

About the Author Summary

The Watson's Go to Birmingham- 1963, received a Newberry Honor and a Coretta Scott King Honor. The book has been a best seller in paperback and hardback. The author, Christopher Paul Curtis, was born in Flint, Michigan and now lives with his wife and their two children, in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Before Curtis was known as a writer, he worked in a factory for 13 years.

Chapter 1 Summary

In chapter one, we are introduced to the “Weird Watsons.” We find that the book is written in first person point-of-view, but we are not yet sure whose point-of-view it is. The chapter begins with a detailed description of the weather. It was a super-duper-cold Saturday in Flint, Michigan. The Watsons had on sweaters, hats, scarves, and three pairs of socks and were still cold. The thermostat was turned all of the way up and the furnace was banging and sounding like it was going to blow up. The whole family was sitting real close on the couch under a blanket. We find that there is a dad, a little sister named Joetta, a momma, an older brother named Byron, and the narrator. We also find out that this chapter takes place in Flint, Michigan, and that the mother was not born there; she was born in Alabama. The mother was not happy with the father due to the cold weather. She “always blamed him for bringing her to the giant icebox state.” We learn that Byron is thirteen and “officially a juvenile delinquent.” The family was watching the weather on channel 12 and they all hear that the temperature is supposed to drop even lower over night. The father tries to turn the T.V., but fails, and the family hears that the weather in Atlanta will be in the mid-seventies. This is when momma gets upset and tells about how she should have listened to Moses Henderson. We find that Moses Henderson (whom dad calls Hambone Henderson) proposed to momma the same time that dad did. He did not want her to move to the north, and he told her how miserable she would be. Due to dad’s humor during his story telling episode, we learn that momma has a gap between her teeth that she is ashamed of. She won’t smile in front of people, and if she does she covers her mouth with her hand. After the story telling ends, dad calls the landlord again with no luck. Then he decides to call Aunt Cydney to see if the family can come to her

house to get warm. Aunt Cydney tells them to come over before they freeze to death. Byron and the narrator are sent out to scrape ice off of the windows of their 1948 Plymouth. The narrator refers to the car as “turd brown” and the “Brown Bomber.” Byron does not want to do his share of the work and begins looking at himself in the car’s mirror. The narrator tells of an incident that happened called “How to Survive a Blizzard.” During this flash back, we learn that Byron and his friend Buphead often mistreat the narrator. In this particular incident, they push him down in the snow and throw snowballs at him. During this story, we learn that the narrator’s name is Kenny. For the final test of “Surviving a Blizzard” Buphead started yelling like the blizzard was going to hit Kenny, and Byron called Kenny’s name. Kenny forgot the one rule about keeping your hands in front of his face, and when he turned around Byron spit a huge mouthful of snow into Kenny’s face. Kenny failed the test. Thinking that Byron was yelling his name this time for the same trick he hesitates in going over to the other side of the car. Byron began to bang on the car, and finally Kenny realizes that Byron’s lips were stuck to the mirror, and he runs inside to get his mom. The whole family comes out to see what is happening. They try to pour hot water over his lips, but that just makes the situation worse. Everyone is crying. Joey starts crying when she sees that Byron is. Kenny’s mom starts to cry when the water doesn’t work. Kenny’s dad is laughing so hard at his own jokes about the situation that he cries, and Byron hits Kenny so hard after pouring water on him that he starts to cry. Finally everyone heads inside but Kenny’s mom who stays behind to rip Byron’s lips off the mirror. On the way to their aunt’s house to seek shelter from the cold, Kenny calls Byron the Lipless Wonder.

Summary: Chapter 2

Chapter two begins with Kenny introducing Larry Dunn, one of the meanest bullies at Clark Elementary School. Kenny says Larry Dunn is king of Clark, but his brother, Byron, is a god! Kenny goes on to say that he would get picked on a lot worse about two things in particular if Byron were not his relative.

First, Kenny loved to read! This made teachers think he was especially smart! Kenny tells about one time in particular when he went to read to Mr. Alum's fifth grade class. It was the classroom of Kenny and Buphead, his friend. Kenny immediately knew he was going to get beat up after school. After school everyone followed him thinking Byron and Buphead were going to beat him up but instead, Byron told Buphead to back off and leave the kid alone.

Kenny says the other thing people would tease him about would be his lazy eye. Kenny says the worst part about being teased is riding the bus when Byron and Buphead decide to skip school, because everyone picks on him. One day when Kenny is left to fend for himself on the bus a miracle happens. He says the bus driver stopped for two kids to get on the bus even though they were running late. If these kids were around he would not get picked on any more, he thinks. Shortly after the kids get on the bus everyone starts laughing at their southern accents and manners. The bus driver yells at everyone and pushes the boys into a seat with Kenny.

Chapter 3 Summary

The principal pushes the older new kid, Rufus Fry, into the classroom. The new boy is shy, and Kenny is disappointed that Rufus will be sitting beside him. Kenny is afraid that this will mean that they both will get picked on, instead of just Rufus. He still wants Rufus to be his personal "saver." Rufus tries talking to Kenny, even as the class laughs. Kenny finally decides to be kind by sharing his apple and peanut butter sandwich with Rufus. After surprising Kenny with the information that he has shot a real gun and eaten a squirrel, Rufus gives his little brother, Cody, the other half of the peanut butter sandwich. Rufus begins to sit with Kenny, eat with Kenny, and come over every night to Kenny's house. Kenny likes for Rufus to come over to play war with American and Nazi dinosaurs. Kenny's old friend, LJ, always stole his dinosaurs. Kenny quit being friends with LJ when LJ tricked Kenny into burying his dinosaurs so that he could steal them later.

Kenny soon realizes that his classmates are leaving him alone and going straight for Rufus. Two reasons that kids make fun of Rufus are his country accent (words like y'all) and the fact that he only has two shirts and two pairs of pants. When the bully Larry Dunn makes fun of Rufus and Cody because of their clothes, Kenny also laughs. This hurts Rufus' feelings, and Rufus stops talking to Kenny for several days. Kenny becomes upset after an unsuccessful apology attempt, but Kenny's mom shows care and understanding. His mom helps him get his friend back, and Kenny is very happy when Rufus comes over to play dinosaurs at exactly 5:30. Rufus realizes that Kenny is different from the other kids.

Chapter 4 Summary

This chapter begins with Kenny describing the clothes his mother makes them put on every morning to walk to school. She thinks the weather could kill you in a flash, even though she was born in Alabama and didn't know the truth about cold weather. Kenny describes having to take off all the layers of his clothes and then help his little sister Joey with hers, who by the time they made it to school was pouring with sweat. Kenny was on the front porch with Byron the next morning, complaining about the layers of clothes.

Byron tells Joey and Kenny the story about the frozen people in the streets in the morning hours and how they look a like trash truck comes through and picks them up. Byron continues telling this story on their walk to school, explaining that is why their mother makes them dress in so many layers. Upon reaching school Kenny says there is one good thing about their mother dressing them so warm and that is that they are the only kids at their school that get to wear leather gloves. They each get two pair a year. After you lose your first pair you have to wear the second pair kindergarten-style, which meant they were tied to your jacket. Kenny shares his gloves with Rufus because he doesn't have any gloves. Kenny gave his first pair to Rufus and retrieved his second pair from his mother until one day his second pair of gloves had disappeared out of his locker.

Larry, another kid from their class came out on the playground with leather gloves that were Kenny's brown ones painted black. Kenny told Byron about Larry stealing his gloves. Byron confronted Larry and began asking Kenny to hit him. Kenny didn't so Byron hit Kenny then started on Larry.

The chapter goes on describing the fight that takes place. It describes how tough Larry was for being out in the cold with only a t-shirt and a thin jacket and also for taking

the beating without shedding a tear. Byron said he was making a movie and Larry was the star, but Kenny and Rufus couldn't take watching the assault on Larry anymore so they left. As they walked home they could hear the screaming of the other kids watching from a half block away.

Chapter 5 Summary

The chapter begins with Byron getting caught lighting matches again. He is able to receive a second chance from his mom because of Joetta's crying. Mrs. Watson tells a story of what happened to her when she was a little girl and her house caught on fire. Before a week was up, Byron goes into the bathroom and begins lighting matches to toilet paper parachutes he has made. He is pretending to make a movie on Nazis that are being shot down by Captain Byron Watson over the Flint River. Kenny watches him through the keyhole in the bathroom door. Their mother started up the stairs after hearing the toilet flush so much to find out what was going on. She threw herself against the door and grabs Byron by his throat then practically carries him down the stairs into the living room.

This is where Mrs. Watson's voice and face change into a hissing snake and her Southern-style accent comes alive. She yells at Joetta to go into the kitchen to retrieve a book of matches. Joetta is not able to comply because she is crying so much so mom asks Kenneth to get them for her. Byron is so scared that he sits on the couch while Mrs. Watson goes to get the matches herself. While mom has gone into the kitchen, Kenneth tells Byron to make a run for it because he is going to get a whipping or get burned. Mrs. Watson enters the room carrying a paper towel, a jar of Vaseline, band-aids, and a book of matches. Joetta begs her mother to stop and begins to cry. Kenneth wonders if his mother will burn Byron and contemplates whether he feels sorry for Byron or not. He decides that he thinks Byron deserves it after all.

Once Mrs. Watson starts to move toward Byron, Joetta tries to protect Byron by jumping between them. Mom picks Joetta up and places her on her lap. She tells Joetta

that she is proud of her for protecting her brother. Mrs. Watson tells Joetta she does not wish to hurt Byron, but she explains that he needs to learn a lesson and that she swore to God that she would burn him if he played with matches again. She tells Joetta that she does not wish to go back on her promise to God. Finally, Joetta agrees and tells her mother to burn him but don't burn him too bad.

Mrs. Watson lights a match and tells Byron to hold out his fingers and he does. As the match gets closer to his finger, Joetta runs and blows the match out before it burns Byron. Joetta continues doing this every time her mother lights another match. Finally, Mrs. Watson is sick of having this happen and tells Byron that he will deal with his father when he gets home.

Chapter 6 Summary

Momma tells Byron to take Kenny up to Mitchell's for some groceries. Byron is immediately upset and wants to know why Kenny cannot just go by himself. Momma just gives him the list of things she wanted again and tells him to sign for it. This statement gets Byron's attention. He automatically assumes that the family was on welfare. His mother tells him that they are not, but that he has eaten welfare food before. She tells him that his thinking is nonsense and he had better get to the store. While they shop Byron is silent. Kenny ends up having to tell Mr. Mitchell that the groceries need to go on the welfare list. Mr. Mitchell laughs and explains that it is not a welfare list and that his parents will pay later. After that Byron and Kenny feel a lot better about the situation. A week later Byron puts some cookies on the list and before Kenny knows it he is eating them. As they sit up in a tree snacking on the Swedish Crèmes they spot a mourning dove on a telephone wire. Byron begins to throw cookies at it, and it does not take him long to hit the bird. It falls to the ground and when they run over to look at the bird they see that it is dead. This sight makes Byron get sick and then become very angry with Kenny. Byron hits his little brother on the head and then yells out and begins to throw apples at him until he runs away. Later Kenny comes back to find that his brother dug a grave and has put a little wooden cross made of popsicle sticks on it.

Chapter 7 Summary

This chapter begins as Kenny sits at the kitchen table doing his homework while his mother peels potatoes. Byron starts to come in the door but surprised to see the two of them; he hurries back out. Mom notices his hurry and calls him back. Mom tells him to take off his hat and Kenny knows something is up so he tries not to look at Bryon. When mom gasped and fell back against the counter Kenny looked up and was shocked to see that Bryon had gotten a conk! His hair had been straightened and he said that the style was called Mexican hair. Kenny knew this meant trouble because his parents said that they were against putting chemicals in their hair. Mom told Byron that he looked like Bozo the clown and sent him to his room to wait for his father to get home.

When Joetta arrives home from Sunday school, Kenny tells her about Byron's hair. Joey and Kenny run up the stairs to find Bryon on the top bunk with his head in his hands. Kenny takes this opportunity to poke fun of Bryon. Joey asks Byron why he did this, knowing he that he would get into so much trouble. Bryon tries to remain cool, claiming not to care what his parents think. The children hear their father drive up and Joey and Kenny run to listen to what their parents say about Byron's hair. Mom greeted their father with kisses and as usual he asks, "What's new with the Watson's"? Mom tries to tell him but decides it would be best if he just saw for himself. Mom calls Bryon downstairs. Kenny begins poking fun of Bryon and Byron pops him on his ear. Kenny and Joey both sit at the foot of the stairs crying; Kenny because his ear hurts and Joey because she is worried about Bryon and what their father will do to him.

After Bryon and his father go upstairs and into the bathroom, Kenny peeks under the door and sees his father cutting off all of Bryon's hair. After awhile, Bryon screams

because of the aftershave that his father put on his head. When father and Byron come out of the bathroom we find that Byron has been shaved completely bald! His family teases him about the shape of his head and his ears that stick out. The chapter ends with the Watsons on the phone making a long-distance call to Grandma Sands in Birmingham.

Chapter 8 Summary

Kenny's Mom and Dad have just gotten off the phone with Grandma who lives in Alabama. Kenny thinks his parents are starting to act weird. His Dad even starts taking the car all around town getting things added to it. Kenny, Dad, Rufus, and Joey go to the junkyard, garage, and store getting the car fixed up. When Dad is finished fixing up the car he brings the whole family out to take a look at it. He has one last detail to add to it and makes them wait with anticipation to find out what it is. When they finally get to see it, they discover that it is just one of those smelly pine trees that hang from the rear view mirror. The next morning is Saturday and when Dad wakes up, Joey and Kenny are already up watching cartoons. Dad tells Kenny that he will be back before Mom even wakes up. By the time Dad comes back Mom and even big brother Byron are awake. Dad has the whole family come outside again to see the car. Again Dad teases everyone wanting them to guess what new thing he has added to the car. Kenny shows excitement as he unveils a drive around record player hidden under the towel in the front seat of the car. Mom gets angry and goes back into the house. The rest of the family is very excited as Dad explains with very fancy words what the record player has to offer. There is even a built-in speaker in the backseat! The kids take turns listening to records and even Mom came back out and Dad plays a song for her. After the song Mom tells Dad that they need to tell the kids that Byron is going to spend the summer with Grandma and if that doesn't straighten him up he will stay with her longer. As soon as Byron hears this plan he runs inside and slams the door.

Chapter 9 Summary

Kenny's father had just installed the record player in the car and this chapter begins with Kenny sitting in the car with his father discussing Byron leaving for the summer. Once their discussion is over, the two go back inside the house and their neighbor brings Joey an angel. The lady tells Joey the angel looks just like her but Joey, though not disappointing the kind lady, disagrees because the angel is white, so she hides it in her sock drawer. The family then begins to pack up for Birmingham, everyone except Byron. He has made plans to escape so he does not have to go to Birmingham for the summer. Little does he know, his parents know about his plans and they make him sleep in their room so he cannot runaway. The family then begins their trip to Alabama. Byron is still mad at everyone and is trying to punish them by not talking. His plan fails before they even get out of Michigan so Kenny, being the little brother, begins picking on Byron for not sticking with his plan. The two then begin silent gestures at each other in the back seat of the car. The chapter then ends with Byron threatening to get Kenny once they get to Alabama.

Chapter 10 Summary

The Watson's enter Ohio and pull over at a rest stop. Kenny and By find out what an outhouse is when they stop at this rest stop. They decide to use the woods as their bathroom instead of the outhouses. They sit down at a table and eat their sandwiches. Momma makes Kool-Aid with the water that Joey and Kenny pump which makes the Kool-Aid taste like metal. Everyone pours their Kool-Aid out but momma. Then Kenny has to get seconds because he was eating a peanut butter sandwich. They all cut up over the toilets. Momma and dad tell By that that is what he will be using when he is staying With Grandma Sands. They loaded the car back up and By came out with a pockets full of toilet paper in them. They all got in the car and before you know it Joey was asleep. By and Kenny were arguing over who had to hold Joey's head because she drools when she sleeps. It didn't matter though before to long Kenny was asleep. He later woke up because he felt something wet on his pants and it was from Joey drooling on him. By had to take Joey's head for awhile and Kenny took Joey's shoes off and noticed inside there was a picture of a white boy and a dog. He wondered how that boy would feel if he knew that he was in his sister's shoe being stepped on all the time. Next, Kenny overheard his mom and dad discussing stopping in Cincinnati and dad decides he is going to stop for gas and a stretch then he was going to keep on driving. Mom was not happy about this. Kenny wants to lean up and tell his mom what he overheard his dad and Mr. Johnson talking about the other day. Mr. Watson asked Mr. Johnson if he thought the Brown Bomber would make it to Birmingham from Flint without stopping. Mr. Johnson said he didn't see why not as long as Mr. Watson was up for the drive. Mr. Watson said he could do it plus that it would save them a lot of money. Dad didn't want Mrs. Watson to know

because she had everything planned for the trip. Before Kenny could tell her he fell fast asleep. They drove through Kentucky but Kenny sleeps most the way through and he was so tired that he even used a few outhouses. The next stop was at Tennessee. Momma tells them that they are at the “Appalachia” Mountains. They notice how dark it is and Joey gets scared because it is so dark. Joey asks about the stars and where they all came from because there are so many of them. Afterwards, Momma yells at Dad and tells him to look at what he has done. She says that he has driven them into Hell! Kenny speaks up and says he thought that it was Tennessee. They ate some snacks then Kenny and By went into the woods to use the restroom. Kenny asks if there are snakes in the woods and By said he isn't worried about the snakes but that it is the people he is worried about. He goes on to tell Kenny that there are rednecks and hillbillies in the woods that like to eat people. They both run back to the car. Dad starts talking about how the air feels and has everyone put their hand out the window and feel the air and later says that it feels like they have their fingers in God's beard and they are tickling him. Kenny says that as they drive down the mountain the car looks like a bug on its back with four skinny brown legs trying to turn back over. Kenny thinks this is the best part of the trip.

Chapter 11 Summary

Chapter eleven begins when Kenny wakes up from a nap on the car ride to Alabama. He finds out that the record player is broken. He falls back asleep and when he wakes up the second time, the record is still skipping. Kenny points out the broken record to his dad and he says not to tell his mother, and then turns it off. Mr. Watson turns on the radio and listens to country music, something he swore he would never do! He tells Kenny he's going to give them all country names and begins to poke fun at southern people.

Wilona complains that they've been in the car for too long and that not stopping has ruined all plans she's made in her notebook. Mr. Watson reminds her that not stopping has saved them a lot of money, and Wilona reluctantly agrees. He says that even though the kids have complained and whined so much during the trip, he just kept on driving. The buzzing sound that the Brown Bomber makes has kept everyone asleep for most of the trip.

Kenny falls asleep again. He wakes up to the sound of Wilona yelling, "We're home!" Kenny says that Birmingham is a lot like Flint. He and Joey prepare to see their Granny for the first time ever. When Granny Sands walks out the front door Kenny was surprised to find out that she's a "teeny-weeny" old woman who is barely taller than him and so skinny!

Granny Sands tells Byron that he'll have to go to the store and get something for dinner. She was quick to make him call her ma'am. When Kenny first saw Granny Sands he thought that Byron would make her life miserable, but now that he's realizing how tough she is, it might be the other way around. Byron says he's only being nice because she's so old and he doesn't want to be responsible for her death. Chapter eleven ends with Kenny saying they've only been in Birmingham for five minutes, and all the fight was already out of Byron.

Chapter 12 Summary

The chapter begins with the Watsons spending their first night in Birmingham. Kenny is very upset because he has to share a bed with his brother Byron. It is extremely hot and they are not used to it. When Kenny wakes up in the morning he hears Byron, dad, and Mr. Robert talking in the backyard so he goes to join them. When he gets out there he learns that Mr. Robert and the dog Toddy used to hunt coons, but now they are too old. Mr. Robert is telling a story about when Toddy almost drowned chasing a coon into the river and he saved his life. Kenny is hungry after the story so he asks what is for breakfast and that is when he goes into the kitchen and finds his mother, sister, and grandmother “yakking”. He gets some cereal, bread, and bacon and listens to his mother’s and grandmother’s conversation as they are catching up on the many years that they have been apart. He thinks it is funny when his grandmother gets irritated with all of the questions that her daughter is asking about Mr. Robert. He thinks it even funnier when his mother starts pouting like a little girl.

Chapter 13 Summary

The Watsons have made their trip to Birmingham. Joetta, Kenny, and Byron are on their way to swim. Grandma Sands warns the children not to go to Collier's Landing because a boy had gotten caught in a whirlpool and dies. The children come to two arrows. One says "public swimming" and the other says "WARNING! NO TRESPASSING! NO SWIMMING! NO PUBLIC ENTRÉE! Signed Joe Collier."

Kenny wants to go to Collier's Landing. However, Joey and Byron do not think it is a good idea. Byron reminds Kenny that a boy had gotten caught in a "wool pooh." He explains to Kenny and Joey that a "wool pooh" is Winnie the Pooh's evil brother that hides underwater and snatches kids. Kenny does not believe Byron and decides to go. Byron takes Joey and they head for public swimming because Byron said that the Wool Pooh doesn't come on public beaches. Kenny is confused because he was sure that Byron would be up for a Fantastic Adventure. Something had changed about Byron from the time they arrived in Birmingham. Kenny knew that Byron had made up the lie about the Wool Pooh because if there was really something that snatched kids his parents would not have let him go swimming to begin with. Kenny follows a trail to Collier's Landing. The water there is dark blue and very cool. Beside the water was a sign that said, "WARNING! DANGER! NO SWIMMING! SIX LIVES BEEN LOST HERE! BAD DROP OFF! Signed Joe Collier." Kenny looked around to make sure that there were no footprints in the sand or no Wool Pooh in the water. He was waiting for Byron to pop out of a bush and tease him, but everything was calm and quiet. Kenny decides that there is one good thing about getting in trouble; you do it in steps. He decides that you ease yourself into trouble, sort of like getting warnings on the way. His first warning was

when Byron and Joey went to the left and he followed the arrow to the right. The second warning was when he decided to wade into the water and the knots would not come out of his tennis shoes. Kenny decides he did not know how many warnings he had gotten, but he had to have gotten a zillion of them. Kenny finds himself standing in the lake with water up to his knees. He sees a bunch of slow moving fish near the shore and figured he could try and catch them. He misses around a hundred times and notices that the fish would not go deeper into the water because of a big green turtle floating in the water. He decides he wants that turtle as a pet instead of a fish. Kenny grabs for the turtle and misses. The rocky ground begins to crumble and Kenny tries to swim back as his head bobs under the water. Kenny has never been this scared in his life. He realizes that everyone was not lying about Collier's Landing and he begins to cry for his mother. He tells himself to get calm so he can swim back to shore, but his head goes underwater again and he knows he will never come back up again. Kenny believes he sees Wool Pooh underwater, even though he does not look like Winnie the Pooh. Kenny tries to fight, but Wool Pooh is just too strong. Then, he could see a pretty little girl in a blue dress. She looks like the angel that Mrs. Davidson had given Joetta. The angel of Joey told Kenny he had to swim up one more time. Kenny gets to the top and calls for his momma. Kenny goes down a fourth time, but he sees someone in the water kicking up dirt and scratching at the water like they were crazy. Byron saves Kenny and brings him to shore where he throws up and cries like a "kindergarten baby".

Chapter 14 Summary

Kenny woke up knowing it was Sunday morning, because his sister, Joey, was dressed in her frilly dress with white frilly socks and black shiny shoes. The neighbor took her to the church down the street. Joey was the only one in the family to go. Kenny stopped her before she left and told her she looked very pretty. After she left Kenny went outside to cool off under the shade tree. He closed his eyes for a moment when he felt and heard something like a huge thunder. Moments later someone told the family that the church that Joey was at had been bombed. Everyone was screaming and crying. Kenny went to the church with everyone else. While everyone else was standing around, he went into the dusty crumbled church, where he found a girl with white frilly socks and shiny black shoes under some concrete. He took one of the shoes off and was so scared by his memory of the Wool Pooh that he went back home. He set for a moment thinking it was Joey's shoe. Joey finally comes to the house and tried to explain she was not in the church. Kenny never acknowledged that Joey was really there talking to him. He thought she was a ghost. Finally, Joey ran upstairs to her grandmother and screamed that Kenny was scaring her. Grandmother told Joey and Kenny to quiet down. Kenny finally realized that Joey was alive and ran out the door to tell his mom, dad, and Byron.

Chapter 15 Summary

When this chapter begins, the Watsons have been back in Flint for about two weeks. From his “secret hiding place” behind the couch, Kenny listens to his mom and dad as they talk about the bombing. Mrs. Watson doesn’t know about Kenny’s hiding place and are concerned that he keeps “disappearing.” Kenny hides behind the couch because Byron has led him to believe that there are genies, angels and magical powers there that will make him feel better.

When Byron discovers Kenny’s secret hiding place, he begins trying to get him to come out by inviting him to watch cartoons and play basketball. Byron sleeps on the couch to keep Kenny company at night. One day Byron tells Kenny he has something to show him and after following him to the bathroom, and Byron shows off his first chin hair. When Kenny sees himself in the mirror, he begins to cry. Rather than making fun of him or getting irritated, Byron tells Kenny that it’s okay to cry. Kenny asks Byron why people would hurt children, and Byron tells him he thinks it’s because they’ve let hate “eat them up and turn them into monsters.”

Kenny confesses that he is ashamed of himself because he had run away from the Wool Pooh and left Joey in the church. Byron tells Kenny that he made up the Wool Pooh, and the genies, angels and magical powers behind the couch. He tells Kenny that hiding behind the couch is never going to make him feel better. Byron reminds Kenny that if it wasn’t for seeing him waving across the street, Joey would have never left the church. Kenny still doesn’t see how it’s fair that Joey survived the bombing and others didn’t, to which Byron replies that things aren’t ever going to be fair.

Epilogue Summary

The epilogue found at the end of the Watson's go to Birmingham – 1963 gives a synopsis of the things happening in the world at the time of the Watson's trip. The south was caught up in a struggle for basic human rights which eventually became known as the civil rights movement. Although, the Constitution and Declaration of Independence state that all are created equal, people did not behave this way toward African Americans. African Americans during this time were faced with segregation of school, playgrounds, hospitals and much, much more. They also dealt with discrimination in schools, housing, jobs, marriage and lots of other everyday things.

There were a number of organizations and people who worked hard to end all of this. Some of them were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Thurgood Marshall, John Lewis, Ralph Abernathy, Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The goal at this time was to create tension and provoke confrontations so that the federal government was forced to step in and enforce laws. Often this resulted in gunfire, fires and bombings instead.

At the time of this story there were many bombings, including that of the Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church on September 15, 1963. Four young-teenage girls were killed. Their names were Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley.

This civil rights movement only grew stronger and gained support from all over the country. On August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I have a dream" speech and two hundred thousand people marched on Washington, D.C.

Those involved in supporting the civil rights movement took great measures and risks to get America to change. Many of them died or were injured trying to make a difference. They were American heroes who simply wanted everyone to be treated the same.