

# Guided reading

SECTION

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## Chapters 6, 7 and 8

Establish what has been learned so far about Carrie's personality. Have the children noticed that her instinct is always to ease situations and say what people want to hear, although that might involve betraying her own feelings? Carrie does this at the beginning of Chapter 6. What is the consequence? (The row with Nick – he loses some respect for her here.)

After the episode at Druid's Bottom, Carrie is very troubled (the last two pages of Chapter 6). Note that she is increasingly caught between two camps and, characteristically, wants to do what's right for both.

In Chapter 7 comes the pivotal event: Mrs Gotobed's conversation with Carrie. Carrie doesn't yet understand it, but does the group? Does it seem right that such an important message of reconciliation should be made Carrie's responsibility?

How has Nick changed by the end of Chapter 7? Look at the intelligent things he says on the last page of the chapter, and consider his relationship with Mister Johnny: Nick is much more sensitive and understanding than he first seemed and is in some ways more grown up than his elder sister.

At the beginning of Chapter 8, we get more insight into Evans's character from Hepzibah, who may seem a surprising source. Here, Bawden persuades us to reconsider Evans. Does he still seem the 'ogre' we first met?

## Chapter 9

In Chapter 9 Nina Bawden cranks up the tension by suggesting future events that threaten the characters. Albert suggests that Mister Johnny might end up in a 'madhouse' after Mrs Gotobed's death; then Mrs Gotobed arrives at the hayfield in the ball gown, which tells us that she is about to die. Next, Frederick admits that he intends to abandon his father, and finally Mrs Gotobed reminds Carrie that she will soon have to deliver her message to Evans. A great 'wind-up' chapter, and it all seemed so *nice* at first!

## Chapter 10

Read the first five pages of Chapter 10, down to the break '...much of a hurry'. Ensure that the children see that Carrie's understanding of Mrs Gotobed's message is consistent with her character; that she has a stubborn desire to put the kindest interpretation on things and imagine that other people will see things as she does. Who is right: Carrie or Albert? Well, Albert, of course. Draw attention to Albert's mention of a Will; this will prove crucial later on in the story.

Discuss how, in the latter part of Chapter 10 Nina Bawden builds up the dramatic tension by keeping Evans bulging-eyed and silent while Carrie witters on. At the end of this chapter, who seems the wiser: Carrie or Nick?

## Chapter 11

Read the first page and a half of Chapter 11, up to '...Hepzibah's kitchen'. Carrie's anxieties begin to overwhelm her here. What do the children make of the odd picture of the box and the dark shape within it? Is it the box with the skull? It could be; but perhaps Carrie remembers the Greek myth of Pandora's Box, which contained all the evils of the world; when Pandora opened the box, they flew out, leaving only hope inside. Why might Carrie think of herself as like Pandora? Is she perhaps *understanding* her feelings? Is she beginning to realise that by trying to be nice to everybody she has actually spoiled things?

## Chapter 12

At the beginning of Chapter 12, what new aspects of Evans's character emerge? (His scrupulous fairness, even occasional kindness.) What do we learn about Albert in this chapter? (Despite his intelligence, he feels impotent because he's a child; that he can be critical of himself as well as others.)

Ask the group to read Chapters 13 and 14 before the next session.

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