar and different.

Venn Diagram



3) CHARACTER CHANGE

According to chapter nine, how is Sammie slowly changing?

4) THEME/CONNECTIONS

In chapter nine, Sammie discovers that her friend Nancy has always liked her crazy, imaginative stories, though Sammie had always assumed otherwise. What do you think the author is trying to say about self-judgment? Have you ever been too self-critical in your life? Explain.

5) CHARACTER INFERENCES

What can you infer about Mrs. Poole from her actions and dialogue in chapter nine? Do you think that Sammie is right that Mrs. Poole neglects Gage and is judging Sammie for her appearance? Explain.

6) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Why is Sammie confused when she sees Mingpoo's picture on the pillow?

CHAPTERS 10-13

1) THEME

On pg. 47, Sammie's senses seem to awaken to the real world around her, so the real world seems as special as her imaginary one. In your opinion, what message is the author trying to convey in this scene?

2) CAUSE/EFFECT

How does seeing Gage fly affect Sammie?

3) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS/MAKING CONNECTIONS

On pgs. 48-49, Sammie realizes that compound interest is a lot like the confidence building inside her.

- a) What does she mean by this?
- b) How has Sammie finally learned to build her confidence?
- c) Do you find that it's easier to tackle something hard in your life when you have a friend or family member believing in you? Discuss an example from your life.

4) SYMBOLISM

Pgs. 49-50: What do you think Sammie's dream about the eagle means?

5) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

In chapter eleven, Sammie's mother asks her about studying. How is Sammie's reaction different than earlier in the book, and why do you think Sammie reacts so differently?

6) MAKING INFERENCES

On pg. 53, Sammie knows that Gage will leave her. How do you think she knows this?

7) MAKING INFERENCES

Why do you think Sammie picks flowers for Gage and her mother?

8) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Why do you think the woods aren't as appealing to Sammie at the end of chapter twelve?

9) THEME

What did Gage teach Sammie?

10) MAKING INFERENCES

At the end of the story, do you think Sammie is still like the fledgling bird in the prologue or the eagle from her dreams? To what extent has she learned to "fly" on her own?

EPILOGUE

1) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS/MAKING INFERENCES

How was Sammie (and other neighbors in Bernardsville) wrong about Mrs. Poole? What do you think Sammie learned after reading the newspaper article?

2) DRAWING CONCLUSIONS/MAKING JUDGMENTS

Why do you think Gage returned to Mrs. Poole instead of staying with Sammie? How do you feel about Gage's decision?

AFTER READING THE NOVEL

1) THEME

Theme is the story's message about life or human nature. One theme in *Gage the Flying Whippet* is that people shouldn't judge others, especially when they don't know a person's history. In the boxes below, record how specific characters were judged and the impact of judgment on that character.

CHARACTER	HOW WAS THIS CHARACTER JUDGED BY OTHERS?	HOW DO YOU THINK BEING JUDGED IMPACTED THIS CHARACTER?
Sammie		
Mr. Jackson		
Mrs. Poole		

2) THEME

What could be some other themes, or messages, from *Gage the Flying Whippet*? What is your evidence from the story?

POSSIBLE THEMES	EVIDENCE

3) CAUSE/EFFECT

Draw two pictures from the story. The picture on the left should illustrate an event that *caused* another event or character reaction to happen. The picture on the right should show the *effect* of the original event. Include captions to explain your pictures; then discuss why the cause-effect relationship is important to the story.

CAUSE	EFFECT
CAPTION:	CAPTION:
Significance of Cause-Effect Relationship to the Story:	

4) CHARACTER CHANGE

On the left side of your paper, draw a picture that illustrates what Sammie is like in the beginning of the book. Try to include symbols in your picture. For example, if you think Sammie is controlled by her fears in the beginning of the book, maybe you could draw Sammie behind bars; on each bar, you could write "FEAR OF DIFFERENCES," "FEAR OF BEING JUDGED," etc. Sammie is never literally behind bars in the novel, of course, but she may *feel* like she is caged by her fears; the bars are symbols. Then, on the right side of the paper, draw another picture with symbols that shows how Sammie has changed by the end of the book. Write a caption to explain the symbolism in each of your pictures.

CHARACTER CHANGE: SAMMIE

BEGINNING OF BOOK

END OF BOOK

CAPTION:

CAPTION: