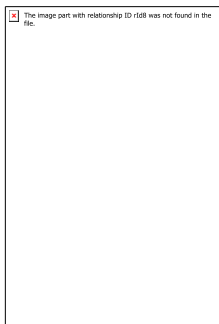


## The First Last Part



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Author Johnson, Angela

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Genre Young Adult, Fiction

Synopsis In this prequel to *Heaven*, sixteen-year-old Bobby struggles between sleep deprivation, school pressures, and an increasing sense of fear as he cares for his infant daughter, Feather. Chapters alternate between life before and after the birth of Feather, effectively capturing Bobby's sometimes conflicting emotions as a young father and revealing why he is raising Feather without her mother.

Themes Family Relations

Protagonist Male, African American

Note Over the years, these books have been published in multiple editions. The page numbers in your book may be different than the ones on the lesson plan.

More Information [www.scu.edu/character](http://www.scu.edu/character)



**Character Based Literacy Program**  
**Independent Study Lesson Plan**  
*The First Part Last, Week 1*





**Integrity Requires Wholeness.** Integrity requires that the way I live my life is whole, entire, undivided, sound, coherent and principled. Integrity moves me to do difficult and new things, not just easy and accustomed things.

## PREPARE

**Background** Gather background knowledge about a place, time, event, person, or thing.

**Research the layout of New York City and Manhattan, and describe what you are able to see, and any questions you have after looking at the map.**

**Map of New York City:**

<http://www.nycvisit.com/content/index.cfm?pagePkey=15>

**Map of Manhattan:**

<http://www.nycvisit.com/content/index.cfm?pagePkey=429>

[http://www.nyctourist.com/images/map\\_manhattan.gif](http://www.nyctourist.com/images/map_manhattan.gif)

**Word Wall** Here are vocabulary words to add to the Word Wall.

|                  |                 |                |                   |            |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|------------|
| baby formula - 4 | mechanical-4    | matinee-5      | nonstop-6         | alley-7    |
| mahogany-10      | muted-11        | respect-12     | responsibility-12 | STD-12     |
| delicate-15      | whimper-16      | post-modern-18 | stark- 18         | tragedy-20 |
| pediatrician-22  | angora-23       | prenatal-26    | obstetrician-27   | Lamaze-28  |
| ulcer-32         | hallucinated-32 | scrunch-34     | bluegrass-34      | revival-35 |

## READ

**Read** Read the selection.

Pages **3-37**

## RESPOND

**Timeline** List 15-20 of the most important events on your Timeline.

- Now: Bobby, the narrator, says that until he was eight years old he didn't sleep through the night and neither did his mother, Mary. Mary would come into his room during the night, sit on the floor near Bobby and play his Game Boy.
- Now: Bobby has an eleven-day old baby named Feather. When she wakes in the night, Bobby lays her on his chest. For him, things need to change.
- Then: Bobby flashes back to his 16th birthday. After spending the day with his friends, K-Boy and J.L., he returns home expecting cake. Instead, Nia, his girlfriend, is waiting for him on the stoop. Bobby says he never got any cake.
- Then: Bobby remembers an old guy, "Just Frank," from the corner who used to ask him if he was being a man. Just Frank died trying to save a young girl from being assaulted in an alley. He was buried in Potter's Field. Bobby wonders if he will be a man.
- Now: Bobby doesn't want to let Feather out of his sight. His mother, Mary, warns him that one day he will be sorry for not exposing her earlier to the world beyond him.

- Now: K-Boy and J.L. are in Bobby's bedroom watching Feather. They are making faces and shaking rattles at Feather who is screaming.
- Now: J.L. picks up Feather and rocks her to sleep. J.L. promptly falls asleep also.
- Now: K-Boy asks Bobby if he is going to keep the baby. The question irritates Bobby. He turns up the volume on his Walkman and says, "No doubt in my mind I'm keepin' her."
- Then: Bobby flashes back to the day in Mary's living room when he told Fred and her that Nia was pregnant. He awaited a lecture that never came.
- Then: Instead, Fred began to cry.
- Now: Bobby realizes what it means to be a parent. Feather wants no one but him.
- Now: Bobby packs Feather's diaper bag and heads to Bedford Stuyvesant to spend the day with his father, Feather's grandfather.
- Then: Bobby flashes back to the day he and Nia told her parents that Nia was pregnant.
- Then: Nia's father asks Bobby a lot of questions. Bobby answers the questions differently in his mind than he does verbally.
- Then: Bobby knows that the conversation is over when Nia's parents stand and say they want to speak to Bobby's parents. Bobby wishes he had started crying before Nia did.
- Now: At the pediatrician's office, Bobby recalls forgetting about Feather the day before when he left the house to go play basketball.
- Now: In the examining room, Dr. Victor weighs Feather, then turns her attention to Bobby. She notes that he looks tired and that he might be coming down with something.
- Now: Bobby wants to tell her how tired he is. Instead, he just says that he is fine.
- Then: In the obstetrician's office, Bobby and Nia sit in the waiting room, both pretending that this isn't really happening. Nia cries.
- Then: Bobby waits outside while Nia is examined by the doctor.
- Now: Bobby has spent the last 24 hours in the hospital with Feather who came down with a 24-hour bug.
- Now: Bobby's mom is out of town and his dad is swamped at the restaurant. Bobby says he hasn't slept in three days.
- Now: After arriving home from the hospital, Bobby stops in at Coco's apartment. He and Feather fall asleep together on her couch until the early morning hours.
- Then: Bobby flashes back to when he told his best friends that Nia was pregnant.
- Then: J.L. asks Bobby for change so that he can call 1-800 ISTUPID for him. Bobby says that they had talked about being careful in the past and that his mother had wanted him to be careful as well.

**Map** Add to ongoing activities like a KWL chart or Map: where did the characters go?

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For the following weeks:

- Keep a running list of things that Bobby does that indicate he is “being a man.”
- Maintain a list of clues as to what may have happened to Nia and where she might be.
- Maintain a Venn diagram labeled “Bobby’s life before Feather” and “Bobby’s life after Nia.”
- Add any landmarks to your map. While you may not be able to pinpoint the location, you will likely be able to place it in the correct borough and neighborhood.

## EXPLORE

**Activity** Explore the reading more deeply with a visual or oral language activity.

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### **One possible activity: *Open Mind Portrait***

Create an Open Mind Portrait of Just Frank, the old man on the corner. Use a Speech bubble to indicate what Just Frank asks Bobby. Use thought bubbles to infer what Just Frank might mean by his question.

Materials:

- large piece of stiff paper for each character, like 11x17 oak tag
- paper for bubbles with scissors and glue sticks
- markers, crayons, pens, pencils, or paint
- construction or tissue paper, scissors and glue sticks if desired

Step One: create a large head shot of the character

1. Imagine what you think the character looks like from the descriptions in the text as well as your imagination. You can make a list of these details to help you draw the character, if you wish.
2. Decide how much of the character you wish to show: just the head and face? from the shoulders up? from the waist up? the whole person? You might want to include at least the shoulders to include some clothing details. You might want to show the size differences between characters.
3. Draw the characters head shot including the face on the large piece of paper. You could also cut the paper to form the head.
4. Illustrate your portrait with colors, construction paper or whatever will make the character colorful.

Step Two: place cartoon bubbles of character thoughts around the portrait

1. Cut cartoon bubbles out.
2. Write things the character thinks, or says to him, on each bubble.
3. Put the bubbles up around the portrait.

Step Three: add bubbles as you learn new things about the character

1. Read the story further and identify new things you have learned about the character, or ways the character has changed.

2. Follow step 2 to create and place additional bubbles.

Variations of this Open Mind Portrait:

1. You can use this process for any character in the story
2. You can use bubbles for what the character says, says to him or her, or does. You could make each of these different colors if you wish.
3. You could add bubbles for what the character learns, or ways the character changes, and use different colors for each.
4. You could use different colors for the beginning, middle and end of the story. Remember in the beginning you are introduced to the setting, the characters and the problems they have. In the middle you learn about the roadblocks to the characters solving their problems, and conflicts occur. In the end of the story those conflicts reach a peak and then resolve with a resolution of the character's problems.
5. You could use different colors for the phases you see in a story or the development of a particular character.
6. Instead of using bubbles you could write the bubble contents on the back of the portrait. You could use any of the variations above with color or print, or create columns or boxes for different categories or phases.
7. You could literally open the head like a hinge and list the contents [as though they were escaping from the space using any of these variations.
8. You could make an Open Mind Portrait of yourself using any of the above variations.

Variations for Writing:

1. You could use the OMP to help write a character sketch, or to help decide what a character might do in a story.

**One possible activity: *Postcard***

Pretend you are Bobby. Create a postcard with the picture of Feather that you drew on the front. Turn it over and write a brief note to Feather, telling her why you decided to keep her.

**One possible activity: *New York City Map***

Create a map of New York City labeling all the five boroughs. Begin to locate settings and events from the novel. You will add to your map throughout the novel. To this point you should be able to locate and label the Empire State Building, the Upper West Side, and Bedford Stuyvesant.

**One possible activity: *Cartoon Strip***

Rearrange this week's events in chronological order using a cartoon strip with five or more frames.

**One possible activity: *Help Line***

Brainstorm issues like pregnancy that teens have to deal with. Create a visual advertisement or the script for a commercial about a new teen helpline. Give the help line a name (1-800-\_\_\_\_\_). [What information would you want to be able to get from

a help line? What services would you want them to supply? What would make you feel safe to call?]

## Discussion

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### Key Questions

#### Pages 3-8

1. Who is the narrator? How old is he? What should others know about Bobby and his life at this point?
2. What do you think Nia said to Bobby when she handed him the red balloon? What do you think happened next?
3. What do you think Just Frank means when he asks Bobby if he's being a man?
4. What do you think makes a man?
5. How do you imagine your life would change if you had a baby this year?

#### Pages 9-13

1. Who gets Feather to fall asleep? What do you know about J.L. and K-Boy?
2. Why do you think Bobby got irritated with K-Boy when he asked if Bobby was going to keep Feather?
3. Why do you think Nia isn't there with Bobby?
4. Why do you think Bobby's dad, Fred, cried?
5. What would you do if you were in Bobby's shoes? What would you advise Bobby to do if you were his friends? His parents?

#### Pages 14-21

1. What are Bobby's new rules? What rules do you think Bobby had before Feather came along?
2. What questions do you think Nia's parents asked Bobby?
3. What do you think Nia's parents will say to Bobby's parents when they talk?
4. Think about a time when your responsibilities increased and you had to "grow up."
5. Why do you think Angela Johnson is telling this story in a non-linear fashion? Why doesn't she just start at the beginning and tell the story sequentially?

#### Pages 22-29

1. Why is it ironic that Bobby has brought Feather to see Dr. Victor?
2. How do you think Bobby felt when he realized he had left Feather all alone? What could have happened? Do you think he will do it again?
3. Do you think Bobby is ready to be a father? Why?
4. How would your life be different if you had to "grow up" today?

#### Pages 32-37

1. Why aren't Bobby's parents at the hospital with him and Feather? How do you feel about that?
2. What would you say to Bobby if you were K-Boy or J.L.?
3. Do you think Bobby was stupid? Why?

## EXTEND

**Write** Write a short product from today's prompt to connect to the unit theme.

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**Key Paragraph – 7**

“I used to laugh when this old dude, ‘Just Frank’ from the corner, used to ask me if I was being a ‘man.’ He never seemed to ask anybody else if they were being men; at least I never heard him. I laughed ‘cause I didn’t consider him much of one, a man, hangin’ on the corner, drinking forties at ten in the morning. Hell, he was a joke. Always had been.”

**Writing Task:**

Think about the people you know. Choose one who you think is a “man.” Describe a particular situation in which this person acted like a man. Then explain why this person’s actions in this situation made him a man.

**Key Paragraph – 11**

“A few minutes later this woman on TV is pointing at a mountain of dirt, an’ I say—like I’m talking to myself—‘No doubt in my mind that I’m keeping her.’”

**Writing Task:**

Pretend you are Bobby and that you have just made the decision to keep Feather. Write the inner dialogue - like you were talking to yourself - that went through your mind leading you to this decision.

**Key Paragraph – 21**

“Yeah, Mr. Wilkins, I got your daughter pregnant.

Yeah, Mr. Wilkins, I know that this is a tragedy ‘cause you all expected more responsible behavior from us.

Oh, hell yeah, we know what’s in store for us.

I can’t tell you how upset my parents are, and the way my dad cried, and the way my mom wanted to slap me so hard she bit her lip till it bled down her chin.

No. I don’t have any plans except shooting hoops with my partners at the rec center, and hanging out till we get bored and take in a movie. (Is this what you meant, Mr. Wilkins? Is this what you wanted me to say instead of I’m going to be the best father to me and Nia’s baby that there ever was?)”

**Writing Task:**

Bobby is experiencing the loss of his childhood innocence. Think of a time when you had to grow up and accept more responsibility - a time when you realized people expected more of you than they previously had. Describe the situation and explain how your life changed.

**Key Paragraph – 24**

“ ‘Your arcade days are over, brother.’ She laughed before she walked out the front door, mumbling something about going to develop some prints.”

**Writing Task:**

Imagine you are a mother or a father of a teenager approaching the age of 18. Write the introduction for a story in which you have a conversation with your son or daughter

about accepting the responsibilities of growing up. [HINT: Think about your own priorities right now and the order in which you place them. Then imagine yourself grown up, fending for yourself (or for your family) - having a job, paying all the bills, buying all the food and supplies, etc. In what ways might you need to change?] Begin your story with the following sentence: “Your \_\_\_\_\_ days are over, \_\_\_\_\_.”

### **Key Paragraph – 32-33**

“Feather spent last night in the hospital, with me sitting next to her bed all night long. I’ve had about twenty minutes’ sleep in the last three days. Almost got locked in the toilet off the waiting room ‘cause I was so sleepy I hallucinated being on the subway.

I got into a fight with a nurse.

Left my backpack in the taxi I came to the hospital in.

And before all of that, Feather threw up on the last clean jacket I had, and my mom is out of town and not answering her voice mail.

Half of Pop’s kitchen staff called off and he’s up to his ass...”

### **Writing Task:**

Reflect on Bobby’s parents’ hands-off approach to being grandparents. Decide whether or not you agree with the way they are treating Bobby and his new situation as a father at 16. Explain your answer, using details from the text as well as from your own experience.

## Character Based Literacy Program

### Independent Study Lesson Plan

#### The First Part Last, Week 2



**Integrity Requires Wholeness.** Integrity requires that the way I live my life is whole, entire, undivided, sound, coherent and principled. Integrity moves me to do difficult and new things, not just easy and accustomed things.

### PREPARE

**Background** Gather background knowledge about a place, time, event, person, or thing.

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**Word Wall** Here are vocabulary words to add to the Word Wall.

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|                |                |             |               |              |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| caramel-42     | khakis-43      | transfer-43 | loafers-42    | engaged-43   |
| polka-dot-45   | jackhammers-46 | ruffle-47   | tangy-48      | pamphlets-49 |
| scoped-50      | guidance-51    | caftan-52   | gasping-55    |              |
| brownstones-58 | bodega-59      | savior-60   | fairy tale-65 |              |
| imitation-66   | damsel-66      | brunch-66   | moat-68       | verge-72     |

### READ

**Read** Read the selection.

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Pages **38-74**

### RESPOND

**Timeline** List 15-20 of the most important events on your Timeline.

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- Then: After telling his friends that Nia is pregnant, J.L. just walks away. K-boy walks Bobby home.
- Then: On the way to Bobby's house, K-Boy asks Bobby what he wants. Bobby throws up.
- Now: In Brit Lit class, Bobby can't keep his eyes open. He drools all over his desk.
- Now: The teacher, Mr. Phillips, holds Bobby after class. Bobby tells the teacher that the mother used to go to school there too, but doesn't anymore.
- Now: Mr. Phillips tells Bobby he hopes he is "getting help." Then Mr. Phillips walks away.
- Now: Bobby takes the subway to pick up Feather from the babysitter in Brooklyn.
- Now: Jackie, the babysitter (who use to babysit Bobby) says that Bobby looks tired. She promises things will change soon enough.

- Then: At ten in the morning, Nia craves pizza. She talks Bobby into bringing her one from Mineo's on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, before returning to her flat in Chelsea.
- Then: Nia follows the pizza with tacos only two hours later. Her belly is beginning to show, and Bobby jokes that the baby eats like a "starving pig."
- Then: Nia says that her parents won't be home for some time. The two go up to her bedroom.
- Now: Bobby is running late this morning. He says over and over that he should have read the signs and just stayed home.
- Now: Coco agreed to take Feather for the day, so that Bobby wouldn't have to go all the way to Jackie's in Brooklyn, which would make him late for school.
- Then: Bobby flashes back to the day that he, along with K-boy and J.L., turned Mr. Nelson's classroom upside down.
- Then: Bobby didn't get a chance to watch Mr. Nelson's reaction, because he was summoned to the office.
- Then: Nia was in the hospital. She was sleeping when Bobby arrived. He put his hand on her belly and the baby kicked.
- Now: Bobby leaves Coco's house after dropping off Feather.
- Now: He realizes that he has an hour and a half before school starts. A craving comes over him to spray paint like he used to.
- Now: After coffee and a doughnut at Mineo's, Bobby spends the entire day painting a public wall. He creates a mural that tells a story with him as a ghost.
- Now: Just before he finishes, Bobby feels a hand on his shoulder. It's the police. The officer hauls Bobby off to the station.
- Then: Bobby tells a fairy tale story of a perfect day.
- Then: Bobby continues his fairy tale story about the perfect day, and it becomes clear that he is remembering a real day in the not-so-distant past when his troubles seemed insignificant to the trouble he finds himself in now.
- Now: The officer places Bobby in a holding cell until his father comes for him in a cab.
- Now: Bobby's father wants to know if he is OK and whether or not he has eaten.
- Now: Bobby's father warns Bobby that he has messed up pretty bad this time - that his mother is furious, that Jackie was worried something had happened to both of them, that Coco had almost called the police, and that Feather missed her daddy.
- Now: Bobby prepares himself to face everyone and heads up the stairs and into the apartment.

**Map** Add to ongoing activities like a KWL chart or Map: where did the characters go?

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- Maintain a KWL chart regarding the treatment of the Jewish people in Germany from 1929 to 1945.
- Add to your list of things that Bobby does that indicate he is “being a man.”
- Maintain your list of clues as to what may have happened to Nia and where she might be.
- Maintain your Venn diagram labeled “Bobby’s life before Feather” and “Bobby’s life after Nia.”
- Add any landmarks to your map. While you may not be able to pinpoint the location, you will likely be able to place it in the correct borough and neighborhood.

## EXPLORE

**Activity** Explore the reading more deeply with a visual or oral language activity.

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### **One possible activity: *Open Mind Portrait***

Create an Open Mind Portrait for J.L. who asks, “What do you want me to say?” Use thought bubbles to infer the things that must be going on in J.L.’s mind to make him simply walk away from his friend without a word.

### **One possible activity: *Newspaper***

Using large paper ( a couple of 11x17 pieces taped together or a piece of chart paper), create a front-page layout for the school newspaper. Give your paper a name (*PS 129 High School Times*, for example). Divide the rest of your paper into four sections, one for each day’s story this week. In the first section create a headline for a news story you are going to write, drawing from an event in the reading – perhaps a human interest story about Jackie the babysitter, perhaps a story about what you should or should not do while pregnant. (see <http://www.bygpub.com/natural/pregnancy.htm> )

Create a visual to go along with the story and include a caption below it. Then write the first few introductory sentences that will draw the reader’s interest. (You will complete the article for your journal.)

Continuing with the school newspaper, create a headline for a news story. You will likely wish to focus on the prank pulled at Bobby’s school. Create a visual with a caption, and write the interest-grabbing introduction.

Continuing with the school newspaper, create a headline for another news story. You will likely wish to focus on Bobby’s arrest. Use the facts available in the text. Then add any other details you choose. Include a quote from K-Boy and one from the principal. You may wish to ask where Bobby’s baby was while he was doing this.

Continuing with the school newspaper, create a headline for another news story. You will likely wish to focus on Bobby’s failure to take care of his child. Pretend you have contacted the police to find out about Bobby’s charges and that you have also called a social worker to find out about the possible ramifications of Bobby’s neglect. Give your story a title. Include a visual. Then begin the story, using an interest-grabbing sentence or two.

## Discussion

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### Key Questions

#### Pages 38-44

1. How do Bobby's friends react to what he tells them? Is this the reaction you expected? How would you respond?
2. What do you think makes Bobby throw up?
3. Bobby has dropped a few clues so far as to why Nia is not present in his or Feather's life at this time. Where do you think she is? Why do you think she isn't around?
4. What happens to you when you get over-stressed? What physical reactions do you experience? What do you do that is positive to deal with stress when you experience it? What advice would you give to Bobby?

#### Pages 44-49

1. What borough does Jackie live in? What borough does Nia live in? What neighborhood does Nia live in? How far is Mineo's Pizzeria from Nia's flat?
2. Why does Bobby take Feather to Jackie, even though she is so far away? What does Bobby remember most about spending days at Jackie's house as a small child? What is Bobby's opinion of Jackie?
3. Do you think Nia wants to keep the baby or not? What makes you think so?

#### Pages 50-56

1. What sign does Bobby say he should've listened to this morning?
2. Bobby's dad says that if you pay attention to the signs, you can change things. But K-Boy says, "What's gonna go down is already set." What do you think?
3. Why do you think the boys, especially Bobby, found so much joy in this "stupid" prank?
4. What do you think is wrong with Nia? Will she be all right?

#### Pages 57-65

1. What does Bobby decide to do with his free time? Do you think he intended to skip school and paint into the night? What happened?
2. Why do you think Bobby paints himself as a ghost? Why does he have such a hard time giving a face to Feather?
3. Was Bobby being a "man"? Why?
4. What are the possible consequences Bobby might experience as a result of his actions?
5. Why do you think Bobby switches from telling the reader about getting caught by the police to telling a fairy tale about the perfect day?

#### Pages 65-74

1. Did this fairy tale really happen? What actual place do you think the magical forest represents?
2. Who all were affected by Bobby's mistake?
3. What do you imagine each might say to Bobby?
4. What advice would you give to Bobby if he asked you how he could make things right?
5. Should Bobby get to keep his baby after this? (Remember, this is the second time he has forgotten her.)

## EXTEND

**Write** Write a short product from today's prompt to connect to the unit theme.

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### **Key Paragraph – 40**

"A minute later, I'm puking in front of a flower shop and K-boy is telling the owner to stop screaming at me, grow a heart, and get out of my face."

### **Writing Task:**

Bobby's body reacts physically to stress with an upset stomach. Prior to throwing up, he also described his fear of having an ulcer. What happens to you when you get stressed? Think of a time when you felt overly-stressed. Explain the situation. Then as vividly as possible, describe your feelings and your reactions to it. Make the reader feel your anxiety.

### **Key Paragraph – 45 or 49**

"Jackie looks the same.

Laughs the same, shaking when she laughs and tossing her beaded braids in back of her when she puts her hands on her hips to tell one of the parents that she needs to give her baby more vegetables to make him regular.

She's probably talked the same way to parents for thirty years.

She probably talked to my own mom that way. Everybody listened."

Or

"No I got all these pamphlets and things from the doctor. All of them say it's okay, just use common sense."

### **Writing Task:**

Over this week, you will be a newspaper reporter for the school newspaper. Choose an event from the reading to report on - perhaps a human interest story on Jackie the babysitter, or perhaps an article on the dos and don'ts of pregnancy. Be sure your story has a beginning, a middle and an end. Depending on the story you choose to write, you may need to include some of your own creative facts and details in order to create an interesting story.

### **Key Paragraph – 54**

"Today we're turning everything in Nelson's room upside down. Desks, chairs, posters, garbage cans, whatever."

### **Writing Task:**

You are a reporter for the newspaper published at Bobby's school. Report on the vandalism to Mr. Nelson's classroom. Be sure your story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. While some details and facts are provided in the reading, you may need to include some of your own creative facts and details as well. Be sure to explain what happened, describe the scene, include a quote from a student and one from the principal. Discuss any possible leads as to who did it and the consequences should the perpetrators be caught.

**Key Paragraph – 60**

“I get about two seconds of relief until the savior turns out to have a uniform and a gun, and I’m sitting in the back of the radio car all the way to the station.”

**Writing Task:**

You are a reporter for the newspaper published at Bobby’s school. Report on Bobby’s arrest. Be sure your story has a beginning, a middle and an end. While some details and facts are provided in the reading, you may need to include some of your own creative facts and details as well. Be sure to explain what happened, describe the scene, and include a quote from the police officer who made the arrest.

**Key Paragraph – 72**

“He looks sad for me, but I must have been hallucinating ‘cause the next second he’s saying, ‘You seriously messed it up today. Coco couldn’t get your mo, and I was out of the restaurant most of the day. She was on the verge of calling the cops.’”

**Writing Task:**

Complete the news story you began earlier. You will likely wish to focus on Bobby’s failure to take care of his child. Pretend you have contacted the police to find out about Bobby’s charges and that you have also called a social worker to find out about the possible ramifications of Bobby’s neglect. You may wish to pretend you have contacted Bobby as well. Be sure to include all the details. Provide quotes from your sources. Pose a closing question for your readers.

## Character Based Literacy Program

### Independent Study Lesson Plan

#### The First Part Last, Week 3



**Integrity Requires Wholeness.** Integrity requires that the way I live my life is whole, entire, undivided, sound, coherent and principled. Integrity moves me to do difficult and new things, not just easy and accustomed things.

### PREPARE

**Background** Gather background knowledge about a place, time, event, person, or thing.

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**Define and explain the different sections of a short story:**

Exposition  
 Rising Action  
 Climax  
 Falling Action and Resolution  
 Reversal

**Word Wall** Here are vocabulary words to add to the Word Wall.

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|              |              |                   |                |                 |
|--------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Thai-76      | fault-77     | blood pressure-78 | anchovies-78   | afterward-81    |
| alien-83     | shrugs-83    | Bat-Mitzvah-83    | caterer-84     | echoes-84       |
| fajitas-90   | eyeing-91    | revenge-93        | doomed-93      | obvious-93      |
| bribe-96     | reflex-96    | unselfish-98      | traditional-98 | reproductive-99 |
| annoying-105 | guidance-108 | fashion-108       | getaway-109    | arcade-110      |

### READ

**Read** Read the selection.

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Pages **75-111**

### RESPOND

**Timeline** List 15-20 of the most important events on your Timeline.

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- Then: K-boy and J.L. are asleep at Bobby's after a night out together.
- Then: In the morning, Nia calls. She is emotional and says she is as big as a house.
- Then: She tells Bobby that her parents want to send her to Georgia to live with her Grandma, where she will be under less stress.
- Then: Bobby tells her he does not want her to go.
- Now: A lady on the bus comments on how nice it is for Bobby to take care of his little sister. He considers going along with the idea that he is Feather's brother. Instead he stares into Feather's eyes and tells the woman that Feather is his daughter.

- Then: Bobby and Nia are at a party at a classmate's house.
- Then: Bobby says that he sees more people at the party than he does at school. Nia, while almost due, is dancing and having a good time.
- Then: Bobby pulls Nia into the hallway. She asks him, "What are we going to do?"
- Then: Bobby can't answer the question, because he can't imagine what it will be like to be a father.
- Then: Nia says that she isn't ready to be a mother. She mentions the possibility of adoption.
- Now: Bobby's older brother Paul is visiting with his two kids, Nick and Nora. They have come from Heaven, Ohio.
- Now: Nick tells Bobby that he helped his dad fix the kitchen sink last week and that he poured orange juice down the drain when the pipes were disconnected. Both Mary and Fred laugh at this.
- Now: Mary offers for the first time since Feather was born, to watch her while Bobby and Paul go have fun.
- Now: At the rec center, Bobby tells Paul that he will be moving to Fred's house in Brooklyn, because of the trouble he caused when he got caught painting the wall.
- Now: Paul tells Bobby that he thinks he ought to consider college. Bobby tells Paul that he loves Feather more than he has ever loved anyone else.
- Then: Bobby and Nia are with their parents at the adoption office.
- Then: The social worker is telling them about traditional and open adoption.
- Then: After the meeting, in the hall, Bobby looks at a photo of a thirteen year-old girl holding a baby. Bobby gives Nia a piece of bubble gum and they hold hands, blowing bubbles, until they get into separate cabs.
- Now: Bobby moves in with Fred. Mary cries before she pulls away in her jeep.
- Now: Bobby wakes with Feather at 5:30 in the morning. He realizes that she looks just like Nia.
- Then: Bobby, Nia, J.L., and K-Boy are hanging out in Mary's apartment. Nia is 8 months pregnant. She says that she has been having a nightmare about being in a bird's nest.
- Then: The narrator states that Nia has decided to give the baby up for adoption next month.
- Now: Jackie, the babysitter, tells Bobby that Feather has begun to cry when Bobby leaves her there. It is now harder for Bobby to leave her.
- Now: Bobby meets J.L. and K-Boy in the laundromat across from school. He says that they are going to see Nia.
- Now: Bobby picks Feather up from Jackie's and returns home to Fred's apartment. While holding Feather, he reads her the letter he received from his brother Paul. Then Bobby tells Feather "about her mom."

**Map** Add to ongoing activities like a KWL chart or Map: where did the characters go?

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- Maintain a KWL chart regarding the treatment of the Jewish people in Germany from 1929 to 1945.
- Add to your list of things that Bobby does that indicate he is “being a man.”
- Maintain your list of clues as to what may have happened to Nia and where she might be.
- Maintain your Venn diagram labeled “Bobby’s life before Feather” and “Bobby’s life after Nia.”
- Add any landmarks to your map. While you may not be able to pinpoint the location, you will likely be able to place it in the correct borough and neighborhood.

## EXPLORE

**Activity** Explore the reading more deeply with a visual or oral language activity.

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### **One possible activity: *Script***

Write the script for the conversation that may have taken place between Nia and her parents, where they suggested that they might send her away to her Grandma’s house in Georgia.

### **One possible activity: *Adoption Agency Ad***

Create an ad for an adoption agency. Market it to young people. Include a visual and some text. What picture might you use to make the ad attractive to a young person? What might you say to convince young people that adoption is a good option?

### **One possible activity: *College Ad***

Create a college ad recruiting young families. (If Bobby were to attend college what extra housing support and daycare support would he need? How would he pay for it? What might convince him that a college education would benefit him and Feather in the future? Include a visual and some text.

### **One possible activity: *Open Mind Portrait***

We hear a lot from the author about how Bobby feels, but we hear much less about how Nia feels. Create an Open Mind Portrait for Nia. Use thought bubbles to infer all that she is thinking about the pregnancy, the impending birth, adoption, and her future.

### **One possible activity: *Dream Depiction***

Visually depict Nia’s dream. Write a brief interpretation of the meaning of the dream below it.

## Discussion

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### Key Questions

**Pages 75-81**

1. How do you think Nia's parents feel about this situation? How do you think they feel about Bobby?
2. Do you think Nia will go to Georgia? Do you think she should?
3. If you were Nia's parents, what arguments would you make to justify sending Nia away?
4. How would you respond, if you were Nia?
5. Do you think Bobby is "being a man" in this section? Why? How would you react if you were in this situation? If you were Nia, how would you hope Bobby would react?

**Pages 82-86**

1. Who is at Jess's party? Where are Jess's parents?
2. What happened at Jess's Bat-Mitzvah?
3. Should Nia be at this party while she's pregnant?
4. What do you think makes someone ready to be a parent?
5. What advice would you give Nia and Bobby at this point? Would that advice be different if you were giving it to your own child?

**Pages 90-95**

1. Describe Paul's children. Which one do you think Feather will end up like? Why?
2. Why do you think Bobby's parents laugh about Paul's getting orange juice in his eyes?
3. Why do you think Mary offers to watch Feather?
4. Will Bobby be better off at his father's house in Brooklyn? Why?
5. What advice would you give to Bobby about school?

**Pages 96-103**

1. What do you think happened that kept Nia and Bobby from giving up the baby for adoption, even though everyone seems to think it was "the right thing to do"?
2. Why do you think the author chose to include a billboard of a thirteen year-old girl in the scene? Why do you think she decided that that Bobby and Nia should be enjoying a piece of bubble gum?
3. In Bobby's life, Mary is the tough one and Fred is the parent that "cooks and cries." Does this make Fred any less of a man? Why?
4. Who do you think Bobby and Feather would be better off living with? Which parenting style do you think is better for Bobby and Feather to live with?
5. How do you think this story is going to end? Will it have a happy ending or a sad one? How would you end it?

**Pages 104-111**

1. What was Nia's nightmare about? How do you interpret this?
2. What do you think happened that changed the decision to put the baby up for adoption?
3. Where do you think the boys are going to visit Nia?

**EXTEND**

**Write** Write a short product from today's prompt to connect to the unit theme.

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**Key Paragraph – 78**

“Her voice is soft and low. ‘My parents are talking about sending me to my grandma’s house in Georgia. They say I wouldn’t be under so much stress there.’”

**Writing Task:**

Write the exposition snapshot for a short story where Nia risks being sent to Georgia. Include Nia, her mother, and her father. Be sure to describe the setting, including sensory details. Set up the conflict for the story. (Remember, the conflict can be between the character and himself/herself, between two or more characters, or between a character and nature, a character and society, or a character and fate.)

Or

Write the exposition snapshot for an original story about a young person in conflict with him/her self, his or her parents, or with the law. Be sure to describe the setting, include at least three characters, and set up the conflict.

**Key Paragraph – 85**

“ ‘My mom talked about adoption, but I don’t know if that would make me bug. I mean the idea that I could be passing my own kid every day and not know it. And what about college? A baby, then?’”

**Writing Task:**

Imagine Nia and Bobby agreeing to give the baby up for adoption. Write the rising action - the part leading up to the climax of the story - for a story in which Bobby and Nia are preparing to give the baby up to the family they have selected. Include two other characters besides Bobby and Nia, and include at least two actions that rise in intensity.

Or

Write your own snapshot of a rising action for a story that involves a character or characters having to make a difficult decision that may affect the rest of his/her/their life/lives. Include at least two actions that rise in intensity.

**Key Paragraph – 95**

“Finally Paul says, ‘What about college for next year? What’s the good of being able to graduate at 16 if you’re not going to be in college?’”

‘I figure I’d just get a McJob for a year and try to save some money.’

‘You’d get to spend more time with Feather.’

I look at Paul and then at the running, screaming kids jumping up and down on the playground. Feather will be one of them one day, and I’ll be one of the scared, happy, mad, yelling, smiling parents who sit on the benches and watch. Just watch it all happen.

I say it like I've known it forever, only now it's so clear and I can say it: 'I've never been closer to or loved anybody more than I love Feather.'

Paul throws a ball back to a group of kids over by the slide and says, I know that, kid. I know that."

### **Writing Task:**

Write the snapshot climax for a story where Bobby goes away to college with Feather. Remember that the climax is the point where the rising action has reached its most intense point. Pay attention to the verbs you use. Provide sensory details. Try to show, instead of tell what is happening. Make the reader feel the intensity of the conflict. Perhaps Bobby has a heated argument. Perhaps he commits another foolish act of irresponsibility like forgetting about Feather. Perhaps the conflict is between the demands of school and the demands of being a young, single father.

Or

Write the climactic snapshot for your own story that deals with a conflict between a character and his/her education. Remember the climax is the most intense part of the story. Pay attention to the verbs you use. Provide sensory details. Try to show, instead of tell what is happening.

### **Key Paragraph – 103**

"I know that even when everything's changing, Feather's not gonna mind as long as she's with me."

### **Writing Task:**

Write the ending - the falling action and the resolution for this story as you would like to see it. Show how the climax has changed Bobby and/or Feather. It may help to imagine what happens to Bobby and Feather over the course of the next five to ten years. Try concluding with the sentence from the key paragraph above.

### **Key Paragraph – 106**

"It would all be back the way it was before, in a month. Nothing would have changed. We'd leave school and keep on going.

No baby in a month."

### **Writing Task:**

Clearly something major changed in the lives of Bobby and Nia that the author has not yet revealed. We know that Bobby has kept the baby, and that while Nia is near enough to be visited, she is not available as a parent. Write the climactic snapshot for a reversal story where the reader has been led to believe that the baby will be given up for adoption. Instead, something significant happens that changes minds. Remember that the climax is the story's most intense part. Make the reader feel the danger, fear, panic, sadness, etc. as you unveil for the reader the events of the next paragraph(s) following the birth of Feather. [Remember that in a reversal story, the author creates an ending different from the one he/she has led the reader to expect. Think about how you would expect the story to end. Then think of possible ways to reverse or change that ending.]

Or

Write the rising action and climax for a reversal story of your own where you lead the reader to believe one thing is going to happen, but instead, something unexpected takes place.

## Character Based Literacy Program

### Independent Study Lesson Plan

#### The First Part Last, Week 4



**Integrity Requires Wholeness.** Integrity requires that the way I live my life is whole, entire, undivided, sound, coherent and principled. Integrity moves me to do difficult and new things, not just easy and accustomed things.

### PREPARE

**Background** Gather background knowledge about a place, time, event, person, or thing.

**Define these aspects of a short story and then give an example for each:**

Discovery  
Choice

**Word Wall** Here are vocabulary words to add to the Word Wall.

|               |                |                  |                |          |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------|
| superior-113  | balloonist-114 | surrounded-115   | preferred-116  |          |
| desperate-119 | babbling-120   | irreversible-122 | vegetative-122 | coma-122 |

### READ

**Read** Read the selection.

Pages **112-131**

### RESPOND

**Timeline** List 15-20 of the most important events on your Timeline.

- Then: At Nia's house, Bobby sings commercial jingles to the baby in Nia's belly until Nia falls asleep. Then Bobby leaves quietly.
- Nia tells the reader that she feels like she is flying, and that she figures this must be what it's like to be dying.
- Now: Bobby tells Feather that he saw her mother today.
- Now: He tells Feather that she is in a coma and that the doctors say that she has brain damage.
- He tells Feather that this is why he would not sign the adoption papers.
- Then: Bobby runs all the way to the Emergency Room. He screams, cries, and begs for Nia to be all right.
- Then: The doctor explains that Nia is in an irreversible vegetative coma, that she will never walk, talk, or smile again.
- Then: A nurse brings the baby to Bobby in an incubator. Bobby says she came to him like "somebody brushed the air with a feather."

- Then: The social worker tries to get Bobby to sign the adoption papers, but he refuses. As she walks down the hall, he thinks he sees “Just Frank” and he knows he is doing the right thing. He is being a man.
- Then: The Wilkins' tell Bobby that they will support him in keeping the baby. Three days later, Bobby and Feather are home together.
- Now: Feather has just gone to sleep, and Bobby is considering moving to Heaven, Ohio which his brother says is a good place to raise kids.
- Now: Fred asks Bobby what he is thinking about. Bobby considers several responses, but settles on “Paul says he loves Ohio and that it’s a good place to raise kids.”
- Now: Fred and Bobby use the time they have while Feather is sleeping to watch the Mets together.
- Heaven: Bobby spends a month going to all his favorite places in New York before he and Feather move to Ohio.
- Heaven: Bobby rented an apartment near a car repair shop for him and Feather. They sit together in the window of the new apartment watching the creek flow past their back yard.

**Map** Add to ongoing activities like a KWL chart or Map: where did the characters go?

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- Maintain a KWL chart regarding the treatment of the Jewish people in Germany from 1929 to 1945.
- Add to your list of things that Bobby does that indicate he is “being a man.”
- Maintain your list of clues as to what may have happened to Nia and where she might be.
- Maintain your Venn diagram labeled “Bobby’s life before Feather” and “Bobby’s life after Nia.”
- Add any landmarks to your map. While you may not be able to pinpoint the location, you will likely be able to place it in the correct borough and neighborhood.

## EXPLORE

**Activity** Explore the reading more deeply with a visual or oral language activity.

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### **One possible activity: *Get-Well Card***

Create a get-well card for Nia. Include a visual on the front and a quote on the inside to go with it. Then write a loving note from Bobby and Feather.

### **One possible activity: *Open Mind Portrait***

Create an Open Mind Portrait for “Just Frank.” Use speech bubbles to demonstrate the things that you think he would tell Bobby about how keeping the baby in this situation makes him a man.

### **One possible activity: *Postcard***

Create a postcard depicting Bobby and Feather in their new life in Heaven. Write a short note on the back to whomever back in New York that you feel Bobby should write to first (Nia, the Wilkins', his friends, Mary, or Fred).

## Discussion

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### Key Questions

#### Pages 112-118

1. Why does Bobby leave Nia sleeping on the couch?
2. What do you think happened to Nia after Bobby left? Why do you think Nia's chapter is written in italics?
3. What arguments can you come up with that Bobby might have used in deciding to keep the baby? Do you think any of the adults changed their minds about the baby following Nia's emergency?
4. Was Nia's condition a surprise to you? If not, at what point in the story did you suspect Nia might be dead or in the hospital? If yes, looking back now, were there clues you missed or interpreted differently? Were there clues that led you to draw different conclusions?

#### Pages 119-126

1. What happened to Nia?
2. How would you initially react when you saw Bobby in the Emergency Room if you were Nia's parents? How would you react to him given time to process all that has happened?
3. What should Bobby consider when making his decision about whether or not to keep Feather?
4. How do you think this story will end?

#### Pages 127-131

1. Where did Bobby move? What would you have done?
2. What factors do you think he had to consider in making this decision?
3. What do you think Bobby will do with his life in Heaven, Ohio? What will happen to Feather over the next five years? Ten Years? Twenty years?
4. Do you think Bobby will ever forget Nia? Will he be able to move on?

## EXTEND

**Write** Write a short product from today's prompt to connect to the unit theme.

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### Key Paragraph – 115

*"All I want to do is lie here and sleep, even though I see the blood and it shouldn't be where it is. And it was just a minute ago Bobby was singing a shampoo commercial, but he's gone now."*

### Writing Task:

Review the list of clues you have been keeping regarding Nia's whereabouts. Then write the exposition and rising action for a discovery story of your own where a set of three clues leads the main character to an amazing, shocking, or tragic discovery.

**Key Paragraph – 125**

“When I walked out of the office I think I see “Just Frank” standing at the end of the hall. And then I know I’m being a man, not just some kid who’s upset and wants it his way.”

**Writing Task:**

Bobby believes he is making the right decision to keep the baby, while the social worker believes that the right decision would be to give her up. Write the climactic scene of a choice story where “Just Frank” and the social worker argue heatedly about what it is to be a man and the right thing to do in this situation. You, the author, will decide who should win the argument.

Or

Write the climactic dialogue for a choice story of your choosing where the main character has to make a difficult decision that may affect the rest of his or her life and the life of others.

## Character Based Literacy Program

### Independent Study Lesson Plan

### *The First Part Last, Final Writing Task*



**Integrity Requires Wholeness.** Integrity requires that the way I live my life is whole, entire, undivided, sound, coherent and principled. Integrity moves me to do difficult and new things, not just easy and accustomed things.

Over the last few weeks, you have written snapshots for several stories. You have written newspaper stories. You have studied the parts of a short story, from the exposition and the rising action, to the climax, the falling action and the resolution. And you have written snapshots for reversal stories, choice stories and discovery stories.

Choose a snapshot you have already written and expand it into a full story. Or write a story of your own, either a reversal, choice, or discovery. Include all the parts of a story. Be sure you have a strong setting, establish a clear point of view and develop three-dimensional characters. Regardless of the story you tell, the central message ought to be about integrity - becoming the person you know you have the potential to be.