

# **Durango Street Study Guide**

**Durango Street by Frank Bonham**

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# Plot Summary

Durango Street tells the story of Rufus Henry, who at the beginning of the story is being released from Pine Valley, a juvenile detention center where he was sent after being found guilty of Grand Theft Auto. He returns home to find out that his mother has moved to the Durango Housing Project with his brother and sister.

His first day home Rufus goes out that night to get milk and treats for his brother and sister. He takes his sister along and they are confronted by a gang called the Gassers. They leave Rufus and his sister but later the pair is questioned by the police and Rufus' sister Janet tells them everything. The police then catch the Gassers, who know that Rufus and Janet led the police to them. The Gassers chase down Rufus, who threatens the leader Simon Jones with a broken bottle and the Gassers stand down. Rufus knows he has created a powerful enemy and he needs to join another gang for protection. Even though it is a violation of his parole he seeks out a gang called the Moors. A friend of his from Pine Valley was a member so Rufus hopes he could get in. After meeting with them Rufus is voted into the gang, though he has to be beaten in order to join. The fight is broken up by the police who haul everyone into jail, and the leader Bantu is held on drug charges.

It is at this time Alex Robbins gets involved with the Moors in order to break up the gang and give them a chance at a real life. He approaches the gang about meeting with them and with Bantu in jail, Rufus takes point. He agrees to meet with Alex in the hope that he can get them out of trouble with police so that he doesn't have to return to Pine Valley.

At the meeting with Alex, the gang agrees to elect a president, Leeroy, who will run their meetings. Alex tells the gang he will be available to help with their problems and he may even get the gang to visit with the Marauders football team. This is a big deal for Rufus because Ernie Brown is a player for the Marauders and Rufus believes Ernie Brown is his father. Rufus even made a huge scrapbook dedicated to Ernie Brown.

Bantu is released from prison and is furious to learn about the new president. Rufus stops him from beating up Leeroy and the pair decides to settle things once and for all. Rufus wins the fight against Bantu and becomes the new leader of the Moors. Rufus decides he will use his new position to toughen up the Moors and make them into a true fighting gang with a firm control over their territory.

Rufus knows if they are going to fight then they are going to need an alibi for the police. He decides to visit the other gangs in their immediate area, the Bloods and the Aztecs, and offer a treaty. If they alibi each other to the police they can continue to fight and defend their territory without being charged by the police. Both of the gangs refuse Rufus' proposal.

When Rufus returns home he learns the Gassers attacked his little sister. He meets up with the Moors and decides it is time to get back at them. The gang plans an elaborate



attack that ends with the Gassers being beaten and running away. Rufus destroys the car Simon left behind. In the morning they are all questioned by the police but the Bloods give all of the Moors an alibi so they cannot be charged.

Alex learns the Gassers have gotten a gun and he knows he has to act fast to prevent further violence. He decides to take both gangs to meet with the Marauders. At the football field Rufus finally gets to meet Ernie Brown and both gangs play on the field. However, Simon tells Ernie about Rufus' scrapbook and the boys try to fight. To help prevent violence, Ernie and Alex decide to start up a football league for the boys.

When everyone meets to discuss the league, Simon shows Ernie Brown Rufus' scrapbook on which Rufus has written he is Ernie's son. Rufus knows he has to get back at the Gassers but the only way to do that would be to get the Gassers on their own territory again. He decides to throw a huge formal dance for the kids in the area and makes sure the Gassers know.

Rufus plans on the Gassers crashing the party and he hires special guards to help maintain order at the party and Alex uses his connections with the police to ensure extra protection. The Gassers do show up and attempt to sabotage the party. Rufus and the Moors remain calm even when it becomes apparent the Gassers were trying to burn down the building. The fire department is called and the Gassers are blocked from escaping by the police. All of them are arrested and the party continues.

A few days later Alex visits Rufus' mom and tells her about how well the boys acted at the dance and how they had made 26 dollars. Rufus' mother asks about sending Rufus back to school and Rufus reminds Alex of why he was expelled in the first place. Alex tells Rufus that there will be problems but nothing worthwhile is easy.



# Chapter 1-3

## Summary

In Chapter 1, Rufus meets with Mr. Rubio. Mr. Rubio tries to get Rufus to open up but Rufus refuses. Mr. Rubio asks about Rufus' father whom Rufus has never seen. Mr. Rubio mentions Rufus does not get many letters from his mom and Rufus says he doesn't let it bother him.

Rufus learns Baby Gibson told Mr. Rubio about his Ernie Brown scrapbook, and Rufus is not happy. Then Mr. Rubio tells Rufus he is going to be sent home to his mother, who has moved to the Durango Housing Project. Rufus does not admit to Mr. Rubio he is scared about living in Durango.

In Chapter 2, Rufus takes the bus home, but contemplates running away to Africa where an American Negro with a little education could take over the place. Instead he meets Mr. Travers, his parole officer, at the station. Mr. Travers tells Rufus he cannot help boys who do not want to be helped because he has a caseload of 76 boys. He tells Rufus joining a gang would be a violation of his parole. Rufus asks what else he can do. Mr. Travers says everyone that joins a gang does so for protection, yet if you rounded up 20 boys, only two would belong in a gang, so what did the other 18 do for protection? Rufus replies they don't fight; they give in to the demands of the gangs because they have no pride. Rufus says he does have pride so he is going to fight.

In Chapter 3, Mr. Travers takes Rufus home and his brother and sister rush out to meet him. His mother won't come outside to meet him because she does not want the neighbors to see her with her criminal son. Mr. Travers talks with Rufus' mother but she doesn't listen because she thinks Rufus is the same and will just go back to being a criminal. Mr. Travers tells Rufus he set him up with a job and Rufus' mother is glad. However, Rufus says he wants to go back to school and might want to become a teacher. His mother worries about college and he tells her he could get a football scholarship. Rufus asks his mother about Ernie Brown, wondering how she could have met him in Leesburg, Missouri, when he was born in Detroit, and she doesn't answer.

## Analysis

This section introduces Rufus Henry and the problems he has not only with the law but with his family as well. His mother is a single mother who no longer has much affection for Rufus. Rufus has learned how to get by on his own and he needs to be able to take care of himself.

Rufus believes the only way he can survive in the inner-city is by joining a gang because that is only way to get protection. Otherwise the gangs would walk all over him and beat him up because they could. He is happy to be free and he cares about his



brother and sister, and as much as he wants to be out of the gang life, he does not know any other way.

These chapters begin to tell how many teenagers feel in the inner city and why there is such a strong desire to join gangs. They come from homes that are not stable and they live in areas that are dangerous. For many boys the only way to stay safe is to join a gang where they have the protection of knowing there are others out there that will fight for them.

The narration makes it clear Rufus is a very intelligent young man and he has great potential. Those around Rufus see that potential but they are at a loss of how to keep him out of gangs and see that there is another way.

## **Vocabulary**

Commence, expressive, gambits, perplexed, pronounced, bewildering, metropolis, antiquity, vestibule, extricated, ridgepole



## Chapter 4-6

### Summary

In Chapter 4, Rufus explores the house with his brother and sister trailing along behind. He decides to take a nap and he dreams of being surrounded by an armed gang. He tries to fight them off but there are too many, out of nowhere Ernie Brown appears and helps Rufus defeat the gang.

Rufus' brother Curtis peeks in and tells Rufus they are going to collect mustard greens for dinner. As Rufus is collecting the greens with his brother and sister, Curtis asks if he is going to join a gang. Rufus tells him no, because it would be a violation of his parole. Curtis tells Rufus he is thinking of joining the Little Warriors so the neighborhood boys would stop chasing him and trying to beat him up. Rufus tells Curtis he has a big brother for protection and that is all he needs, and he should never join a gang.

At dinner Rufus learns his mother didn't have money to buy milk so he offers to buy some with the gate money he got from Pine Valley. He and Janet head out to the store.

In Chapter 5, Rufus and Janet walk toward the store with Rufus enjoying his freedom. A car pulls up beside them with six or seven guys inside. Rufus tells Janet to run to a porch if they get out of the car. From the car someone says, "It isn't him," and the car revs and as it drives away someone in the back throws a bottle. Rufus turns to protect his sister and the bottle hits him on the back. He grabs a piece of the bottle for protection in case they come back.

A short distance later they are stopped by police who ask about the broken glass. Rufus refuses to say anything but Janet tells the whole story. After the police leave, Rufus yells at Janet for talking to the police. He tells her she has made them a target for the Gassers. Janet wants to go home but Rufus tells her they can't go home without milk or their mother would know something happened. They continue on and soon see the police have caught the Gassers.

In Chapter 6, Rufus and Janet hide while the police question the Gassers. The police question the driver who is Simon Jones. The police let the Gassers go and Rufus and Janet continue to the store. Rufus tries to kill time in the store but the store owner wants them out. As they are paying, a Gasser walks in, spots them, and leaves. Rufus and Janet leave the store soon after and Rufus tells Janet to run home the back way and wait for him on the porch. Then Rufus stays on the sidewalk until the Gassers spot him, then he runs down the alley looking for a place to hide.

### Analysis

These chapters show the reasons why teenagers feel like they need to join a gang for protection. Even Curtis feels like joining a gang is the only way to be safe. Rufus



realizes by telling Curtis not to join a gang he sounds just like everyone talking to him, but if Rufus gained a strong enough reputation it would give Curtis enough protection to stay neutral.

The trip to the store shows the apparent inevitability of getting involved in gang violence. Rufus and Janet are attacked just for walking down the street, and by telling the police, they made themselves targets. The lack of being able to feel safe on the streets or able to go to the police emphasizes the need to join a gang for protection.

Rufus shows his character when he puts his desire to protect his sister and brother above all else. He is not a kid who wants to be a criminal for the fun of it, or because he wants to be bad. Rufus sees gang membership as the only way to protect himself and his siblings. The ease in which they become targets for the Gassers, emphasizes his need for protection.

Janet and Curtis obviously love their big brother and this is shown in their desire to do everything with him. The level of protection Rufus offers is shown in how little Janet understands about how dangerous their world is and how naïve she is.

Rufus' fear about letting his mother find out about their problems is paramount throughout this section. He goes through great lengths to avoid their mother finding out, partially because he thinks she'll blame him and partially because he knows she can't do anything to protect him anyway.

## Vocabulary

Balustrade, blatting, ironic, burbling, scrutiny, gaiety, fluorescence, meticulous, roused, linger





## Chapter 7-9

### Summary

In Chapter 7, Rufus hides in an alcove when the Gasser's car races down the alley. Seven boys with Simon in the lead approach him. Each of them holds a weapon scavenged off the street. Simon accuses Rufus of talking to the police but he denies it. Rufus tries to get the gang to back down and when they don't, he breaks the milk bottle and shoves a broken shard at Simon's stomach.

Rufus demands the keys to the Gasser's car. Simon informs Rufus there are 16 boys in his gang and other gangs he can call on. Rufus tells the Gassers to get in their car and he will leave their keys at the other end of the alley.

After Rufus returns home, he hears his mother praying about him. He quietly asks her if she was really married to Ernie Brown. She tells him she was only 16 when it happened and it only lasted a few months, and he'd better not tell anyone about it.

In Chapter 8, Rufus wakes up the next morning knowing he has to find Baby Gibson and join the Moors for protection from the Gassers. First he heads to the job Mr. Travers set up for him at Ace Tire & Retread. He reports to Mr. Wells who refers to Rufus as "Boy" and "Jailbird." His treatment angers Rufus so he deliberately ruins a tire casing which Mr. Wells tells Rufus will come out of his pay. When he goes on break, Rufus decides never to return.

Rufus heads to The Happy Spot where the Moors are known to hang out. He finds Baby Gibson who quickly introduces him to the rest of the gang. Bantu is President of the Moors and has already heard about Rufus' confrontation with Simon Jones. He tells Rufus if he wants to join the gang then everyone would have to vote on him that night.

In Chapter 9, Rufus meets a few of the Moors at the Happy Spot. Though they barely speak to him Bantu chastises him for being late. Then all of them get into the car and drive to the playground. Once there Rufus is questioned as to his past and what his loyalty would be to the gang. Then the gang votes by having each member light a match, the gang agrees to let Rufus join. However, after the vote Bantu quickly punches Rufus in the face and informs him members "gets beat into the gang and they gets beat out." While Rufus struggles to defend himself from the all the gang members the police arrive and order everyone against the wall. They are all arrested. Mr. Travers arrives at the station after being called about Rufus and decides to give Rufus one last chance. He calls the Group Service Council to ask them to break up the Moors.

### Analysis

These chapters once again emphasize the futility of trying to avoid being in a gang from Rufus' perspective. He never asked to be a part of the gang violence in his



neighborhood but it found him, and the threat from the Gassers ensured he would not survive without his own gang for protection. Rufus wants something better and yet he does not see how to get there when he wants to stand proud against the threats against him.

The initiation rite of the Moors shows the dangerous nature of gangs and where loyalties lie. Even though Baby Gibson and Rufus were close friends from their mutual stay at Pine Valley, Baby does not warn Rufus about the beating. His loyalty must first always be to his source of protection, the gang. The beating also shows how desperate teenage boys are to be tough and to have a sense of safety. They would rather be beaten by those they know in order to get future protection, then to be beaten or possibly killed on the streets.

Rufus shows his pride in his reaction to the job Mr. Travers offers him. Even though it could have been a way to stay busy and out of trouble, Rufus could not stand with the disrespect he got from Mr. Wells. The treatment of Rufus by Mr. Wells is in the story to emphasize the race relations of the period and how Rufus feels he will always be treated like he is beneath the whites.

The desire of Mr. Travers to help Rufus despite his heavy caseload shows the hope he and the others who work with the gangs have to save the boys. Even though Rufus violated his parole, Mr. Travers does not turn him in because he knows will not solve anything. This situation sets up one of the themes of the story, which is how can the gang problem be dealt with effectively?

## Vocabulary

Alcove, dwindled, amuck, dilapidated, disheveled, impassive, festooned, laths, chagrined, acridness, threshing



# Chapter 10-12

## Summary

In Chapter 10, Alex Robbins from the Group Service Council goes to the Cathedral Heights Police Station. He inquires of Sergeant Starkey about the Moors and he hands over all the files of the gang members and asks what Alex plans to do. Alex replies he is going to break up their gang. The two men discuss whether or not the boys can be saved and both agree it is the background of the boys causing them to be criminals.

After he studies the files, Alex asks the sergeant where he can find them. Rufus and the gang, with the exception of Bantu who remained in prison on drug charges, were spending time on Baby Gibson's roof. Alex meets them there and Rufus tells the gang to let him do the talking. Alex tells the gang he is someone that fixes things for people in gangs, so Rufus tells Alex he needs to fix them with Sergeant Starkey because he does not want to go back to Pine Valley. Alex agrees as long as the boys meet him that night, to the dismay of the gang, Rufus agrees to Alex's proposal. Rufus tells the gang they do not need to come with him, but he has to try so they do not get in trouble with Sergeant Starkey because of Bantu's drug charges.

In Chapter 11, Rufus and his family eat a dinner of leftovers from a party thrown by his mother's employer. The sandwiches are wrapped in an old newspaper which reports that Ernie Brown has been traded to the Coast City Marauders. Rufus begins contemplating ways to tell Ernie Brown he is his son. Rufus' mother tells him that Alex Robbins called her about forming a support group for parents of the Moors. She tells him she refused, believing she had done all she could and there was nothing else she could do for Rufus. Rufus is glad and tells his mother they are only letting Alex around so he will fix them with the police.

Rufus heads to the meeting spot to see the entire gang there, with the exception of Bantu who was still in prison. Everyone puts on the shades that Rufus told them to bring. He tells the gang the glasses will keep Alex from getting into their heads.

In Chapter 12, the gang heads to the crafts room of the park and under Rufus' direction they push Alex as far as they can before settling down to talk to him. Alex tells them he is there to help them with their problems. He tells the boys he knows they band together because they are scared to do it alone. At this everyone is outraged and all but Rufus move to leave. Rufus admits they are afraid but asks what Alex can do about it.

Alex replies he is going to try and solve all the problems that make them need a gang. He says they need to elect a president first, to which Idell states they already have a president. But Alex tells them this president would only be for their meetings. He suggests Leeroy who is obviously the weakest member of the gang. Rufus realizes they are being sucked in and tries to think of a way to backtrack when Alex offers to take



them to a Marauders football practice. He mentions the Marauders now have Ernie Brown.

Baby tells Alex Rufus is an Ernie Brown expert and even has a scrapbook. Rufus tells Baby he must be crazy and there was no scrapbook. Rufus fears the entire offer was a setup. Alex leaves and tells them to come back the following week.

## Analysis

These chapters really show Rufus as a true leader; even though he is the newest member of the gang he quickly takes control as if it was natural to him. The other members defer to him because he has the confidence and determination that makes him a leader. His thought processes throughout his interactions with Alex also show how smart he is and how aware he is of everything that is going on.

In Chapter 11, the focus is to inform not only has Ernie Brown come to town but Rufus believes Ernie Brown is his father. This gives a strong sense of hero worship and explains why Ernie Brown is such an important figure in Rufus' life. He desperately wants to have a father who can be a positive role model and yet he doesn't want to admire a father who would leave his family in poverty.

Chapter 11 also gives more depth to Rufus' relationship with his mother. She has become resigned to Rufus being a criminal to the point where she is enabling him. Even listening as he admits he is going to be mean to Alex, or just let Alex stay around so he can get away with things from the cops. There is no conversation about Rufus now being in a gang or that he was taken to jail, his mother feels she can no longer do anything to help him.

Chapter 12 is where Rufus' desire to find another option comes through. While he is angry that Alex knows they are in the gang because they are scared, he wants to see what other options Alex can offer. He is the one who brings the gang back to the table to listen to the other choice. However, he is also afraid to truly let go of his gang protection and affiliation, and this is evident when he realizes he is losing control in the relationship with Alex. What was supposed to be a relationship where the gang gave nothing but got what they wanted quickly became a gang that was willing to have a mutual relationship.

The reveal of how Alex can arrange for Rufus to see Ernie Brown in person takes away any of Rufus' fears about working with Alex. Suddenly he is willing to give up everything and put aside his concerns so he can meet Ernie Brown. This once again emphasizes how important Ernie Brown is to Rufus and how much Rufus needs to have that sort of idol in his life. Ernie Brown is both a positive role model and he is the catalyst being used to turn his life around. Alex knows he needs to get through the gang by going through Rufus and he knows he can get to Rufus through his idol. So both directly and indirectly Rufus' role model is leading him toward a better life.

## Vocabulary

Disconsolately, somberness, traversed, fathoming, Masonite, semaphoring, truancy, disdainfully, escapade, quagmire



# Chapter 13-15

## Summary

In Chapter 13, Rufus recalls the first time he learned about his father. He was 12 and starting to get in trouble with the police. His mother asked Rufus if it would make his father proud to know his son ran around stealing things with bad boys. Rufus replied maybe his father stole too, to which his mother scoffed. So Rufus replies his father was too lazy to steal. That was the last time his mother whipped him. It made Rufus wonder why she would defend John Henry. He was mean, lazy, never held down a job and left after Curtis was born.

After the whipping Rufus's mother tells Rufus never to talk about his father again, that he didn't even know who his father was. Rufus asked her about his father every day for a week until she finally told him it was Ernie Brown. She said they married in high school but their parents got it annulled a few months later. When he went to college he sent money for Rufus until she married John Henry. John Henry adopted Rufus so Ernie Brown no longer had to send money.

In Chapter 14, the Moors gather at the Happy Spot and Idell suggests going to fight a rival gang, the Aztecs. The gang talks about picking off some stragglers but Rufus tells them they should wait for Bantu before they make a move. Just then Bantu comes up and Idell fills him in on their sponsor and Leeroy being elected president. Bantu starts beating up Leeroy telling him he will never be president of anything. Rufus stops him and Bantu pulls out a switchblade. Rufus suggests they settle things outside without blades, but Bantu insists on using blades.

Outside Rufus realizes if he kills Bantu with the knife he will go to jail or worse and if he cuts Bantu up he will also go to jail. Rufus tosses the knife aside and faces Bantu unarmed. Rufus is able to get the upper hand of Bantu who smells like alcohol. The rest of the gang supports Rufus as they had all been beaten before on Bantu's orders. After the fight Rufus tells Idell to search Bantu's pockets for money, which he gladly does. Then he tells Whitey to drive Bantu home and for everyone to meet at his place the following morning.

In Chapter 15, Rufus examines the cut he got from the fight with Bantu and knows he should see a doctor, but they ask too many questions. As he waits for the gang to arrive he realizes they are going to have to fight out a reputation for themselves and secure their territory.

As everyone arrives he clears the air with Idell to make sure he is okay with Rufus taking over. Rufus then tells everyone his plan to get the Moors back on top. He figures the best way to avoid being arrested for fighting is to have another area gang be their alibi. Rufus decides to visit the other gangs that night to talk about a treaty.



## Analysis

Chapter 13 finally reveals the whole story of why Rufus believes Ernie Brown is his father. It also shows the circumstances of why Rufus needs a positive male role model in his life. The only father figure he has ever known was John Henry and Rufus' description shows he has no one to look up to. It also shows the frustration of his mother, who really does not know how to help him find the right path to stop getting into trouble.

Chapter 14 and 15 secures Rufus' role as leader of the Moors. His easy defeat of Bantu and his readiness to defend Leeroy shows both his physical strength and his strength of character. Rufus has a kind heart and wants to protect Leeroy even though it means putting himself in trouble with Bantu.

Rufus' sense of good and evil is clearly portrayed here. While he jumps to the aid of Leeroy his only concern in fighting Bantu are the consequences he may face, not any concern for Bantu. He chooses to fight without a knife not because he does not want to hurt Bantu, but because he does not want to go to jail for hurting Bantu.

Idell's quick turnaround despite being the defender of Bantu throughout the book shows how important the gang is to him. Above all else he wants to be a member of the gang, whether that means supporting Bantu, or stealing from him when Rufus takes over the gang. Idell's eagerness to square things with Rufus, even though Idell was against Rufus being in control earlier, also shows that Idell is a "tough guy" only when he has the support of the gang around him.

Rufus' quick control of the gang and his determination to bring the gang back on top shows he is a strong leader. He wants the gang to have a reputation that will guarantee them protection, because the bigger the reputation the less they will have to fight in the future. Rufus also sees the bigger picture; by forming treaties with neighborhood gangs he creates a situation in which he can avoid police prosecution while still fighting rival gangs, namely the Gassers. Rufus shows no fear in going to meet with the other gangs, even though the others warn him against it. It is because Rufus knows he is offering something that benefits both gangs: the ability to conduct business and always have an alibi.

## Vocabulary

Vigorously, pessimistically, jarred, feigning, serum, gingerly, envisioning, shuffling, infernal, reeling



# Chapter 16-18

## Summary

In Chapter 16, Rufus, Whitey and Baby first head to the Bloods. Rufus tells the leader Pelican Sam his plan of their being alibis for each other with the police. The bloods refuse and the trio leaves. Then they offer the same plan to the Aztecs and they refuse as well. Rufus tells them to find him if they change their mind, otherwise they had to stay out of his territory. The trio returns to Rufus' home to find Alex's car parked outside.

In Chapter 17, Rufus walks into his home to hear Alex talking about filing a complaint. Alex tells Rufus he had come over to talk about the parents group when he ran into a situation. Rufus learns the Gassers attacked Janet and cut off one of her pigtails. Simon had then tied the pigtail to his car's radio aerial.

Alex tries to talk Rufus out of retaliating, saying he would find a way to make Simon pay. Rufus refuses and Alex tells Rufus that fight one only leads to fight two and that leads to another fight and so on. He tells Rufus he is smart enough to find another way but to call him from jail when he gets arrested. Rufus goes up to his room and unscrews the back from his portable radio to reveal 12 blasting caps. He smiles and plans his revenge on Simon and the Gassers.

In Chapter 18, Rufus meets up with the Moors and tells them of the attack. The others show their anger and Rufus tells them they will attack the Gassers that night. Whitey asks about what Alex would do and Rufus replies he would just keep preaching to them. Rufus tells the gang his plan and they start preparing.

That night Rufus and Whitey drive to Cathedral Heights. They are spotted by one of Simon's stakeouts who leaves to alert Simon. Rufus tells Whitey to speed to the drive-in where Simon was. They reach the drive-in just as the call to Simon is coming in through the pay phone. Rufus tells Whitey to park across the street with the engine running. He heads toward the payphone and glances to Simon's car to see Janet's pigtail. Rufus blocks the payphone just as Simon opens the folding door. Rufus punches Simon in the mouth, splitting his lip. Another Gasser, Dukie, appears and Rufus punches him in the stomach and races toward the car.

## Analysis

This section is all about Rufus trying to turn the Moors into a gang that is feared by everyone. He wants the neighboring gangs to know not to mess with the Moors. Part of this plan means they have to find a way to stay out of prison when they do have to fight. So Rufus goes to the other gangs in their immediate area and asks them to be alibis, despite the fact they have had issues with these gangs in the past. While both gangs refuse his proposal, both of them seem to be intrigued by the prospect.





Rufus is furious about the attack on his sister and knows he has run out of time to make the reputation of the Moors and his own reputation, because he needs to protect his family. However, Alex telling Rufus that one fight only leads to another fight foreshadows the response to Rufus' plan for revenge. Both Alex and Rufus know there can be no peaceful end to the situation and yet Rufus knows he cannot let the Gassers get away with hurting his sister.

Rufus' intricate planning for his revenge shows he has much more foresight than just going over to the other gang and trying to beat them up. He wants to make sure his gang always has the upper hand and that no one gets seriously hurt. Rufus' plan once again shows how smart he is and how much potential he could have if he was not involved in gangs and criminal activity. There is much more to Rufus than just being a career criminal or just wanting to be a career criminal.

## Vocabulary

Wiry, nettled, vestibule, dolorous, hassock, hubbub, precariously, bungalow, gravely, filched, brandished



# Chapter 19-21

## Summary

In Chapter 19, Whitey drives to the designated location with the Gassers following close behind. Finally they reach a dirt road with a barricade at the end, indicated a concrete riverbed was up ahead. Whitey and Rufus get out of the car and run through the barricade, the Gassers do the same. Rufus and Whitey run between sheds, careful to leap in the right spot. Behind them, the Gassers start falling and Dukie shouts there is a wire between the sheds.

In one of the sheds Baby and Leeroy wait. Then Baby gives Leeroy the signal and Leeroy begins touching wires to a battery terminal. The wires set off the blasting caps that had been buried in the ground. The Gassers scream there is a hidden gun and they panic. The entire Moors gang descends on the chaos, beating up all the members of the Gassers gang. As they try to get in the car and escape, Rufus shouts it is booby trapped. All the Gassers leave on foot, except for Simon who is still on the ground. Rufus tells Simon he will kill him if he ever touches his siblings again. He tells him he is never to set foot in the Flats again and to leave his car as spoils of war.

Rufus tells the gang they should go home soon and if anyone asks, say they were on Big Lawn all night. Then he takes Simon's car and runs it into the riverbed. The car erupts into flames and the gang scatters.

In Chapter 20, Rufus and 4 other members of the Moors gang are brought to the station for questioning the following day. They are questioned together and separately but none give information about the fight and arson. Rufus asks Sergeant Starkey if he had questioned Pelican Smith about their whereabouts. The Sergeant says Pelican Smith did confirm their story. Alex arrives and the Sergeant takes him to another room. Alex and the Sergeant discuss the fight and realize Rufus had gone to great lengths to avoid excess bloodshed. The Sergeant tells Alex his gang liaison Sergeant Roberts learned Simon was getting a gun from the Pharaohs gang.

Alex decides to try and get the Moors and Gassers together on Neutral territory. He tells the Sergeant he will be taking the Moors and the Gassers to see the Marauders train. The Sergeant has no choice but to release everyone because he has no evidence.

In Chapter 21, the gang waits for Alex to show up at their usual meet up spot. As they wait, two girls, Judy and Nonie appear and they suggest setting up a girls support for the Moors. They offer to carry weapons, since girls can't be searched or throw parties. Rufus refuses knowing the Moors are not ready for that yet. As they meet with Alex he tells them the Gassers have a gun. Baby says they could get a gun too but Alex says they should avoid a shooting war.



He tells the Moors that the following Tuesday they will be going to see the Marauders. Alex says that everyone needs clean clothes and tennis shoes. The boys don't all have those items and they decide to raise money to buy them. Rufus asks what it has to do with the Marauders and Alex tells them that the Gassers are also coming. It takes some convincing but the Moors agree to go.

## Analysis

Rufus' big plan comes to light and it is a completely successful plan. Not only do none of the Moors get seriously hurt but the Moors reestablish their reputation. The plan gave everyone a part and even let Leeroy feel like he was still an important member of the gang. The decision to destroy Simon's car seems like a strange one, but there is no way the boys could have kept the car without drawing attention to themselves. Rufus also knew how important the car was to Simon and it was payback for taking his sister's pigtail and tying it to the car.

The decision of Pelican Smith to act ultimately as an alibi shows not only how convincing Rufus was but how the races stick together. The Aztecs were not willing to be alibis but Rufus suspected the idea was a good one for the Bloods. The scene in the police station shows Rufus was right in using the other gangs as a way to stay out of trouble.

The decision of the Moors and Rufus to be on the same field as the Gassers shows just how much all of the gang and Rufus idolize Ernie Brown. They all want to be a successful Negro like him and they want to have a life where they don't have to be a part of a gang. By thinking about playing football or rising to the top like Ernie Brown they believe there might be hope for something better.

## Vocabulary

Remorse, churning, frisking, milled, dazedly, shambled, monstrous, apprehensive, incredulous, imperturbable, adulation, auxiliary



# Chapter 22-24

## Summary

In Chapter 22, the Moors arrive at the training field dressed in their new clothes. Ernie Brown comes over and introduces himself. He sends Rufus out for a pass which Rufus easily catches. As he does, Rufus realizes Ernie is his father, and they even look alike. The Gassers arrive, escorted by Sergeant Roberts and Sergeant Wenzle. Simon makes jabs at Rufus while both groups eat the sandwiches they are offered. Afterward Ernie decides to take the boys on the field to give them football pointers. Everyone has fun until Simon misses a pass and trips. Everyone laughs and Ernie calls Rufus over to show Simon what he did wrong. As he does, Simon tells Ernie not to get too close because Rufus is in love with him, and he even has a scrapbook. Rufus charges Simon but is stopped by Sergeant Wenzle.

Ernie decides it might be good to set up a sandlot league for the boys. Everyone is interested but they are wary, so Alex tells everyone to meet Thursday to talk about it.

In Chapter 23, Rufus tells his mother he met Ernie Brown but she avoids the subject. Rufus sends Whitey and Idell out to spread the word about Ernie coming on Thursday. Willie mentions he talked to a girl in the Heights and she said Simon was planning something big. Then Willie asked Rufus about his scrapbook and Rufus tells him it was just something he did as a little kid.

On Thursday, fifty or sixty boys turn out, including the Gassers. Rufus noticed Simon was not with the rest of the Gassers when Ernie Brown shows up. Sergeant Wenzle approaches Ernie to ask for an autograph which leads everyone else to do the same. Then Simon appears and shoves his way through the crowd and hands Ernie a scrapbook. Ernie glances at the scrapbook but quickly hands it back to Simon. So Simon decides to read the title out loud "My Big Ernie Book, Facts an' Pitchers by his son, Rufus H. Brown." Rufus moves to attack Simon but is stopped by Sergeant Roberts. He puts Rufus in a car with Alex and Ernie.

Sergeant Roberts asks Rufus to admit the scrapbook is his so he can arrest Simon for breaking and entering and robbery but Rufus refuses. On the way home Rufus tries to explain the scrapbook as a childish thing but no one really believes him. Ernie asks Rufus to keep up the scrapbook but he refuses to take it back.

In Chapter 24, Rufus heads off to meet the Moors at the Happy Spot. He learns that Willie has been spending time with the Gassers and thought about joining. Rufus tells everyone it was time to beat Willie out of the gang and the others agree. They corner Willie at his house and he says the Gassers picked him up and were putting pressure on him. He tells them Simon wanted him to be a spy. Rufus replies they won't beat Willie out of the gang if he can get them a rifle. Willie says he knows an adult who buys



stolen radios and who will buy them a gun if he threatens to tell the police. When Rufus returns home he finds out his mother has been attending Mr. Robbins' parent meetings.

## Analysis

This section really starts to bring to life what Alex foreshadowed about one fight leading to another. Rufus' attack on Simon could not go unpunished and Simon chooses to completely embarrass Rufus in front of his gang on several occasions. There is much more emphasis on the pain of this attack by Simon, than the beating that Rufus got from his own gang or the fear of being beaten by the Gassers. The emotional pain is much more substantial and lasting than the physical pain and Rufus has in many ways lost that role model he cherished.

Rufus' desire for a gun shows how quickly the fight between the teenagers is escalating. Both feel when they are disrespected in front of their gang it is the ultimate offense and deserves the ultimate punishment. However, Rufus has shown he is against bloodshed, even when his sister is attacked, so it seems strange he would suddenly change his mind.

One of the most striking parts of this section is at the end of Chapter 24 when Rufus learns his mother has been attending Mr. Robbins' meetings. It shows no matter what she says she has not completely given up on Rufus. She still wants Rufus to have a good life and be successful and Alex is giving her the hope there might still be something left that can save Rufus.

## Vocabulary

Obscurely, lanky, jeering, wrathful, perplexed, guilelessly, evasively, tarnished, coalesced, earnestly



# Chapter 25-27

## Summary

In Chapter 25, Willie meets up with the Moors to tell them he got the gun and hid it under the freeway. Rufus, Baby, Whitey and Willie go check on the gun. Rufus discovers it was tampered with and won't take a cartridge. He tells Willie to take it with him to the machine shop and fix it. Rufus tells the boys his plan is to shoot the windows of Simon's car and then the windows of his house. He plans to keep it up all winter and have it look like bad luck to Simon.

In Chapter 26, the boys were drinking on Baby's roof when Willie arrives. He tells them the gun was stolen from outside of the machine shop. The Moors accuse Willie of lying but Rufus tells them he will just think of something else. He tells the gang they need to make the Gassers come to them, like the last time. The gang heads to the Happy Spot where Nonie and Judy are. The girls pester the boys about throwing a dance of their own since they are jealous of the graduation dance at the high school. Rufus refuses the idea until Leeroy mentions the Gassers would crash the dance anyway. Then Rufus decides to go meet with Alex about throwing a dance and he tells girls.

In Chapter 27, Rufus presents his idea of a dance to Alex saying the plan was to have 200 to 300 kids. Alex mentions that a party like that would be hard to control, so Rufus tells him they would hire special guards, with the money they get from charging a dollar apiece. Alex is wary and tells Rufus it sounds like a plan to get back at Simon. But Rufus insists the guards would prevent anything from happening, so Alex agrees to sponsor the affair.

## Analysis

The plot to get a gun and use it to scare Simon fails and yet no one seems very disappointed. Rufus seemed sure it was going to fail and yet he wanted to do something big that would get back at Simon. No one in the gang wants the violence to escalate and yet they will follow Rufus regardless because they are scared of losing the gang. Rufus also does not want bloodshed but he wants a way to make sure Simon will not bother them anymore.

The idea of the dance is a way to get the Gassers back on their turf while offering a dance to the teenagers who are no longer in school. While many of them, including Nonie and Judy have dropped out from school, they still feel jealous of some of the school functions, like the graduation dance. By throwing their own dance, the Moors not only get their name out there and increase their reputation but they also have a chance to get even with the Gassers.

The dollar -a-head dance Rufus and the Moors are planning is very rare and something that would be a real treat for all of the kids in the neighborhood. They would rarely if



ever, get the chance to go to a formal dance where they got to dress up and feel special just like the high school kids at their graduation dance. The dance also allows the Moors to put their energy toward something that is not violent and shows they have the ability to do something constructive with each other.

## Vocabulary

Dubious, flange, diversionary, suffused, raptly, vocational, predicament, scrimmage, resounded, exaltation, sardonic



# Chapter 28-31

## Summary

In Chapter 28, the Moors bring Alex to Club Chic hall for his approval and the hall meets all of his requirements. Alex offers to arrange for the guards and tells Rufus to call the musician's union for a band leader. The gang decides to rent the hall, but the owner wants \$50 upfront. Rufus manages to negotiate with the owner by offering \$60 and have the gang clean the hall before and after.

Rufus calls the union and asks for the name of a band leader. He gets the name of Bill Bibbs who tells Rufus the band needs \$90 upfront for a Saturday and \$70 upfront for a Friday. Rufus decides on having the dance Friday. The boys get posters printed and Rufus makes sure there are plenty of posters in Cathedral Heights.

In Chapter 29, on the day of the dance Rufus' mother helps him get ready and he goes to pick up Judy. At the hall the boys set everything up and prepare for their guests. Sergeant Roberts and Sergeant Wenzle check out the entire hall for guns and liquor before clearing the hall for the dance. Rufus asks if they could station an officer outside the hall in case the Gassers show up, and Sergeant Wenzle says he cannot spare a car for the whole night. By the first run 200 kids had arrived, all the tables had been reserved and drinks were \$.15. Rufus takes Judy out on the dance floor but when they return to their table they notice Simon, Shankman and their dates at their table.

In Chapter 30, one of the hired guards approaches the table and tells the Gassers to move, as the table was reserved. The Gassers move to the side of the hall but Rufus watches them. Then a smell fills the hall followed by black smoke. Rufus tells Whitey to have Bibbs make an announcement about the smoke and for everyone to stay calm. Rufus finds Alex and he tells Rufus to call the fire department while he stops the Gassers. Alex tells Rufus that the main thing is not to ruin the entire dance.

Alex tries to restrain the Gassers but they get away and head toward the stairs where Sergeant Wenzle stops them. He tells Rufus and Alex he caught Dukie in the alley and thought he should see if there was trouble. He takes all of the Gassers away and Alex tells Wenzle the Gassers are responsible for the arson. Gradually, everyone returns to the dance floor.

In Chapter 31, Alex tells Rufus' mother about how well the boys did at the dance. They ended up making \$26 after all their expenses. Rufus' mother asks about sending Rufus to school in the fall. Alex says Rufus may have to go to a continuation school. Rufus scowls and describes a fight he had before getting expelled from the last continuation school where he was enrolled. Alex replies there might be problems "but nothing worthwhile is ever easy. Isn't that so?" Alex smiles as does Rufus. He replies "If you say so, Chief."





## Analysis

In this section it is apparent all of the members of the Moors gang go to great lengths to make the dance a real success. This seems overkill for something that is meant to be just a trap for the Gassers. The real motive for the dance may have been to do something nice for the kids in the neighborhood while being able to get payback on the Gassers. The whole dance ends up being a huge success that everyone enjoys and that is the focus. Even though there is the confrontation with the Gassers, the important thing is the dance continued and the Moors chose not to fight.

The last chapter gives some optimism and insight into Rufus' future. While nothing is left for certain and while there are many unresolved issues, the overall end of the book is hopeful. Rufus is able to smile and consider going back to school even though it is hard work. The last line feels like the book has come full circle from Rufus laughing about how the social workers always preach a little education could lead a Negro to be president, to actually thinking he could have a future if he worked for it.

The exchange of smiles also hints to how the relationship between Rufus and Alex has changed. No longer is Alex simply a means to stay out of prison but he is a means of change. He got the Moors to put their energy toward something that benefitted the community, he got Rufus' mother to have hope for her son and for Rufus to believe there really was another option.

Rufus' plan at the dance does prove to be ingenious because it accomplishes what Alex and the police always wanted, for the Gassers to go to jail and for there to be evidence against them. However, Rufus does not have to break the tradition of the streets or rat anyone out to the police to do so.

The book never answers the question of Ernie Brown, nor does it answer whether or not the remaining Gassers retaliate, or if Rufus still wants the Moors to be a fighting gang. These are all left open to interpretation by the reader and to show the future is never certain, and Rufus has been given a chance to work toward a better life but there is no certainty he will follow through.

## Vocabulary

Aperture, dingy, vague, loafed, huskily, scoured, pulpy, haughtily, quizzically, ominous, unobtrusively, anemic, indignant



# Characters

## Rufus Henry

Rufus Henry is the main character of the book. Through his own leadership skills and determination he becomes the leader of the Moors. Rufus wants something better than life in a gang but he does not know any other way to survive.

## Mr. Rubio

Mr. Rubio is a social worker at Pine Valley. He is the one that tries to get Rufus to open up and tells Rufus that he is being released.

## Baby Gibson

Baby Gibson is Rufus' friend from Pine Valley and a member of the Moors. He is very strong and a little slow, but he greatly admires Rufus.

## Mrs. Henry

Mrs. Henry is a single mother of three kids, including Rufus. She wants the best for all of them but does not know what to do to help Rufus anymore.

## Mr. Travers

Mr. Travers is Rufus' parole officer. He is the one that calls in the Group Service Council to break up the Moors.

## Alex Robbins

Alex Robbins is a member of the Group Service Council and he tries to help the Moors. He wants to break them up and end their violence. While he claims to be a social worker, Rufus suspects that he might be a cop.

## Janet Henry

Janet Henry is Rufus' little sister and she looks up to Rufus. She is very naïve about the dangers of the streets.



## **Curtis Henry**

Curtis Henry is Rufus' little brother. He wants to be just like his brother and even contemplates joining a gang himself.

## **Whitey**

Whitey is a member of the Moors gang and one of the most useful because he has access to his mother's car.

## **Bantu**

Bantu is the leader of the Moors until Rufus beats him out of the gang.

## **Willie**

Willie is a member of the Moors that used to live in Cathedral Heights.

## **Sergeant Starkey**

Sergeant Starkey is the officer in charge at the Cathedral Heights police station and he maintains records on all the members of the Moors gang.

## **Sergeant Roberts**

Sergeant Roberts is Sergeant Starkey's gang liaison.

## **Sergeant Wenzle**

Sergeant Wenzle is Sergeant Robert's partner.

## **Simon Jones**

Simon Jones is the leader of the Gassers and the one that causes Rufus the most embarrassment.

## **Shankman**

Shankman is the second in command of the Gassers under Simon Jones.



## **Dukie**

Dukie is a member of the Gassers.

## **Idell**

Idell is a member of the Moors who was second lieutenant to Bantu, but changes his loyalties when Rufus defeats Bantu.

## **Pelican Smith**

Pelican Smith is the leader of the Bloods another gang that operates in the Flats.

## **Judy**

Judy is a local girl who becomes enamored with the Moors after their big fight with the Gassers. She wants to form an auxiliary group for the Moors.

## **Nonie**

Nonie is Judy's cousin and also wants to be part of a support group for the Moors.

## **Ernie Brown**

Ernie Brown is a football halfback who achieved substantial fame. He is Rufus' role model and Rufus believes that he is his father.

## **Mr. Wells**

Mr. Wells is the owner of Ace Tire and Retread. He treats Rufus in a very derogatory manner.

## **Bill Bibbs**

Bill Bibbs is the band leader of the band hired to play at the Moor's dance.

## **Leeroy**

Leeroy is the weakest member of the Moors gang and he is elected President during one of Alex's meetings.



## **Objects/Places**

### **The Moors**

The Moors are a gang that operates on the Flats and uses the Happy Spot as their hangout.

### **The Happy Spot**

The Happy Spot is a taco stand on Durango Street.

### **Durango Street**

Durango Street is the main street in the Durango Housing Projects.

### **The Flats**

The Flats is the street name for the Durango Housing Project.

### **Coast City**

Coast City is the city where the story takes place.

### **The Marauders**

The Marauders is the Coast City football team that acquires Ernie Brown through a trade.

### **Pine Valley**

Pine Valley is the juvenile detention center that Rufus was sent to after being charged with Grand Theft Auto.

### **Teagarden Street**

Teagarden Street is the street of the Durango Housing Project that Rufus lives on with his family.



## **Cathedral Heights**

Cathedral Heights is the area of town that is controlled by the Gassers.

## **Ace Tire & Retread**

Ace Tire & Retread is where Mr. Travers lined up a job for Rufus, however Rufus refused to work there.

## **Walnut Street Crafts Room**

The Walnut Street Crafts Room is the place where the Moors meet to talk to Alex.

## **Group Service Council**

The Group Service Council is the organization that Alex Robbins works with that tries to break up gangs.

## **Club Chic**

Club Chic is where the Moors rent a hall in order to throw their dance.

## **Escala Court Project**

The Escala Court Project is the area of town that is controlled by the Aztecs.

## **The Aztecs**

The Aztecs are the Hispanic gang in the Flats.

## **The Gassers**

The Gassers are the rival gang of the Moors and they are led by Simon Jones.

## **The Bloods**

The other Negro gang in the Flats that is led by Pelican Smith.

# Themes

## **The Importance of Role Models**

In Durango Street, Rufus' devotion to Ernie Brown drives much of what he does. His desire to be related to someone that important or to be someone that important, is what makes Rufus want to move beyond the gang life. Rufus wants to go to school and make something of himself like Ernie Brown, and he wants to have a father figure that can be that good role model for him. Throughout the book it is emphasized just how much of an impact Ernie Brown is on Rufus' life even before they meet.

## **Violence Leads to Violence**

There is little doubt that throughout the book, every time someone reacts to a situation with violence it leads to more violence. Even when the bottle is thrown from the car at Rufus, it leads to Janet talking to the police, which leads to Rufus having to fight off the gang in an alley. In gang life it becomes a never ending cycle until one side refuses to react to a situation with violence. Only when Rufus and the Moors decide to find a nonviolent way of solving their problems with the Gassers, does the violence end.

## **People are Shaped by Their Environment**

One of the ideas that are presented by Alex and other social workers in the novel is that many of these boys are raised in a way that leads them to violence. Many of them do not have strong male role models, they live in dangerous areas and they feel isolated. Their mothers are often overworked and struggling to get by and cannot always be mother and father to their children. This leaves these boys to find other sources of comfort and community, which drives them to gangs. In the novel, Rufus looks more to gang membership as a way to deal with his problems, rather than talking to his mother or the police.



# Style

## Point of View

Durango Street is written from a third person point of view that changes from character to character as necessary. The majority of the story is told from Rufus' point of view but sometimes changes to that of Mr. Travers or Alex Robbins to relate parts of the story that Rufus is not a part of. The point of view puts most of the emphasis on Rufus as he is the catalyst of the story, but when the point of view changes it is done to show the motives of the people who are interacting with Rufus. All of them have good intentions in their actions toward Rufus and this is shown throughout the book but especially when the focus turns solely to them.

## Setting

Durango Street takes place in the Durango Housing Project, which is the inner-city section of Coast City. Many of the names and places seem to be deliberately nondescript so as to make the story applicable to nearly any inner-city/impooverished area. The setting is described throughout the book as a very dismal and poor place to be.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the book is very simple and easy to read. It features many of the words and phrases that the boys would use in speaking so that the reader does become immersed in the world that Bonham has created. The language flows very easy and allows the focus to be on the story being told and not on trying to decipher the codes within the text.

## Structure

The book is divided into 31 short chapters. The chapters all have line breaks to show the passage of time or to change point of view. The short sections allow for the book to be read at a much faster pace.





## Quotes

If gorillas has lived in Coast City, the Flats were where you'd find them screaming in the trees. (Chapter 1)

He had to learn to get along without her affection, the way fat people got along without sweets. (Chapter 3)

If you were black, you were "boy" till you were eighty. Then you were uncle. (Chapter 3)

What do we do now?" Baby asked. Rufus shook his head. "Do like the man said. Face the wall, maybe that's where the answers are. (Chapter 9)

You gets beat' into this gang, and you gets beat' out. (Chapter 9)

A kid joins a gang because he's been thrown out of every school, playground, and club in the city. (Chapter 10)

I wear my All-American Sap pin inside my undershirt. The scratching reminds me that you can't bring the dead back to life. (Chapter 10)

It was like a very disorderly room in his mind that he was afraid to even try to straighten up. (Chapter 13)

A black violence rose in Rufus. Pain, sadness, and rage choked him. (Chapter 17)

Fight Two grows out of Fight One. Fight Three grows out of Fight Two. Where does it stop? (Chapter 17)

The ability to see farther than the next fight is a big step. (Chapter 20)

Rufus was obscurely angry – angry that a rich old ox like Ernie, a man who would desert his family, should have such power over him. (Chapter 22)

I carried Ernie like a pistol, for protection. (Chapter 24)

He did not like emotion, and he hated being touched. (Chapter 29)



# Topics for Discussion

## Topic 1

The book does not answer the question of whether or not Ernie Brown is Rufus' father. Why do you think the author left this question unanswered?

## Topic 2

Even though the dance was meant to be a trap for the Gassers, Rufus ends up being very protective of it. How does this show Rufus maturing as a character?

## Topic 3

Do you think Sergeant Starkey and Alex Robbins are right when they say the boys are not responsible for becoming criminals?

## Topic 4

How is Rufus treated because of his race? Do you think this affects his decision to join a gang?

## Topic 5

Rufus' mother is very cold towards him at times and even enables his gang behavior. Do think this makes her a bad mother to Rufus?

## Topic 6

Compare members of the Moors gang and the Gassers gang, do they have more in common than either gang wants to admit?

## Topic 7

The book stresses the importance of good role models and the fact that many of the boys in gangs do not have fathers. Do you think that the lack of a positive male role model causes these boys to turn to gangs?



## Topic 8

Does Rufus fit the profile of what you think of when you think of a gang member? Why or why not?

## Topic 9

Do you think the Moors gang broke up or did it turn into something else? Why do you think the book does not give the answer?

## Topic 10

Many of the people in the book who try to help Rufus are outwardly tough and yet they do go out of their way to help Rufus. Why do you think they have become so tough when it comes to kids who belong to gangs?

## Topic 11

Will gangs always exist in areas that are impoverished? Do they thrive in areas that are not impoverished?