

# *Fourmile*

**Author:** Key, Watt

**Publisher:** Farrar, Strauss Giroux

**Copyright:** 2012

**Genre:** Fiction

**Setting:** Alabama

**SUMMARY:** Foster loves the farm and the life his father built for their family. But when his father is tragically killed, all that Foster holds dear is threatened. Linda, his mother wants to sell the farm and move to the city. Then Dax, a local man becomes involved with their lives. Just when Foster begins to despair, a stranger appears. For better or worse, Gary will be the catalyst that brings a violent resolution to this suspenseful and satisfying coming-of-age story. Watt Key writes in the style of the classical westerns, with characters that evoke both menace and compassion. This is a great book for all readers, but especially boys.

**AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:** Watt Key's full name is Albert Watkins Key, Jr. He always went by Watt so as not to be confused with his father. He grew up relatively isolated in Point Clear, Alabama, a rural area, that inspired him to develop his imagination in a way that led to his decision to write. He is the first of seven children raised by his parents. For more information:

<http://www.wattkey.com/http://www.wattkey.com/>

**Other books written by the author:** Alabama Moon and Dirt Road Home.

**SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:** The Last Invisible Boy by Evan Kuhlman

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Why do you think Foster did not like Dax? What was the dog Joe's opinion of Dax? Do you think dogs are sometimes better able to sense good and evil in people?
2. Why do you think Foster's mother was interested in Dax at the beginning of the book? What finally makes her change her mind?
3. Why did Foster lose interest in playing baseball? Discuss how the loss of someone you love can affect how you feel about life.
4. What was there about Gary that appealed to Foster? Discuss how we sometimes use instinct to relate to other people.
5. At the end of the book, Foster says he may go back and visit Four Mile someday. People often visit their old homes or favorite spots after moving away. Why do you think this is important to people? Do you have a place like this?

## **LITERARY LINKS or ACTIVITIES:**



<http://www.alabama.travel/experience-alabama/beaches><http://www.alabama.travel/experience-alabama/beaches>

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**Language Arts:** Using the Internet, take a virtual tour of the area of Alabama used as the setting for *Fourmile*. Select one or two of the locations and create a PowerPoint presentation for your classmates that show where you would enjoy visiting. Clearly state your reasons for your selections.

#### **EL.6.7.6 2006**

Support opinions with researched, documented evidence and with visual or media displays that use appropriate technology.

#### **EL.7.7.6 2006**

Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications:

Provide helpful feedback to speakers concerning the coherence and logic of a speech's content and delivery and its overall impact upon the listener.

#### **EL.8.7.7 2006**

Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications:

Analyze oral interpretations of literature, including language choice and delivery, and the effect of the interpretations on the listener.

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fdo02><http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fdo02>

**Language Arts:** In chapter 31, pg. 153, the author mentions a book by J. Frank Dobie titled Coronado's Children. Research this author using online databases. Write an analysis of why you think this particular author was used as a literary device by Watt Key in this book.

#### **EL.6.3.1 2006**

Structural Features of Literature:

Identify different types (genres) of fiction and describe the major characteristics of each form.

Example: Describe the common characteristics of different types of fiction, such as folklore, mystery, science fiction, adventure, fantasy, or biography, and provide examples of each type from books read by students in the class. Use a graphic organizer to show comparisons.

#### **EL.7.3.1 2006**

Structural Features of Literature:

Discuss the purposes and characteristics of different forms of written text, such as the short story, the

novel, the novella, and the essay.

Example: Describe a short story as a piece of prose fiction usually under 10,000 words and provide an example, such as "The Night the Bed Fell" by James Thurber. Describe a novel as a prose narrative of considerable length and provide an example, such as *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin. Describe a novella as a short novel and provide an example, such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Describe an essay as a short piece of writing on one subject or theme and provide an example, such as E.B. White's "Farewell to Model T."

### **EL.8.3.3 2006**

Compare and contrast the motivations and reactions of literary characters from different historical eras confronting either similar situations and conflicts or similar hypothetical situations.

Example: Compare literary works that deal with the theme of the impact of war, both on those who fight in the battles and those who remain at home. Works could include Walt Whitman's poem "Drum-Taps" from the Civil War period, John Hersey's novel *A Bell for Adano* from World War II, or Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American*, set in Vietnam at the beginning of the Vietnam conflict.

### **Challenging Words**

briar

periphery

killdeer

parse