

# PEACHTREE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

GRADES  
3-7

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## *The Everlasting Now*

by Sara Harrell Banks

### ABOUT THE BOOK

**In Depression-era Alabama, a white boy meets a Black boy from Detroit, who opens his eyes to the complexity and opportunities in their world.**

In 1937, the Depression is in full force, Joe Louis is the new heavyweight champion of the world, and Champion Always Luckey arrives in Snow Hill, Alabama, changing Brother Sayre's life forever. With Champion, Brother learns all sorts of things—that he enjoys fishing, that he needs glasses, and that there are subtle and powerful rules of race and power that he's never noticed. Brother has never questioned the ways of his small southern town—but now he has reason to.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Setting is when and where a novel takes place. It may be revealed in several ways: a social situation or event, geographical surroundings, and through dialogue between characters. Identify the setting of this book. How is it revealed? What is the social situation?
- Discuss how the dialogue helps establish place. Explain why the setting is central to the plot of this book.
- Describe life in Snow Hill, Alabama, during the Great Depression. How does the Great Depression affect the lives of Brother's family? Discuss how Serena Sayre keeps her family fed and clothed during these hard times. Describe his mother's plan for survival.
- Identify the hobos in town. How is the Sayre family boarding house kind to them? Contrast Miz Edna Earl's view of the Great Depression to that of Serena Sayre. What one word best describes each of these women?
- At the beginning of the first chapter, Brother says, "When I first met Champion Luckey, I didn't know that he was going to change my life" (p. 1). Foreshadowing is a literary device that suggests things to come later in the novel. What does the opening sentence foreshadow? In what ways does Champion change Brother's life? Discuss whether Brother changes Champion's life.
- Identify the central theme of the book. What does this theme indicate about life in the South in the 1930s? How does the Sayre family view race differently than most people in Snow Hill? Explain what Brother means by, "Things sure got complicated when Champion and I became friends" (p. 38). What are the complications that Brother is referencing? How is Brother surprised by all the rules required under segregation? Why hadn't he noticed these things in the past?
- Lily is employed by Mrs. Sayre, but she is like a member of the family. How are Brother and Swan taught to respect Lily? Brother thinks that Lily is much stricter than his mother. Cite passages that prove Brother is correct about Lily.
- Draw a connection between bullying and racism. Who is the primary bully in the book? Why does the sheriff target Brother? Discuss the scene at the drugstore lunch counter when Champion is approached by Sheriff Hamm. Why doesn't Doc Phinizy speak up? How does Lily blame Brother for letting Champion sit at the counter? Contrast the way Lily and Brother interpret the sign over the lunch counter.

- Explain what Lily means by, “Brother Sayre, there’s a big difference between you and some other folks. Your family name protects you” (p. 15). Discuss the importance of Brother’s family name. How does his mother use the name to her advantage? Discuss why the sheriff isn’t impressed by the family’s importance in the community. What is Mrs. Sayre’s view of the sheriff? Discuss how Serena gets him shipped out of town.
- Describe the railroad workers. Why is Mr. Edwards, the engineer, a hero to Brother? Explain what Mr. Edwards means by, “[A] railroad engineer carries time in his pocket” (p. 18). Why does Mr. Edwards tell Brother not to share the “railroad talk”? How does this create a special connection between Brother and the railroad men? Discuss how they make him feel safe.
- Brother knows that the men in his family were brave. Describe Brother’s act of bravery. How does Dusty help Brother understand what true bravery is? Discuss Brother’s reward at the end of the novel. Explain the title of the book.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Sara Harrell Banks** (1936–2020) was the author of several books for young readers, including *The Everlasting Now* and *Under the Shadow of Wings*, which was named an American Booksellers Association Pick of the Lists and compared to *To Kill a Mockingbird* by *School Library Journal*. She lived in North Carolina, and she passed away in 2020.