

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The View from Saturday

by

E.L. Konigsburg

Book Information

E.L. Konigsburg, The View from Saturday

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163 Pages

Book Level: 5.9

Interest Level: MG

Four students, with their own individual stories, develop a special bond and attract the attention of their teacher, a paraplegic, who chooses them to represent their sixth-grade class in the Academic Bowl competition.

Award: ALA Notable/Best Books; Newbery Medal; SLJ Best Book; State Award

Topics: Community Life, School; Disabilities, Physical; Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship; Popular Groupings, Middle Grades Popular Authors/Starred Reviews; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 9+; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 6-8; Recommended Reading, Children's Literature Choice

Main Characters

Allen Diamondstein Nadia's father

Eva Marie Olinski a paraplegic teacher and coach of the Academic Bowl team

Ham Knapp, Michael Froelich two sixth grade trouble makers

Izzy Diamondstein Nadia's grandfather, who is married to Ethan's grandmother

Margaret Draper Ethan's grandmother, who was also Mrs. Olinski's principal at one time

Mr. Singh Julian's father

Noah Gershom, Nadia Diamondstein, Ethan Potter, Julian Singh the sixth grade members of the Academic Bowl team, nicknamed "The Souls"

Vocabulary

atrociously extremely evilly or cruelly

calligraphy the art of beautiful handwriting

chanteuse a woman singer

chupah a bridal canopy

incandescently shining brilliantly; very bright

ironic a contrast between what is expected and what actually happens

paraplegic a person who is completely paralyzed in the lower half of the body

suffragette a female believing in a woman's right to vote

Synopsis

The author begins the book by explaining that Mrs. Olinski and her Academic Bowl team are headed for the championship. It surprises everyone that a sixth-grade team has made it this far in the Academic Bowl. Although initially Mrs. Olinski can't find the right explanation for how she chose the four members of her team, the author alternates the narration of each chapter from character to character to give the reader a hint at the reason for each member's selection.

Noah Gershom spends some of his summer at Century Village in Florida with his grandparents. He lends a hand in the wedding of Margaret Draper and Izzy Diamondstein. He writes out wedding invitations, organizes a coupon exchange for the wedding menu, and stands in as best man for Izzy, when Izzy's son, Allen, breaks his foot tripping over the red wagon carrying the wedding cake.

Nadia Diamondstein has divorced parents. She travels to Florida to spend time with her father, Allen. While she is there, she participates in turtle walks organized by her grandpa's new wife, Margaret. She discovers that Margaret found her mom a job in New York. She refuses to go on future turtle walks because she is tired of Margaret's interference in her life. Later, however, a huge windstorm brings Nadia back to the beach to help her family save baby hatchlings.

Ethan Potter visits his grandmother, Margaret, in Florida and meets Nadia. He feels he is a disappointment to his teachers because he isn't like

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his brother, Lucas. He becomes concerned when new student Julian Singh stands by his seat on the bus and waits for him each day before going into school. He doesn't want to have a bus partner for the school year.

Julian Singh and his father have just moved to Epiphany. Mr. Singh is turning the Sillington place into a bed and breakfast. Julian is often harassed by Ham Knapp and Michael Froelich, two sixth grade boys. Julian invites Ethan, Noah, and Nadia to his home each Saturday for tea.

Nadia's dog, Ginger, plays Sandy in the play, "Annie." Julian outsmarts Ham when he takes the drugged doggie treat meant for Ginger. The four Academic Bowl team members grow closer in their friendship and name themselves, "The Souls." They advance past the seventh-grade teams to the final contest against eighth-grade team Maxwell. Julian questions one of the answers in the contest. He then goes on to answer the question that wins The Souls the championship.

Mrs. Olinski and The Souls discover kindness in themselves and each other along their journey to the championship.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Mr. Singh explains to Mrs. Olinski that The Souls found kindness on their journey. What are some examples of the kindness they found?

Responses might include Julian's invitation to the others for Saturday tea, Noah's helpfulness while he stayed at Century Village, Nadia's help rescuing the turtles, Ethan's ride on the school bus and his conversations with Julian, Julian's decision not to take revenge on Ham, and The Souls' decision to help Mrs. Olinski.

Literary Analysis

Julian shows The Souls a small ivory monkey and comments "You see, this monkey can balance on any one of its four limbs." How does this monkey represent Mrs. Olinski?

Student responses should include The Souls' agreement that Mrs. Olinski is kept off balance by the behavior of Ham and others in the classroom. They agree to give her support in her attempt to find her "balance."

Inferential Comprehension

Mrs. Olinski continually struggles with finding an explanation for why she chose the members of The Souls as her Academic Bowl team. At the very end of the book, she looks at them and asks, "Did I choose you, or did you choose me?" The Souls answer, "Yes!" Why is that an appropriate answer?

Answers might include the following responses: They believed it was a mutual "choosing"; some things happen with no reason behind it; people can be drawn together for unexplainable reasons; the possibility of fate being involved; the idea that people can "know" about each other without really having factual information. Also included might be thoughts on strong perceptions and intuitions.

Constructing Meaning

The Souls bring different personalities to the story and to the Academic Bowl team. Identify each character and discuss individual personalities. Which character are you most like? Why?

Responses should include Noah's wit, quick thinking, and self-confidence; Nadia's cherub looks and stubbornness; Ethan's habit of watching people and listening; Julian's calmness, quietness, and intuitive nature.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting The story takes place mostly in Epiphany, New York. Epiphany is located in the Finger Lakes region of the state. New York has eight regions. Each is named for a

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major body of water that touches the counties within its boundary. Have students locate each region on a map and identify the body of water after which it is named. After locating the body of water, have students research the origin of its name. (For example, the Hudson River is named after explorer Henry Hudson.)

Understanding Literary Features Hold a class discussion regarding the themes presented in *A View from Saturday*. Ask students to identify and explain themes and list them on the board. Themes might include unexplainable friendships, working together as a team toward a common goal, kindness and how people should treat one another, and overcoming handicaps. Have students determine which characters can be identified within each theme.

Understanding Characterization The four members of The Souls bring different qualities to the Academic Bowl team. Noah is quick-witted, Nadia is strong-willed, Ethan is a good listener, and Julian is calm, quiet, and respectful. Team students in groups of four. Have them identify their positive and negative qualities and decide what assets each one could bring into an academic team. Have them discuss what makes a team work well together.

Understanding the Author's Craft The author precedes the introduction of each member of The Souls with a scene from the final championship in which a question is directed at that member. Have students re-read those scenes and find the question directed at each member and determine why that question is appropriate. (For example, Noah is asked about the meaning of the word calligraphy, and it is later discovered he was shown how to use a calligraphy pen and ink by Tillie, a woman living in Century Village.)