Bad Boy: A Memoir by Walter Dean Myers

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

Directions: On a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions in complete sentences using the question stem. Do not use pronouns—be specific. Write legibly and DO NOT write the questions.

MR. IRWIN LASHER—I AM NOT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

1. What does Walter say was the main source of entertainment for young people in Harlem?
2. Based on his knowledge and exposure, into what three categories does Walter place most black people?
3. After being teased for reading, how does Walter bring books home from the library?
4. In the summer between the fifth and sixth grades, who is Walter’s best friend?
5. What is the name of Walter’s first male teacher?
6. How does Walter severely injure his legs?
7. What does Walter tell his father about his legs?
8. When Walter jumps from the church roof, from whom is he escaping?
9. As he approaches age 12, Walter says he wants to be good as well as WHAT?
10. Where is Walter more comfortable than anywhere else?
11. Why is Walter’s birthday party cancelled?
12. What does Walter’s father do at home to pass the time as he mourns Lee’s death?
13. In what sort of class is Walter enrolled in the seventh grade?
14. On occasion, where does Walter’s father take the family as he tries to overcome his depression?

A WRITER OBSERVES--- SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

1. What does Walter consider one of the most beautiful areas in the world?
2. How are Mickey and Walter different?
3. What is the purpose of the club the boys in Walter’s class start?
4. What do the boys in the club get in trouble for doing?
5. Who scares the boys in class by pretending to talk to an officer in the hall?
6. Why isn’t Walter allowed to attend Eddie’s party?
7. What sport does Walter enjoy playing regularly?
8. What interest does Walter hide from his teammates and friends?
9. What is the name of Walter’s ninth-grade teacher?
10. What is Sonnets from the Portuguese, and why is it significant to Walter?
11. What is the name of the Japanese play that the ninth-grade class performs?
12. What special notion does Walter believe all the SP kids take with them at the end of the school year?
13. Why doesn’t Walter’s father comment on Walter’s poetry?

HEADY DAYS AT STUYVESANT HIGH--- THE GARMENT CENTER

1. What are the Dean family’s two unexpected financial burdens in the summer of 1951?
2. What kind of stories does Pap like to tell?
3. What is the academic emphasis at Stuyvesant High School?
4. What food does Pap refuse to eat?
5. How does Walter react when the Dodgers do not win the pennant?
6. What is Walter’s father’s advice about race?
7. What job does Walter’s Aunt Nancy now have?
8. Why did someone once tell Walter he couldn’t be a lawyer?
9. Why doesn’t Walter join the school’s track team?
10. Why does Walter quit working at the garment factory?
11. What does Walter do at the L. Einstein & Co.?
12. Why can’t Walter buy the typewriter he wants?
13. Who gives Walter a used typewriter?
14. How does Walter respond to the notes his school sends home?

**GOD AND DYLAN THOMAS – MARKS ON PAPER**

1. How does Walter occupy his time when he skips school?
2. What famous basketball player does Walter find himself playing against in a coaches’ tournament at City College?
3. How does Walter meet Frank?
4. What is the center of young Walter’s community?
5. Whom does Walter see being interviewed on Seventh Avenue?
6. Describe what Walter hopes to accomplish through his poetry.
7. When he reenters school in September, how long does Walter’s resolve to succeed last?
8. What draws Walter back to his school on 15th Street?
9. During the fall of 1953, what kinds of stories does Walter want to write?
10. Why does Walter want to learn French?
11. What does Walter’s English teacher tell him while he sits in the guidance office?
12. Why isn’t Walter punished for missing so many days of school?

**THE STRANGER – DR. HOLIDAY – BEING BLACK – 1954**

1. What will happen to Walter if he continues to miss school?
2. Why did Frank spend much of his youth in mental institutions?
3. What does Frank’s new job entail?
4. Of which literary character does Frank remind Walter of?
5. What is the name of the psychiatrist Walter must visit?
6. What does Walter say are his sole interests?
7. Why does Walter think he has been labeled “disturbed” rather than “rebellious”?
8. What unexpected question does the psychiatrist ask Walter?
9. From where does Walter get his ideas about career and maleness?
10. What does Walter consider to be the binding forces in his Harlem home?
11. How does Walter’s mother feel about Frank?
12. Why does Walter think dying in battle might not be a bad thing?
13. When he finally decides to go back to school, what does Walter discover?

**SWEET SIXTEEN – THE TYPIST**

1. What does Walter give his father in the veterans’ hospital?
2. What happens to Frank in the subway bathroom?
3. Why does Walter think that his psychiatrist has been talking to his mother?
4. Where does Frank decide to go to avoid any further threats to his safety?
5. What does Walter’s father give him on the day he leaves for the army?
6. WDM says that reading led him to ideas which led him to what?
7. Where does Walter work after his discharge from the army?
8. What does Walter believe sending out his poems may promise?
9. What story about the black urban experience deeply impacts Myers?
10. What does Myers love about his life now?