

# Chatting it up

A Holiday House Reader's Guide

All about the Blossoms in . . .

## The Blossoms and the Green Phantom and more!



Discussion  
Questions

An Interview  
with Betsy Byars

Sneak Peek  
at  
*A Blossom  
Promise*

## Discussion Questions

1. Junior has failed at two inventions, and this time he intends to succeed with a new invention called the Green Phantom. Why does he get a patriotic feeling every time he looks at it?
2. It's quite clear that Junior wants people to be interested in his secret invention. Discuss the efforts he makes to get them interested. Why is he upset when he is ignored?
3. Pap and Junior seem to share a tendency toward getting into unusual predicaments. Compare and contrast Pap's night in the Dumpster to Junior's night with Mad Mary in *The Blossoms Meet the Vulture Lady*.
4. Describe Vern's friendship with Michael. Why doesn't Vern want Michael to meet his family?
5. Michael and Ralphie love to come to the Blossom house. Why are they so intrigued with the Blossoms?
6. Explain Junior's reaction when his mother says to Maggie, "Oh, love, your dad would be so proud

of you” (p. 27). Why is Junior so convinced that his father would be ashamed of him?

7. Junior feels that every single Blossom is a success but him. Discuss the successes of each Blossom. How might Junior’s creativity be viewed a success?
8. Explain the power of the “Blossom promise.” Why is Junior so excited to be on the receiving end of a Blossom promise?
9. Vicki Blossom is furious when Maggie, Vern, and Ralphie leave Junior on the roof of old man Benson’s chicken house. Why does her fury surprise the children? Suggest ways the children could have helped Junior get down from the roof. Explain why staying behind to help would show courage and loyalty.
10. Pap is finally rescued by the police. Why is Pap so worried that he will look foolish to people? He says that not wanting to look foolish is a Blossom trait. Debate whether this trait has been inherited by Maggie, Vern, and Junior.

Prepared by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

# An Interview with Betsy Byars



**Junior was born to be an inventor. And since you are a writer, you are too! What else did you get the inventing gene for?**

When I was growing up, I liked to make my own clothes. Some of them really were inventions. I sewed fast, without patterns and with great hope and determination; and that's approximately the same way I write.



**Pap and Junior get into lots of unusual predicaments. What was the most remarkable predicament you were ever in?**

My most remarkable predicament was finding myself an author. It had been easy to be a writer. I wrote whenever I could, wherever I was, and on whatever I could find. Nobody wanted to meet me—certainly not editors. I didn't have to become an AUTHOR until I won the Newbery Medal. Having to act like an author was a remarkable predicament.



**Was Junior getting stuck on the roof based on anything you'd experienced?**

I get stuck all the time when I'm writing. I get to the point where I don't know what's going to happen next. I've tried hitting myself on the forehead and saying, "Think, Betsy, think!" It doesn't work. Here's what works. I say, "Oh, well, I'll just play some computer games." I start playing and I get really involved and I'm about to win—and wouldn't you know it—I think what's going to happen next and have to go back to my writing.

# S N E A K P E E K !

## Book 4: A Blossom Promise

*Will an unforeseen tragedy tear the family apart?*

The Blossoms have just weathered the worst flood in the state's history. Snake Creek has overflowed its banks, and Vern and Michael can't wait to test their homemade raft. But they don't count on the raging current. Suddenly, Pap hears screams around the bend. Can he rescue them before it's too late, or are they up a creek without a paddle?

*Turn the page for a sneak preview. . . .*

“Hold on!” Pap yelled. Under his breath he said, “They’re going to drown before they get to me.”

“Just don’t miss,” Junior advised.

Pap waded into the muddy water. At his side, the rope twirled evenly, effortlessly. Junior ran up the creek toward the raft, beckoning it to shore.

“Over this way,” he shouted. “Over here.”

Pap waded deeper into the water. He would have his best shot at roping the boys when they got to the bend in the creek. The loop of rope was twirling at shoulder height now so it wouldn’t touch the water.

All week long, while the creek had been rising, Pap had been watching it from a rocking chair on the porch. Pap knew that the raft would probably spin around at least once before sweeping around the turn. Pap had watched logs and trash get caught there in an eddy all week.

He got set. He edged farther out into the creek. The muddy water filled his high-topped shoes, splashed on his swollen knees. He took another step. The water rushed around his thighs.