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## **Sample MonkeyNotes**

**Note: this sample contains only excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format and content.**

# *The Cay*

by

**Theodore Taylor**

**1969**



**MonkeyNotes Study Guide by Laurie Lahey**

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## KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

### SETTING

The story takes place between April and August of 1942, in the midst of World War II. The novel begins in Curaçao (an island in the Caribbean sea just off the coast of Venezuela), which was.....

### CHARACTER LIST

#### Major Characters

**Phillip Enright** - Eleven-year-old Phillip is the main character and protagonist of this novel. Phillip lives on Curaçao in 1942 with his mother and father. The waters surrounding the island have recently fallen prey to German U-boats. Phillip's mother tries to take him to Virginia, where she believes they.....

**Timothy** - Timothy is an older, black man from St. Thomas. He is gentle and easy-going. Timothy.....

#### Minor Characters

**Phillip Enright** - Phillip is Phillip's father. Phillip works in the refinery on the island. He moved.....

**Grace Enright** - Grace is Phillip's mother. She is homesick for Virginia and does not like living on Curaçao. She also does not like black people and teaches Phillip that they are different than white.....

**Henrik van Boven** - Henrik is Phillip's friend in Curaçao. Henrik is Dutch and gets along.....

### CONFLICT

The conflict of a plot is the major problem experienced by the protagonist. In this novel Phillip must overcome his physical and metaphorical blindness. He must either learn to survive with blindness or.....

**Protagonist** - The protagonist of a story is the main character who traditionally undergoes some sort of change. He or she must usually overcome some opposing force. In this novel, Phillip.....

**Antagonist** - The antagonist of a story is the force that provides an obstacle for the protagonist. The antagonist does not always have to be a single character or even a character at all. In this novel the forces that.....

**Climax** - The climax of a plot is the major turning point that allows the protagonist to resolve the conflict. In *The Cay*, the climax comes when Phillip is rescued. This is the climax because it is.....

**Outcome** - The outcome, resolution, or denouement occurs in the final chapters when Phillip.....

### SHORT PLOT / CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

Phillip Enright lives on Curaçao with his mother and father in 1942, at the height of World War II. When German U-boats attack the waters surrounding their island, Phillip's mother insists that she and Phillip return to Virginia, where the family came from three years earlier. Phillip's father disagrees but allows his son and wife to leave, while he stays behind to work in the refinery.

On the passage home, Phillip's ship is attacked by a U-boat and sinks. Phillip is stranded on a life raft with a black man named Timothy. Phillip dislikes Timothy because his mother has taught him that black people are different than white people. Soon, Phillip learns to trust Timothy as he finds himself blind from an injury he suffered the night the ship sank. Timothy finds an island and insists that he and Phillip .....

## THEMES

### Major Theme

**Senseless Human Hatred** - This novel's major conflict is also its major theme. The plot of the novel is driven by the senseless human hatred which causes both World War II and Phillip's .....

### Minor Themes

**The Vicious Cycles of Racism** - The major antagonizing force of this novel—racism—is spawned by vicious cycles of hatred steeped in ignorance. Adolf Hitler was the major force behind the beginning of World War II. Hitler was able to build upon people's hatred for the Jews and those he perceived as.....

**Self-Reliance** - An important theme in this novel is how Phillip must learn to rely on himself. Phillip must overcome his physical handicap of not being able to see as well as his emotional .....

**Human Compassion** - While the plot of this novel is driven in large part by human hatred, it is also shaped by human compassion. Timothy's most important lesson for Phillip is not how to survive as a.....

## MOOD

The mood is tense. Taylor creates a tense mood through setting, characterization, and plot. The novel's setting, a deserted island in a dangerous part of the sea, provides scenery in which almost anything can happen. This is not a relaxing island, but a place where the blinded Phillip and aged Timothy must.....

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

Theodore Langhans Taylor was born on June 23, 1921 in Statesville, North Carolina. Taylor had four older sisters. In 1934 his family moved to Virginia and he began writing at age thirteen for the *Virginia Evening Star* as a sports reporter. After graduating high school, Taylor went on to write for the *Daily News* in Washington D.C. Taylor served in the U.S. Merchant Marines and later as a Navy officer during both World War II and the Korean War. Taylor went on to work with radio and film in addition to writing numerous.....

## LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This novel was written in 1969, during the height of the battle for civil rights in America. This was an important time of transformation in American society that resulted in many political and .....

## GENRE

Young Adult Fiction

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND NOTES

### CHAPTER 1

#### Summary

Eleven-year-old Phillip Enrich lives on the island Curaçao with his mother, Grace and his father, Phillip. One night in February, 1942 German submarines blow up six of Curaçao's tankers and attack its sister island, Aruba. The next day, Phillip does not have to go to school and is excited by the prospect of war. He has heard a lot about war, since the whole world is engaged in it; he hopes to see some fighting. Phillip's mother warns him to stay close to home. However, when she is busy, he sneaks away to meet his friend Henrik. Phillip and Henrik notice the island is more quiet than usual. When they see that there are no ships in the sea, they become frightened and run home. Phillip's mother scolds him, telling him he will be safe as long as he listens to her.

When Phillip's father comes home that evening, he is very tired. Phillip's mother says he should not ask him

too many questions because he has had to work extra hard at the refinery since the attack. Phillip asks his father a few questions about the war and learns that the island is not prepared to defend itself.

### Notes

This chapter provides the book's exposition. The exposition is the section of a novel in which the main characters and main conflict are introduced. Any relevant background information is also given in this section. In chapter one, we learn that Phillip and his parents came to Curaçao from Virginia in 1939 when the war began. The United States did not officially become involved in World War II until December 8, 1941—they day after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. However, Phillip's father believed it was his duty to participate in the war effort in Curaçao.

We learn that Grace does not like living on the island and is homesick for Virginia. We also learn that Grace does not like black people.

## CHAPTER 2

### Summary

Phillip's father goes back to work after dinner. Phillip has difficulty sleeping because he is growing worried about the Germans. He takes a hatchet from the tool shed and puts it under the sofa he sleeps on. When Phillip's father returns later that night he hears his mother tell him that she wants to return to the United States with Phillip. Phillip's father believes the journey would be too dangerous unless they fly. Phillip's mother is afraid of flying and insists she is taking Phillip back to Virginia. Phillip thinks about how much he loves the island and does not want to leave.

The Chinese crews on the tankers refuse to sail without naval escorts because they are afraid of the Germans. The island begins running out of water because the British and American ships that usually bring them distilled water are unable to. Phillip's father takes him to see the *S.S. Empire Tern*, a British tanker being loaded with oil. Many people watch as the ship sails away. Soon after the ship leaves port, it is blown up by a U-boat. Phillip's mother is frightened and talks more of leaving. Although Phillip's father believes they are safe on the island, he can not convince his wife. When Phillip's mother tells him they are leaving, he is devastated.

Phillip and his mother board the ship, the *S.S. Hato* with eight other passengers. Phillip's father comes aboard to say good-bye. Although his father pretends to be confident about the trip, Phillip notices that he checks the safety features of the ship.

### Notes

This chapter demonstrates the heightening tension on the island which makes Phillip's mother take him to the United States. Even though U-boats have been attacking tankers, Phillip's father is convinced that they are safe. Phillip's father believes the Germans are only concerned with the island because it provides fuel for the Allied Forces. However, Phillip's mother—who has been homesick since she arrived on the island—insists on leaving anyway. ....

## OVERALL ANALYSES

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Phillip Enright** - Phillip is the main character and protagonist of this novel. As the main character, Phillip must work to overcome the major conflict of the plot. The major conflict of *The Cay* is Phillip's physical and emotional blindness.

In the beginning of the novel, Phillip is a typical eleven-year-old boy who is not able to comprehend the gravity of war. Phillip only wants to see some of this war that he has heard so much.....

**Timothy** - Timothy is an older black man from St. Thomas. He rescues Phillip during the ship wreck by bringing Phillip onto his raft. Timothy is patient and kind with Phillip, who is frequently rude and.....

## **PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS**

**Exposition** - The exposition of a plot is the place where the reader is introduced to the main characters and any important information to understand what is currently happening. The exposition of this novel occurs in chapter one where we learn about Phillip and his family. We are also introduced to the main theme of the novel when we learn that a war is raging and that Grace dislikes blacks.

**Rising Action** - Rising action is the action that will lead to the climax (or the major turning point in the plot). In this novel the rising action is everything that happens before Phillip is rescued. This includes.....

**Climax** - The climax of a plot is the major turning point that allows the protagonist to resolve the conflict. In *The Cay*, the climax comes when Phillip is rescued. This is the climax because it is the .....

**Outcome** - The outcome, resolution, or denouement occurs in the final chapters when Phillip is.....

## **THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS**

**Senseless Human Hatred** - This book is dedicated to “Dr. King’s dream, which can only come true/if the very young know and understand.” Like an epigraph, which seeks to convey the main theme of a literary piece, this dedication tells the reader what Taylor is trying to say in his book. “Dr. King’s dream” refers to civil rights activist, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, which is one of the most famous speeches in American history.

One of the most quoted lines of this speech is “I have a dream that my four children will one.....

## **POINT OF VIEW**

First person, past tense. This story is told from Phillip’s perspective as an adult looking back on the adventure.

## **IMPORTANT QUOTES - QUOTATIONS**

Edition: Laurel Leaf, 2003

Originally Published: 1969

1. **“We are at war! Don’t you understand?”**— Grace, p. 13.

Phillip’s mother says this to him when he disobeys her and leaves the yard. This quotation illustrates how reckless and youthful Phillip is at the novel’s beginning. He wants to see war because he has heard so much about it; however, he does not realize how terrible war is. By the end of the novel, Phillip’s relationship with Timothy, as well as his experiences on the island and with blindness have made him a much more mature and thoughtful boy.

2. **“She started dis terrible wahr, eh, young bahss?”**— Timothy, p. 38.

Timothy says this to Phillip after Phillip blames his mother for his being stranded on the raft. Timothy’s point is that it is not Phillip’s mother’s fault that Phillip is stranded. Phillip is on the raft because.....

## **SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS / IMAGERY / SYMBOLS**

**Timothy Leaning on Phillip** - Actions as well as objects can be symbolic. When Timothy leans on Phillip at the end of chapter twelve, it is symbolic of how their relationship has changed because of .....

## **IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY**

**Title:** *The Cay*

**Author:** Theodore Taylor

**Date Published:** 1970

**Setting:** Curaçao and Devil's Mouth in the Caribbean Sea, 1942 during World War II.

**Genre:** Young-Adult, Fiction

**Tense:** Past

**Meaning of the Title:** *The Cay* refers to the island on.....

## **VOCABULARY LIST**

**Sextant** - A navigational instrument used to determine longitude and latitude.

**Ballast** - Heavy material placed in the hold of a ship to provide stability.

**Mutiny** - Rebellion against authority.....

## **STUDY QUESTIONS**

### **Multiple Choice**

1. Where does Phillip's father work?

- A. The grocery store
- B. The oil refinery
- C. On a fishing boat

2. Where is Phillip's family from?

- A. Virginia
- B. Mississippi
- Alabama.....

### **Answer Key**

1. B 2. A .....

## **ESSAY QUESTIONS / BOOK REPORT IDEAS**

1. Write an essay describing the first encounter between Phillip and Timothy from Timothy's perspective.

2. Do you think Phillip ever returns to the island? If so how does he feel when he gets there? Is he sad or scared? If he does not return to the island, why?.....

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