

Bud, Not Buddy Study Guide

Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis

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Overview

Ten-year-old Bud Caldwell is on the lam.

Running from the barren, impersonal confines of a 1930s orphanage and a stupidly cruel and dysfunctional foster home, he is off on a search for his birth father.

All Bud has in the world he carries in a battered suitcase which he guards with his life. There is a picture of his mother, some stones she treasured, a blanket, and the only clue to his father, a blue flyer advertising Herman E. Calloway and the Dusky Devastators of the Depression, a jazz band working out of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Bud's journey is sometimes a matter of two steps forward and three steps back, but with the help of some new friends who pop up along the way, he finally arrives at Grand Calloway Station, home of the man he knows must be his father. What Bud finds there is not what he expected; in some ways, it is even better.

About the Author

Award-winning author Christopher Paul Curtis, the second of five children, was born to Herman and Leslie Curtis in the blue collar, automobile-manufacturing town of Flint, Michigan. After graduating from high school, Curtis was accepted at the University of Michigan-Flint, but chose to join his father on the assembly line at the local Fisher Body Plant. What was to be a summer job extended, by his own account, into thirteen long and unhappy years.

To relieve the monotony of the assembly line, Curtis and his partner arranged to give each other periodic, half-hour breaks from hanging fifty to eighty-pound doors on new Buicks. Curtis spent his time off journal writing. Many of these creative efforts resulted in critiques of co-workers, or letters to Kaysandra Sookram, his Trinidad-born wife-to-be, whom he met at a basketball game in Hamilton, Ontario. Kay, a nursing student, encouraged Curtis's creativity. After leaving Fisher, he enrolled in classes at the University of Michigan, working his way through in other equally unrewarding jobs.

Kay soon became Kaysandra Sookram Curtis and the couple had two children, Stephen and Cydney. In 1983, Kay, determined that her husband should have a chance to realize his dream of becoming a writer, offered to support the family for a year and give Curtis that essential element in a writer's life, time. Day after day, for a year, Curtis sat at a table in the children's room of his local public library writing longhand drafts of *The Watson's Go to Birmingham—1963*. In the evening Stephen typed the drafts into their home computer and served as a first reader. Kay's faith in her husband paid off. In 1995, *The Watson's* was published to critical acclaim and won the Coretta Scott King Award for AfricanAmerican Writers for Children. With this achievement, Curtis became a full-time writer.

In an interview with Dave Weich of Powells.com, Curtis says that though he did not deliberately set out to write for a young adult audience, he had a story to tell and it was best told through a child's eyes.

I really don't think about writing to kids. I know you're supposed to think of your audience, but when I wrote *The Watson's Go to Birmingham—1963*, I didn't really write it as a children's book. I thought of it as a story, and the narrator happened to be ten years old. It ended up as a children's book because I didn't know where to send it—most publishers won't accept unsolicited manuscripts—so I sent it to a literature contest at Delacourt Press just to have a professional editor read it. It didn't win the contest because the narrator, Kenny, was too young for the contest and 1963, the year the story takes place, is considered 'Historical Fiction,' but they published it anyway. When I wrote *Bud, Not Buddy* I just had a story to tell and wanted to tell it. I didn't think of it as a children's book per se. There are things in *Bud, Not Buddy* that kids won't get, but that doesn't detract from the story. Some things adults won't think are funny, kids will think are hilarious. I don't think that takes away from your enjoyment.



Nevertheless, Curtis believes that his stories fill a void in African-American literature for young adults. Walter Dean Myers is the only other African-American man writing for this age group, Curtis says, and he thinks this is one reason his stories are so well received. On the other hand, Curtis combines the pathos of family life, a sense of humor, convincing plot, historical settings and incidents, and an interpretation of the dark side of life that give each of his stories a special freshness all their own.

Bud, Not Buddy, Curtis's Newbery Prizewinning second book, placed him solidly in the ranks of writers for children. It was the first book by an African-American writer to win this prestigious award since Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, which took the prize in 1977.

Curtis prefers to work on multiple writing projects simultaneously, so that if one grows "stale," he has another project to turn to. When not writing in the library or playing basketball at the YMCA, Christopher Paul Curtis lives with his wife and daughter in Windsor, Ontario. His son, Stephen, resides in Virginia, where he serves in the U.S. Navy.



Plot Summary

Ten-year-old Bud Caldwell leads the life of an orphaned young boy living in the 1930s near Chicago, Illinois. The story begins when he is still six years old, lives at home with his mother, and struggles with not knowing his father. Bud's mom and he have an enjoyable life together, spending time doing things like reading from his favorite book, *20,000 Leaks Under the Sea*, also known as *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne. Finding his mother dead, after a few days of her being "sick" changes Bud's life forever, however, as he is sent to an orphanage, which he calls "The Home." It is here that he meets Bugs, his best friend.

Bud has a difficult time making sense of the sudden change of direction in his life, so he finds childish ways to get through these unexpected changes. One coping method he invents is developing "The Rules for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself," described throughout the novel. Bud devises these rules for living to give him an understanding of the "curveballs" of life that he is thrown. There are only eleven revealed in the book, yet he numbers the rules as high as # 328.

After Bud lives with the Amos family and things do not go well, he realizes he is better off alone on his life journey. He tries to be positive about the move into the Amos's home, despite his friend Bugs telling him this is not a good thing. He hopes for the best, that this family might be able to love him and care for him, yet he meets their only child, Todd, and realizes this will not happen. Todd is a bully who is resentful that an orphan has been allowed in the house to share his space and things. He tells Bud stories about snakes and huge bugs that are out in the Barn to create a fearful existence during Bud's stay. These stories become Bud's possible reality when he and Todd get into a fight and, as punishment, Mr. Amos sentences Bud to the Barn. Encountering no snakes or bugs, yet finding hornets (disguised in the nest, which he mistakes as a bat) and fish heads on the barn doors is fear inducing enough, however. These are all motivators for Bud to go at life on his own, as he sets off toward Grand Rapids, Michigan to find his father.

Walking the journey is nice at first, as Bud does silly things like stepping in and out of the State line, yet the benefits of being on his own prove short-lived. Being picked up by a random motorist was a saving grace for Bud Caldwell. "Lefty" Lewis is on his way to deliver some blood samples to the hospital when he notes Bud walking alongside the interstate at 2:30 in the morning. He doubts Bud's story of how he is returning to see his Dad in Grand Rapids, so he tricks him into taking the ride into town by offering his brown-bagged dinner to him. Being very hungry, Bud takes him up on the offer.

Despite some scary moments where Bud mistakes Mr. Lewis for a vampire and tries to escape (unsuccessfully) in the car without the driver, Bud does arrive in Grand Rapids. Bud has been determined to find his long-lost father, but he confronts many surprises. Bud arrives to a not-so-welcoming father figure, a brotherly band, and a motherly Miss Thomas. With the exception of a few helpful people along the way, such as friends from the Home and kind librarians, Bud remains quite the loner in his quest to both find purpose in his life that has been missing since the loss of his mother, and to find a true



family. He remains driven throughout the novel to recover this happiness he felt as part of a family, and although he does not seem to find the traditional family he is searching for, he finds what he needs and is able to give to them some unexpected gifts as well.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Bud, Not Buddy begins with a picture of how it feels to be in an orphanage and be picked for leaving the orphanage. As an outsider, one feels that Bud Caldwell, the main character, would be happy about becoming someone's adopted son instead of being stuck alone in the orphanage. Bud and Jerry, another young boy in the orphanage, are both selected to leave and go to their respective homes.

Bud is happy, though a bit reluctant, to find he is going to a home with boys. He tries to cheer up Jerry, who is a little worried about going to a home with girls. Bud reassures him that it will be easy going and fun, since the girls will want to play house and dress him up. Bud feels as if Jerry got the short end of the stick, because he has to go to a home with girls. Bud and Jerry are both concerned that this may be yet another temporary home, as Bud has been in a temporary home before. He fights the emotion of leaving the orphanage, as he's been one to cry when he's left.

The importance of being six is discussed, as both boys are six years old. Bud thinks that six is important because a child is no longer a cute little kid and people begin talking as adults and assuming the child understands. This leads to him talking about one of his fears: his teeth falling out. Bud dreams of losing his teeth, and then worries about it really happening. The loss of his teeth leads him to worry another appendage might be falling off, also.

Bud's most important possession appears to be his blue flyers, five in all, that detail a band called "Herman E. Calloway and the Dusky Devastators of the Depression." This band's lead singer, Herman, is the man that Bud believes to be his real father. He recalls the time his mother became so angered over one of the blue flyers, which tells of this band playing locally in Flint, Michigan. This leads to the incident where Bud "finds" his mother. She is lying on the floor, soon after she had been so angered by the blue flyer. It is assumed she is dead. This is the defining moment as he begins his journey alone.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Bud Caldwell has some obvious pitfalls that make his life difficult, yet makes the reader admire him for these pitfalls. The picture on the front of the novel illustrates Bud as a young African-American male, and through the first chapter, the reader finds he is a six-year-old orphan. The frankness of the story that Bud tells of his mother's death, gives the reader the forewarning that he is a strong character and one who has been on his own for a while.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Bud arrives at the family of the Amos's, and is happy to learn that one boy, Todd, is near his age--two years difference. This happiness is quickly dissipated, however, when he realizes that the family is keeping him there for the money they receive as a foster family. He has a difficult time getting along with the son, who excels at acting "good" in front of his parents, then when they walk away he becomes aggressive and cruel to Bud. The first evidence of Todd's dishonesty is when he fakes an asthma attack when he is caught fighting with Bud on the floor in their bedroom.

The mother, who is obviously under the "spell" of Todd's manipulative actions, gets angry with Bud for taking advantage of her and her family's good efforts to help him during this difficult time, the Depression. Todd's supposed asthma attack is the acceleration point for Ms. Amos, as she banishes Bud to the padlocked shed in the backyard. Todd gets in his final jab in this scheme by calling Bud a "bed wetter" as Bud is dragged out back by Mr. Amos, the father in the adoptive family.

This happening introduces the "list" that Bud gives as his "Rules and Things for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself." They are numbered, abbreviated, and referred to as the "Rules and Things." These rules provide a bit of humor relief in the midst of such a painful happening in this young boy's life.

As Bud is walking toward the door to his punishment out back in the shed, Todd refers to puddles of blood and freakish insects to build up Bud's fear as he heads to his supposed doom. This is the first of many challenges Bud faces at the Amos' home, as he refuses to allow Mr. Amos or any other family member notice his fear and anger. The chapter ends with the click of the padlock.

Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter begins to illustrate some depth to Bud's character, as it becomes difficult to remember he is so young. He models behavior of a well-seasoned adult as he takes the manipulations and aggressive actions of Todd Amos in stride. He describes the fighting as if it's expected and comes with the territory of being in his temporary home.

The suitcase Bud brought with him to the Amos' home. He realizes that his only important possession, the band flyers, might be lost, until he eyes the suitcase hidden underneath the dinner table. He is given his blanket and pillow to take with him.

When Bud is sentenced to the shed the reader becomes surprised at the level of mistreatment. The fear is that Todd's description of blood pools and disgusting insects might be accurate. The description of the fear Bud feels makes it very real to the reader, as if the reader is going into the padlocked shed with Bud.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

The description of the fish heads is elaborate and daunting, and allows the reader to feel he is stuck in the barn himself. Fear is visceral as Bud is stuck figuring out how he is going to escape this situation. The "vampire bat" he sees on the ceiling is revealed to be a hornet's nest when he bats at it and angers the nest's inhabitants. The description of Bud's constant stings and attacks from the hornets make the reader miserable for Bud, and make one hope the door could just become instantly ajar and he could be saved. Despite the stings, Bud insists on escaping and getting out from under the ruling of the Amos's.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The edgy teeth and stinging insects all seem to be symbolic of the painful dealings Bud has dealt with since visiting the Amos household. Trust issues are present from the time he walks in, as he worries whether his suitcase, his most prized possession, is safe, or if they will go through it and steal its contents. He is caught defending himself against their son, Todd, after having a pencil shoved in his nose "up to the R." He is rightfully beating up Todd, yet Todd manipulates his way out of getting in trouble by his parents, and Bud is left as the odd man out.

Bud is sentenced to the Barn, where he is stuck in the dark and dampness of his surroundings. The hornet's nest at the top is mistaken for the supposed vampire bat, which he discovers is not real after he smacks it and has to run for his life from the angered hornets. The fish heads on the barn's door scrape him as he tries to escape. This is enough to get Bud motivated to go out on his own. He figures being on his own cannot be as dangerous and frightening as trying to make a life work with the Amos's.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Bud's suitcase is still where he saw it last, as he makes a run through the house from the hornets in the barn. He sees the shotgun, which he imagines using to get "even" with the Amos's. He envisions violence as an answer to his frustrations, but quickly decides that simply moving the gun to a better location might be best. He worries that they might use it on him and tell the Home it was accidental, so he figures using it or leaving it out where they could use it would be a mistake.

Bud realizes why Todd is so mean. Todd must feel invaded since a strange boy (Bud) has moved in, been getting cared for and sheltered by his family, and less attention has been being paid to Todd. He understands that Todd must be mean and manipulative to defend himself.

As a parting gift, Bud plays the "pee in the bed" trick on Todd by placing his hand in warm water. When the trick neglects to produce immediate results, Bud opts simply to pour the water on Todd in his bed. The grin on Todd's sleepy face confirms this was the right thing to do, and Bud leaves satisfied.

Bud leaves the house with his suitcase in tow, and feels that being on his own cannot be any worse than trying to live with this family. He sets out toward the Library, where he can further investigation what to do next. He wonders if Miss Harris, his favorite librarian, will be there to help him.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Bud is nervous that being on his own will be difficult, yet he is so unhappy with the Amos family and feels like an outsider. His trip to the Barn is the last straw, as he is left to fend with the fish heads and hornets nests. Though he is sure he will find his suitcase ransacked and disheveled, he finds it intact and virtually untouched, though he can tell the Amos's did go through the suitcase.

His relief is replaced when he finds his flyers in the same place he put them in the suitcase, and he sets off on his own to find his father. The last two efforts to "get even" are met when he makes Todd wet his bed as the utmost revenge for calling him a bed wetter, and by moving the gun to another location so they may not use it on him if they catch him escaping.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Metal bars on the windows of the library makes Bud upset. These changes are an example of how things have changed for Bud since he entered the orphanage. He realizes that the library is not the same place it was when he used to attend with his mother years ago.

Bud realizes the Amos's must have rummaged through his suitcase. The old knots are not tied the way he had left them and things were tossed around inside the case. Bud has very few things that are needed to maintain their sameness, but his suitcase staying kept as he has tied it and organized it is important to him. He reflects back on how the conversations with his Momma were always the same. Bud looks at the picture of Momma and notes her facial expression. The only picture he has is one when she was young and frowning.

The story behind why Bud maintains he is never to be called Buddy is divulged. Bud remembers his mother explaining why he was named Bud versus Buddy. Momma wanted him to be called "Bud" because a bud is an un-bloomed flower with promise. Momma sees potential in Bud and hopes he will grow to be a successful man, so calling him Bud is important to her.

Chapter 5 Analysis

This is one of the first times the reader hears about Bud's Momma and her belief that he will someday be someone important. One realizes how and why Bud has an inner confidence to succeed even though he does not have an adult helping him do so. The reader finally realizes the importance of what is inside of his suitcase and why the objects are so important and cannot get stolen or misplaced. They seem to be symbols of the few things in life Bud can control and not have change. Bud holds on to these few items because they are the last things that he and his mother shared. They are his only means of staying connected to what was once his family.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

In his newfound independence, he wakes too late to make it to breakfast at a local shelter but a family saves him by pretending he is their son "Clarence." Bud is set to be starving for another meal, yet this family is smart enough to pretend he is their son, which fools the shelter workers into allowing him to stay in the feeding line. When Bud tries to be thankful for the huge favor bestowed on him, he is pushed to keep quiet. He realizes they know he is thankful for the deed and continues to play along with the "family" that is helping him get food.

The biggest favor his newly adoptive family gives him is a small one, but one he realizes is most important. The "Momma" in the family shares brown sugar with him for his oatmeal. He senses the frustration of the family members as he is treated with the same respect they get; yet he is quietly thankful for small favors.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Bud has a quick taste of having a family when another homeless family allows him to be a part of their family long enough to be able to be fed at the shelter. Without their help, he would have been forced to be hungry for at least another mealtime, yet they were quite aware and quickly claimed him as their adopted son. The further favor of giving him brown sugar in his oatmeal is an added surprise, but one he has trouble being thankful for since the "family" does not allow him to say thank you.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The library and its smells gives Bud a taste of home again, as he had the night before at the shelter. He realizes the sameness of the library allows him to find information easily, and that the "page powder," or book page dust that flies up when fluttering the pages, seems to have imaginative powers for him that help him feel relaxed and restful. The last component of his home away from home is the hope of seeing Ms. Hill, his favorite librarian. He is disturbed to hear that, through another kind librarian, she has left the library, married, and moved to Chicago with her new husband.

When he feels the library door closing, Bud reflects on one of his Momma's sayings. Momma always said, "As one door closes, another one opens." He feels hopeful that something good is coming his way, even though he is disappointed he cannot see his favorite librarian.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Knowing Ms. Hill has moved is symbolic to how things continue to change for Bud. He continues to try to take change in stride, but when things are constantly taken from his world, he finds it harder not to be affected. The memory of Momma's saying is important. He is reassuring himself that things will change for him soon, as he is dealing with a lot of frustration with leaving the orphanage, having bad luck with his adopted family, and not finding his friend at the library. Speaking with the new librarian and having her kindness of giving him the book to borrow, lending him information help, and giving up her sack lunch gives him hope he will have a change of luck soon.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Bud is surprised when his friend from the orphanage, Bugs, sneaks up on him and finds him. They are able to play a bit of catch up and Bud tells of what has been going on with him since he left. He gets to recount the fight with Todd Amos, as it has preceded him at the Home and Bugs has already heard what a fight it was.

The boys "slob-promised" to be brothers as they planned to jump trains the next morning so they may be on their way to Chicago. They run across a "cardboard jungle," which is a name for a homeless gathering of people who eat and sleep together to share the few resources that they have. He is happy to have talked with Bugs again, and runs across a cute girl in all the chaos.

Deza Malone speaks with him and becomes the first girl he kisses, while talking about his mom, his running, and doing the dishes. She has a dimple that he cannot ignore, as he realizes she is a beautiful young thing. He hopes to talk with her more the next morning as he falls to sleep, readying for his next morning's journey aboard the trains.

Bud double checks all his "stuff" from his suitcase is still there the next morning, making him almost too late to catch his train. Area residents run around and waken any stragglers so they will make the train, but as the boys turn the corner, they find the cops are around the block. The cops have caused quite a crowd as Bud and Bugs, as well as others from getting on the train, headed for Chicago. The group tries to get on the train but it is too large, causing cops to give up and allow several people to sneak on the train without paying.

Bugs gets on the train but Bud cannot run fast enough to catch the train and he worries the suitcase and Bugs are on their way to Chicago without him. Once Bugs realizes Bud has truly missed the train, he throws down his suitcase out the train. Bud spends a moment or two feeling bad for not getting to follow his "brother" in spit, but shrugs it off.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Bugs return to Bud gives him the revitalizing push he needs to get going on his journey. The excitement of going on this journey with Bugs help makes it seem less scary if he thinks of going with his "slob brother." The cops' presence is daunting to Bud, as he is reminded he is doing something not legal by jumping the train. Watching the train drag away with Bugs riding away is easier because Bud knows he is journeying his way.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Bud is saddened to not see his pretend-family in the food line, where he had once shared a brown sugar moment with them. He eats and moves on to the library, where the new librarian recognizes Bud and gives a special Civil War book to him. He is wondering where the other librarian is, since she was usually the one that helped him with anything he needed when he visited. The "new" librarian remembers he used to always ask Ms. Hill, the former librarian friend of his, for the special books with war pictures in them. He reasons that these were the only books with very interesting pictures. She realizes he has not eaten and gives him her lunch.

Bud has a flashback to Billy Burns, the bully from the Home. Billy used to argue that he was too good for the Home and that his mother would be shortly on her way to get him. Once the boys would tease him that his mother had forgotten him, he would retaliate against Bugs and Bud with name-calling and mockery of their parents. He would brag how he knew who his mother and father were, at least.

The clearest recollection was the moment that Billy held up his "buffalo" nickel. Billy would pretend that the buffalo on the nickel could speak, as he would tease the boys who did not know who their parents were. One of these buffalo nickel moments were all it took to motivate Bud to begin his journey to find his Dad.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Changes abound Bud, as he must deal with a new librarian, yet he quickly resolves this newness as she remembers what he liked best about Ms. Hill. When she brings out a Civil War book, and mistakes that he likes war books, he must explain why he always liked these books from Ms. Hill. He simply liked the pictures. One realizes he liked the mothering Ms. Hill provided more than the books she gave him.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Bud wasted time entertaining himself by jumping in and out of Flint by toddling back and forth over the borderline, before getting bored. He realized he had a long way to walk yet to make it to his destination of Grand Rapids. A man who appeared to be some sort of "soldier" stopped his car and whistled at him. Bud worried this man was here to cause harm.

This guy gave him a hard time for not being from around there and walking at 2:30 a.m. Once the offering of "red pop and bologna sandwich" is given Bud softens up and sees this man will help him. Bud becomes suspicious about his comment of needing "help with [a] problem," however. He is always suspicious of adults that say they need help, because he knows he is going to have to do work. With some doubt in mind of this man's intentions, Bud tells the man he ran away from Grand Rapids, sensing how the guy is doubtful of his story.

Bud gets alarmed once again as he reads how the box in the front seat says "Urgent: contains human blood." Bud has fears of monsters and vampires at ten-years-old and this seems to prove to him this man may be a vampire. Without much thought, Bud climbs in the car, locks it, and puts it in drive to escape the vampire.

Seeing that he cannot figure out how to drive the car without help, and realizing he may have overreacted when he sees the man's puzzled and horrified expression, he stops the car and gives in by rolling down the window only a crack to allow the man to talk to him. Once convinced he is not a vampire, but a messenger delivering the blood supply to a local hospital, he scoots back to his passenger side and proceeds to fall asleep as the man continues toward the hospital.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Bud's regular distrust of adults is common, considering his bad luck lately with his foster family locking him up in the backyard barn. Bud is lucky, however, that the adults that do reach out to him are trustworthy people with the best of intentions. His safety is in question as he allows a total stranger to pick him up off the streets to take him to his destination. He doubts his choice and safety, as well, but after trying to drive away with the car unsuccessfully, he realizes that maybe he has little choice but to trust this man to take him where he needs to go. He finds that his mistrust, at least in this case, was unfounded and that the worries were harmless, as this man is simply en route to delivering the blood to the local hospital.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Bud realizes he is taking a big risk on accepting this ride from the stranger and feels that if he questions the driver about vampire possibilities he will feel confident. The box in the front seat has not made him feel good about allowing this man to help, but he realizes he has no choice. The ride to Grand Rapids is full of questions. Lefty asks about Bud's mother being worried about his running away. Bud explains she is dead and that he lives with Dad in Grand Rapids. The only draw back to his truthfulness is that Lefty knows WHO his Dad is.

This man introduces himself as "Lefty" Lewis. He tries to lighten the mood by complaining of backwash when he must share the red pop with Bud, yet Bud is concerned about what lies ahead. He decides the best way to deal with the situation is to pretend he is sleeping. When they arrive back at the house, Lefty's family talk about his dad, Mr. Calloway. Mr. Lewis banters playfully back and forth with his children, but the daughter gets irritated at her Dad, "Lefty", for mocking Bud as he sleeps. Lefty refers to Bud as his "peanut head" friend.

When he awakes, Kim and Scott are introduced as the grandkids. The two kids are quite forward and begin immediately asking questions of Bud. The two kids ask about Bud's mom's death and talk incessantly, which makes Bud nervous. He does his best to answer questions but is hesitant to give over much information.

Chapter 11 Analysis

This event is a foreshadowing of the family that Bud will have once he arrives in Grand Rapids to meet his "father." Bud has his first taste of being mothered again, when he awakes half-dressed under the covers. He realizes that he was seen partially dressed and it makes him nervous, yet he is grateful to have been taken care of with folded clothes and pajamas to wear.

The mocking episode is one often done by a father figure, so the teasing of the "peanut head" that Mr. Lewis daughter tries to defend him from is quite family-related. Bud oddly is not bothered by it, especially when he sees Mrs. Sleet defending him against her father, Mr. Lewis. The kids are a bit nosey for his nature, but he is used to this type of behavior from living at the Home.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Bud realizes the blood from the car ride was delivered safely, and that Lefty sent a telegram to "Dad" about his safety. Bud must have a telegram explained and then his worry begins to set in as he worries how Mr. Calloway must be reacting to receiving a notice of his runaway son. Mr. Calloway was not even aware of having a son to begin with, yet the telegram will take care of that situation. The stress over this grows as a policeman pulls them over on way out of Flint, Michigan.

The cop discusses the concern over labor organizer problems and lets him them go on to Grand Rapids. This seems to be an unrelated concern until Lefty gives him a box to hold while the cop talks to them. Bud is fearful of "box" that he must hold. Lefty explains how there is a need for a union so that workers can be treated fairly and the flyer that was hidden in the box Bud was holding for him explains a meeting about this union. This is confusing to Bud, yet he is glad the box did not hold something more concerning and he shrugs off the incident.

Bud and Lefty arrive at the Cabin, where Mr. Calloway is practicing with his band. Although Lefty wants to go in and make sure he arrives safely, Bud convinces Lefty he will go in and see Dad and tell him to call Lefty. Bud wants some time to make the transition into talking to his supposed father without Lefty present in case he is wrong about Mr. Calloway, is not received warmly as his son, or if there are other complications.

Upon entering the practice area, Bud notes that guys are in there talking about band details. The band boys look at him and ask if a Miss Thomas has sent him. He tells them he is there to meet his Dad, and they realize with an understood nod why this boy is here.

Chapter 12 Analysis

The box in this chapter seems symbolic of all that is being kept hidden in this car. The box of blood being delivered, which remains somewhat mysterious until the end of the ride, and the box Mr. Lewis has Bud hold while the policeman visits. The tiny box of Union flyers is also kept secretive until the policeman has driven off in his car. Mr. Lewis tries to explain, but it is hard for Bud to understand the importance of having a union when he has not had to work at a job yet!



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Band members are in shock when they talk to Bud and realize he thinks Mr. Calloway is his father. Realizing there is something missing from this story and knowing they need some time to figure out what is going on, they promise to feed Bud at the Sweet Pea Restaurant. This restaurant is their favorite eatery, as they realize he is in need of a good meal, and in return he has to promise to tell the truth about why he is there at the Cabin.

The band introduces themselves: Jimmy Wesley (horns), Doug "Thug" Tennant (drummer), Steady Eddie (sax), Chug Cross (trombone), and Roy Breed (piano). The members begin teasing him about Herman being his Dad. Herman reveals himself to not have much of a sense of humor. He does not find this teasing humorous.

Bud is already realizing this meeting of his Dad is not what he expected it to be and he lets it slip out about how he thinks his "father" happens to be the grumpiest guy out of the whole group. The audibly loud sigh is felt as the band is shocked Bud would have the guts to say such a thing, having just met them minutes earlier. Knowing the truth to this observation, the band lets his comment lie.

Steady Eddie becomes one of Bud's favorite band members because of how much he stands up for Bud's feelings, whereas Bud's growing admiration for Miss Thomas, the lovely assumed girlfriend of Mr. Calloway's keeps him pining for her admiration. The band members sense that there is something more to this Bud Caldwell but they are unsure what it might be as of yet. The idea that Bud is Mr. Calloway's son is not fitting their mold, yet the reader senses there is some connection between these two characters.

Chapter 13 Analysis

The novel takes a turn in this chapter as Bud's newest evolution of what his family is develops here. Meeting the band for the first time, Bud realizes things are taking a turn for the better, and as he opens the door to the cabin, he feels another opportunity burgeoning to develop, as his mother always told him. When one door closes, in this case leaving Mr. Lewis and the orphanage behind, another door always opens, the cabin door to his new "family" of the band, Miss Thomas, and Mr. Calloway.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Bud gets to go eat with the Band, known at the Sweet Pea Restaurant as "NBC", or Nobody But Calloway. He and the band eat at the restaurant so frequently that the reservation at the table simply says NBC. The band name changes often, so it became simpler to place the sign as NBC instead of the newest band name, according to the band member's explanation.

Bud is enamored with Miss Thomas, the companion of his "Dad," and "vocal stylist", or singer of the band. Miss Thomas tries to uncover the reasoning that Bud feels that Mr. Calloway is his father. Band members and Miss Thomas are doubtful that this could be true, yet Bud struggles to explain to Miss Thomas. When the food's arrival interrupts their discussion, Bud finds himself relieved and eats to his heart's content.

Bud is ecstatic to find that he will be staying for more than one night with the group, yet wonders how he will explain to Mr. Calloway and the band about his fatherhood concerns. He is worried that they doubt his story and those they feel he is making up the story.

Bud has fun with his new family of the band. He starts to see their personalities appear, as Mr. Jimmy is tells of their country traveling, and keeps even the neighboring eaters at the restaurant adding their parts to the stories he tells. He is being taught saxophone tips by Steady Eddie, who is determined he might make a great player, as he gets older. He finds himself daydreaming of what life would be like if he was able to be here permanently.

This daydream becomes too real as he is overcome by emotion and "the faucet" turns on. Bud begins to cry uncontrollably and covers his face with the checkered napkin on the table. He hopes to remain unnoticed, as he recalls Momma's advice that one only gets one chance to make a good impression and he feels it slipping away as he cries.

He feels some relief as he curls up to cry and finds himself being lifted onto Miss Thomas' lap and being rocked. She quietly comforts him by telling him it is all going to be okay and he finds himself allowing the crying to continue through his slow relaxation. He finds the crying slowing down as he is oddly comforted by his inner voice, which tells him he has found his home.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Bud realizes in this chapter that he is glad he ventured out on his own to Grand Rapids. His hope to find his father has presently taken a backseat as he begins to get to know the band members better. He sees some of their personalities and begins to find what he likes and dislikes about the group. Steady Eddie is allowing him to feel a part of the

group with his sax lessons, while Miss Thomas has mothered him from his first appearance at the Club.

The dinner that Bud gets during this chapter is something that he is thankful for and overwhelmed by at the same time, enough so that he begins uncontrollably crying at the end of the chapter. He finds the comfort in Miss Thomas, who lifts him up like a baby and rocks him to relax while whispering in his ear. He realizes that, though he is so visibly upset, he has finally found the home he has been journeying to find.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Bud gets his first bedroom since living with his mother. Miss Thomas guides him into his room, complete with a bed with "two sheets" and closets that could house monsters galore. Bud worries about the possibilities of monsters lurking in the closets, but realizing after asking if the closets lock that he is lacking in his good impression towards Miss Thomas. Mr. Calloway explains under his breath to Bud how he is on to him and to watch his move. He realizes he has a lot of ground to cover with Mr. Calloway to earn his trust. He falls asleep to the sound of arguing of Miss Thomas and Mr. Calloway, without even turning down the sheets first.

Bud awakes late the next morning, half-dressed and under the sheets, which makes him nervous that Miss Thomas has seen more of him than he is comfortable with, yet he realizes how well he slept. He loved sleeping in his bed, but is still curious how the girl that used to have the room is described as "gone." He realizes this is a euphemism that adults use to describe someone that has died, and he spends little concern over how that happened because he is more overwhelmed over having his own room.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Bud enjoys his new room, yet senses how he is not a favorite to Mr. Calloway, his supposed father. Miss Thomas still is taking up for him and defending his position as an orphan. She continues to be a mother figure to Bud, as he gets accustomed to being a part of the band, and gets to know all the other band members.

The question behind the girl that used to live in the room he is staying in bothers Bud for a short while, but he is so excited to be a part of a new "family" that he allows it to bug him for only a small time. He is really enjoying the acceptance felt by all other band members and Miss Thomas, but feels he has to work on being liked by Mr. Calloway. He is still confused why Herman is still so "cold" to him when all others have accepted him as part of the crew.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Bud awakes from his first night of sleep well rested and partially dressed. When Bud enters the room, he realizes Miss Thomas and the guys have been talking about him. He over hears Miss Thomas defending his orphanage status, but gives some time lapse and re-enters once they have stopped talking. He can sense the thickness in the air between Miss Thomas and Mr. Calloway.

Steady Eddie asks Bud about the importance of his suitcase. He requests that in order to keep up the classy appearance of the band, would Bud mind transferring the things from his old suitcase into the newer case? Eddie shows Bud an old sax case from a stolen sax that he never was able to recover. Bud is tickled to accept such a gift, as well as the recorder that Eddie offers him to learn his hopeful musical skills on.

Last revelation that really opens Bud up to his newfound family is the offering to re-name him. Miss Thomas takes her cue to leave the boys to their moment, and the band offers Bud his new name. All the band members have a special nickname, so Bud's knack for oversleeping leads the gang to dub him "Sleepy LaBone."

Chapter 16 Analysis

Bud begins to see importance of his things in a new light, as he allows his old, raggedy suitcase to be replaced by the almost-new saxophone case that Eddie had from a previously stolen instrument. He realizes that it is the insides of his case that are so important, not the case that is carried in, which becomes the picture of what Bud is learning in life. He realizes that what's on the inside of a person is so much more important than what is on the outside. He becomes patient with Mr. Calloway in this same respect, realizing that he needs the time to come around.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Bud begins to take his responsibility with the band as he mops the floors, while imagining being a part of *20,000 Leaks Under Sea* book. This is the book that Bud's mother, Angela, regularly read to Bud when he was small. Bud remembers the story differently, as well as daydreams about being a part of the story.

This is Bud's first real encounter in the band's crew, so he is mystified by the music, especially Thug's drums. One can sense Bud's growing admiration for the music and the music bug has bit, as the reader can tell he wants to be part of the band. He has never been this close to live music and respects the music so much he cannot find words to speak when Miss Thomas and the band are thankful for his cleaning and brag on him. He is so thrilled at hearing the music that he doesn't respond.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Bud begins to find his comfort level again with this group, as he is able to work to earn his keep through the cleaning. Bud is excited to be safe, where he is fed and respected. The band has caught on to Bud's possible talent, but Mr. Calloway is not convinced yet, so there still is a need for Bud to prove his place with the band. The little tasks of cleaning for the band and being respectful to all the adults is key in winning over the harshest critic of them all---Mr. Calloway.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Band guys tease that Dirty Deed is only white guy in band. Band members explain that it is necessary to have a white guy in the band, in the case of being involved with audiences that are sensitive to working with an African-American band. The explanation given in the story has historical significance. Many times successful African-Americans were forced to partner with Caucasian partners so they could work behind the scenes to earn a living, yet the white on-the-outside partner would keep others from questioning the business or endeavor on racial bounds, and their operations would be less likely to deal with racial problems, such as robberies, heckling, or boycotting the store because of disagreement on racial principles.

The Band tells Bud has to ride back with Herman from the music gig and he frets about dealing with Mr. Calloway's grumpiness. The ill temperament makes it difficult for Bud to talk with him, but he notices how Mr. C picks up a rock and puts it in his pocket. He then notices how the glove compartment is full of rocks with writing on them. Bud questions Mr. C where these rocks came from, as he tells him how he has some of the same rocks. Herman has doubted this boy from the beginning, so he gets angry at Bud and claims he has stolen the rocks.

He proves to Mr. Calloway that he is being honest about the rocks after showing his mom's name is Angela. This is the first moment that Herman can no longer deny he is indeed Bud's grandfather, though not his father as once claimed.

Chapter 18 Analysis

This chapter causes a major turn in the final storyline, because Mr. Calloway and Bud are forced in a small space together. Bud also does something in line with Mr. C's suspicions, where he seems to be the thief that Mr. C thinks he is. Hearing about the rocks seems so unbelievable that Mr. Calloway doubts Bud's intentions of simply being curious about the rocks. This seemingly harsh moment becomes so beautiful as the reader discovers along with Bud and Mr. Calloway that they are related as grandfather and grandson.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Bud recounts finding his mother dead four years ago and how she didn't suffer. He is concerned that Mr. Calloway and Miss Thomas both are clear that although she is dead, she went peacefully. It is not until this chapter that more detail is given as to how "Angela," Bud's mother, was ill for several days and finally died after at least six days of being ill. He goes to get his Mother's picture and finds Mr. Calloway crying in his room. Significant detail of the sounds of Mr. C's crying are given, which allows one to really "hear" Mr. C's pain. Bud tries to comfort Mr. Calloway in his first attempt to be his grandson. This is the first time they truly share something in common, but Mr. C is not ready for the closeness and shrugs off the touch.

Once back in the room with Miss Thomas, she tells Bud about Mr. Calloway's dreams for Angela to have become a teacher and have been the first person who would have been college-educated in the family. This was something that one realizes did not happen, but it is not given any more reason. Miss Thomas asks Bud if he was sad when he lost his mother and he answers matter-of-factly that he still hurts to this day, so he understands when Miss Thomas illustrates how much pain she and Mr. C are in, as they've just been told by him of her death.

Band guys come in with a new package---a new saxophone for Bud, who has been practicing non-stop on his recorder as they had asked of him. He claims he will learn the saxophone in only three weeks in his excitement, but they tease him because it's taken them a lifetime to get their talent.

Bud tacks up his mother's picture in her room "among the horses" where he feels she would be happy in his bedroom. This seems to be the final acceptance in Bud's circle of growth, since his mother's death. This is important, as well as when Bud realizes that although he has referred to the bedroom as the dead girl's bedroom, that he has been referring to his own mother's bedroom.

Bud begins practicing his saxophone and realizes the squeakiness of the instrument is not just an annoying noise, but the sound of one door closing and another door opening, as his mother always told him. This is one of the most profound moments and a rightful way to end the novel.

Chapter 19 Analysis

The hope for Angela to have been educated and become a teacher told by Miss Thomas, gives the idea that maybe Angela became pregnant with Bud and did not return for fear of angering her father. No explanation is given to clarify why Bud's mother and Mr. Calloway quit talking to each other, but it is understood that Mr. C's hardnosed approach to parenting, spoken of by Miss Thomas, was a contributing factor.



The realization that Bud was actually sleeping in his mother's bedroom, not the "dead girl's bedroom," is the real turning point in understanding the mystery behind who Bud's family is. The "aha" moment of the reader can almost be heard at this moment, and the rest of the story falls into place, as one understands who Bud's family is, why Mr. Calloway is the grandfather and not the father, and why it has been so difficult for them to accept him into the family.

Bud's acceptance of the musical lifestyle has made the transition into their family an easier one. His dedication to helping the band clean and maintaining his strict practice schedule has proven to the band members and indirectly to his grandfather, Mr. Calloway, that Bud is ready to be a part of their schedule and lives.



Characters

Bud Caldwell

Bud Caldwell is the ten-year-old African-American orphan and main character/narrator of the story. The entire novel is told from Bud's perspective, from his first years at home with his mother to his tenth year when he finds the family he had once lost. Bud becomes an orphan early on in his life, due to his mother's unexpected death from illness. Bud never knew his father and his mother had never told him much about him. This huge question in Bud's life becomes the drive for his life's journey, as he finds that the orphanage is not the permanent place for him. His first clue is when his short stay at a foster home, the Amos household, goes awry. Finding the only child of the family to be quite a bully forces Bud to defend himself, which causes him to be punished into solitary confinement in a backyard barn. The oddness of this experience motivates Bud to take on his life's direction himself and to run away.

Taking off on his journey first entails a long walk from the Amoses home to where he thinks his father is---Grand Rapids, Michigan. He takes his clues from the flyers his mother always kept when she was alive. She would take out these flyers and either get angry or begin to cry. He takes off walking, figuring from the librarian he has spoken with along the way at one of his stops, knowing it will take at least a couple days to walk, yet realizing he has nothing but time. He walks into the night, despite the darkness, and becomes more determined to get to meet his father. Luckily, a Good Samaritan, Lefty Lewis, stops to help him and move him along on his journey by giving him a ride into town.

The next leg of Bud's journey begins once he arrives in Grand Rapids, where his father is to be playing with his band. Though, Lefty Lewis insists on coming in to help him greet his father, as it is someone that Lefty is familiar with, Bud coerces him to stay out of the situation and allow him to meet his father on his own terms. Bud walks into the bar not knowing how his life will be affected once he crosses into the unknown.

Dusky Devastators of the Depression

Herman E. Calloway is the bandleader and rumored father of Bud Caldwell. This band name is on all the flyers that Bud has kept all the years since his mother first cried over the papers. The band name is changed a couple times in the story, and midpoint in the story it is addressed. The band is referred by the band's favorite eatery, The Sweet Pea, as NBC (Nobody But Calloway) most often since most people have trouble keeping up with its many changes. The drummer is often insecurely worrying aloud throughout the story about his job, and if someone has heard any rumors of his removal from the band.

The band is made up of the "vocal stylist" or singer, Miss Thomas, the horn player, Jimmy Wesley, the drummer, Doug "The Thug" Tennant, the sax player, Harrison Eddie



"Steady" Patrick, the trombone player, Chug "Doo-Doo Bug" Cross, and the pianist, Roy "Dirty Deed" Breed. Miss Thomas and Eddie seem to take the biggest liking to Bud upon his arrival, as they are often defending him to anyone that harasses Bud or to Mr. Calloway, who proves the hardest one to be won over by Bud's heart.

Herman begins their relationship as a hard-nosed, heartless old man that wants nothing to do with Bud, the apparent newest addition to the band. Herman makes it clear he does not trust Bud around his possessions and that he better keep his distance. The distance becomes not only physical but also emotional, as Bud realizes that he does not wish for Herman to be his father. He also thinks he is realizing why his mother often cried at the flyers, which would remind her of this angry character.

Herman proves he is more than an old grumpy man, however, once the true connection between Bud and him is revealed. Once Herman realizes that Bud is actually his grandson, whom he never realized existed, he is overwhelmed by both the grief of never knowing him and by the realization that his daughter is no longer alive.

Momma

Bud Caldwell's mother's real name is Angela Caldwell. Bud recalls her throughout the story, yet because it is through his young boy perspective, there is little detail known about her. You realize that she dies from a mystery illness that she suffered actively for only a few days, until Bud found her dead. Bud's strongest recollection was when he found flyers about Herman E. Calloway that causes her to cry frequently.

Bud's memories of his mother are very loving and innocent. He lost her at such a young age, that he remembers little negative of her. He keeps things to remember her by in his suitcase, such as the rocks with dates on them and the flyers of the Dusky Devastators. Other than these physical reminders, he draws on memories of how she used to read to him as a child. He remembers how calming it made him feel and how easy it was to fall asleep. He often goes into daydreaming instances when he remembers her reading because he imagines becoming a part of the story.

More information about Angela is revealed toward the end of the novel, when her father and Bud's grandfather, Mr. Calloway, reveals the true meaning of the rocks. His emotional reaction touches Bud, and he realizes the room he has been staying in that he formerly thought was the "dead girl's room," is indeed his mother's room. This feeling of intimacy allows him to let go of some of the attachment he had to his mother, and be able to put to rest some of the memory pieces. He remembers that his mother is always going to be in his heart, as Deza Malone at Hooverville told him, and he has little need for physical memories.

Deza Malone

Deza Malone meets Bud at the Hooverville site, where he and she are staying the evening before trying to catch the train the next day. Deza is understood to be the



same age as Bud, and although they seem to have a sarcastic start out, Deza and Bud share a first kiss moment before they go to bed for the evening. This kiss leads Bud to wonder about Deza the next morning, but he only realizes he has missed her early departure the next morning. He must hold on to her words of advice that physical memories are no longer necessary once they are in your heart, so he must place her in his heart, with his mother's memories and move on to the next place.

Miss Thomas

Miss Thomas is a young black woman, who is the voice of the Dusky Devastator's band, is a strong mother figure for Bud Caldwell at his darkest moment in his search for his family. Bud no longer has his mother, and Miss Thomas immediately comforts him and takes him under her wing when Mr. Calloway gets grumpy and intolerant of him. She seems to keep the peace between the grumpy angry Mr. Calloway and the less stubborn but similarly outspoken other members of the band. When Miss Thomas is no longer present to keep this peace, the men get irritable and less tolerant of Bud, which makes him question his motives for being there in the first place. His wishes to find his father are treated seriously by Miss Thomas, and the need for being understood is granted by her character.

Herman E. Calloway

Herman E. Calloway is the bandleader and rumored father of Bud Caldwell. This band name is on all the flyers that Bud has kept all the years since his mother first cried over the papers. The band name is changed a couple times in the story, and midpoint in the story it is addressed. The band is referred by the band's favorite eatery, The Sweet Pea, as NBC (Nobody But Calloway) most often since most people have trouble keeping up with its many changes. The drummer is often insecurely worrying aloud throughout the story about his job, and if someone has heard any rumors of his removal from the band.

Lefty Lewis

Lefty Lewis is a token Good Samaritan on his way from work one evening when he sees Bud Caldwell walking alone along the highway. He realizes that he must stop to help find out whatever is making this boy be on his own at 2 a.m. and then help him back home. After realizing that Bud is alone and after unraveling his runaway story to realize he has nowhere to go but to find his "father," Mr. Calloway of Dusky Devastator fame, he takes the young boy home to his house. He gets Bud in comfortable sleepwear without him waking, and after a good night's sleep feeds him a hearty breakfast, complete with family arguing and bantering.

Lefty is instrumental in getting Bud to meet the goal of his journey--to meet the person he thinks is his father. After taking Bud to town, Lefty questions Bud's knowledge of his father. This is when the story unravels and Lefty realizes that Bud has never met his father and this story may not even be true. Lefty fades out of the picture, however, once



he drops off Bud at the restaurant/bar where Mr. Calloway and his band are practicing. Once Bud walks through the door to the restaurant, Bud finds refuge there and does not return to the road.

Steady Eddie

Harrison Eddie "Steady" Patrick is the trombone player of the Dusky Devastators. He proves to be Bud's biggest ally other than Miss Thomas. He sees the possibility that Bud holds to uplift the grump that has taken hold of Mr. Calloway, the bandleader and supposed father figure that Bud has been searching. Steady Eddie keeps Bud trying to keep up his spirit

Billy Burns

Billy Burns is the bully at the Home, or the name of the orphanage Bud lives at the beginning of the story's unfolding. Billy pins down Bud and threatens him, yet this is the last straw for Bud as he decides it is time to break out and try things on his own. He is tired of being bullied by other boys in the Home, such as Billy, who think they are wiser and better than Bud.

Librarian

The librarian at the small town he reaches on the way out of Hooverville strikes a chord with Bud. He has always had a fondness for books and libraries have been a comforting shelter for him throughout his runaway existence. He travels to the library hoping to find his old friend that often shared sandwiches and comforting words, but only finds another young librarian in her place, who only can offer an atlas to get him back where he needs to go instead of the kind words he once had from the predecessor.



Objects/Places

"Rules and Things" List

This list details rules of honesty, distrust of adults, and other fear and trust issues. Bud uses these rules to help him protect himself against euphemisms adults use regarding death, as well as other big life changes. He feels the confidence and assurance to go forth and do what is necessary instead of fearing results of what might happen if he blindly listens to everything adults have told him throughout his young life. Bud uses these as tools to keep him focusing on his journey instead of feeling victim to his surroundings. One example of such a rule is #83, which states, "If a Adult Tells You Not to Worry, and You Weren't Worried Before, You Better Hurry Up and Start 'Cause You're Already Running Late."

Rocks

The rocks are pebbles saved from when Bud's mother was alive. Bud never questions why there is writing on each one, as it makes little sense to him at the time he gets them from her. Later in the story, once he meets Herman Calloway, he notices Mr. Calloway has some of the same type of rocks. He questions Mr. Calloway, who promptly becomes very defensive and angry. Mr. Calloway makes it clear that he does not trust Bud and that he better keep his distance.

The rocks play a big part in the final breaking through for Bud when Mr. Calloway has realized that his daughter, and Bud's mother, is dead. Upon trying to comfort Mr. Calloway in his moments of grief, he shows the rocks to Mr. Calloway. Mr. Calloway gets angry and assumes he has stolen them until Bud explains they are from his mother. The final link is made as Mr. Calloway explains that he used to collect these rocks during his days of touring with the band away from home, and he would always write on them a date of when he collected them and an abbreviation of where he got the rock in order to make sure his daughter could know where he was.

Flyers

The flyers were advertisements from when Bud's mother, Angela, was younger and her father, Mr. Calloway traveled with his band. The flyers were something that Bud's mother kept in her drawer and would periodically pull out to look at them. Once she died, Bud placed them in his suitcase to remind him of her and give him hints to finding the man he thought was his father. The advertisements for his recent shows proved that her father was in town and able to see her and he did not check in to find her so it would upset her when she saw the flyers. Bud did not understand this connection until the end of the novel, when he realizes that his mother was not crying because the flyers reminded her of her husband but her father.



Suitcase

The suitcase serves as a lockbox where Bud keeps anything of importance to him. He carries this beat up suitcase, laced together with a shoelace to keep it shut and secure. He will not be parted from this case, even at his worst moments, like when the Amos family punishes him by throwing him into the Barn, or when he first arrives in the band's practice room. He is finally convinced to rid of the case, when one of the band members reminds him that is more than likely the contents of the case that are important and not the case itself. This along with Deza Malone's comment from when he stayed in Hooverville, reminds Bud that it is not the physical things that keep his mother close to his heart but his emotional memories. He replaces his tattered suitcase with the sax case that Steady Eddie gives him. He puts all his rocks and flyers into it and feels a sense of relief when he is told it looks better. The suitcase is a symbol of how he must keep things important to him enclosed and safely secure or it may get taken. Once he is able to let go of the suitcase, he is actually letting go of some of that security and allowing himself to be vulnerable with his new "family."

The Barn

The barn is behind the foster family home of the Amoses, where Bud stays for a short while before going on his journey to find his dad. He is sentenced here as punishment after he and Todd, the only child of the Amos family, get in a violent argument. After being referred to as a bed wetter and being framed as someone trying to steal Todd's toys, Mr. Amos decides there is no other way of dealing with Bud who appears ungrateful for his new home. The denial of Todd's actions, which truly caused Bud to defend himself, leads to his banishment to the Barn.

The Barn is dark and has odd things that scare Bud. The doors have fish heads with sharp teeth. There seems to be bats on the ceiling, which when Bud tries to throw things to knock them down, he finds they are not bats but hornet nests. Upon escaping the hornets, Bud gets stung several times and gets cut by the fish heads on the door.

Once Bud is free from the Barn, he rescues his suitcase and thinks of using their gun. Once he realizes violence is not the answer he wants, since all he wants is his freedom, he moves into Todd's room. He pours water on Todd and leaves with his suitcase in tow, realizing he is truly free.

Hooperville

Hooperville is a term similar to Hooverville, which was a term used to describe any town of homeless and/or unemployed people, commonly found during the Depression of the 1930s. Bud stays the night at this place for the night during his journey to find his Dad and escape the Amos family. This family had left him to fend for himself in the Barn out in their backyard as punishment.



He meets Deza Malone here, and feels an immediate connection with her. They talk through the evening and he finds himself kissing her before they leave. He hopes to see her the next day, but she is already gone. The most important thing he gets from talking with her is not only his first kiss, but also the affirmation that it is okay to miss his mother but to know she will always be in his heart and no one can take that away. This affirmation gives more relief to Bud later on in the story when he begins to leave behind some of the physical things of his mother's that he had been carrying in his suitcase.

The Home

The Home is the name Bud calls his orphanage where he and Bugs live. The Home is the setting of the beginning of the story, before it flashes back to life before the orphanage, when Bud's mother is still alive. This is where Bud meets Bugs, his best friend, who the reader gets little information. Bugs and Bud both get informed at the same time that they have had a foster family chosen for them and that they will be moved there soon. When hearing this, Bud seems to get a small lift of hope, but that is quickly dashed by Bugs, who tells him this is probably just a temporary stop and they will be back at The Home before long.

Grand Rapids

Grand Rapids is the town in Michigan where Bud travels to, after being picked up by Lefty Lewis, a random Good Samaritan, early one morning from the side of the interstate. This town is where Herman E. Calloway, Bud's hoped father, lives and is working with his band. Lefty Lewis knows Mr. Calloway and takes it on as his personal endeavor to make sure this boy gets there safely. This gentleman "saves" Bud from walking to Grand Rapids by himself at 2:30 a.m. in the morning. He is on his way to deliver blood to hospital and sees him walking on side of road. When stopping to pick him up, he discovers Bud is a runaway and happens to know the man Bud claims as his father. He drops him off there and this is how Bud meets his "Dad," who is actually is grandfather.

Chicago, Illinois

Chicago is mentioned often in *Bud, Not Buddy* as the musical Mecca. Bugs and Bud originally speak it about early on when they are still living at the Home. They picture it as the place they both would be happy living. Bud sees it as where his father might be working as a musician. Originally Bud sets this as his sight for escaping from the orphanage, but settles for Grand Rapids because it is closer and he has a Good Samaritan, Lefty Lewis, to help him travel there.



Sweet Pea

Sweet Pea is the restaurant that Bud is taken to shortly after meeting the band at the log cabin practice building, where Lefty Lewis leaves him. This is the restaurant where Bud actually talks with the band members and he meets Miss Thomas, the beautiful "lady friend" of Mr. Calloway. She appears to be the band manager, as well as the biggest fan of Bud Caldwell when he randomly appears in Grand Rapids. She is described as the vocal artist, or singer, of the band. Bud is equally taken with Miss Thomas, as she is described as a beautiful lady that makes Bud nervous initially. Bud quickly realizes Miss Thomas is the one that will be his only hope of being able to stay and get to know Mr. Calloway. Miss Thomas appears to be a girlfriend of Mr. Calloway, but that information is never revealed directly to the reader.

Setting

In the United States, 1936 was one of the darkest years of the Great Depression. Desperate, homeless men and boys traveled the country on foot and by rail searching for work, any work that would keep body and soul together. Desperate women waited for their men to return, trying in any way possible to make a home for their children.

Despite these efforts to keep families together, orphanages were overflowing with abandoned and parentless children and foster homes were few and far between.

It was against this background that Curtis developed his story of a child's search for family in the midwest towns of Flint and Grand Rapids, Michigan. While many stories of the Depression are concerned with the Dust Bowl and the plight of farmers in the Plains States or migrant workers in California, Bud, Not Buddy provides the reader with a different perspective on life in that era with the trials of a ten-year-old orphan runaway as a focal point.

Curtis sets the scene immediately when he has the orphanage director explain the Depression to Bud and his friend, Jerry, advising them to be grateful for yet another foster home placement. Both boys are wise enough to expect an uncertain reception wherever they are sent. As Bud puts it "Here we go again." In this same chapter, Curtis implicitly reveals the story's location, Flint, Michigan, through references to Bud's precious blue flyer featuring the local, limited engagement of a popular jazz band.

References to the Depression are made throughout the story as Bud embarks on his family search. He worries about gangsters such as Pretty Boy Floyd, Al Capone, and Baby Face Nelson. He conjectures that he, himself, may be on J. Edgar Hoover's tenmost-wanted list for the FBI or even be Public Enemy Number One.

When Bud and his friend, Bugs, set out to find the town of "Hooperville," on the outskirts of Flint, they discover it is a "cardboard jungle," a "shantytown." Here, displaced men and boys and a few families wait to board the freight trains that they hope will take them west to find work.

Here, they encounter the Pinkerton Security Guards and Bud witnesses the senseless tragedies of destruction by fire and forced evacuation as the flimsy town goes up in flames.

Told through the eyes of the young protagonist, Bud, Not Buddy covers an amazing range of historical material. Bud, who knows little outside his first six years with his mother and life in the orphanage and foster homes for the last four, gets an education in economics, discrimination, sit-down strikes, telegrams, pullman porters, union organizers, and how to calculate distances on a map. Most importantly, he enters the wonderful world of a group of small time jazz musicians led by the irascible Herman E. Calloway, and learns what music can do for the soul.

All the characters are affected by the setting, some more than others, but none let us forget where we are or what time it is.

History and setting confront the reader in Bud's narrative, when he refers to popular figures such as the Louisville Slugger and popular toys such as a magic decoder ring and Little-Big Books. He uses expressions such as "the copper would plug me," "he would rub me out," and "it would have been curtains," all idioms from gangster movies of the thirties. We understand the effects of poverty by his physical condition, he is small and always hungry. We share his homelessness as he sleeps under a "Christmas Tree" by the library and goes to a mission for meals. Moreover, everyone he meets seems given to musings and advice about the hazards of living in 1936 in the state of Michigan or anywhere else in the United States. We cannot miss the setting and though the editorializing gets a little heavy handed at times and Bud is often an observer, he is a strong enough character to keep the essence of the story his own.



Social Sensitivity

Curtis makes only subtle references to race. Were it not for the dust cover, we would be well into the story before we recognized Bud's heritage. It is when Mrs. Amos reprimands him bitterly: "Boy—I am not the least bit surprised at your show of ingratitude. Lord knows I have been stung by my own people before—I do not have time to put up with the foolishness of those members of our race who do not want to be uplifted," that we are aware of color. Neither are we aware of Deza Malone's background until Bud notices a "dimple in her brown cheek" and even then it could be a suntan from living out of doors.

Lefty Lewis gives Bud advice about the possible dangers to a "young brown-skinned boy" alone on the Michigan roads at night.

Herman E. Calloway keeps a white man, Dirty Deed, on with the band because he is useful in arranging engagements that the Devastators could not otherwise obtain. People of color cannot own property in Michigan so Dirty Deed holds the rights to Grand Calloway Station. We assume he must be trustworthy.

Bud, himself seems innocently unconcerned about race. He neither condemns nor glorifies anyone, taking a human in their own right, good or bad. His imagination soars as he sees the Hooverville residents, in the firelight, all looking much the same. "They were all the colors you could think of, black, white, and brown, but the fire made everyone look like they were different shades of orange. There were dark orange folks sitting next to medium orange folks sitting next to light orange folks."

Still, Bud is concerned that one destitute and obviously ill white family in Hooverville does not come to the fire or share the stew.

They sit apart from the others. Deza Malone explains: "They been invited. . . when someone took them food and blankets, the man said 'Thank you very much, but we're white people. We ain't in need of a handout.'"

This exchange provides ample food for thought on the subject of ill-afforded pride.

Curtis treats men, women, and children equally well in his characterizations. They take on the roles they are given and play them with wit and charm, spite, confidence, sweetness, joy, and murderous intent. All reflect different aspects of the human condition regardless of age, gender, race, or life circumstances. They are authentic and we recognize them as people we know.

Homelessness is always an issue in society. Bud is a homeless child in the 1930s even as some children are homeless today.



He survives through wit, courage, determination, and the hand of providence. In doing so, he gives the reader a glimpse of foster homes and orphanages that, hopefully, are stereotypical of the Depression.

The Amos family is interested in him only for the money they are paid for his keep. The orphanage is overcrowded and impersonal to the extent that adults in charge do not know the children's names. This may be a somewhat true picture of orphanages, but there seems some bias here toward foster homes. Certainly, from Bud's standpoint, these places leave much to be desired. About all he knows of them is bumps and bruises and hornet stings, isolation, threats, and recrimination. Surely this image is not true of all people who take on the role of foster parents and could present a skewed interpretation for students.

Curtis also makes the case that the Depression was not all abject poverty, Hooverville's, gangsters, and dust storms. Some people held steady jobs. They lived well enough to afford cars, decent food, and good living accommodations. Miss Thomas' fingers sparkle with diamonds, Herman E. Calloway drives a touring car, the band can afford to eat in restaurants, and houses have indoor plumbing. Lefty Lewis and Mr. Sleet work for the railroad. For some families, life was safe, dependable, and good. Not many stories about this era in American history show the other side of the picture and Curtis gives the reader a more rounded perspective.

Literary Qualities

Curtis is a versatile writer, not one to develop a formula. The plot of his first novel, *The Watson's Go to Birmingham—1963*, is episodic in nature. Each chapter is a novella of the Watson family's doings that moves the story forward to its poignant and dramatic conclusion. In contrast, the plot for *Bud, Not Buddy* is linear in form with the young protagonist moving from one event to another with a developing goal in mind and eventual achievement of that goal. Both stories, however, are universal in their portrayal of family interactions, characters, and events.

Curtis is also a master of language.

Throughout the story delightful examples of onomatopoeia tickle the tongue and activate the funny bone as inanimate objects spring to life. Parked cars grumble, "wugga, wugga, wugga." High heels go "tap, tap, tappity." Idling trains murmur "shuh, shuh, shuh." Grown men cry "muh-huh, muhhuh," and saxophones, in the hands of the inexperienced, shriek out "ahwronk, roozahga, baloopo."

The author's skill with alliteration comes through in names given to the jazzbands: "The Dusky Devastators of the Depression" and "The Nubian Knights of the NRA." But his style is not always so clownish. Curtis has a way with description that lifts the spirit and stretches the mind. He allows Bud, the down-to-earth, street-smart kid, to express himself in lyrical prose on occasions that touch his child heart. When Bud realizes that Miss Thomas, with her ring studded hands, is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen, he treats us to this observation: When she talked, she moved her hands and fingers around and the lights from the ceiling and from the little candle on the table would bounce off all them diamonds and spark up in your eye and make you feel like you'd been hit with some kind of fairy dust, then you couldn't help but smile.

Curtis uses a metaphor of weather to show Bud's reaction to the Devastator's rehearsal. Until now he has not heard the band and in this first experience, he is immediately transported into a world of rain and thunder and Niagara Falls. Then Miss Thomas joins in and her song is like the sun emerging through clouds, lighting the world with its brilliance as she and Steady Eddie's magnificent saxophone speak to each other in a dialogue of exquisite notes.

The author's use of Depression era idioms and African-American dialect is careful and accurate, giving the reader a taste of the time and the characters. His band members, especially, speak a language that Bud has to decipher and he makes clear to the reader what he learns.

Perhaps the only credibility gap occurs in Bud's use of gangster slang from 1930s movies. From what we can tell, Bud is not a child who has ever attended a movie and no reference is made to his learning these expressions anywhere else.



As well, lectures from minor characters about current events sometimes interrupt the story line. Still, if the reader holds to the theme of learning, this "tell" rather than "show" becomes more acceptable. Certainly, these are small glitches in an otherwise thoroughly engaging story.



Themes

Family and Personal Relationships

Family and relationships are strong themes in this novel. Bud's mother is his closest ally at the beginning of the novel, yet by the time he has to live at the orphanage, his friend Bugs becomes the only family he has. The bully figure, Billy Burns, serves as a catalyst for Bud to find his family again after realizing that substitute families, such as the Amoses, will not be successful in helping him to be happy.

Bud often seems to befriend females easily, as they remind him of his mother. The librarian and Miss Thomas are some of the strongest allies Bud has in his development into a young man. He can be vulnerable with these ladies enough to share his hunger, his worries, and his emotions when necessary. They provide a constant mothering to him after his own mother is gone from the picture.

Herman C. Calloway, the grumpy figure in Bud's life that eventually grows into a true family figure, is the biggest challenge for Bud Caldwell. Bud realizes quickly that finding him in Grand Rapids is not the only solution to figuring out who his father is. He believes this man is his father, but through the band members and Miss Thomas he slowly sees this is not what he has found. The initial angry exterior Herman exudes is strong, almost as if he is trying to keep Bud from being important to him. He threatens Bud to not steal and keep his distance at the beginning of his arrival, yet soon the relation to him is undeniable. The moment the rocks are displayed Herman must quit denying his relation to Bud, and begin accepting the finality of his daughter's death. Though he feels the door closing with the grief he feels with the loss of his daughter and Bud's mother, he begins to loosen up his defensiveness against Bud as the novel closes. Between Miss Harris's urgings and Bud's relentless dedication to music and helping the band, Herman is left with no choice but to befriend Bud, and Bud comes full circle to having the family he had been without since the death of his mother.

Virtue

The "Rules for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself" appear to serve as a guide for Bud Caldwell to live his life. Bud often has no real adult to help him make decisions as he grows up, so these rules he makes for himself seem to serve as that purpose. The Rules regularly serve as a way for Bud to justify why adults do or say what they do, and they make sense of life's more puzzling moments for him by allowing him to use a rule to explain the behavior.

Survival becomes the virtue that Bud hunts for and finds in the hapless people he encounters on his journey. Surviving the Home is a virtue that all fellow orphans at the house respect and value. When this is no longer feasible with the presence of the bullies, Bud must move on and find his own survival, minus the support of the Home



personnel. Finding that he can survive without being in presence of adults is the sad value that Bud earns and realizes while trying to find his family and still maintaining direction in his life. He struggles to keep hope in a world where he cannot find his father, or anyone who seems to place him above all things as he felt his mother once tried.

Hope comes in the form of the Good Samaritan character, from Leftie Lewis to the Hooperville helpers and on to his own "family" he finds in the band members. He constantly doubts his hope in each person but they seem to have enough of his stubborn quality to keep proving to Bud that they are there to help him and keep him on the journey to finding family and well being.

Personal Identity

Bud, Not Buddy serves as a rite of passage novel as it guides the reader through the pain Bud Caldwell experiences from becoming an orphan, through being alone in the orphanage, being unwanted as a foster child, and finally as a voyageur on the search for his father in Grand Rapids. Bud being an orphan is symbolic of how his character fits into the story. Bud is alone in life without his mother, is a young black male in the Depression, and is alone in his venture to find his identity.

Bud never seems to succumb to being a victim of his lack of adult guidance, but prospers in it. He is a gentleman as he interacts with other adults, as if he has a second sense about how the adult expects him to act. He is polite and kind, and patient when dealing with others.

Bud's racial identity as an African American isolates him from others, as the Depression has not brought the recognition of equal rights for blacks and whites. Bud is left to fend for himself as a young black man, and this becomes apparent when he has to be in line for food at the shelter, or when only Leftie Lewis is willing to pick him up on the side of the road late the night he begins his journey to finding his father.

Bud is the eternal underdog, but he is able to survive despite his orphan status, his African American descent, and his lack of information about his family background. He is a remarkable young man who finds his guidance within himself and uses his inner strength to aid him in finding his family. The journey is a rite of passage that helps Bud find out who he is, but also enables him to be strong enough to handle the information about his family background that he had not been capable of understanding before when his mother was alive.



Themes/Characters

The major theme of *Bud, Not Buddy*, centers on the child's search for family. Motherless Bud has knocked around the Flint orphanage and a succession of foster homes long enough to know what he wants and what he does not. He would rather be on the lam.

Besides, Bud remembers his mother; how she read to him at night, how they visited the library together, the important messages she gave him about his name and doors that open and close. They were a family and he treasures that "rememory."

So, once he "busts out" of wrongful imprisonment in the Amos's garage, his latest foster home, Bud is on his own and after a few false starts, he heads on foot for Grand Rapids, looking for the man he is certain must be his father.

Curtis adeptly uses the archetype of the hero's journey to play out the plot. It is a quest for paradise lost, his life with his mother, and he finds enough helpers and obstacles along the way to challenge and satisfy any hero.

Bud already knows about dysfunctional families, but he discovers there are some of a different mold as he treks across the state.

There is the "pretend" family at the mission who adopt him for breakfast, and the Hooverville family who share their meal and whose precocious daughter, Deza Malone, gives him his first kiss. There is the family of Lefty Lewis who provide him with a good night's sleep, new clothes, and a magnificent breakfast. There is Bugs, his blood brother, who reluctantly leaves him behind in the Hooverville stampede for the train. By the time he gets to Grand Rapids, Bud knows the kind of family he wants, but what he finds is far different from what he expected.

Occasionally, Bud's stream of consciousness narrative demands careful reading.

One moment we are trapped with Bud in the Amos family shed attempting by every means possible to escape. The next, we are plummeted backward in time to the orphanage where we are witness to the terrifying events that gave Bud's friend, Bugs, his name. Then, just as quickly, we are back in the shed with Bud and his escape plans.

The style is not one for a passive reader; it requires our constant attention.

Certain recurring motifs keep the story focused. Bud thinks about how ideas are like seeds, small to begin with, but growing into maple trees when you are not looking.

Doors open and close for Bud, literally and figuratively. Some doors hold good things behind them, others hide monsters and sometimes it is hard to tell just what may be lying in wait. Then, there is the matter of the blanket that not many kids would think to take with them, he reasons, but which gives Bud peace and security in the lonely nights.

Then there is hunger; Bud is always hungry and grateful for any meal he is given. Even muskrat stew, straight from the Hooverville pot, tastes delicious. Last, but not least, there is the importance of name. Bud's mother gave him his name for a special reason. He is to let no one ever call him Buddy, she says, so he constantly corrects people. Bud is indignant when the "pretend" mission family calls him Clarence until he figures out the game and even then he thinks there might have been a better one. In the end, Bud receives a new name from the jazz band musicians and is initiated into the group. His identity is secure.

These motifs reinforce a secondary theme.

Bud, Not Buddy is a coming of age story, a story of internal growth and change and eventual acceptance of life as it is and can be. Everywhere he turns, Bud finds opening and closing doors, welcoming doors, doors that hide monsters, and doors that are locked against him. He discovers that there are some he must open himself if he is to find the life he yearns for. When he finds what he is seeking, he no longer needs his blanket and he is no longer hungry. Seeds, buds, and maple trees, also, are symbols of life and growth. Most important to Bud is his name. The giving and receiving of a name is a symbol as old as humankind. Bud finally receives the one he believes he was born for and knows that he is, again, a member of a family.

Learning, from others and by experience, is a secondary theme as well. Everywhere he turns, Bud finds somebody ready to teach him something and experiences that he can learn from. Practical things, like writing telegrams, map reading, and "riding the rails" become a part of his survival kit as do abstractions like kindness, commitment, courage, belonging, and love. Bud takes every lesson, good or bad, to heart, adding it to his personal philosophy and Bud Caldwell's "Rules and Things For a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself."

Bud Caldwell is a street kid, smart and tough, whose "eyes don't cry no more." He is a self-proclaimed liar, and, considering Book cover illustration by Ernie Norcia for Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis.

the few years he has been in the world, something of a philosopher. With mixed bits of Little Rascal and Shirley Temple in his personality, he is also compassionate, understanding, and able to see both sides of a situation even when he is on the receiving end of an insult as revealed by this incident at the mission: I watched them walking away. My pretend brother looked back at me and stuck out his tongue, then reached up and took my pretend mother's hand. I couldn't really blame him. I don't think I'd be real happy about sharing my brown sugar and my folks with any strange kids either.

As the author of Bud Caldwell's "Rules and Things for a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself" he establishes his own creed. Some rules are very short: No. 3, If you got to tell a lie, Make sure it's simple and easy to remember. Others take



longer to express: No. 8, Whenever an adult tells you to listen carefully and talks to you in a real calm voice, do not listen, run as fast as you can, because something real terrible is just around the corner. Especially if the cops are chasing you.

Tough as he is, Bud is not without the terrors that beset any ten-year-old. He believes in ghosts. He believes in vampires.

He is afraid to be left in a strange room by himself. He sleeps with an open jackknife in his hand and his faithful blanket covering his head. The objects in Bud's suitcase are his only security. He turns to them again and again for security and comfort and puts himself to sleep by remembering the stories his mother read to him each night. But Bud's vivid imagination is not entirely given to holding off fears. Curtis comically captures Bud's relationship to story when he plays Twenty Thousand 'Leaks' under the Sea with a mop and cleaning bucket whispering a conversation between Captain Nemo and one of his sailors into the water.

Eventually, though, Bud begins to trust both himself and others. He finds, within the comforting safety of a new found "family," that those eyes that "don't cry no more" betray him at last, and children are not the only ones given to tears.

With the exception of Herman E. Calloway and Miss Thomas, the many other characters in Bud, Not Buddy, are relatively static.

Their purpose in the story is to further Bud's education. The Amos family's mother is a borderline psychotic and her son is a murderous lout. Bugs and the too-good-to-be-true librarian make walk-on appearances, deliver their lines, and disappear—as does Jerry, Deza Malone, Lefty's family and the kindly family at the mission. Herman E. Calloway is a different story. He is a grumpy, self-righteous, domineering old man who refuses to acknowledge Bud's existence, even when the rest of the band members move for theoretical adoption. Though he is unreasonable and bad-tempered, the band members are faithful to him. He knows his business and keeps them well employed, so they endure his moods of depression and unsocial behavior. Calloway is a wellrounded character for whom the reader develops a hesitant sympathy, not really sure it is deserved until the very end.

Miss Thomas, the band's "vocal stylist," adds a touch of real feminine beauty to this male-dominated story. She understands Herman. She understands Bud. She is adored by Bud and the members of the band. We come to know her as a strong, confident woman, sympathetic, but firm, who takes no nonsense from Calloway, is completely honest with Bud, knows when the band needs time for their male bonding ceremony, and exits with humor.

Steady Eddie and Mr. Jimmy are important characters in that they come to Bud's defense, but we know little about them and the other band members except for the instruments they play. Yet in a rehearsal scene, the men come together with Miss Thomas in one harmonious whole and we know what their primary love must be.



Style

Points of View

This story is told from Bud Caldwell's ten-year-old perspective, as an African-American orphaned boy. The story begins as he is orphaned by his mother's death, and leads us through his unsatisfactory home placement with the Amos Family, and on to his journey to find his father, whom he believes is none other than Herman E. Calloway, the leader of the famous band in the flyers that his mom had always held close.

Though the story is seen through Bud's eyes, the reader is still able to pick up on small details of how others doubt his story from time to time. When he tells others that his father is Mr. Calloway, many give some quite inquisitive expressions or questioning requests. Adults are often helpful to Bud, yet they are kindly questioning of his endeavor to find his father once he is on his own and has no parent to guide his behavior. There always seem to be some adult there in the background to help him.

The beginning of the story allows his mother to help him out, but once her death happens, he is left without much guidance except what is provided by the orphanage. Lefty Lewis helps guide him back on his journey by picking him up from the side of the road and getting him to Grand Rapids, where he may find his father. The rough appearance often shocks adults into feeding and caring for Bud, although he fails to be victimizing or pitiful in his interchanges. Bud often is surprised how easily adults can see that he is hungry or in need of help, since he regularly keeps to himself and does not divulge such personal information very often.

Setting

Bud, Not Buddy begins in Bud's orphanage home during the 1930s, but flashes back to his moments with his mother. Bud obviously cared deeply for his mother, who returned his deep love, yet the question of who his father is looms over his entire upbringing. The weeping sessions Bud catches his mother in is even more confusing when the only reason he can find for her crying spells are the flyers advertising a jazz band in Chicago. Bud begins to assume this is his father, and the sight of these flyers is serving as a painful reminder to his mother of the loss of Bud's father. He assumes that his father left, yet it is not clear what motivated him to leave. Bud harbors hope that his father was unaware that he was alive, or that maybe his mother did not let the father be a part of their life. He wishes to have the opportunity to one day find and meet his father and find these answers.

In the meantime, Bud gets placed in the family home of the Amoses. Things do not go well from the first moment of arrival at their house. Todd proves that Bud is not welcome; as he teases that he is a "bed wetter." He attempts to bully Bud into feeling inferior, but is shocked when Bud fights back. The only defense Todd has is to whine to



his parents, as he notices Bud is stronger than him. When being sent to The Barn, Bud sees how he will always be the outsider to the family, as he makes the decision to run away.

After arriving in the town of Grand Rapids, where the person he thinks is his father plays with his band, the story often flashes back and forth from the present to his former days with his mother at their home, before her death, and to more recent days at the children's home where he had lived.

Language and Meaning

Language of this novel is easy-flowing and on a fifth-grade reading level. The themes of the novel are comparable to many conflicts that young children are dealing with or will deal with as they grow. Because the novel is told from mostly Bud's point-of-view, it makes for an easy read aloud for young children.

Structure

The structure of the novel is easy flowing, going along the pace of Bud's journey to find his guidance in life. Surviving most of his life without much adult guidance, Bud embodies being an orphan. The reader goes on the journey with Bud, through being a son at home with his mother, through his life at the Home, and on towards the journey to Grand Rapids, via his friend Lefty Lewis, to find his father.

Quotes

"The padlock snapped shut with the loudest click I'd ever heard." Chapter 2, pg. 20.

"A bud is a flower-to-be. A flower-in-waiting. Waiting for just the right warmth and care to open up. It's a little fist of love waiting to unfold and be seen by the world. And that's you." Chapter 5, pg. 42

"We slapped our hands together as hard as we could and got our slob mixed up real good, then waved them in the air so they'd dry. Now it was official, I finally had a brother!" Chapter 8, pg. 63

"I scooped my lips up and mashed my face on Deza Malone's. We stuck like that for a hot second, but it felt like a long time." Chapter 8, pg. 75

"I used a little trick to help me fall off to sleep. I pulled my blanket right up over my head and breathed in the smell real deep. After doing this three times the smells of the shack and Hooverville were gone and only the smell of the blanket was in my nose. And that smell always reminded me of Momma and how she used to read me to sleep every night." Chapter 8, pg. 79

"I jumped in and out of Flint around seven times before that got boring and I decided I'd better head for Grand Rapids." Chapter 10, pg. 96-7

Herman E. Calloway, my father, said, "There comes a time when you're doing something and you realize it just doesn't make any sense to keep on doing it, you ain't being a quitter, it's just that the good Lord has seen fit to give you the sense to know, you understand, enough is enough." Chapter 12, pg. 146

I said, "Well, sir, I had some problems with some folks that were supposed to be looking after me and after I hid their shotgun and poured water all over Todd Amos I busted out of the shed and had to go on the lam and then I thought it was about time I came and met my father because it's been - " Chapter 13, pg. 151

"I said, 'Well, ma'am, Todd Amos woke me up by shoving a pencil up my nose all the way to the R and went I went to punch him I slapped him instead and it left a big welt on his cheek so we put up our dukes and went at it and it didn't take long before I knew I couldn't whip him so I just curled up and fell down.'" Chapter 14, pg. 164

"When you got someone as old as Herman E. Calloway crying you better look around, 'cause you know you're square in the middle of one of those boiling tragedies." Chapter 19, pg. 219

"Deza Malone was right, I was carrying Momma inside me and there wasn't anyone or anything that could take away from that or add to it either." Chapter 19, pg. 234



"If you didn't have a real good imagination you'd probably think those noises were the sounds of some kid blowing a horn for the first time, but I knew better than that. I could tell those were the squeaks and squawks of one door closing and another one opening."
Chapter 19, pg. 235

Adaptations

Students may want to read Curtis's first novel *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*.

The audiobook of *Bud, Not Buddy*, complete with instrumental music, is recommended as a supplement to the written version.

For older students, John Steinbeck's classic, *The Grapes of Wrath*, is a must for understanding the effects of the Depression on Oklahoma farmers. For younger students, *Children of the Dustbowl: The True Story of Weedpatch School*, by Jerry Stanley documents the lives of migrant children in California in the 1930s. *Out of the Dust*, by Karen Hesse, is the poignant story, in prose poem form, of a family's desperate circumstances as their farm blows steadily away. A different story of the era is *Grandpa Jake and the Good Christmas*, by James Aldridge. It is the tale of a young girl who makes some surprising discoveries about her grandfather.

For those who wish to explore the child's search for home in young adult fiction, Karen Cushman's *The Midwife's Apprentice*, *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli, and Sharon Creech's *Walk Two Moons* are excellent choices. *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, by Katherine Paterson, also deals with a homeless child, but Gilly's experience with her latest foster home is far different from Bud's.

Students interested in the music of the 1930s and the musicians who made it their life's work will enjoy *If Only I Had A Horn: Young Louis Armstrong*, an illustrated biography of the jazz musician by Roxanne Orgill. Kathleen Krull's *Lives of the Musicians: Good Times, Bad Times, and What the Neighbors Thought*, highlights Scott Joplin, Woody Guthrie, and George Gershwin, all contributors to popular music of the 1930s.

Those students interested in researching the unionization of the Pullman porters will want to read *A Long Hard Journey: The Story of the Pullman Porter*, by Patricia and Frederick McKissack.



Topics for Discussion

1. Curtis's use of dialogue lends itself well to readers theater. Choose a selection such as Bud's first encounter with the jazz band or the story of how Bugs got his name, and perform the scene for the class.
2. View a 1930s Shirley Temple movie such as *Little Miss Marker*. Discuss how the film compares to *Bud, Not Buddy*.

Are there similarities or differences?

Which is more true to life? Why do you think Shirley Temple was such a popular child star? Would she have appealed to Bud? Why or why not?

3. Create a panel discussion of the pros and cons of placing children in foster homes. Could Bud's experience still apply? Why or why not?
4. How does the structure of *Bud, Not Buddy*, compare to Curtis's earlier work, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*? Is one more accessible or easier to follow than the other? Why or why not?
5. What stereotypes, if any, exist in *Bud, Not Buddy*? How do those stereotypes contribute to the story?
6. Was Curtis low key handling of racial issues successful? Why or why not?
7. Discuss the theme of the child's search for home and family. Why is this such a persistent theme in much fiction for young adults?
8. Curtis touches on the issue of the nontraditional family. How does this concept reflect the saying "Home is where the heart is?" How does it compare to family life in the twenty-first century?
9. In small groups, discuss personal journal responses to the story. How do they compare? What are the similarities and differences?
10. Discuss Herman E. Calloway's reaction to Bud's true identity. Speculate on how he will cope with his relationship to the child. What will he do next?
11. Discuss Curtis's use of language and humor in *Bud, Not Buddy*. How do these elements add to the story? How do they define character?
12. Discuss the tone of the story. There are incidents of joy, violence, and despair. How does Curtis handle these components of light and dark?
13. Have students listen to the audiobook *Bud, Not Buddy*. Discuss the usefulness of books on tape and how they may enhance or detract from the written version.



Essay Topics

Think about the theme of expectation in this novel. Bud expects to be adopted one day and often experiences disappointment when going to a temporary home and not feeling wanted. Bud expects to meet his father and deals with disappointments on the way with people doubting him and questioning him. What are some disappointments the readers have had in life and are they similar or different to Bud? Have anyone some better advice to give Bud on how to handle his life's disappointments?

Bud uses his suitcase as a carryall for his memoirs of his life with his mother. Make a model of a suitcase, or use an old suitcase, and place in it the objects that would be in the suitcase if it resembled something to be taken on a personal journey. Would it have rocks or flyers, or something else and why would it be in the suitcase? What does it serve to be a reminder for?

Bud has a list of things to remember in order to survive, called, "Rules and Things To Have a Funner Life and Make a Better Liar Out of You". If given a list of rules, what would they be called? What would be the focus to concentrate on? Make a list of twenty rules to live by and see how it compares to Bud's lists.

The setting for Bud Caldwell's story is the Depression of the 1930s. Tell a short story detailed as if growing up during these times. What hobbies are most enjoyable? What are the hardships of the time? How does one deal with the hardships---moving, getting more than one job, or finding another occupation? Where does your journey take the main character?

Pretend to be the son or daughter of a famous musician. Detail a day in their life. How is it to be like them? Are days spent eating donuts by the pool, or is there a more regimented upbringing to earn "keep"? Is life what appears to be from the outside by the fans? Produce a poster advertising the musician and their talents.

Bud travels most of the novel on a journey, either a physical one, as he travels to Grand Rapids to find his father, or a mental one, as he struggles to grow into his need to be independent of adult help by growing into a young man. Imagine a journey through someone's life. Tell their story of the journey they take in life---where is that journey taking them? Is there a single item, as in Bud's suitcase, that helps them feel safer? If so, what would be in the suitcase? Who would be some of their encounters on the journey? Would anything be solved, or would things continue with no special goal in mind?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. This story is perfect as a springboard for individual and group research on the Depression era. Addressing selected topics such as the stock market crash of 1929, unemployment, soup kitchens, hobo jungles, the dust bowl, or President Roosevelt's many government projects, students may make use of the library, newspaper reports, films, and photo documentaries to compile their reports.
2. Have students interview older family members and friends for their memories of the Great Depression. Interviews could become an oral history collection and bound into book form.
3. Research the music of the Depression. Guiding questions: How did jazz originate? What distinguished jazz from other forms of music? Who were some of the outstanding jazz musicians of the day? What relationship does jazz have to today's music? What other forms of music were popular in the thirties?
4. Choose one of the minor characters to develop more fully and extend the story. For instance, speculate about what happened to Bugs. Where did Deza Malone and her family go after the destruction of the Hooverville? What was Jerry's experience in the foster home to which he was sent?
5. Have students respond in their reading journals to the topic of Bud as a homeless child. Guiding questions: What emotions, feelings, or mental images did his situation evoke for you? How does Bud's plight compare to homelessness in society today? If you had been in Bud's place, what would you have done?
6. Do an Internet search on author Christopher Paul Curtis, his life and work.
7. As a group project, develop a story map of Bud's travels from Flint to Grand Rapids.
8. As a group project, have students create an open mind portrait of one of the adult characters such as Miss Thomas, Herman E. Calloway, Mr. Jimmy, or Steady Eddie. Mrs. Amos might be a good subject as well.
9. As a group project, have students create a sketch to stretch portrait of the story using symbols that represent the plot and the character of Bud.
10. Write a short essay comparing Bud with Billie Jo in *Out of the Dust*, by Karen Hesse. How are the characters alike?

How are they different? What differences or similarities are to be found in the tone of the two books?
11. Write an extension or sequel to *Bud'*, *Not Buddy* featuring his alter ego, Sleepy LaBone. What happens to him next?



12. Curtis alludes to the auto workers sitdown strike in Detroit and the impending unionization of the Pullman porters. Have students research these events.

How do they compare to similar circumstances in the twenty-first century?

13. Have students choose a character, such as Deza, Bugs, or Jerry, and write letters to Bud concerning their lives and experiences since they saw him last.

Have other students take the character of Bud and reply.

14. Write a skit which details the conversation between Miss Thomas and Herman E. Calloway behind closed doors.

15. Write an extension of the story that describes the Amos family's reaction when they find Bud gone.

Further Study

Beck, M.D. "An Interview with Newbery Award Winner, Christopher Paul Curtis." *Riverbank Review* (winter 1999-2000): 12-15. Christopher Paul Curtis answers questions about his young adult novels and his life as an author.

Lamb, W. "Christopher Paul Curtis." *Horn Book Magazine* (July 2000): 397. Editor for Delacorte Press, Wendy Lamb, tells how she came to publish Curtis's two young adult novels. She details incidents in his life and his struggle to become an author. Intimate and friendly, she gives us glimpses of the man behind the story; his sense of humor and unassuming ways.

She says, "I am fervently glad this man has found the right work."

Lesesne, Teri. "Writing the Stories Brewing inside of Us: An Interview with Christopher Paul Curtis." *Teacher Librarian* (March 1999): 54. The author discusses his life, writings, and experiences talking with students who read his books.

Sutton, Roger. Review of *Bud, Not Buddy*.

Horn Book Magazine (November 1999): 737. A brief, favorable review of Curtis's novel.

Related Websites

Weich, David. "Christopher Paul Curtis Goes to Powell's." Powell's Books News
<http://www.powells.com>. April 2001. An extensive interview in which the author talks about his life as an auto worker and as an author.



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