British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

Commissioner's Book Club: Discussion guide

Clean Getaway

by Nic Stone

Introduction

The B.C. Human Rights Commissioner's Book Club offers monthly book selections that use stories to help readers connect with human rights issues and with the characters they encounter. We hope to bring together a province-wide community of readers to deepen their understanding of human rights and those who are most affected by human rights issues.

This guide has been prepared to help parents, teachers, librarians, and other trusted adults explore the themes in Clean Getaway by Nic Stone. The story explores racism, segregation, family history and personal growth through the experiences of Scoob, a young boy travelling across the American South with his grandmother. Along the way, Scoob learns about historical injustices, the Green Book and his family's experiences with segregation, helping him understand how racism has shaped both his family history and his own life.

Discussion questions

1. What did you think of the story? Did it teach you anything new or help you see something differently?
2. What was your favourite moment or scene in the book? Why? Compare your answer with others in the group.
3. Bullies often use aspects of people's identities, such as race, gender, disability or sexual orientation, to target them. Thinking about Drake's experience, what part of his identity did the bully target?
4. What do you think about how Scoob responded to Bryce bullying Drake? Did his reaction help solve the problem? What could he have done differently?

5. What do you think Scoob's father means when he says, "When boys like you ... hit boys like him ... the punishment is harsher and the fallout is infinitely worse"? What does this statement tell us about how people are treated differently because of their race or identity?
6. How does being part of a mixed-race family shape Scoob's experiences?
7. Was G'ma right to take Scoob on the trip without telling his father? Why or why not? Why does Scoob decide to leave with his G'ma?[KG2.1]
8. During the road trip, Scoob begins to see his G'ma differently. Can you think of moments when he was worried about G'ma or unsure about what to do? Would you have acted the same way? Why or why not?
9. How were Black people treated differently when G'ma and G'pa were younger? Can you think of examples from the book?
10. What did Scoob learn about segregation during his journey?
11. What is the Green Book? Why did Black travelers need it?
12. What surprised you most about life during segregation?
13. Why is it important to learn about difficult parts of history?
14. How has society changed since the time of segregation? What kinds of unfair treatment still exist today?
15. How might Scoob's road trip have been different if it had taken place in the 1950s or 1960s?
16. Guilt is an emotion experienced by several characters in the book. Can you think of examples of characters who felt guilty? Why did they feel that way?
17. Have you ever felt guilty about something? What did it feel like? How would you describe that feeling?
18. At the beginning of the book, there is a quotation from Bryan Stevenson: "Each one of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done." How does it relate to the story? Do you agree with the quotation? Why or why not?
19. After reading Clean Getaway, what role do you think families and caregivers play in teaching children to stand up for themselves and for others who are treated unfairly? Give examples from the book and your own life.

Activities

Human rights tree

> *Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world*
>
> — Eleanor Roosevelt

Part 1: Class discussion

Read the quote together. Discuss as a class:

- What do you think Eleanor Roosevelt meant by "small places, close to home"?
- What are some ways that the people we see every day and who care for us (like caregivers, parents, other family members, teachers and friends) help us learn about fairness, kindness, respect and standing up for others?
- Can those close to us help us learn about our rights (how we should be treated) and responsibilities (how we should treat others)? How?
- What is one important lesson about fairness or respect that you have learned from someone in your life?
- How does this quote relate to Scoob's experience in Clean Getaway?

Part 2: Human rights tree

1. Have each student draw a tree with roots, a trunk and branches on a large sheet of paper.
2. On the roots of their tree, have students write or draw things they have learned about human rights. This can include historical events, words, phrases or ideas. It may help to brainstorm ideas together for the students to use. For example:
    a. respect
    b. fairness
    c. Chinese head tax
    d. Komagata Maru
    e. everyone has human rights
    f. residential schools
    g. standing up for what is right
3. On the trunk have each student write "human rights"

4. On the branches, have students write examples of how they can put what they have learned into action:
    a. including others in games and activities
    b. speaking up when someone is treated unfairly
    c. respecting differences
    d. joining a diversity club
    e. treating myself and other people with care
5. In the leaves, have students write the names and/or roles of people who have helped them learn all of these things. This can include:
    a. parent, guardian or caregiver
    b. grandparent
    c. aunt or uncle
    d. sibling
    e. Elder
    f. friend
    g. teacher, coach, counsellor
6. Display the finished trees and have an activity-closing discussion about what students learned. Finish by asking each student: What is one lesson you learned about human rights during this project?

Segregation investigation

In the book, Scoob learns a lot about the history of segregation in the United States. He learns about segregation in hotels, restaurants and theatres and how, in order to travel, African Americans needed to use The Green Book to find places to stay and eat that would accept them as customers. He also learns about segregation of schools and health care.

Ask students: What do you know about segregation in Canada?

Have students choose one of the following areas:

- education
- health care
- services like restaurants, hotels and movie theaters

Have students research if and when segregation occurred here in British Columbia or anywhere in Canada in these specific areas. Encourage students to find out:

- When did the segregation take place?
- Where did the segregation take place?
- Which groups of people were excluded?
- What part of their identity was targeted? For example, their race, gender, religion or sexual orientation.

Once students have this information, tell them to research how people advocated to end the segregation. Questions they can consider:

- How did people fight to end the segregation? Were there specific people who fought it? Who were they?
- What happened to end the segregation? When did it end?

Once students have this information, have them create a slideshow or poster about what they have learned. Be sure to have them include the names of the people who helped to end the segregation and how they did it.

Extension activities:

Have students do presentations of their work for students in younger grades by sharing and explaining their slide presentation or poster and then answering questions.

B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* book

B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* (the Code) is a law that protects us from discrimination in B.C. in many of the places shown in the book, such as stores, hotels, schools and hospitals.

Invite students to learn more about the Code and the B.C. human rights system using the resources listed below.

Have students make small four to five page books about the Code that tells people about their rights in different places like when they are at school, in stores, on the bus or in hotels.

Tell students to include:

- what B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* is
- what parts of our identity it protects
- what areas and places of our everyday life it protects us in (in schools, stores, and restaurants, on the bus, at work, going to the doctor or when renting a place to live)
- what someone can do if they experience discrimination

Encourage students to:

- make the cover of the book colourful and exciting for readers
- include key information that people need to know about the Code
- space out the information so that readers learn something on each page

Human rights resources

- B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* (provincial law)
- Intro to Human Rights video and teacher resources:

  What are human rights? | BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner
- B.C.'s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner has many educational resources for learning about the Code. To learn more about how the Code protects you in certain areas of daily life based on parts of your identity:

  What is protected | BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner