Connections Academy
Novel Study Guide

**Title**
The Cay

**Author**
Theodore Taylor

**Plot Summary**
The Cay is narrated by Phillip Enright, a young American ex-patriot who moved to the island of Curaçao with his parents. His family relocated to the island following the outbreak of World War II, when Phillip's father was recruited to work for an oil company and support the war effort. However, when the Germans invade Curaçao, Phillip and his mother try unsuccessfully to return to the United States. Their ship is torpedoed and Phillip finds himself on a raft with a stranger with whom he has nothing in common. When the two arrive on a deserted island, Phillip and his fellow castaway must learn to live and work together despite facing many challenges.

**Setting**
The story takes place in Curaçao and on a cay in the Caribbean Sea during World War II.

**Characters**
- Phillip Enright (main character and narrator)
- Timothy (Phillip's fellow castaway)
- Phillip Enright, Sr. (Phillip's father)
- Grace Enright (Phillip's mother)
- Henrik van Boven (Phillip's friend)

**Chapter Review Questions**
Answering the following questions will increase your comprehension of the story. Respond to these questions by discussing them with your Learning Coach and/or writing the answers in your notebook. Some of the questions require you to express an opinion or describe your reaction to events in the story. In these instances, there is no right or wrong answer and responses will vary. The answers to factual questions are included in this study guide.

**Chapter 1**
Vocabulary: gable, galleon, gravely, massive, pontoon, refinery, schooner
1. How does the author set the mood by using figurative language in the opening sentence?

2. Describe the tasks that Phillip’s mother completes in order to help prepare the family for the impending war.

3. Phillip says the following about his mother: “She was like that. One minute, shaking me; the next, holding me.” What do you think he means?

4. What is the cause of the tension between Phillip’s parents?

5. What clues in this chapter can help you find out how long Phillip has lived in Curaçao?

**Chapter 2**
Vocabulary: aft, ballast, dishearten, distilled, fore, mutiny, starboard

1. What is Phillip’s initial reaction to the idea of leaving the island? Why does he feel this way?

2. Why are the Germans attacking the tankers leaving the island?

3. What event causes Phillip to fully understand that “death and destruction” are a part of war?

4. Phillip says terrible things to his mother because he feels angry and disappointed about having to leave Curaçao. If you were his friend, what advice would you give him? Have you ever disagreed with a parent’s decision? What did you do?

5. What does Phillip tell his friends about why he is leaving Curaçao?

**Chapter 3**
Vocabulary: alabaster, calypso, sextant, steward, wiry

1. On what date was the S.S. Hato attacked?

2. Describe how Phillip got separated from his mother.

3. Why does Timothy call Phillip “young boss”? What can you infer from this title?

4. What has Phillip’s mother taught him about black people?

5. What does Phillip do that shows he has absorbed his mother’s prejudices against black people?

6. List two things that Timothy does to help them survive while on the raft.

7. How does the author use dialect to help bring the character of Timothy to life?

**Chapter 4**
Vocabulary: aimless(ly)

1. How has Timothy shown that he wants to protect Phillip and keep them both alive?

2. What happens to Phillip when the pain from his head injury finally goes away?
Chapter 5
1. Phillip says this about Timothy, “His eyes were becoming mine.” Explain what he means.
2. What hopeful sign do Timothy and Phillip receive on their third day on the raft?

Chapter 6
1. Now that he is blind, give an example of how Phillip uses his other senses.
2. Why does Timothy have to rescue Phillip from the water once again?

Chapter 7
1. Why is it better for Phillip and Timothy to be on the island instead of on the raft?
2. Phillip makes Timothy promise not to leave him alone on the island. What do you think would happen to Phillip if Timothy were to abandon him?
3. Imagine what the island looks like. Draw a picture of it based on the description in this chapter. Then add to your picture as you read more descriptive details about the island later in the book.

Chapter 8
Vocabulary: crowing, superior
1. Why do you think Phillip is so willing to think poorly of Timothy, despite the fact that Timothy saved his life and has only tried to protect him?
2. Describe Timothy’s plan to help them get rescued. What other things would you do to ensure rescue from the island?
3. At the end of the chapter, why does Phillip say that he feels superior to Timothy?

Chapter 9
1. Do you think it is fair of Timothy to expect Phillip to also do some work for their camp?
2. Why does Timothy strike Phillip? What was your reaction to this incident?
3. After the incident when Timothy hits Phillip, Phillip says that he began to change. What does he mean? In what ways does he begin to change?

Chapter 10
Vocabulary: catchment, squall
1. Summarize the conversation that Phillip and Timothy have about race.
2. Why does Phillip say that Timothy “felt neither white nor black”?
3. Why won’t Phillip climb the palm trees to get coconuts for them?
Chapter 11
Vocabulary: submerge, voodoo (“jumbi”)

1. Make a two-column chart. List the tasks that Timothy and Phillip have completed to keep them safe and comfortable on one side, and list the tasks that maximize their chance of rescue from the island on the other. Then next to each item on the list, write “P” if the task mostly benefited Phillip, “T” if the task mostly benefited Timothy, or “both” if both characters benefited from the task.

2. Analyze the information in the chart. Determine which character has made the most significant contributions to this island camp. How has Phillip’s blindness affected his ability to contribute? Is it truly an obstacle or is he using it as an excuse to do less work? Explain.

3. Use Phillip’s description to add details to the illustration of the cay that you began after reading Chapter 7.

4. Phillip senses that Timothy is trying to make him independent on the island. List any clues that support this idea.

Chapter 12
Vocabulary: malaria, murmur

1. When Timothy gets sick, Phillip is forced to become the caregiver. Describe how Phillip is able to help Timothy, despite his blindness.

2. How has the relationship between Phillip and Timothy changed?

3. Predict what will happen next to the characters.

Chapter 13
Vocabulary: grindstone

1. How do the characters keep track of time on the island?

2. Why does Timothy encourage Phillip to learn how to fish on the reef?

3. Why does Phillip finally decide to climb the palm tree and get coconuts?

4. Why has Timothy given up hope that they will be rescued?

5. Phillip has always described Timothy as having an ugly face. Why does he now remember Timothy’s face as “kind and strong”?

6. Why do you think Phillip asks Timothy if he is still black?

Chapter 14
Vocabulary: tempest (“tempis”)

1. Describe how Timothy and Phillip are preparing for the hurricane.

Chapter 15
Vocabulary: arc, tatters

1. Explain what Phillip means when he says that holding someone’s hand “could be like medicine.”

2. Describe what happened to Timothy.

3. Predict what will happen next to Phillip.
Chapter 16
Vocabulary: caw, cellophane, muted, precise
1. Why does Phillip seem so motivated to clean up and rebuild the camp now?
2. With everything they created now destroyed, how would you prioritize the tasks that Phillip needs to complete?
3. Describe how Stew Cat comes to Phillip's rescue.

Chapter 17
Vocabulary: earnest, flail(ing), gingerly
1. Summarize the events in this chapter.

Chapter 18
Vocabulary: bleat, drone
1. Explain how Phillip uses his other senses to make up for his lack of sight.
2. Why doesn't the airplane notice Phillip's first signal fire?

Chapter 19
Vocabulary: charter, gangway, meek(ly), priority
1. On what date was Phillip rescued? How long had he been on the island?
2. What questions would you ask in an interview with Phillip?
3. How might the story be different if it were told by Timothy?
4. Why do you think the author included Stew Cat?
5. Which scenes from the book are especially well suited for a movie adaptation? Which scenes might be difficult to adapt to a movie screen?

Answers to Chapter Review Questions
Chapter 1 Answers
1. The simile comparing submarines to "silent, hungry sharks" creates a suspenseful mood.
2. Phillip's mother puts up blackout curtains and makes sure the family has enough water and food.
3. Phillip's remark shows that his mother is sometimes quick-tempered, especially when she is worried about him, but that she also loves him and wants to protect him.
4. Phillip's mother had not wanted to come to Curaçao in 1939, but his father had insisted. His mother is homesick for Virginia and resents his father's decision.
5. Phillip states that the submarines arrived in the middle of the night in February 1942 and that the family had come to Curaçao in late 1939.

Chapter 2 Answers
1. Initially, Phillip is sad about the idea of leaving, because there are many people and places he would miss. He also does not want his friends to think his family was afraid of the Germans.
2. The tankers transport water and fuel. By attacking them, the Germans prevent gas and oil from reaching England, and they also cause food and water shortages on Curaçao.
3. The Germans torpedo and destroy a British tanker, the S. S. Empire Tern, just hours after Phillip's father had taken him to see it.
4. Responses will vary. Responses should provide specific advice to Phillip about what to do when you disagree with a parent's decision.
5. Phillip tells his friends that he and his mother are leaving Curaçao for a short time to visit his grandparents.

Chapter 3 Answers
1. The S. S. Hato is attacked on April 6, 1942.
2. As Phillip and his mother are boarding a lifeboat, the ship lurches and the lifeboat tips its passengers into the water. A falling object hits Phillip on the head, knocking him out. Timothy puts the unconscious Phillip onto a raft.
3. Although Timothy is an adult and Phillip is a child, Timothy is considered socially inferior because he is a low-paid laborer and because he is black.
4. Phillip's mother has taught him that black people are different from white people. She believes black people and white people should lead separate lives.
5. Phillip calls Timothy, an adult, by his first name and shows little respect toward Timothy. He refuses to eat the raw fish Timothy has caught.
6. Timothy insists on conserving their drinking water. He also uses clothing and boards from the raft to build a tent-like shelter.
7. The author uses dialect, such as "bahss" for "boss" and "dat" for "that," to show how Timothy and other people from the islands speak.

Chapter 4 Answers
1. Timothy builds a shelter, catches fish to supplement his and Phillip's food supply, and makes sure Phillip sleeps in the warmest spot on the raft.
2. After the pain goes away, Phillip is blind.

Chapter 5 Answers
1. Phillip now depends on Timothy's descriptions to know what is happening in the world around them.
2. Timothy and Phillip hear the sound of an engine from an aircraft above.

Chapter 6 Answers
1. Phillip uses his sense of touch to know what time of day it is. For example, when it is cool and damp, he knows it is early morning.
2. On hearing that Timothy sees an island in the distance, Phillip excitedly stumbles overboard.

Chapter 7 Answers
1. On the island, Phillip and Timothy will be able to make camp and build a signal fire.
2. If Timothy were to abandon him, Phillip might go hungry or injure himself. He cannot see and knows nothing about how to survive in the wilderness.
3. Responses will vary, but illustrations should be based on specific descriptive details from the novel.

Chapter 8 Answers
1. Phillip is exhausted and frightened and misses his family. He is frustrated because, although Timothy is knowledgeable and kind, he cannot solve all of their problems.
2. Timothy plans to keep a small fire burning permanently. He also stacks a pile of wood for a larger fire. Timothy plans to use the smaller fire to start a larger one if an airplane approaches the island.
3. When Timothy asks Phillip to write the word "HELP," Phillip realizes that Timothy cannot spell simple words.

Chapter 9 Answers
1. Responses will vary, but opinions should be supported with details from the novel.
2. Phillip refuses to work, loses his temper, and insults Timothy by calling him ugly and stupid. Timothy most likely feels angry and hurt.
3. Phillip probably means that he realized the seriousness of the situation and understood that he and Timothy had to work together to survive. He approaches Timothy, says he wants to be friends, and asks Timothy to call him by name instead of calling him "young boss."

Chapter 10 Answers
1. Phillip reveals that his mother dislikes black people and asks Timothy why. Timothy says he dislikes some white people, but that it would be ridiculous to dislike all white people. Phillip asks why people are different races and colors. Timothy says he does not know, but that he believes people are the same under the skin.
2. Phillip's attitudes about race are changing, and he no longer accepts his parents' views. His dependence on Timothy, and perhaps his loss of sight, helps him to view Timothy as a fellow human being whose skin color doesn't matter.
3. Phillip is afraid to climb the tall palm trees.
Chapter 11 Answers
1. Responses will vary but should include specific information about the tasks Phillip and Timothy completed and whom these tasks benefited.
2. Responses will vary, but opinions should be supported with specific details from the novel.
3. Responses will vary, but should include specific descriptive details from Chapter 11, such as the overall width of the island, the coral reefs, and the plants and animals Phillip and Timothy encounter.
4. Responses will vary but should include specific things Timothy does to promote Phillip's increased independence, such as making Phillip a cane.

Chapter 12 Answers
1. When Timothy is sick, Phillip gives him water and puts a damp cloth over his forehead. When Timothy wanders deliriously into the water, Phillip uses his sense of hearing to track down Timothy and rescue him.
2. The relationship between the characters is reversed, because Timothy now depends on Phillip. Phillip points out that even after Timothy recovers from his illness, he does not really regain his strength.
3. Responses will vary, but predictions should be based on specific details from the novel.

Chapter 13 Answers
1. Timothy keeps a can with pebbles and adds one pebble for each passing day.
2. Timothy encourages Phillip to learn how to fish so that Phillip can provide food if Timothy becomes sick again.
3. Phillip probably climbs the palm tree because learning to fish has given him confidence and because he wants to make Timothy proud of him.
4. Timothy has given up hope that they will be rescued because he and Phillip have not seen any ships or airplanes since they came to the cay.
5. Timothy’s kindness and strength have made a lasting impression on Phillip, so he no longer considers Timothy ugly.
6. Phillip has become very close to Timothy, and he no longer thinks much about racial differences. This is probably why Phillip asks Timothy if he is still black.

Chapter 14 Answers
1. Timothy and Phillip prepare for the hurricane by securing their water keg high up in a tree. They attach a rope to the tree that they can hang onto if necessary. They gather important supplies from their raft and place them near their shelter, where the water is less likely to wash the supplies away. They also eat a large meal in case they are unable to catch any animals for food during the hurricane.
Chapter 15 Answers
1. When Phillip was injured and afraid, Timothy’s presence helped give him strength. This is probably what Phillip means when he says that holding someone’s hand “could be like medicine.”
2. Throughout the hurricane, Timothy protects Phillip from the storm. The wind and rain lash his body, and both he and Phillip lose consciousness when a wave washes over them. Weakened and exhausted, Timothy dies soon after the storm.
3. Responses will vary. Phillip may be unable to survive on the cay without Timothy’s protection. Alternatively, he may use the skills he has learned to live independently, or he may be rescued.

Chapter 16 Answers
1. Phillip knows that he is now in charge of his own survival, including the maintenance of the camp. He also clears debris so he can build a grave for Timothy.
2. Responses will vary but should address specific things Phillip must do to provide himself with food, water, and shelter and to increase his chances of being rescued.
3. As Phillip is exploring the southern beach of the cay, a flock of birds attacks him. Stew Cat attacks and kills one of the birds, and the others fly away.

Chapter 17 Answers
1. Summaries will vary but should describe how Phillip attempts to catch a lobster and is bitten by an eel.

Chapter 18 Answers
1. Phillip learns to tell the difference between different types of bird calls. He is also familiar with other island sounds, such as the rustle of the breeze and the noises of the lizards and Stew Cat.
2. Phillip realizes that the signal fire gave off white smoke, not black smoke, so the people in the plane could not see it.

Chapter 19 Answers
1. Phillip is rescued on August 20, 1942, after spending about four months on the island.
2. Responses will vary.
3. Responses will vary, but should include realistic details about Timothy’s experiences, his perspective about life on the cay, and his feelings toward Phillip.
4. Responses will vary. The author may have included Stew Cat so that Phillip would have a companion after Timothy died.
5. Responses will vary. Scenes of action and adventure, such as the hurricane, might be especially well suited for a movie adaptation. Scenes that discuss Phillip’s inner thoughts and feelings might be harder to adapt.