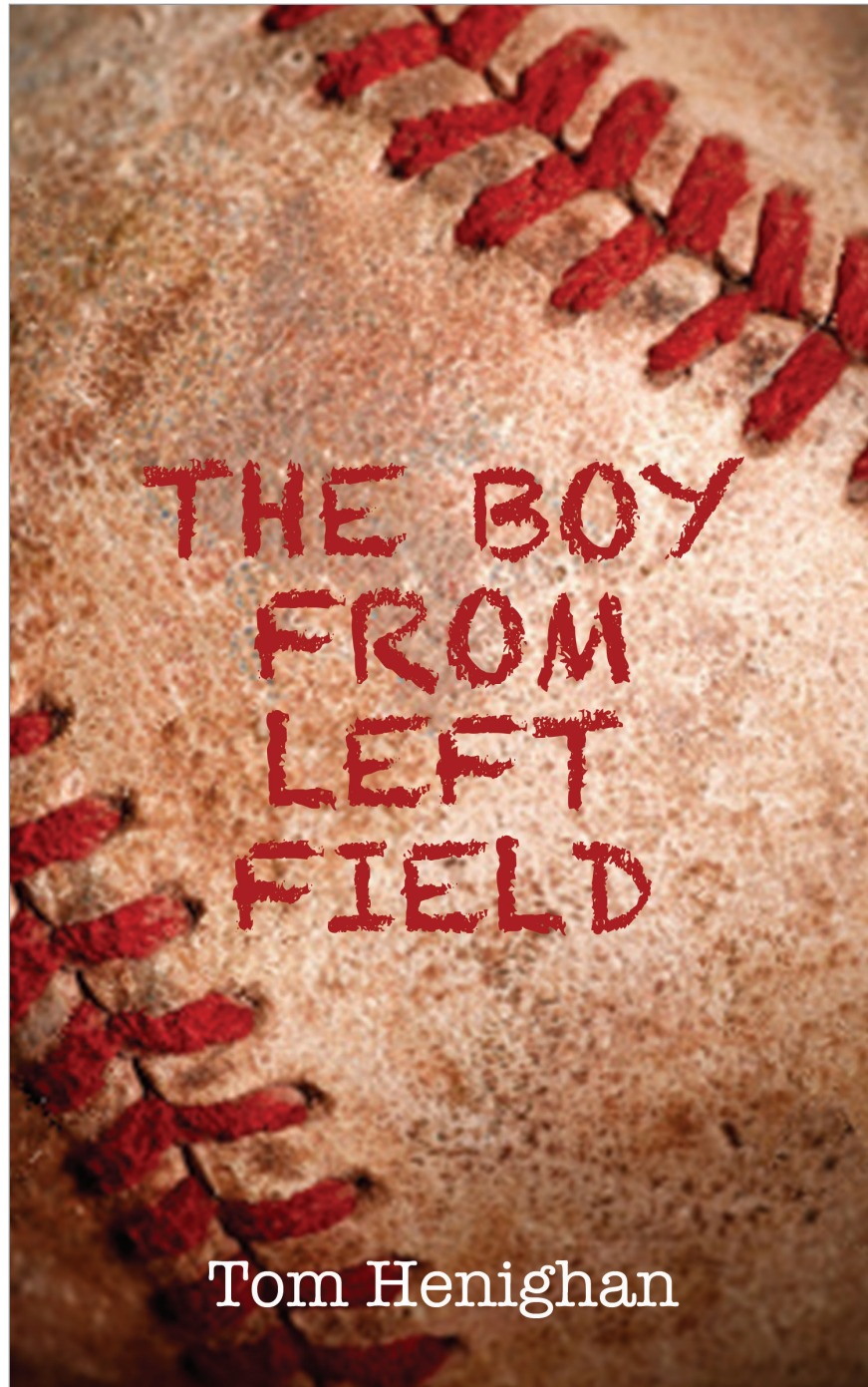


TEACHER'S GUIDE

Grades 7 - 9



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I INTRODUCTION

Life is difficult for Hawk, a young boy trying to find his place in the world. He's had to grow up too fast and shoulder more responsibility than his peers. When he gets caught up in gangs and treasure hunts he tries his best to please everyone who matters to him, especially his constantly fighting parents, and win the respect of his friends and teachers at the same time. His is a coming of age story, one that highlights the loss of childhood innocence and defeating the odds.

Grade Level

The Boy From Left Field and the accompanying Teacher's Resource Guide are ideal for students in grades 7 -9.

About the Author

Tom Henighan teaches adult fiction at Carleton University and has published twenty books, six of which are novels for young adults, including *Mercury Man* which was shortlisted for the Red Maple Award. He has appeared at various children's literature festivals including the 2011 MASC workshops in children's writing in Ottawa, where he lives.

II THEMES

Poverty

Money and, more importantly, the lack of it is a central issue in this story. Hawk's homeless state makes him stand out amongst his peers, especially when he enters the gifted class and is a source of shame. His pursuit of Babe Ruth's baseball is driven by the fact that, if he can find it, he will become famous and with fame comes money. He worries about his mother's inability to earn money selling her worthless trinkets and understands the awkward shame involved in asking his father for extra money. The fact that his father has money but does not share it with Hawk and his mother the way a father should is an undercurrent in the story that is not fully explored by the author.

Adventure

The story, as told from a ten year old's point of view, focuses on the excitement, and not the logic, of chasing down gangs and hunting for treasure. The story has a distinctly unrealistic element to it, most of Hawk's exploits with his friends are the stuff of movies and Hollywood—staking out an enemy, tricking gang members into getting arrested, chasing down the bad guy, finding the treasure and saving the day.

Teachers may want to talk to their students about the unrealistic nature of this book and how that makes it into an adventure book even if it doesn't have the stereotypical magic and myth element that many kids associate with adventure. How are the exploits of Hawk and his friends realistic or not? What would be the outcome if these situations were real?

“Broken Home” Syndrome

Almost all of the characters have issues at home. Hawk's are the most prominent since it is his point of view that the story is told from. However, with the exception of Panny and Albert, all of the other main characters hint at problems within the family or at home, even Mr. Rizzuto. This factors strongly into the children's lives and their ability to participate in the exploits described. It also puts a stress on Hawk that he should not have to deal with—he tries to please both of his parents even though they want opposite things from him.

III CHAPTER INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chapter One:

Summary:

The reader meets Hawk, a young half-Native boy who lives in a taxi cab with his mother, a self claimed Native who has taken the name Storm Cloud. Hawk does not go to school anymore because his mother pulled him out of his class after a fight with his teacher. His mother believes that Hawk should be in a gifted class but his teacher does not agree. Hawk longs to go back to school, even though he is teased and bullied for being poor, and he spends his spare time with Mr. Rizzuto who coaches baseball. Hawk has also run into trouble with a local gang called the Rippers who stole his new baseball glove, ball and cap.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think of Mrs. MacWhinney as Hawk describes her? Is she a nice person? A good teacher?
2. Do you think that Hawk's mother should keep him out of school because she doesn't like his teacher? Why or why not?
3. Re-read page 15. Do you ever feel the same

Chapter Two:

Summary:

The reader meets Panny Chang, a girl from Hawk's school and her dog. He tells her about his problems with the Ripper gang and why he's not in school anymore. Panny promises to see if she can find out anything about Hawk's stolen goods since she knows a lot of people in the neighbourhood. The reader also meets Mr. Rizzuto who owns a shoe repair store and is depicted as quite well off by Hawk. He is a huge baseball fan and lays claim to being distantly related to a famous New York Yankee player. Mr. Rizzuto has a troubled family, however, and does not return to New York because his estranged daughter lives there and the city holds painful memories for him.

Discussion Questions:

1. On page 21 Hawk says that "if he was a grown-up like Mr. Rizzuto, and didn't have to live in a broken-down taxi, and had two houses, a store, a nice car, and tickets to all the Blue Jays games, he didn't think he'd feel so bad." Do you think this is true? Do you think money would make Hawk happier, or would he still have problems?
2. Do you think Panny can help Hawk or would it be better if he went to the police about the Rippers? What would you do if you were Hawk?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Panniere

Chapter Three:

Summary:

This chapter introduces the main goal of the story, to find Babe Ruth's famed first professional homerun ball which may or may not have landed in Lake Ontario in 1914. Mr. Rizzuto introduces the idea to Hawk as a way to gain fame and money, which he promises to share with Hawk, and suggests that such winnings could be used to better his situation in life. Mr. Rizzuto declares them partners in this hunt, informs Hawk that he has a man looking into details that will help them narrow their search and that as he focuses on his hunt he may need Hawk to help out with errands and the like. The only problem is that there is another person, an unknown man, also looking for the ball.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Hawk's mom would try to be "more of a Native" as Hawk says on page 29?
2. Do you think Mr. Rizzuto and Hawk have a good shot at finding Babe Ruth's ball?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Pipe dream

Chapter Four:

Summary:

In this chapter we meet a new member of the baseball gang, Elroy Whittaker. Elroy isn't all that he seems, however, and Hawk identifies the boy's glove as the same one that was stolen from him by the Rippers. Elroy is nervous and keeps changing his story about how he got the glove and so Martin, another member of Mr. Rizzuto's baseball gang, and Hawk decide to find out more about Elroy by following him home.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think Elroy knows that the first baseman's glove was stolen from Hawk? Give examples to support your answer.
2. Do you think Hawk should tell Mr. Rizzuto about Elroy and the stolen glove? Why or why not?

Chapter Five:

Summary:

In this chapter Martin, Panny and Hawk stake out Elroy's home. During the stake out they realize that Elroy knows one of the leaders of the Rippers, Ringo, and is most likely a Ripper himself. Hawk experiences some worry about the possibility of finding Babe Ruth's baseball, his situation at school and his family life.

Discussion Questions:

1. A 'white lie' is commonly defined as a lie that does not cause any harm. On page 51 Hawk tells Mr. Rizzuto a white lie when he tells him that he has to meet his mother on the Danforth. Do you think Hawk was wrong to tell Mr. Rizzuto the lie? Why or why not?

2. On page 53 it says, "...he'd learned that you couldn't count on anything, and that things had a way of turning out weirdly." What do you think Hawk means by this? Is he right?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Fielding grounders
Shagging flies

Chapter Six:

Summary:

In this chapter Panny informs Hawk and Martin that she believes Elroy is scared of the Rippers, not part of them. Hawk goes home to his mother who seems worried about Hawk wanting to leave her and live with his father, she makes him promise to tell his father that he wants to live with her. She also informs him that she is thinking about moving to Ottawa to join a Native movement there and Hawk is distraught at the thought of leaving his friends, his father, and the search for Babe Ruth's ball. In the middle of the night a rock is thrown through the front window of their cab and Hawk is afraid it is the Rippers.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think is happening with Elroy and the Rippers? Is he part of the gang or is he in trouble with them?
2. Why does Hawk's mother make him promise to tell his father that he wants to live with her? What does this tell you about Storm Cloud's relationship with Hawk's father?
3. Do you think the rock was thrown by Ringo or could it be a coincidence that this happened to Hawk and Storm Cloud on the same day that Hawk was spying on Elroy?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Ojibway

Chapter Seven:

Summary:

In this chapter the reader meets Hawk's father, Jim "Wolf" Eagelson. Hawk walks over to his father's place for a visit and reminisces about his relationship with his father. He suggests that his father has some anger issues and that Hawk is slightly frightened of him. They talk about Storm Cloud's plans for moving to Ottawa and Jim assures Hawk that he will not let Hawk be moved to Ottawa. They play a bit of ball in his backyard before Hawk goes home with some money for his mother.

Discussion Questions:

1. On page 75 Hawk's father says, "I'm sorry I've had to leave you there, but your mum isn't easy to deal with." Do you think this is a good enough of a reason to let his son live in a taxi? Why or why not?
2. What do you think of Hawk's relationship with his father? Is it a good one?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Cree

Chapter Eight:

Summary:

Hawk leaves his father's place and meets his mother on the Danforth where she is selling her Native crafts. He is rather depressed watching Storm Cloud and her two friends try to sell their wares to pedestrians who do not care. Panny stops by and tells him that Martin may have found out where the Rippers gang hangs out. Panny and Martin came up with the idea that Martin and Hawk should scare Elroy after the next baseball practice so that he runs back to the gang and they have a chance to follow him again and find out the gang's patterns.

Discussion Questions:

1. Many people do not feel comfortable with giving money to beggars or street vendors like Storm Cloud because they think that the money is going to bad habits like smoking, alcohol or drug use instead of food and shelter. After reading about Storm Cloud and Hawk's struggles to live off of the money she makes from selling her crafts do you feel differently about the people you see begging for money? Does this story make you want to help more?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Taj Mahal
Buddhist

Chapter Nine:

Summary:

In this chapter Hawk and his mother go home to find that their taxi has been removed. At first Hawk thinks that the Rippers might have had something to do with it but it soon becomes clear that Mr. Selim had it removed. He offers them a room in the back of his restaurant, only for a month, until they can find somewhere else to live. The next day is Hawk's first day in class and he is intimidated by the differences between it and his previous classroom. Unfortunately, Hawk is given a nasty note by one of the other students that upsets him.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think that the removal of the taxi by Mr. Selim is a good thing? Why or why not?
2. The note that is left for Hawk reads, "Hi, Pocahontas. What kind of hairspray do you use?" Why is this racist and offensive to Hawk? What is the writer of the note making fun of?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Einstein
Mahatma Gandhi
Hayley Wickenheiser
Mother Teresa

Chapter Ten:

Summary:

In this chapter Hawk meets several new students including Charles, the leader of 'The Ferrets' and Panny's friend Albert. He is overwhelmed by the students and the level of their work. He is assigned a project which he asks his father for help with as it deals with Native heritage in Canada and spends most of his day with Panny and Albert.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think that the way the author describes Ms. Calloway's students and their presentations is an accurate description of a grade four class?
2. On page 110 Ms. Calloway says, "This class is going to be a big turning point for you". Do you think she's right?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Multiple Intelligences
Ad-libbing
Middle Ages

Chapter Eleven:

Summary:

Hawk joins the baseball group after school and together with Martin he tries to intimidate Elroy who comes to practice with a different glove. Despite their attempts, Elroy does not seem concerned about Hawk or his threats. After practice Martin follows Elroy again and Hawk goes back home where his mother is a bit irritated that Hawk had not bothered to ask her for help with his project.

Discussion Questions:

1. On page 112 Hawk describes a particular experience that he has while walking over to Mr. Rizzuto's. What do you think of it? Can you relate at all?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Line drive

Chapter Twelve:

Summary:

Hawk meets his second teacher, Ms. Clarke, and spends the day being taught by her. He runs afoul of Charles by accidentally hitting him with a ball in gym and not bringing the dollar that he was supposed to give over. Charles gives him a threatening card with a skull and cross bones on it with "Monday" written underneath. After school Hawk, Panny and Albert meet up with Martin who tells them that he was caught by the Rippers and that he saw their "Big Boss."

Discussion Questions:

1. At the very end of the chapter Martin reveals that Mr. Big is Asian. Why does he seem reluctant to tell the others this information? Do you think it matters that Mr. Big is possibly Chinese?
2. Why do you think Elroy helped Martin escape the Rippers? Do you think Panny is right and that he's being forced to join?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

der Junge

Chapter Thirteen:

Summary:

Hawk, Albert, Panny and Martin visit Panny's cousin, Dr. Sam, a Criminology professor at York University. They learn more about gangs, especially the Chinese triads, and speculate about whether or not the Rippers could be connected to them.

Discussion Questions:

1. The author uses a considerable amount of foreshadowing in this chapter. Find and explain one example of foreshadowing in this chapter. What do you think the author is hinting at?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Dim sum

Chapter Fourteen:

Summary:

Hawk learns from Mr. Selim that his mother has left with her friend to go to Ottawa for an unspecified amount of time. He spends the weekend with his father, learning more about his Native heritage and talking about Charles and the Ferrets. His father promises to go to the school with him on Monday morning to talk to the teacher about the bullying.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think about Storm Cloud's sudden trip to Ottawa? Are you surprised? Why or why not?

Chapter Fifteen:

Summary:

Panny, Hawk, Martin and Albert stake out Elroy's house and eventually confront him. Elroy invites them inside to talk, away from prying eyes. Hawk also tells his friends about his troubles with Charles and finds that they are all very supportive.

Discussion Questions:

1. Hawk and his friends confront Elroy on their own, cornering him outside of his home. Why might this have been a bad idea? What could have gone wrong?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Fascist

Chapter Sixteen:

Summary:

Hawk and his friends learn that Elroy has been pressured into the gang and that he is scared for his life. He tells them that he has to complete a big task for the gang the next evening as part of his initiation. Panny comes up with a plan to catch the Rippers in the act so that they have something to give the police and get Elroy out of trouble.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you feel about Elroy after hearing his story? Do you think he should be forgiven for his actions?
2. What do you think of Panny's plan to catch the Rippers? Is it a good idea or a dangerous one?

Chapter Seventeen:

Summary:

Hawk goes to school and has the satisfaction of seeing Charles pulled out of class by Ms. Calloway. After school he is picked up by Mr. Rizzuto who tells him that he may have found and purchased Babe Ruth's ball. Hawk informs him that the ball is about to be stolen that night by the Rippers.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you suspect that the Rippers might be connected to Babe Ruth's ball? Why or why not?

Chapter Eighteen:

Summary:

Mr. Rizzuto is reluctant about Hawk's plan, but agrees to it because he's even more reluctant to involve the police. Hawk nearly slips up about the evenings plans before leaving his father's house and going to meet his friends at their prearranged spot.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think it's realistic for Hawk's father to simply accept his explanation about the Rippers and Elroy? Why or why not?
2. If you were Mr. Rizzuto, how would you react to Hawk's news? Explain your reaction.

Chapter Nineteen:

Summary:

Hawk and his friends attempt to pull off their plan to expose the Rippers but it backfires and they end up in a fight with two of the gang members. Luckily for them, Albert's cousin and his partner arrive in time to catch two of the Rippers, but not before Ringo escapes with Chew-Boy in a sack.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think Hawk and his friends could have done better so that they didn't end up cornered by the Rippers?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Sangria
Picasso

Chapter Twenty:

Summary:

Hawk, Martin and Panny chase after Ringo with the help of Elroy who was shown the escape route earlier by the Rippers. They chase him out onto the street where they find that he has been hit by a bus. He is not killed but wounded enough to warrant a visit to the hospital. Chew-Boy is safe and sound and the kids return to the warehouse where the police are waiting for them.

Discussion Questions:

1. Would a real police officer let a bunch of kids chase down a wanted criminal?
2. On page 189 a passenger of the bus that hit Ringo says, "but we're a bit ticked off because we're going to be late for the dog show. And we came all the way from Buffalo, New York to be part of it..." What was your reaction to this line? What do you think of the woman?

Chapter Twenty-One:

Summary:

Hawk is delivered back to his father's house where he spends the next couple of days grounded and out of school. On the third day, Mr. Rizzuto and all of Hawk's friends including Ms. Calloway and Mr. Rizzuto's lawyer come over to un-box the stuff that had been found in the warehouse. They find Babe Ruth's ball in one of the boxes.

Discussion Questions:

1. If you were Hawk and Mr. Rizzuto, what would you do with the ball?

Chapter Twenty-Two:

Summary:

Hawk's mother comes back from Ottawa to congratulate him on his success and Hawk returns to school to give his presentation. The book finishes up with all of the friends at Panny's cousin's place eating and laughing.

Discussion Questions:

1. What did you think of the ending of the book? Were you satisfied? Did you enjoy the story? Why or why not?

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Put the squeeze on

Oblige

IV READING COMPREHENSION QUIZ:

1. Which teacher does Hawk's mother dislike?
 - a. Ms. Calloway
 - b. Mrs. MacWhinney
 - c. Mrs. Cole
 - d. Ms. Clarke
2. Which character owns a shoe repair shop?
 - a. Mr. Selim
 - b. Mr. Rizzuto
 - c. Storm Cloud
 - d. Chick
3. What is Storm Cloud's real name?
 - a. Panny Chang
 - b. Eliza Dean
 - c. Ruby Wilson
 - d. Juliet Fletcher
4. What year did Babe Ruth hit his first home run?
 - a. 1930
 - b. 1922
 - c. 1918
 - d. 1914
5. Which character claims to be a descendant of a famous baseball player?
 - a. Hawk
 - b. Martin
 - c. Mr. Rizzuto
 - d. Elroy
6. What does Storm Cloud do for a living?
 - a. She owns an Indian restaurant
 - b. She drives a taxi
 - c. She teaches Native culture
 - d. She sells trinkets
7. Where did Elroy come from originally?
 - a. Toronto
 - b. 'the South'
 - c. 'up North'
 - d. Ottawa

8. What area of Toronto does Hawk live in?
- Etobicoke
 - North York
 - Riverdale
 - High Park
9. What does Hawk's father do?
- He works at the Native Center
 - He's a mechanic
 - He makes Native trinkets
 - He owns his own shop
10. Where does Storm Cloud want to move to?
- St. Catherines
 - Hamilton
 - Vancouver
 - Ottawa
11. Which gang steals Hawk's glove?
- The Rippers
 - The Ferrets
 - The Triads
 - The Mafia
12. Who leaves a note for Hawk on his first day in a new class?
- Albert
 - Panny
 - Charles
 - Eliza
13. How does Hawk feel about the Gifted Grade Four class at first?
- He's happy
 - He's overwhelmed
 - He's upset
 - He's cautious
14. What does Hawk do his presentation on?
- Native Customs
 - Life on the streets
 - Women's Rights
 - Youth Gangs
15. Where does Martin hide after he escapes from the Rippers?
- Rizzuto Shoe Repair
 - Selim's Indian Restuarant
 - Chang's Dim Sum
 - Schnitzel House

16. Who is the leader of the Rippers?
- Ringo
 - Elroy
 - Sterling
 - Martin
17. Which gang is Mr. Big the leader of?
- The Rippers
 - The Ferrets
 - The Triads
 - The Mafia
18. Who is Dr. Sam?
- Martin's uncle
 - Panny's cousin
 - Albert's cousin
 - Mr. Rizzuto's friend
19. What colour is Chew-Boy?
- White
 - Black & Grey
 - Brown
 - Beige & White
20. What does Elroy's mom want him to be when he grows up?
- A lawyer or a doctor
 - Something in law enforcement
 - A mechanic or a carpenter
 - A piano man or a preacher
21. What is the nickname of the original O'Boyle?
- Runner
 - Diver
 - Skimmer
 - Hunter
22. What happens to Ringo?
- He gets hit by a bus while running away
 - He gets arrested by Albert's cousin
 - He gets bitten by Chew-Boy
 - He surrenders when the police show up
23. How many days is Hawk grounded for?
- Five
 - Two
 - Three
 - Seven

24. Who says, "Everything documented, everything legal—that's my motto"?

- a. Mr. Rizzuto
- b. Mr. Selim
- c. Hawk's father
- d. Albert's cousin

25. Where do the kids go at the end of the final chapter?

- a. They all go home
- b. They all go to Hawk's dad's place
- c. They all go to Dr. Sam's
- d. They all go to the Schnitzel House

V ANSWER KEY:

1. B
2. B
3. C
4. D
5. C
6. D
7. B
8. C
9. A

10. D
11. A
12. C
13. B
14. A
15. D
16. A
17. C
18. B

19. A
20. D
21. C
22. A
23. C
24. A
25. C

VI LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS:

1. On page 30 Mr. Rizzuto says, "Think about this. You know how sometimes you know something but you don't really know it, because you never really took it out of your mind and looked at it, dusted it off, and took it on in a real way. It was just a thought, bumping around in your brain with lots of other ideas, then one day, bingo! It's real and you're ready to deal with it." Explain what Mr. Rizzuto means in your own words. Use examples to help support your explanation.
2. Do you think Storm Cloud is a bad mother or just doing the best with what she has? Consider the things that she says to Hawk and her actions throughout the story when you answer. Use evidence from the novel to support your opinion.
3. On page 202 Jim says, "If you get some money for this little round globe of a baseball, this souvenir, you should think about that big glove and how every age has its challenges. Don't just think about getting money. Think about how, when you grow up, you can help make the world a much better place to live in, so we don't go back to the bad times of Babe Ruth's 'good old days.'" What does he mean by this? What is he trying to teach Hawk?