

Name _____

“Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys” by James Berry

“The Southpaw” by Judith Viorst

Vocabulary Warm-up Word Lists

Study these words from the selections. Then, complete the activities.

Word List A

average [AV uh rij] *n.* in sports, a measure of a player’s skill on offense
Sandy’s batting average was .357.

broad [BRAWD] *adj.* full or wide
The robbery occurred in the middle of the afternoon and in broad daylight.

crushed [KRUSHT] *v.* squashed
Andrew heard a crunching sound as he crushed the beetle with his foot.

envy [EN vee] *v.* feeling of jealousy
I envy my sister’s skill in math.

interfere [in ter FEER] *v.* to involve yourself in a situation that has nothing to do with you
Rajiv tried not to interfere with his parents’ plans to go on vacation.

quarrel [KWAWR rul] *v.* an argument
Manuel and Sam had a quarrel over who would play on first base.

sympathy [SIM puh thee] *n.* the understanding or sharing of other people’s troubles
Annalisa felt sympathy for the wounded sparrow.

terrific [tuh RIF ik] *adj.* very good or excellent
Megan thinks that action-packed novels are a terrific read.

Word List B

ballplayer [BAWL play uhr] *n.* one who plays ball, especially baseball
Mickey Mantle was a great ballplayer.

barged [BARJD] *v.* entered loudly, rudely, and abruptly
The noisy group of students barged into the room.

outfield [OWT feeld] *n.* part of a baseball field between the infield and the foul lines
Derek’s favorite baseball position was in the outfield behind second and third bases.

menace [MEN is] *n.* a threat or danger
Jonathan’s ability to score made him a menace to other teams.

permanent [PUR muh nuhnt] *adj.* lasting or meant to last for a long time, or forever
After many changes, Lisa made a permanent move to the city.

trophy [TROH fee] *n.* a prize or award given to a winning team or athlete
The team’s captain accepted the trophy after winning the big game.

uncertain [uhn SER tuhn] *adj.* not sure
I was uncertain about the umpire’s decision to allow the player to remain on third base.

unreasonable [uhn REE zuhn uh buhl] *adj.* not showing good sense
She thought her parents’ demand that she keep her room clean was unreasonable.

“Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys” by James Berry

“The Southpaw” by Judith Viorst

Literary Analysis: Comparing Characters' Traits and Motives

The qualities that make a character unique are called **character traits**. A **character’s motives** are the reasons behind a character’s thoughts, feelings, and actions. These motivations can be based on internal and external factors.

- *Internal factors* include thoughts and feelings, such as love, pride, or anger.
- *External factors* are events or actions, such as a natural disaster or winning a prize.

A. DIRECTIONS: *Read the following passage. Then, answer the questions.*

Then, going home with the noisy flock of children from school, I had such a new, new idea. If Mum thought I was scruffy, Nat, Aldo, Jimmy, and Ben might think so, too. I didn’t like that.

After dinner I combed my hair in the bedroom.

1. What character traits does Becky reveal in this passage?

2. What external factor motivates the narrator, Becky, to comb her hair?

3. What internal factor motivates Becky to comb her hair?

B. DIRECTIONS: *Read the following passages. Then, write a response.*

Dear Richard, I wasn’t kicking exactly. I was kicking back. Your former friend, Janet P.S. In case you were wondering, my batting average is .345.	Dear Janet, Alfie is having his tonsils out tomorrow. We might be able to let you catch next week. Richard
--	--

4. What character traits does Janet reveal in her note?

5. What character traits does Richard reveal in his note?

6. Alfie is mentioned in Richard’s letter to Janet. Write a short letter from Alfie to Richard that explains the external motivation that will cause him to miss a baseball game.

Short Answer Write your responses to the questions in this section on the lines provided.

1. In “Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys,” Granny-Liz tells Becky, “A tomboy’s like a whistling woman and a crowing hen, who can only come to a bad end.” Explain what she means.

2. Describe the relationship between Becky and her mother in “Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys.” Use details from the story to support your description.

3. Near the end of “Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys,” Ben’s eyes pop with envy when he sees Becky’s bike. Explain why Becky feels envy at the beginning of the story.

4. In “The Southpaw,” Janet and Richard refer to themselves as “former” friends. Explain what former action leads to the cockroach incident in “Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys.”

5. At the beginning of “The Southpaw,” Richard and Janet are fighting. In his last letter, Richard asks Janet to at least call her goldfish “Richard” again. Explain what the last letter tells you about the relationship between Janet and Richard at the end of the story.

6. Both “Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys” and “The Southpaw” tell about a fight between friends. How does Becky’s motive, or reason, for fighting with Shirnette differ from Janet’s motive for fighting with Richard? Include details from the stories in your answer.

7. Think about how the main characters in “Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys” and “The Southpaw” are able to get what they want. What is a main idea shared by both stories? Use examples from the stories to support your answer.

8. The main characters of “Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys” and “The Southpaw” share some of the same motivations. What is one internal motivation that Becky and Janet share? Use examples from the stories to support your answer.

9. External factors motivate other characters in both “Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys” and “The Southpaw.” On the chart, write the external factor that motivates the character and what happens because of that factor. Then tell how the actions of these characters influence the outcome of both stories.

Character	External Factors	What Happens
Becky’s mother		
Richard		

10. The main characters from “Becky and the Wheels-and-Brake Boys” and “The Southpaw” both get what they want by the end of the stories. Do you think the two girls are more motivated by internal or external factors? Use details to explain.