



Novel Guide for Gifted and Advanced Readers



This guide is appropriate for use with gifted and advanced readers. It addresses their affective and cognitive needs through questions that can be used for discussion. Depending on the length of the book, students should read the entire book before conducting the bibliotherapy lesson, the **Group Discussion** using the higher order questions and the **After Discussion** activities. Students should be given the **Before Discussion** activities to complete during their time while reading the book. If the book is exceptionally long, you may need to modify this lesson plan. See **Novel Guide: Notes for Implementing** for additional procedures and recommendations.

Book Title: *Things Not Seen*

Author: Andrew Clements

Interest Level: 6-8

Lexile: 690 L

Length: 251 pages

Guide developed by: Miles Laseter

Summary Bobby Phillips is the son of two University of Chicago professors who often seem to be more consumed with their research than with Bobby. He is a 15 year-old high school student at the lab school, where his peers often seem not to notice him at all. Then, a fateful night of sleep changes Bobby from a seemingly invisible kid to a physically invisible kid. Enlisting the scientific expertise of his father and the bureaucratic maneuverability of his mother, Bobby seeks to find a solution to his unique problem while evading the suspicious eyes of his school and child services. Along the way, he meets Alicia Van Dorn, whose blindness is a unique complement to his invisibility, and combining the expertise of the aforementioned characters and a few more helpful individuals, Bobby ultimately finds a way to restore his visibility and decides that the associated responsibilities and privileges of visibility are indeed worth the trouble.

Conceptual Connections

Conceptual Lens: visibility

Other Key Concepts: responsibility, superficiality, identity

Essential Understandings:

- A healthy mixture of privacy and visibility contributes to a positive sense of identity.
- A healthy mixture of responsibility and freedom contributes to a positive sense of identity.
- Superficiality can be dangerous when appearances do not match reality.

Essential Questions:

- How does visibility shape identity?
- What is the value of responsibility?
- How important are appearances?

Affective Focus (Bibliotherapy)

Introductory Activity/Hook

Individuals exist within societies. A kind of tug of war between the individual and his or her society determines his or her identity. To what extent is your identity tied to the way others respond to you? Write a poem in your journal about an embarrassing mistake you might make in public. Imagine that, after making your embarrassing mistake, you realize that no one even noticed. Then, write a poem in your journal about a great accomplishment that you have achieved or that you would like to achieve. Imagine that no one showed any signs of noticing your achievement, and use vivid descriptions of your feelings and reactions as you narrate your achievement and realization.

Menu of Bibliotherapy Questions

Identification:

- What are some signs that Bobby's peers fail to notice him even when he is visible?
- What terms does Bobby use to describe his invisibility?
- How does Bobby's invisibility impact his relationships?
- How does Bobby go about solving his problem differently than his father? Similarly?
- What do Bobby and Alicia realize that they have in common?

Catharsis:

- How does Bobby's realization about "fear itself" enable to cope with his anxiety?
- How does Bobby benefit from sharing his struggles with Alicia?
- How are sleep and invisibility forms of escape for characters in the novel?
- How does Bobby feel about his invisibility early in the novel? Late in the novel?
- How do Bobby's parents make him feel unimportant even before he becomes invisible? His peers?

Insight:

- Which responsibilities do you accept? Which responsibilities are forced upon you?
- When do you feel invisible?
- How do others make you feel visible?
- How can show others that you notice and value them as individuals?
- Would you choose invisibility or visibility?

Universalization/Follow up Activity

- Write and illustrate a comic strip that explores both the possible advantages and disadvantages of the scenario you elaborated in your first poem.
- Write and illustrate a comic strip that explores both the possible advantages and disadvantages of the scenario you elaborated in your second poem.

Reading Comprehension: Independent Work and Group Discussion

To foster strong reading comprehension, literacy skills, and love of literature, students need to read critically, respond to what they read with text-based evidence, develop a robust vocabulary, and engage in high level discussion with peers. The following activities address these components.

Before Group Discussion (Activities for students to complete independently)

A. Knowledge and Comprehension Questions related to the novel. Students use sticky notes to locate answers in the text as they read. Teacher may use student's answers for a grade.

Knowledge Questions

- Bobby compares himself to what kind of warrior.
- What makes it possible for Bobby to introduce himself to Alicia?
- What unexpected event leads to Bobby's lying to a doctor?
- To which actor does Bobby compare himself?
- What is the "first class work" Bobby does in order to find a solution to his invisibility?

Comprehension Questions

- Why does Bobby decide to use his invisibility to his advantage to steal records while he refuses to use it to steal money?
- Why does Bobby need to create distinctions between himself and his father?
- Why do Bobby's parents risk so much to keep his condition secret?
- Why does Bobby honor Sheila's wishes even though he chooses the opposite path for himself?
- Why does Bobby ultimately decide to try to regain his visibility?

B. Vocabulary Study: Students will complete the following activities with vocabulary from the novel. The activities may be used for a grade, but should also be included in the discussion.

- Students look up the word in the dictionary or online, noting the definition that best fits how the word is used in the passage. Also, determine possible synonyms and evaluate the author's use of the word in the passage.
- Students will complete a graphic organizer provided by the teacher.

Vocabulary Words

- timid (p. 3)
- refractive (p. 14)
- phenomenon (p. 31)
- patented (p. 97)
- maladjustment (p. 112)
- magnitude (p. 154)
- parameters (p. 154)
- confidentiality (p. 208)

Group Discussion: Teacher-facilitated small group discussion. Teacher may choose to provide students with a set of the questions prior to the discussion. Students should also be encouraged to create their own questions.

Higher-Level Questions (using Bloom’s categories):

1. Application

- Would you choose invisibility over visibility?
- Would you like to run away from all your responsibilities like Alicia did?
- What does Bobby mean when he repeats President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s words about “fear itself”? Do you agree with this statement?
- What would you do differently if you were invisible?

2. Analysis

- How does Bobby’s opinion of appearances differ from that of Mrs. Van Dorn?
- How does Alicia’s blindness complement Bobby’s invisibility?
- How much did Bobby’s parents neglect him?

3. Evaluation

- What does this novel imply about the importance of appearances for most teenagers?
- What does this novel suggest about disabilities?
- What does this novel suggest about the likelihood that disabilities will permanently alter an individual’s character?

4. Synthesis

- If you were tasked with designing the cover of this novel, what images and colors would you use to best reflect the plot, mood, and themes?
- How would the story have differed if the invisible protagonist were an adult?
- What do you think Bobby’s life at school will be like now that he has learned what it is like to be literally invisible?

After Group Discussion: Activities for students to complete with a partner, in a small group, or individually. Activities may be used for a grade.

A. Connections to the Curriculum: Students will make connections to a curriculum area (math, science, social studies, language arts, art, or careers) using one of the concepts from the story. The product should reflect creativity as well as critical thinking.

- **Language Arts-** Students will discuss the exploitative extreme visibility of characters within *The Hunger Games*. Students will write an expository essay that compares and contrasts the disadvantages of extreme visibility with those of invisibility.
- **Social Studies-**Bobby takes comfort from words spoken by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the Great Depression. Students will research the history of the Great Depression—including its roots and the means by which individuals and groups coped with and reversed this devastating period of American history. Students will also explore the cultural and intellectual effects of the Great Depression, some of which still persist.
- **Science/ Health-**Students will research vision and vision problems. They will draw diagrams of the eye and of the neurological structures involved in sight. Students will also consult sources from social psychology that explore the role of sight in the formation of perception of others.
- **Art-**Students will study and listen to jazz, which is Bobby’s favorite music genre. Students will analyze jazz’s emphasis on experimentation and subversion of conventions. Students will then

connect these qualities to visual art in preparation for creating their own post-modern works of art.

- **Careers** – Students will research careers in science, beginning with physics and astronomy (the fields of Dr. Phillips and Dr. Van Dorn, respectively) and then branching out to other areas of interest. Students will create informational brochures detailing possible career paths within the sciences.
- **Language Arts/Creative Drama**- In keeping with comparing *The Hunger Games* with *Things Not Seen*, students will study the diction, syntax, and tone of Bobby's narration and dialogue in preparation for writing a script in which Bobby finds himself thrust into *The Hunger Games*. Students should make use of Bobby's highly informal yet contemplative speech patterns as well as his use of repetition, polysyndeton, and fragments. Departures from his normal speech—if justified by context—are acceptable in moderation.

B. Creative Reading: Using the following list of creative products, students will complete a project reflecting their personal connection with the novel (students may determine their own creative product with the approval of the teacher):

1. Create a puppet play based on a favorite scene in the story
2. Create a poem based on the novel, a character, or favorite scene
3. Illustrate a favorite scene(s) from the story
4. Create a story board of the plot of the story
5. Write a screen play based on the story
6. Create a new ending for the story
7. Create a map of the location(s) of the story
8. Create a mural representative of the story and characters
9. Extend the story into a sequel
10. Rewrite a portion of the story from another character's perspective
11. Rewrite the story in another time or culture
12. Create an online product: infographic, video, character blog, etc.
13. Write a song that one or more of the characters might sing
14. Create an interpretative dance for the story
15. Student idea for a creative product related to the story