

Teacher's Guide for **HAVEN**, by Beverly Patt
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Please see the end of this document for list of state standards addressed by teaching Haven)

Discussion questions

1. At the beginning of the story, Rudy meets Latonya when she comes to spend Christmas day with his family, people she has never met. Who do you think arranged this and, more importantly, why did they arrange it? How would it feel to be in Latonya's shoes?
2. Why do you think Rudy's father is so grumpy every Christmas? Have you ever been grumpy on a day that was supposed to be happy? What happened?
3. Rudy speaks about the Morris Gloom that hangs about his house. What do you think caused this gloom? What made it better?
4. Rudy's father avoids visiting his own father, Rudy's grandfather, in the nursing home and Rudy doesn't like it much either. Why do you think they feel that way? What is it about nursing homes and hospitals that make some people uncomfortable? Have you ever felt that way? What happened?
5. Rudy's friend Stark asks him, "Did we come here for the ATV or for the girl?" What do you think the answer to that question is and why?
6. What is the significance of Stark being named after his great, great grandfather?
7. Rudy starts to have misgivings about helping Latonya – what is going through his head? Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to help a friend but didn't know exactly what to do? What did you do? Looking back on it, was it the right thing to do? If not, how could you have handled it differently?
8. Why do you think Rudy's mom decided to study nursing? Do you know anyone else who chose their career because of something that happened to them earlier in life? What do you want to be when you grow up? Does it relate to anything you have gone through?

9. In the 1980's and before, abused and neglected children could be sent home to their parents if those parents took the required amount of parenting and/or anger management classes. How do you feel about this? What are the pros and cons of this practice? How does Britt's experience fit into this idea?
10. Also in the 1980's foster children could only be placed in homes of the same race. What positives and negatives can you think of for this practice? How would you feel living in a home where the family was of a different race than you?
11. When families have something in their past that they don't like to talk about, it's called having a 'skeleton in the closet.' Discuss the skeletons in the closets in this novel. Is it always best to bring the 'skeletons' to light or are some secrets best left alone? Discuss your answers.
12. Why is Rudy is afraid of the Yellow-Eyed-Boy? What does he find out about him? Have you ever been afraid of someone you didn't really know? What happened?
13. Rudy writes thank you notes to his relatives, not mentioning what he's spent the money on. Is this lying? Why or why not?
14. When Rudy sides with Omar against Latonya, she sees it as a betrayal. What do you think? Why?
15. By the end of the book, what do you think of Stark as a friend? Rudy? Latonya?
16. Many stories use 'symbolism' to represent an underlying theme. What do you think Benny's birdhouse represents and why might the author have added it?

Suggested Activities/Projects

- Run a Food Drive It doesn't have to be Boxing Day to collect food for the poor. Get in touch with your local food bank or shelter and find out their needs. Then plan your Food Drive to suit. You can even challenge other classrooms to try to out-drive you!
- Research Transracial adoption and MEPA (Multiethnic Placement Act) Write a report, make a timeline but most of all, discuss!

- Build a Birdhouse Scour the library, the web or your scout manual for directions on how to build a birdhouse. It can be as elaborate or as simple as time and materials allow. Make sure you check with an adult first!
- Make a Family Tree Learn about your own family when you make a family tree! Anything from the old-fashioned, paper-and-pencil chart to an online photo montage to a power point presentation – the sky and your imagination (and maybe your wallet) is the limit.
- Visit a Nursing Home Schedule time for your classroom to visit a nursing home. Speak to someone in charge as to the best time to come and what they recommend you bring. A seasonal craft, handmade cards, board games to play – or maybe you could sing a few songs you’re learning in Music class. You’ll never have a more appreciative audience.
- Host a Debate The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in Illinois had valid reasons for their same-race rule in Foster Parenting. Split your group into two sides, one side arguing in support of the same-race rule and the other side arguing against. Consider having an audience, who would then vote for the side who presented the most compelling case.
- Write a Story about a Skeleton in the Closet – either real (literal) or figurative. Remember, a ‘skeleton in the closet’ is something in a person’s or a family’s past that is has been kept secret. Why is it a secret? Who has something to lose if the secret is found out? What would the possible consequences be?

State Standards addressed by teaching HAVEN and using the discussion questions listed above:

Illinois State Standards (Elementary and Middle School)

Reading

- 1A. Word Analysis, Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension
- B. Prediction, Compare/Contrast, Clarification for understanding
- C. Story elements, Point of View, Theme

Literature

- 1A. Literary elements and techniques
- B. Settings and Plots in relation to historic events, eras and perspectives. Conflict Resolution and Real-life applications.

Writing

- 1A. Writing to Communicate, using proper grammar, spelling and structure
- B. Compose well-organized and coherent writing for specific purposes and audiences.
- C. Communicate ideas in writing to accomplish a variety of purposes.