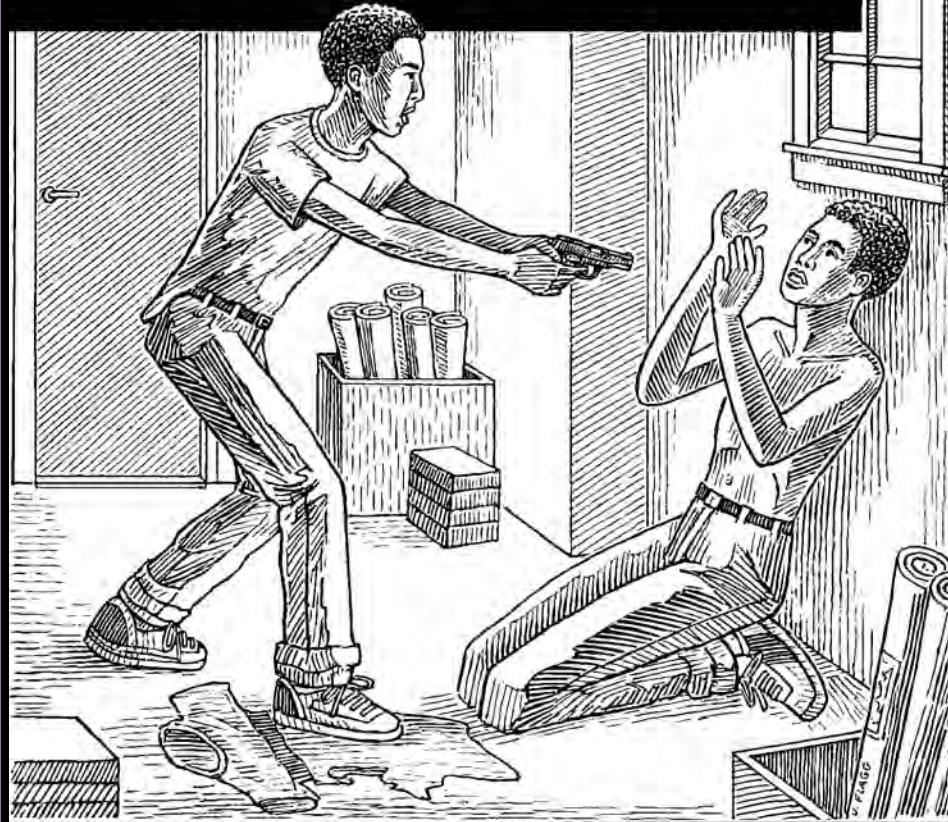


Novel·Ties

# Scorpions

Walter Dean Myers



## A Study Guide

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**LEARNING LINKS INC.**

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## For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide consists of instructional material to use in conjunction with the novel *Scorpions*. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

NOVEL-TIES are either for whole class instruction using a single title or for group instruction where each group uses a different novel appropriate to its reading level. Depending upon the amount of time allotted to it in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in two to four weeks.

The first step in using NOVEL-TIES is to distribute to each student a copy of the novel and a folder containing all of the duplicated worksheets. Begin instruction by selecting several pre-reading activities in order to set the stage for the reading ahead. Vocabulary exercises for each chapter always precede the reading so that new words will be reinforced in the context of the book. Use the questions on the chapter worksheets for class discussion or as written exercises.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits formed by practice in focusing on interpretive comprehension and literary techniques will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

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## CHAPTERS 1 – 3

**Vocabulary:** Draw a line from each word on the left to its definition on the right. Then use the numbered words to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1. parole    | a. style of folk singing originally associated with evangelical revival meetings   |
| 2. appeal    | b. young or youthful   |
| 3. gospel    | c. release of a prisoner, usually for good behavior, before a sentence has expired |
| 4. juvenile  | d. refined; displaying appropriate habits or manners                               |
| 5. civilized | e. transference of a case to a higher court for rehearsing or review               |

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1. Since he was only fifteen, the teenager was sent to a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ detention center rather than a prison after he was convicted of armed robbery.
2. After serving seven years of his ten-year prison term, the convict was released on \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Though the courts ruled that he must serve a prison term, the defendant hoped that a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ of the case would reverse this decision.
4. The principal spoke to the students about their behavior in the school cafeteria, saying they would have to show more mature and \_\_\_\_\_ behavior.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ singers in the church sang with enthusiasm and conviction.

### Questions:

1. How did Jamal show he was concerned about his mother?
2. Why did Mama come home so late?
3. Who was Randy? Why did he need five hundred dollars?
4. How did Jamal respond to his mother's concern about the Scorpions?
5. Why didn't Jamal like Mack?
6. How was Jamal treated in Mr. Davidson's office? Do you think the principal was correct in treating Jamal that way? Explain.
7. What evidence showed that Jamal was a poor student?

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## Chapters 1 – 3 (cont.)

8. Why did Jamal like Miss Brown? Why did he want to be good and do his homework for the next three days?
9. What people made Jamal feel badly about himself?

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What evidence showed that Jamal came from a very poor neighborhood?
2. How do you think Jamal felt about his sister Sassy? How do you know?
3. Do you think Mr. Davidson was a good principal? How does he compare to the principal of your school?
4. In Chapter Three, Jamal had the following thoughts as he walked past Mr. Davidson's office, "When you did something wrong, everybody put their mouth on you. When you did something good, everybody acted like it wasn't anything special." Is this what happens in your school or in your home?

### Social Studies Connection:

How did the legal system as depicted in this book make it difficult for poor people to obtain justice? Do some research to find out whether these same difficulties exist in the community where you live.

### Literary Techniques:

*Slang*—is casual language, more often found in speech than in writing. It is language often borrowed from the special language of an ethnic or socio-economic group.

*Dialogue*—is the language or the words supposedly spoken by characters in a work of fiction in contrast to narrative, which is the voice of the author describing what is happening.

How did the author use slang and dialogue to make this story more meaningful? Do you think it would be better or worse if the author had used standard English and narrative, instead?

### Writing Activity:

Have you or anyone you know ever been bullied by a person like Dwayne? Write about such an incident and tell what you think motivated the bully. Tell whether this bullying issue was ever resolved. What, if anything, is being done about bullying in your school?

**CHAPTERS 4, 5**

**Vocabulary:** Use the context to determine the meaning of the underlined word in each of the following sentences. Circle the letter of the word or phrase you choose.

- Jamal went out to buy some milk and bread from the little bodega on the corner.  
a. restaurant            b. grocery store            c. supermarket            d. hotel
- With his father still living in Puerto Rico, Tito now lived with his elderly abuela in Harlem.  
a. uncle            b. sister            c. cousin            d. grandmother
- The bank robber waved his gun menacingly at the bank clerk as he demanded the money.  
a. nervously            b. quickly            c. threateningly            d. foolishly
- After his team lost the championship game, the basketball player sat sullenly at his foot locker.  
a. glumly            b. happily            c. reasonably            d. foolishly
- The homeless man was easily identified by his scruffy clothes and untidy appearance.  
a. fashionable            b. oversized            c. ominous            d. shabby
- Separated from his companions on the hike and alone in the woods, the camper sat down to study his map.  
a. buddies            b. strangers            c. enemies            d. family

**Language Study:**

Mack spoke mainly in “jive” talk, or slang. What do you think each of these statements means? Rewrite each statement in standard English.

- You know I ain’t got that kind of dust, man.

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- If I got your back, they got to give you some slack, ’cause I’m the Mack.

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