

# ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

## Language Arts

Each of Brooks's characters is quite different from the others, but they have many similarities as well. Construct a comparison chart for the class to fill out. Across the top of the chart, write the following categories: Character's Name; What does this character value? What is this character's family like? What is a challenge this character faced in the book? How did the character deal with that challenge? Identify a change that this character undergoes through the course of the book. Down the side of the chart, list the following characters' names: Jerome, Bix, Asa, and Zim. Fill in the chart as a class.

Have each student select a character from the books and keep a journal as that character. Students should write in the journal regularly as they read. You may wish to supplement their writing by supplying thought-provoking questions related to the text. In addition to getting students to probe into how the characters think and feel, this is also a good exercise in writing in a particular voice—have students examine how the character talks and thinks and try to mimic that voice in their journals.

Brooks uses exciting and descriptive language to make baseball and basketball games come to life on paper. Have students write a descriptive observational piece (if they are not interested in sports, they may prefer to write up something else physical, such as a dance performance). Have them consider how they can take a literal retelling of an event and make it engaging for the reader.

## Social Studies

In *The Moves Make the Man*, Jerome is selected to be the sole black student at a newly integrated high school. Have students research the civil rights movement in the 1960s, select an aspect of the movement that interests them, and prepare a report to present to the class. You may prefer not to limit your students' research to the 1960s and have them research this movement over time, up to and including the 1990s.

## Art

Put the names of characters from these books into a hat and have each student select one. Using newspapers and magazines, each student will make a collage that represents that character with words and pictures. See if the other students can guess which character is being represented. Have volunteers explain how selected images relate to their chosen characters.

## Meeting the Author: An Interview with Bruce Brooks



**Q.** Sports play an important role in many of your books. Have sports been a big part of your life?

**A.** I have always liked sports, as most boys and girls do. With sports, children are truly on their own among their peers. It's difficult for kids to find that kind of forum. Most of the time they are dealing with adults in a subservient way, but the sports field is a place they deal with other kids in direct equality. Sports are never a metaphor for me—they are what they are, and they mean what they mean to the characters.

**Q.** Why do you choose to write for younger audiences instead of adults?

**A.** I don't really. I write *about* young people but not *exclusively for* young people. I love when adults read my books, and I wish more adults would read them. I write about young people because I'm still very intrigued by a lot of the things I went through as a teenager and the things teenagers go through now. I find that young people make fascinating characters and readers.

**Q.** Where do you get the ideas for the characters and the stories in your books?

**A.** My ideas evolve without my knowing why. I come up with certain things, and eventually begin to ask myself about the situations and the characters I'm creating. Questions lead to more questions, and suddenly I have a story. I take the time to think a tremendous amount before I start writing, and I think that's very important.

**Q.** What advice do you give to young readers who want to be writers?

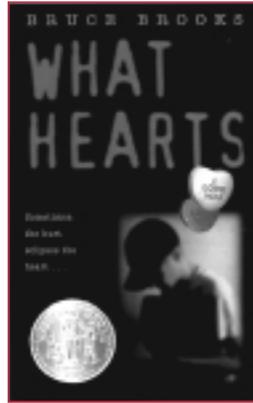
**A.** To read a great deal, and to read with a different kind of analytical eye. By this I mean to realize that writing is basically something aimed at producing emotional effects in the reader. So I advise young readers and writers to do three things: first, to notice when something—a passage, a sentence, a chapter—that they're reading causes their feelings to change; second, to presume that the author wanted the feelings to change that way; and third, to go back over that passage until the mechanism has been uncovered. You can always find out what an author has done to you because the words are there on the page. That's the most important thing a young writer can do, even more than writing—to look at what's written and analyze it.

## Books Featured in This Guide



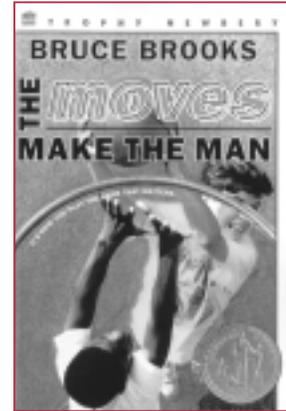
### Asylum for Nightface

Trophy Rack ISBN 0-06-447214-0  
\$4.95



### What Hearts

Trophy Rack ISBN 0-06-447127-6 \$5.95  
1993 Newbery Honor Book  
Notable Children's Books of 1993 (ALA)  
1993 Best Books for Young Adults (ALA)  
1993 Fanfare Honor List (*The Horn Book*)  
1993 Teachers' Choices (IRA)  
1993 Books for the Teen Age  
(NY Public Library)



### The Moves Make the Man

Trophy ISBN 0-06-440564-8 \$4.95  
Trophy Rack ISBN 0-06-447022-9 \$4.95  
1985 Newbery Honor Book  
Notable Children's Books of 1984 (ALA)  
Best of the Best Books (YA) 1966–1992  
(ALA)  
1985 Boston Globe–Horn Book  
Award for Fiction  
Best Books of 1984 (*School Library Journal*)  
100 Favorite Paperbacks of 1989 (IRA/CBC)  
“Best of the '80s” Young Adult Novels  
(*English Journal*)

## More HarperCollins Children's Books About Turning Points

### The Buffalo Tree

By Adam Rapp  
Trophy 0-06-440711-X \$11.00

### Buried Onions

By Gary Soto  
Trophy 0-06-440771-3 \$11.00

### Dangerous Skies

By Suzanne Fisher Staples  
Trophy 0-06-440683-0 \$4.95

### Farm Team

By Will Weaver  
Trophy Rack ISBN 0-06-447118-7 \$4.95

### Gypsy Davey

By Chris Lynch  
Trophy 0-06-440730-6 \$11.00

### Monster

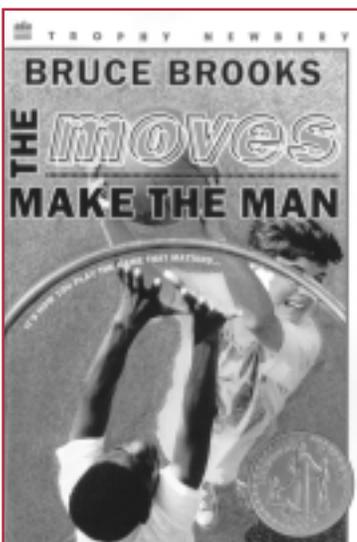
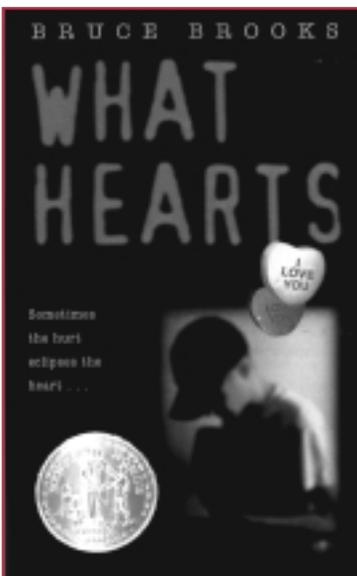
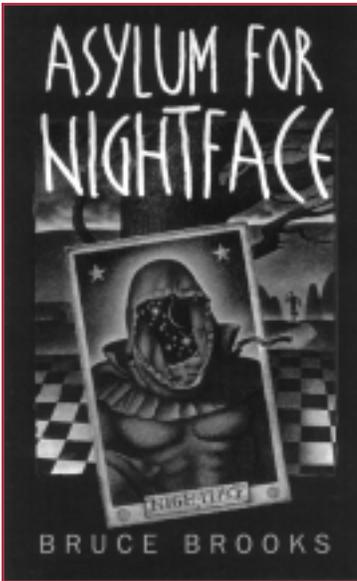
By Walter Dean Myers  
Trade 0-06-028077-8 \$15.95

### Necessary Roughness

By Marie G. Lee  
Trophy Rack ISBN 0-06-447169-1 \$4.95



Visit us on the Web at <http://www.harperchildrens.com/schoolhouse>  
ISBN 0-06-449342-3



## *A Guide to Teaching Bruce Brooks's*

# ASYLUM FOR NIGHTFACE ■ WHAT HEARTS ■ THE MOVES MAKE THE MAN

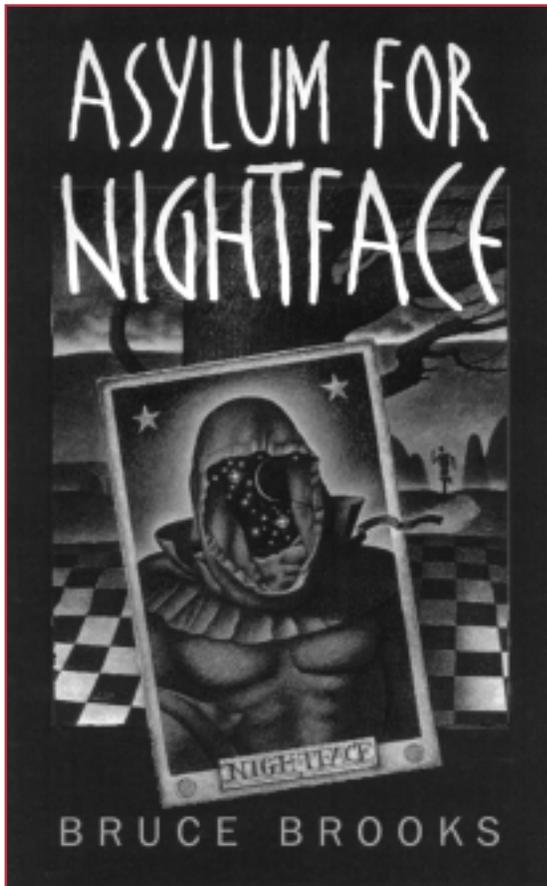
### THEMES

Meeting Challenges  
Personal Journeys  
Problem Solving  
Turning Points

### READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

Compare and Contrast  
Identify Problems and Solutions  
Make Judgments and Decisions  
Understand Cause and Effect

In these three provocative novels, two-time Newbery Honor author Bruce Brooks presents three extraordinary boys as they come of age struggling to cope with difficult situations. Fourteen-year-old Zimmerman of *Asylum for Nightface* must decide between two acts that he finds morally reprehensible. In *What Hearts*, Asa is forced to negotiate his way between an emotionally unstable mother and an antagonistic, manipulative stepfather, while moving so often that he never gets a chance to develop a sense of home. *The Moves Make the Man's* narrator, Jerome, age thirteen, must handle not only the pressures of being the first and only black student at his newly integrated junior high school, but also of living in a temporarily parentless household and befriending a troubled but good-hearted classmate. These independent, intelligent, and charismatic characters meet their difficult situations, learning to recognize love where they find it, no matter how unusual the search.



## BEFORE READING

Have students look at the cover of the book and think about the title. What do they think this story might be about?

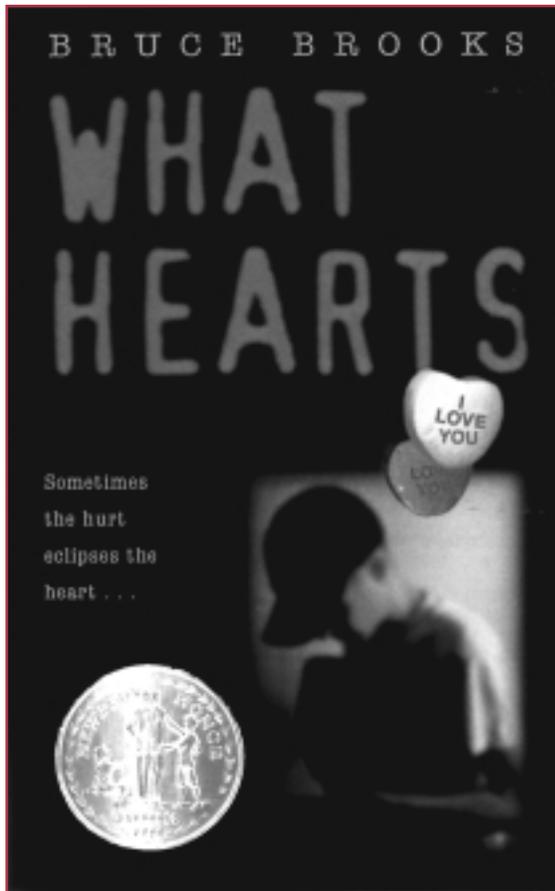
## SETTING THE SCENE

Fourteen-year-old Zimmerman has always baffled his ultrahip parents by a deeply felt faith in God. They love him but consider his chaste lifestyle “bleached,” and constantly encourage him to do something delinquent. However, their attitude takes a sharp turn after a trip to Jamaica changes his parents into devoted members of the Faith of Faiths, a zealous Christian sect led by the charismatic Luke Mark John. They not only begin to regard Zimmerman as a “living saint,” but they want him to be the poster boy for their sect—a sect whose integrity and beliefs he finds questionable. As the book draws toward its climax, Zimmerman must face a

difficult ethical decision involving the morals and virtues he has tried so hard to uphold.

## SHARING THE BOOK: QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Why does Zimmerman dislike organized religion? How does his own attitude toward religion differ from that of most churchgoers? Where do you think his parents’ faith fits within these distinctions?
- Within Zimmerman’s narrative, he tells the tale of the comic-book-creating prodigy Drake Jones. What parallels do you notice between Zimmerman and Drake?
- Why does Luke Mark John think Zimmerman will make such a good exemplar for the Faith of Faiths? Why is Zimmerman opposed to this idea?
- In Chapter 24, Zimmerman describes “the closest my parents came to religion” (p. 128). What leads him to say this? Discuss Zimmerman’s father’s unusual behavior at the fishing pond. How do you think it makes Zimmerman feel?
- Discuss the significance of the Nightface card (described in Chapter 15). Why do you think Brooks decided to give this name to the book?
- Why do Zimmerman’s parents try to encourage him to do conventionally wrong things, such as stealing and taking drugs? Describe the relationship between Zimmerman and his parents, both before and after their conversion to the Faith of Faiths. Do you think their roles change much? Why or why not?
- Consider the end of the book. Why does Zimmerman steal the card? Do you think he compromises his values by doing so? Why or why not?



## BEFORE READING

Read aloud the first two chapters of the first section “As If,” and stop. Have students consider foreshadowing and what they have already learned about the characters, and speculate about what they think will happen next. Revisit this query once students have read further and discuss their answers.

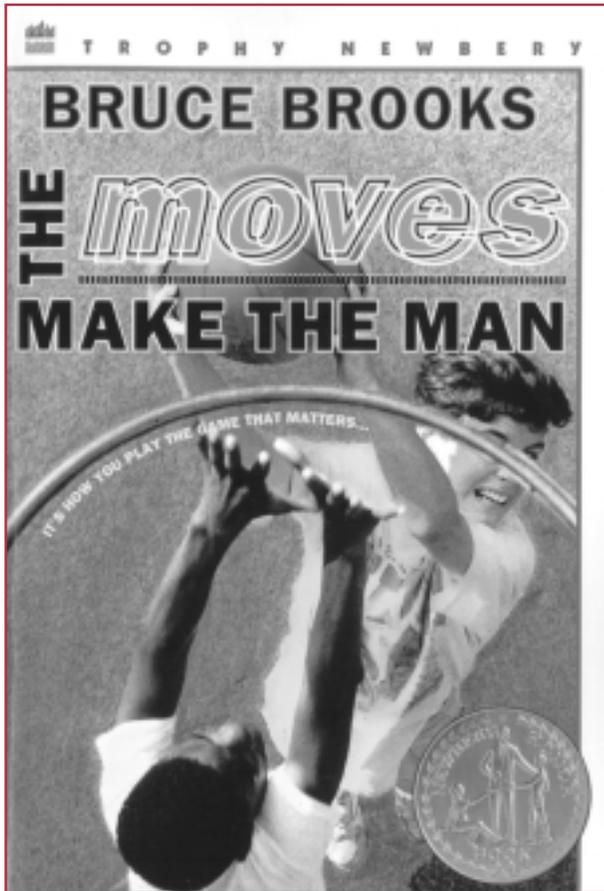
## SETTING THE SCENE

Proud to be bringing home his class’s top honors and a batch of vibrant radishes he grew himself, Asa returns from the last day of first grade to find his mother waiting outside, his suitcase packed, and his father gone. This is only the first of many moves that Asa will make over the next five years with his mother and her belligerent boyfriend, Dave. From their first night together, when he forces Asa to ride a roller coaster by himself, Dave regards Asa suspiciously. Throughout the five years of the book,

Asa confidently faces a difficult journey through childhood. With his constant moving from school to school, Asa learns to slip into casual popularity with students but he is never able to get close enough to develop a real relationship with any of them. The book deals with the many relationships in Asa’s life, from befriending these students to dealing with Dave’s challenges to caring for his loving but emotionally fragile mother. Through it all, Asa triumphs with his wit, intelligence, and charisma.

## SHARING THE BOOK: QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Consider the possible meaning and significance of the four section headings. Discuss the significance of each of these turning points in Asa’s life.
- Why does Dave force Asa to go on the roller coaster? Why does Asa return to the ride later that night? Explain Asa’s realization that he “was not on tracks” (p. 36).
- Discuss Asa’s behavior during the Variety Show. How does Joel react when he sees Asa onstage and realizes what’s going on? Why does Asa decide to recite “Little Boy Blue”?
- Asa notices that “he and Dave were communicating entirely through the baseball” (p. 118). What does he observe? How does practicing sports affect the relationship between Asa and Dave? Why does Dave throw the baseball at Asa (p. 120)?
- What is Asa’s relationship with his mother? Why does she take the sleeping pills? Do you think her divorce from Dave at the end of the book is a turning point for her, or do you think her pattern of moving and taking pills will continue? Explain.
- Why do you think Dave feels the need to tell Asa that he loves him? Do you think Asa loves Dave? Consider both possible answers, and discuss.
- Even though Jean turns out to be fickle in her love for Asa, he ends the conversation, and the book, feeling triumphant. Discuss.
- Asa “knew he would always *move*, inside and out” (p. 185). What does he mean by this? How is this statement reflected in his actions and thoughts throughout the book? Do you think this movement benefits Asa? Why or why not?



## BEFORE READING

Have students think about the title of this book. What do a person's actions show about his or her personality? Is this a valid way to judge someone?

## SETTING THE SCENE

Thirteen-year-old basketball whiz Jerome may be the only black student in his high school, and he may have to help run his fatherless household with his two brothers while his mother is in the hospital, but that doesn't keep him from showing he's one of the brightest kids in school or perfecting his moves on the court. Jerome befriends the talented but mysterious Bix, and an intense friendship develops as Jerome begins to teach him his basketball moves. When it comes time to demonstrate fakes, the key to winning the game, Bix reacts strongly and refuses to do anything that could possibly be deemed dishonest. What unfolds is a compelling and unforgettable tale of honesty, sports, sanity, and friendship.

## SHARING THE BOOK: QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- When Jerome grudgingly attends the baseball game at the beginning of the book, he admits that he “did not want to like anything or anybody. But Bix got me, baby.” What is it about Bix that fascinates Jerome when he first sees him playing baseball?
- How does Jerome wind up getting the lantern? Do you agree with Jerome's mother that he should have returned the light, or with Jerome's brother, who thinks he should keep it? Why?
- Why does Jerome name the lantern Spin Light? Why does this phrase have special meaning to Bix?
- As the title states, Jerome believes that “the moves make the man.” Given their actions, what does this tell you about Jerome and about Bix? What about Bix's parents and Jerome's mother?
- Why does Bix have such strong convictions about telling the absolute truth? Consider the incident between Bix and his mother. Do you think that telling the truth is always the best thing, or are there occasions when it would be better to lie? Explain your answer.
- Beginning halfway through the game against his stepfather, occurring again at dinner at Jerome's house, and coming to a peak with his mother in the hospital, the plot moves from Bix always telling the truth to his using moves and fakes. Why does he undergo this change? In each of the incidents listed above, why does Bix choose to put on moves?
- What role does basketball play in the relationship between Bix and Jerome? Between Bix and his father? For Jerome by himself?
- Jerome closes the book by saying, “If nobody else is there to take the fake, then for good or bad a part of your own self will follow it. There are no moves you truly make alone.” What does he mean by this? How do the events in the book lead him to make this conclusion?

## READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES FOR ALL THREE BOOKS

### Compare and Contrast

Bix, Asa, and Zimmerman all have unusual and often tense family situations. Ask students what similarities they notice among the three. What differences?

### Make Judgments and Decisions

The characters in each of these novels are often faced with complex decisions and problems that do not have clear solutions. Have students identify an important decision that one of the characters makes. Did the character make a good decision? Why or why not?

### Understand Cause and Effect

Ask each student to select a character in one of the novels (such as Bix's mother), and think about his or her actions. Given what is revealed about the character throughout the book, examine how certain situations and character traits lead up to those actions.

## EXPLORING CHALLENGING ISSUES

Each of these books deals with challenging issues, such as: fundamentalist Christianity and casual drug use in *Asylum for Nightface*, child abuse and a parent's suicide attempt in *What Hearts*, and racial bigotry in *The Moves Make the Man*. In addition, all three books contain examples of questionable parenting as well as characters who are emotionally disturbed. The protagonists in Brooks's books face these issues head-on, with integrity and intelligence. Have students supplement the books with real-life examples of the issues raised, and have a forum in the classroom to discuss these topics. How are students' perceptions of these issues affected by reading about them in Brooks's books? Why is it important to cover such topics in literature?