

# SUMMER ON EARTH

By Peter Thompson

## EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

#### SM

- Engineering
- Science farming

#### Reading and Language Arts

- Story elements – setting; plot; character development; cause and effect; relationships; alternate points of view
- Themes – loss, hope, family, friendship, survival, courage
- Comprehension strategies – compare and contrast characters

- Figurative language – simile, metaphor, hyperbole
- Elements of science fiction literature

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS/ INSTRUCTIONAL STRAND

L. 5.3,4,4a,5,5a,5b,6

W.5.4,6,8,9,9a,10

RF.5.3,3a,4,4a,4c

RL.5.1,2,3,4,5,6,10

SL.5.1,1c,1d,2,4,6

GUIDED  
READING  
LEVEL

T

GRADE  
LEVEL  
EQUIVALENT

5

INTEREST  
LEVEL

Grade  
3-8

LEXILE

760





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***A novel about a boy, an alien, a family, and a summer they'll never forget.***

Eleven-year-old Grady is dealing with the pain and grief of his father's death and a growing realization that his mother doesn't have enough money to keep the farm going. There is no help in sight until the night when the shooting star Grady sees turns out to be a spacecraft plunging to Earth and delivering Extraterrestrial engineer Ralwil Turth. Will, as they call him, is strange, no doubt about that, but soon he becomes a member of the family. The people in town don't trust him though, and when odd things begin to happen, they blame Will. Things get uncomfortable, and it's up to Grady to save his friend in this middle grade science-fiction story that is often tender, sometimes hilarious, and always filled with action and adventure.

### FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

*Language Arts: Reading Comprehension, Critical Thinking*

To make sure your students understand the story, recognize themes, and retain the details, ask:

- From the start, Ralwil Turth and Grady Johnson have some important things in common. They are both feeling lost and alone. Why does Ralwil feel this way? Why does Grady?
- Name five special abilities/skills that Ralwil has.
- Grady asks Will, "if you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?" How does Will answer?
- When Will goes to town with the family the first time, how do people respond to him? Be specific.
- Why does Will steal a \$20.00 bill from Ma's wallet?
- What about Mrs. Johnson's money makes Mr. McAfferty suspicious?
- What kind of machine does Will build in the barn? What does it do? Why does he need it?
- Why does Deputy Schtinkle get excited when he first hears about the Johnson family suddenly having a lot of money?
- When Will thinks about leaving the farm, the family, Earth, what does he realize he will miss?
- In the last scenes of the novel, what happens that enables Ralwil to really understand Grady and Grady to understand Ralwil? How does this change how they feel about each other?

**RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5**



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### FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

*Language Arts: Critical Thinking, Speaking and Listening, Reading: Literary Genres*

- Grady's Dad has died recently, and each of the family members—Ma, Grady, and Luanne—are reacting in their own way. Talk about how they are expressing their grief and loneliness. If any of your students have experienced this kind of loss in their own lives, they can talk about their own reactions. Those students lucky enough not to have had to deal with death, should talk about how they imagine they would feel and act.
- *Summer on Earth* is a science-fiction novel. What in the novel takes it out of the realm of realistic fiction? Have any of your students read other science-fiction books or comics or seen sci-fi movies? Ask those who have to talk about them. How are they different from realistic or historical novels?
- Look at the list of "special abilities/skills" that your children created to answer the second question on page 2. Put a combined list on the board. Invite children to talk about which of these skills they would most want and why. How would they use the special talent?
- Open up a discussion about friendship. Ask how Will and Grady gained each other's trust. We see their friendship build throughout the course of the novel. By the end they are so close they can feel each other's feelings, know each other's thoughts. Do your students have friendships like that? Ask each student to present an example of the deepest friendship they have—what they did for their pal and what he/she did for the student.
- Divide the class into small reading groups of 5 or so students. Assign each group to read chapters 31 and 32 closely. They should go over every word, sentence, and paragraph to be sure they do not miss anything. In these two chapters a single event causes a crisis for Grady and a crisis for Will. Did Peter Thompson, the author of *Summer on Earth* prepare your students for the event and result? How? Did the students predict what would happen? As readers, how do the teams feel about this plot turn? Do they wish things could just have ended earlier, with a happy ending? Why do they think the author decided not to end the book earlier than he did?

**RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5; SL 5.1**



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### ACTIVITIES

*Language Arts: Vocabulary, Creative Writing, Speaking and Listening*

- As they read *Summer on Earth*, your students will come across some words in Ralwil's native language. They should be able to understand the meaning of those words in context. Have them make an index card for each of the words they find in the book, writing them on one side of the card along with the sentence where the word appears. On the other side, they should write its definition. Then they should make up a dozen or so words in Ralwil's language. For these, they should write the word and a sentence demonstrating its meaning on the front of a card and its "dictionary definition" on the back. Call on students to share the sentences they've written for their invented words while the rest of the class guess the meaning.

#### **RL 5.4**

*Language Arts: Narrative Writing*

- Each student should imagine that he or she is from an alien planet and has just arrived on earth. Like Ralwil Turth, they take the form of a human being. Have students write a short story or create a six-panel comic depicting a moment when they, as aliens, encounter something on earth they've never seen before. How do they figure out what it is, how it works, and what it does.
- Collect the stories and comic pages into a classroom "Close Encounters" book and put it in your classroom library or publish it online so everyone can read each other's stories.

#### **W 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6**

*Language Arts: Reading – character development; Reading for Details*

- Each student should create a characters chart on which they select adjectives to describe several characters' personalities, traits, physical attributes, and relationships to each other. Collect the stories and comic pages into a classroom "Close Encounters" book and put it in your classroom library or publish it online so everyone can read each other's stories.



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### Characters in Summer on Earth

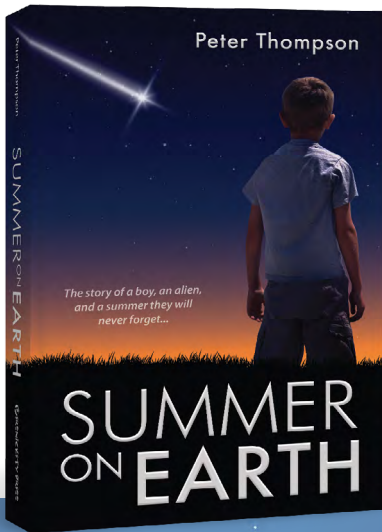
CHARACTERS	AGE	PERSONALITY TRAITS	RELATIONSHIPS	REMINDE ME OF:
Helen Johnson	Adult	Loving parent, wise, worrier	Grady's mom, Luanne's mom	My mom
Mr. McAfferty				
Grady				
Luanne				
Ralwil/Will				

**5.1, 5.2, 5.3**

#### *Language Arts: Speaking and Listening*

- Give your students a chance to go back to the novel and enjoy the comedic escapades of Deputy Schtinkle. He is introduced in chapter 18 [Page 145] where we learn: “Since he’d been a boy, he had always wanted to be a policeman. All his favorite movies and TV shows were about policemen and detectives... It was all so exciting on TV. But nothing exciting ever happened around here. Nothing.”
- The excitement begins when Grady’s mother pays off the money she owes to the bank and to various stores—in cash! Deputy Schtinkle jumps to conclusions and springs into action. And that action is often hilarious. Have students look for some of the scenes when the deputy is on his stake-outs and find the sections that they think are funniest. Then, students should prepare readings of those scenes as monologues or dialogues with a partner. Remind the class to be active listeners and to support their fellow students by laughing and applauding generously.

**RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.6, 5.7; SL 5.1, 5.2, 5.6**



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