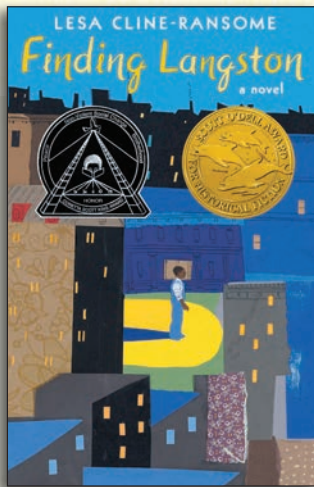


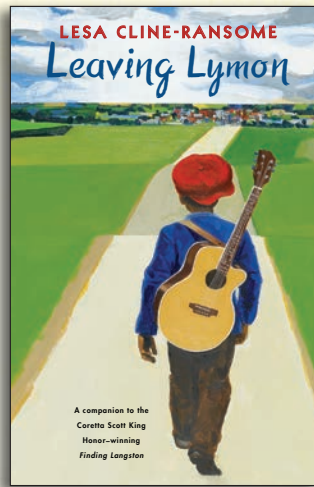
# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

## *Finding Langston* Trilogy

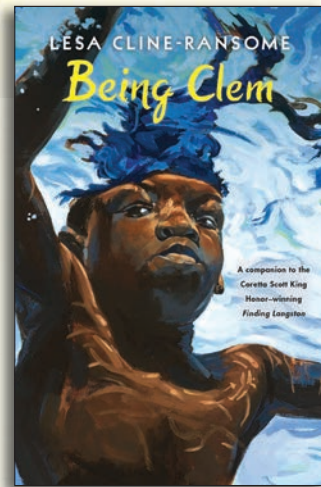
by LESA CLINE-RANSOME



HC: 9780823439607  
PB: 9780823445820  
E-BOOK: 9780823441105



HC: 9780823444427  
PB: 9780823449422  
E-BOOK: 9780823446339



HC: 9780823446049  
E-BOOK: 9780823448968

### PRAISE FOR THE SERIES

★ “This whole series deserves a place on library shelves everywhere.”

—*School Library Journal* on *Being Clem*, starred review

★ “Like the other two entries, this novel with its parallel narrative addresses tough situations with care.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* on *Being Clem*, starred review

### ABOUT THE SERIES

Grief, resilience, family, friendships, and overarching social dynamics all tie together the stories of three young boys living in 1940s Chicago.

The series begins with the titular *Finding Langston*. It's the year 1946, and eleven-year-old Langston's mother has just died. The loss causes Langston's father to move them from everything they've known in Alabama to Chicago's Bronzeville district. Despite facing bullies and a lonely home life, Langston finds refuge in the Chicago Public Library—a place that welcomes all, unlike the whites-only library back home in Alabama.

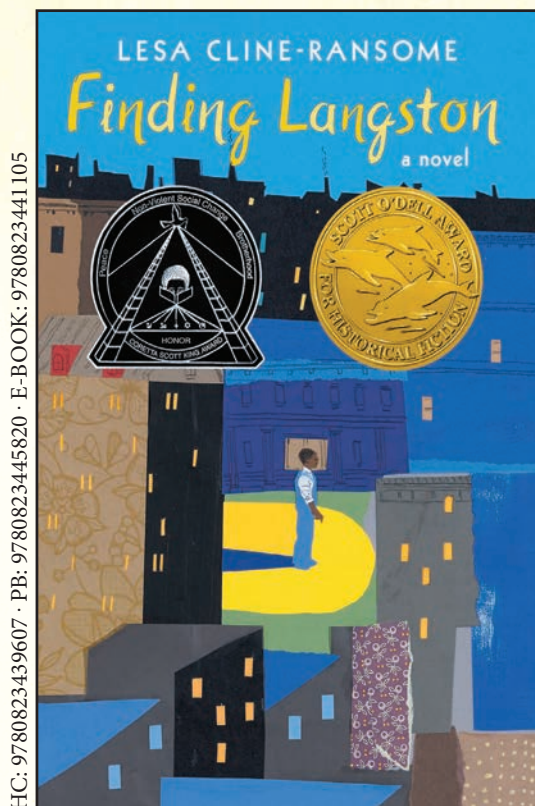
Langston's bully, Lymon, has a chance for redemption in the second installment of the trilogy, *Leaving Lymon*. Lymon's life of music and summer nights playing guitar with his grandpops is abruptly uprooted with an unexpected journey to two Northern cities.

The trilogy concludes with *Being Clem*. Clem is known as a fun-loving friend and brother. But when his family receives word that his father has passed away in the infamous Port Chicago disaster, the fabric of his life begins to crumble. As he sees his mother work long hours as a maid for a wealthy white family, Clem begins to question: Can he live up to his father's legacy?





# HOLIDAY HOUSE



## *Finding Langston*

Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book  
Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction

- ★ *Booklist*, Starred Review
- ★ *The Horn Book*, Starred Review
- ★ *Kirkus Reviews*, Starred Review
- ★ *School Library Journal*, Starred Review
- ★ *Shelf Awareness*, Starred Review

### ABOUT THE BOOK

In this award-winning debut novel about the Great Migration, a boy discovers Chicago's postwar South Side and the poetry of Langston Hughes.

Set in 1946 Chicago, eleven-year-old Langston is grieving the death of his mother, and missing rural Alabama where he and his father lived until his father decided there was no longer a reason to stay. They moved into a small one-room

apartment in a section of Chicago called the Brown Belt. Langston's father works in a nearby factory, and Langston walks to school. The problem with school is that there are bullies, including a young boy named Lymon, who call Langston "Country" and laugh at his overalls, his rundown shoes, and his Southern accent.

When Langston discovers the Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library, he finds that, unlike the whites-only library in Alabama, he is welcome. He spends every afternoon in the library, and with the guidance of the children's librarian, he discovers the poetry of Langston Hughes. Until then, he didn't know where his name came from, but the poetry his mother quoted in secret letters she once wrote his dad reveal that she was so inspired by Langston Hughes that she named her son for him.

### PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Have students read about the Great Migration on the following website: [blackpast.org/aah/great-migration-1915-1960](http://blackpast.org/aah/great-migration-1915-1960). Then read aloud "One-Way Ticket" by Langston Hughes: [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/ows/seminars/tcentury/gmigration/Hughes\\_OneWayTicket.pdf](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/ows/seminars/tcentury/gmigration/Hughes_OneWayTicket.pdf). Ask students to write a one-page paper that states how this poem reflects the feelings of the people who left the South during the Great Migration.

Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-5.3





## CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- After Langston's mother dies, he and his father move to Chicago. What does Langston miss most about Alabama? How are the people in Chicago different from those in Alabama? Why does Langston think that the folks in Alabama would call those in Chicago "uppity"? Langston describes his memory of Alabama as "a candle fighting to stay lit in the wind" (p. 5). Why is it important for him to keep his memories of Alabama "lit"?
- Langston says nothing in Chicago belongs to them, and no one knows his name. At what point does Langston begin to feel a sense of belonging? Who and what help him find his place in the vast city?
- Langston's father explains that Chicago is their home now. Discuss the difference between a house and a home. Contrast Langston and his family's house in Alabama with the apartment in Chicago. Explain how their house in Alabama was a home. Debate whether the apartment in Chicago ever feels like a home to Langston.
- Compare and contrast the way Langston and his father deal with grief. Why won't Langston cry in front of his father? Discuss how tears are often the best way to confront grief.
- Define *privacy*. What is the difference between *privacy* and *secrets*? Langston discovers a box of letters that his mother sent his father when they were young. How does Langston violate his father's privacy by reading the letters? Why is reading someone's mail like stealing?
- What does Langston learn about his parents from reading the letters? Discuss what his father would say if he knew that Langston had read the letters.
- How does Langston deal with loneliness? Parts of poems by Langston Hughes are used throughout the novel. Which poems speak of loneliness? How do the poems console Langston? In what other ways do Hughes's poems speak to Langston?
- Discuss Langston's encounter with bullies. Who is the ringleader? Describe Erroll's and Clem's roles in the bullying. Debate whether they are afraid of Lymon. What is the first hint that Clem is different from Lymon and Erroll? At what point does Langston stand up to Lymon? Describe his father's reaction to the fight. How does the schoolyard incident help Langston gain respect from the other boys? Debate whether such respect is worth the detention Langston must serve.
- Describe the friendship that develops between Langston and Clem. What do they have in common? Langston doesn't like being called "Country." What is symbolic about Langston telling Clem his name?
- Langston discovers the George Cleveland Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library and goes there every afternoon after school. Why does he lie and tell his father that he is playing with boys his age after school? Explain his reaction when Miss Fullton asks him if he has been spending his afternoons at the library.
- Discuss Langston's thoughts when he discovers the poems of Langston Hughes. Why does he think the poet is like a magician? Discuss why he wants to keep the library and Mr. Langston Hughes to himself. Explain why he finally tells his father about the library. What is the significance of Langston and his father going to the library together at the end of the novel (p. 104)?
- How does Miss Fulton become more than just a neighbor to Langston and his father?
- What does Langston learn about his father during the short time they've been in Chicago?
- Debate whether Langston's attitude toward Chicago changes by the end of the novel.

*Correlates to CCSS in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1, RL.3-5.2, RL. 3-5.3; Craft & Structure RL. 4-5.4, RL. 3-5.5, RL. 3-5.6; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-5.1, SL. 3-5.2, SL. 3-5.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

**Writing**—Langston and his father move from Alabama to Chicago in 1946. Most African Americans leaving the South were escaping Jim Crow laws, and searching for better work opportunities. Have students write a paper that reveals what Langston and his father are seeking, and what they leave behind.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*





Ask students to write a paper that explains the title of the book. Instruct them to cite direct quotes or specific scenes to support their opinion.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*

**Language Arts/Writing**—Langston’s father likes blues songs. He later thinks that the poems of Langston Hughes are similar to the blues. Read about Langston Hughes and the blues on the following website: <http://bbkingmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/L.-Hughes-and-the-Blues.pdf>. Allow students to work with a partner to consider the main character of the novel and his sadness about living in Chicago. Then have them write a blues song or poem called “Langston’s Chicago Blues.”

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*

Read aloud “Mother to Son” by Langston Hughes, and have the class analyze the message the mother is sending. ([poetryfoundation.org/poems/47559/mother-to-son](http://poetryfoundation.org/poems/47559/mother-to-son)). Then have them write a poem titled “Father to Son” that reveals the relationship between Langston and his father.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*

**Social Studies/Writing**—Ask students to use books in the library or sites on the Internet to research the Harlem Renaissance. The following sites are helpful: [youtube.com/watch?v=nWMus4KHKx4](http://youtube.com/watch?v=nWMus4KHKx4) (for younger students) and [poetryfoundation.org/collections/145704/an-introduction-to-the-harlem-renaissance](http://poetryfoundation.org/collections/145704/an-introduction-to-the-harlem-renaissance) (for older students). Then have them write a newspaper feature for Black History Month that discusses the importance of this cultural movement. Remember to include who, what, when, where, and how.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W.3-5.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-5.4, W. 3-5.6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-5.9; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2.*

What is a jewel? Have students write a one-page paper that explains why the Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library is called the “Black Jewel of the Midwest.”

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*

**Drama**—Plan a program for the Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library about the Chicago Black Renaissance. Have Langston and Clem as Masters of Ceremonies. Engage other classmates in the program by having them present some of the luminaries of this cultural movement. End the program with an interpretive dance to one of the poems of Langston Hughes. Information may be found on the following websites:

### Visual Artists

Charles White ([moma.org/artists/6339](http://moma.org/artists/6339))  
William Edouard Scott  
([illinoisart.org/william-edouard-scott](http://illinoisart.org/william-edouard-scott))

### Musicians

Louis Armstrong  
([npg.si.edu/exh/armstrong/index.htm](http://npg.si.edu/exh/armstrong/index.htm))  
Cab Calloway  
([notablebiographies.com/Br-Ca/Calloway-Cab.html](http://notablebiographies.com/Br-Ca/Calloway-Cab.html))  
Muddy Waters ([muddywatersofficial.com/](http://muddywatersofficial.com/))  
Mahalia Jackson  
([biography.com/people/mahalia-jackson-9351242](http://biography.com/people/mahalia-jackson-9351242))

### Writers

Lorraine Hansberry  
([chipublib.org/lorraine-hansberry-biography/](http://chipublib.org/lorraine-hansberry-biography/))  
Arna Bontemps  
([poets.org/poetsorg/poet/arna-bontemps](http://poets.org/poetsorg/poet/arna-bontemps))  
Gwendolyn Brooks  
([poetryfoundation.org/poets/gwendolyn-brooks](http://poetryfoundation.org/poets/gwendolyn-brooks))  
Richard Wright  
([biography.com/people/richard-wright-9537751](http://biography.com/people/richard-wright-9537751))  
Langston Hughes  
([poets.org/poetsorg/poet/langston-hughes](http://poets.org/poetsorg/poet/langston-hughes))

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-5.7, W. 3-5.8, W. 3-5.9; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-5.4.*

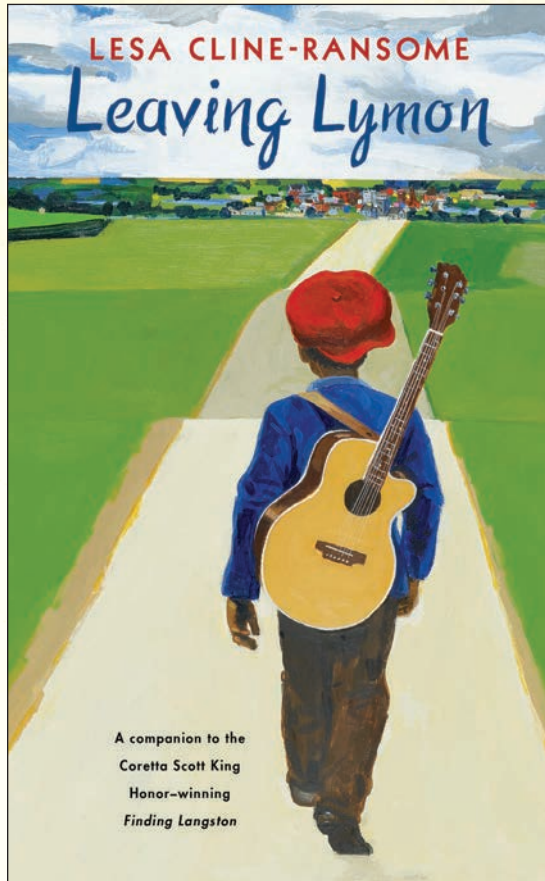
## VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE

The vocabulary in the novel isn’t difficult, but students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words, then try to define them by taking clues from context. Such words may include: *esteemed* (p. 28), *residents* (p. 280), *selections* (p. 29), *surpassing* (p. 63), and *sashaying* (p. 91).





# HOLIDAY HOUSE



HC: 978-0-8234-4442-7 • E-book: 978-0-8234-4633-9

## Leaving Lymon

- ★ *Booklist*, Starred Review
- ★ *The Horn Book*, Starred Review
- ★ *Kirkus Reviews*, Starred Review
- ★ *School Library Journal*, Starred Review
- ★ *Shelf Awareness*, Starred Review

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Young Lymon, who appeared in the award-winning *Finding Langston*, has a story worth hearing and at least one chance for redemption. It's 1946 and Lymon, uprooted from his life in the Deep South and moved up North, needs that chance.

Lymon has never really known either of his parents. His mother moved to Chicago during the Great Migration, while his father is serving time at Parchman Farm, the Mississippi State Penitentiary. His grandparents provide a good home for him, but things change after Grandpops dies. Lymon and Ma move from Vicksburg, Mississippi, to Milwaukee to be closer to relatives. When Ma becomes ill, Lymon is sent to live with his mother in Chicago. He has dreamed of knowing his mother, but the relationship is strained because Mr. Robert, his mother's husband, is a bully and resents Lymon being there. Lymon's behavior deteriorates: He bullies a classmate at school and steals money from Mr. Robert as he tries to run away. The courts sentence him to six months in a detention home, a place that at first glance reminds him of Parchman. His love of music leads him to the band room at the Arthur J. Audy Home, where Mr. Danforth, the music teacher, recognizes Lymon's talent. And it is music that sets him on a new path in life, one that hopefully includes his father.

### PRE-READING ACTIVITY

*Leaving Lymon* is a companion novel to *Finding Langston*. Discuss the difference between a companion novel and a sequel. Instruct students to consider Lymon's brief appearance in *Finding Langston* and have them write a one-page paper that predicts one possible conflict in *Leaving Lymon*.

Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.



HolidayHouse.com



#LeavingLymon



## CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- Describe Lymon's relationship with Grandpops. How is Grandpops better than Ma at answering Lymon's questions? What does Grandpops give Lymon that Ma can't give him? Discuss the greatest gift that Grandpops gives Lymon. How does this gift see Lymon through some tough times?
- Ma and Grandpops take Lymon to see his father at Parchman Farm. Why don't they explain to Lymon where they are going? Explain Lymon's reaction when he sees his dad in "black-and-white pajamas." Discuss why his dad tells Ma and Grandpops not to bring Lymon back to Parchman.
- No one really explains to Lymon that Grandpops is very ill. At what point does Lymon realize that Grandpops might not live? How could he have been better prepared for his grandfather's death if someone had been honest with him?
- When Grandpops dies, Aunt Shirley explains to Lymon that his daddy can't come to the funeral. She tells him that he needs to be a "little man" today. Debate whether Lymon fully understands this expectation. Cite other times in the novel that "being a man" is mentioned. Who ultimately teaches Lymon what it means to be a man?
- After Grandpops dies, Lymon and Ma move to Milwaukee to be near Aunt Vera and Uncle Clark. Lymon is enrolled in Fourth Street Elementary School. Later he lives with his mother in Chicago and attends Lincoln Elementary School. How does Lymon compare Fourth Street Elementary and Lincoln Elementary to the school he attended in Vicksburg, Mississippi? In which school is he the happiest? How does his reaction to the three schools reflect his home life at the time?
- Explain the following simile: "Milwaukee sounded like a record, playing all kinds of sounds at once" (p. 32). Identify other similes and metaphors related to music.
- Describe Mr. Eugene. How does he sense that Lymon needs a male role model? Why does Lymon think that Mr. Eugene is like the "deacons in Vicksburg"? Discuss the conversation that Mr. Eugene has with Lymon at the end of the novel. How does Mr. Eugene encourage Lymon to learn from his mistakes?
- When Ma gets sick, Aunt Vera calls Lymon's momma to come and get him. Describe Lymon's reaction when he sees his momma for the first time. Lymon had dreamed of knowing his momma. What does he learn about her once he goes to live with her?
- Discuss the following phrase: "When you lie down with dogs, you wake up with fleas" (p. 52). How does this perfectly express Ma's attitude toward Lymon's momma? Who are the "dogs" that Lymon encounters in Chicago? Debate how the "dogs" give Lymon a temporary case of the "fleas." At what point does he rid himself of the "fleas"?
- How does Lymon describe Curtis, Errol, and Clem, his classmates at Lincoln Elementary School? When Curtis, the bully, taunts Lymon, Errol encourages Lymon to walk away. Instead, Lymon hits Curtis. Lymon explains his actions by saying, "If I ran now, I'd always be running" (p. 109). How might Lymon have better handled the situation without "running"? Discuss why Lymon bullies Langston.
- Grandpops always said that "a man has got to demand respect" (p. 110). Why is there no respect in becoming a bully? How might Grandpops have reacted to Lymon's way of demanding respect?
- Describe Mr. Robert. Why does Lymon's momma think that he's a good man? Debate whether Mr. Robert resents Lymon living with them. How does he bully Lymon? Discuss whether he is partly responsible for Lymon's bullying behavior.





- Lymon runs away and is picked up by the police. He is sent to the Arthur J. Audy Home. How does this place remind Lymon of Parchman Farm? Explain what he finds there that he never had while living with his momma and Mr. Robert.
- Trace Lymon's relationship with his dad from the beginning of the novel to the end. How does the author reveal hope at the end of the novel?

*Correlates to CCSS in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1, RL.3-5.2, RL. 3-5.3; Craft & Structure RL. 4-5.4, RL. 3-5.5, RL. 3-5.6; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-5.1, SL. 3-5.2, SL. 3-5.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Language Arts/Writing—Explain what Lymon means when he says school is like “playing a game of Mother May I? where I took one baby step while everybody else in class took five” (p. 29). Write a short essay that explains the point in the novel when Lymon finally takes a giant step. Who helps him make the leap? Cite specific scenes and use direct quotes to support your opinion.
- Language Arts/Writing/Poetry—A shape poem is a poem that is shaped like the thing it describes. Write down words that describe the symbolism of the guitar that Grandpops gives Lymon. Then write a shape poem about the guitar and what it means to Lymon. Include a line about Mr. Robert destroying the guitar.
- Language Arts/Writing/Music—Have students read the lyrics of “Home” from *The Wiz* (lyricsondemand.com/soundtracks/w/thewizlyrics/homelyrics.html). Write a paper that compares the meaning of the song to Lymon's journey home.
- Debate—In the Author's Note, Cline-Ransome poses the question: “Are bullies born, or are they made?” Stage a debate where students argue the question. Instruct them to make specific reference to the book to support their argument.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-5.4; Language: Conventions of Standard English L.3- 5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3- 5.3.*

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Key Ideas & Purposes W. 5.3; ; Language: Conventions of Standard English L.5.1, L.5.2; Knowledge of Language L.5.3.*

*Correlates to CCSS in Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL 3-5.1, SL. 3-5.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-5.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*

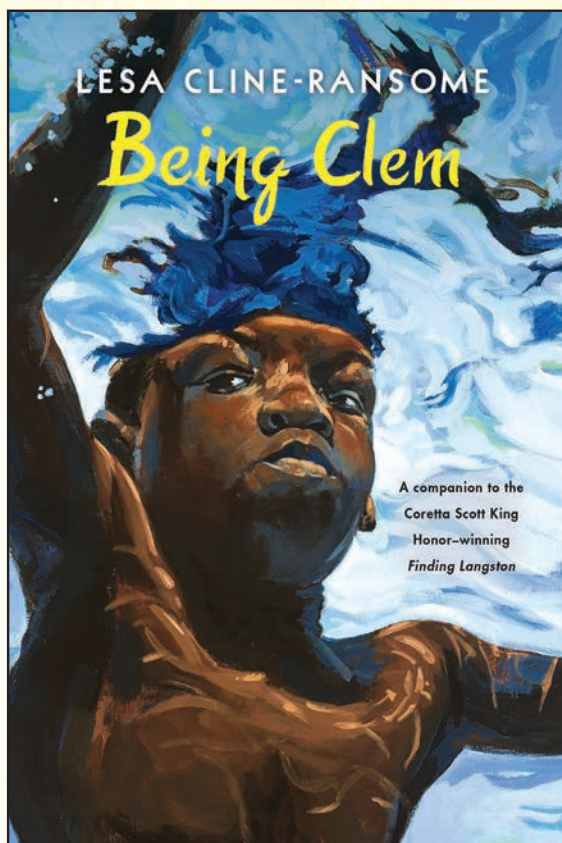
## VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE

The vocabulary in the novel isn't difficult, but students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them taking clues from context. Such words may include: *truancy* (p. 68), *documentation* (p. 68), *adequate* (p. 69), *dilemma* (p. 77), *dignity* (p. 93), *custody* (p. 168), and *asset* (p. 171).





# HOLIDAY HOUSE



HC: 9780823446049 · E-BOOK: 9780823448968

## Being Clem

### ABOUT THE BOOK

**A brilliant and vulnerable African American boy must navigate his family's losses and struggles in 1940s Chicago from the award-winning author of *Finding Langston* and *Leaving Lymon*.**

Clemson Thurber, Jr. was four years old when his daddy joined the navy, and he is nine-years-old when soldiers come to his family's apartment in Chicago's South Side to inform them that Clemson, Sr. was killed in the Port of Chicago Disaster on July 17, 1944. Since Clem has so few memories of his daddy, he can't grieve in the same way as Momma and his sisters, Clarisse and Annette. He wants to be brave like his daddy, and make Momma proud, but he is small and harbors fears, like

learning to swim and dealing with bullies. He is so intelligent that he skips third grade, but this makes him the target of much larger and tougher fourth grade guys. In sixth grade, he teams up with Errol, a neighbor, and Lymon, a new boy, to deal with Curtis, the school yard bully.

They call themselves the Three Musketeers, but when Errol and Lymon begin bullying Langston, a new boy from Alabama, Clem makes the decision to leave the Musketeers. He and Langston discover they have something in common—the love of books and the Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library. Something about Langston makes Clem feel brave, and he finally gains the courage to conquer his fears. He learns to swim from a member of the DuSable High School swim team, and he faces off with Lymon. His newly developed sense of self gives him the courage to speak up for himself to Momma and his sisters. He even manages to convince Momma to allow him to get a paper route and help with the family finances.

### PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Clem's father joined the navy during World War II, and was killed in the Port of Chicago Disaster. Read about this tragic incident on the following website: [history.com/this-day-in-history/port-chicago-disaster](http://history.com/this-day-in-history/port-chicago-disaster). Then write a one-page paper that explains why this incident during World War II was an example of race discrimination in the United State military.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-5.3.*





## CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- The novel opens with the night the family learns that Clemson Thurber, Sr. was killed in the Port of Chicago Disaster. Explain what Clem means when he says that on that night, Clarisse, his oldest sister, “looked like the momma and our momma looked like the child” (p. 3).
- Clem was very young when his father joined the navy. Debate whether grief is easier or more difficult for Clem because he doesn’t have many memories of his father. Discuss whether Momma ever overcomes her grief.
- Discuss how Clemson Thurber’s death changes the family. How does each member of the family deal with these changes? Who suffers the most?
- Contrast Clarisse and Annette. Why does Clem say that Clarisse is hard to like? Explain the following simile: “She [Momma] had us lined up on the couch and was giving directions like she was a drill sergeant and we were recruits” (p. 31). Which of the recruits is most likely to disobey Momma?
- Momma has to go to work to pay the bills. She is turned down for secretarial work, though she has a secretary degree from the National Training School for Women and Girls in D. C. Define discrimination. How is Momma the victim of discrimination?
- Momma is forced to take a job as a maid for the Franklin family in the wealthy Hyde Park neighborhood. Explain why Momma cries on the first day of work. Clem’s sisters seem to understand what Momma is feeling. Why don’t they explain it to Clem? Later, Clem goes to work with Momma. Discuss his reaction when he hears Matthew Franklin call his mother “CeeCee.” Why does Clem think his mother looks older at work than she does at home?
- How is it obvious that Clem is Momma’s favorite child? Debate whether it’s because he’s the youngest, or whether it’s because he’s the only boy. How does being the favorite interfere with Clem’s journey toward becoming a man?
- Discuss why Clarisse sometimes calls Clem “Clementine.” Name times that Clem feels like a “Clementine.” Clem says, “All I did was my schoolwork. I just wish once someone would treat me like I had something to offer” (p. 35).
- At the end of the novel, Clem takes Anthony’s paper route. Discuss Momma’s response when Clem gives her the money from his earnings. How does this change Momma’s view of him? What else does Clem do to change how his family views him?
- Strength of family is evident throughout the novel. What is an extended family? The summer after his daddy dies, Clem and his sisters go to Milwaukee to visit Uncle Kent’s family. Contrast Clem and his first cousin, Kendrick. What things does Clem learn from his cousin? How is this trip different from his summer visits with his aunts in D.C.?
- Clem is very intelligent, and the school principal thinks that he should skip third grade. Explain why Mrs. Franklin is surprised to learn that Clem skipped a grade.
- Why do the boys in the fourth-grade call Clem “Professor”? Discuss why Clem wants to go back to third-grade. Explain what Momma means, “We can’t always do what’s easiest, Clem” (p. 14).
- Clem gives the answers to test questions to the boys sitting around him. Explain why he cheats when he knows it’s wrong. How is being so intelligent sometimes a burden for him?
- Describe Clem’s relationship with Errol. Explain what Clem means, “I might have to walk with Errol, but it didn’t mean I had to walk beside him” (p. 47). How is walking with Errol Momma’s idea, not Clem’s?
- Who are the bullies in the novel? How do Clem and Errol respond to them? Discuss why Clem and Errol team up with Lymon. They call themselves the Three Musketeers. Explain why Clem seems out of place in this group.
- The group calls Langston, Country Boy, because he’s from Alabama. Explain what Clem means, “The way Lymon treated him [Langston] didn’t have nothing to do with Country Boy and just about everything to do with Lymon” (p. 142).
- Clem makes a decision to leave the Three Musketeers. How is this a good decision? Explain how this is an act of courage.
- Lymon rips the pages from Langston’s library book. Discuss Langston’s reaction. Clem gathers the pages and gives them to Langston. Debate whether Langston is surprised by this kind gesture. How is this a turning point in their relationship? Why does Clem call Langston a hero?
- Clem tells Annette that he wants to learn to swim to feel brave. He failed with two swim teachers. How does Anthony give him courage to try again? Momma, Clarisse and Annette come to see him swim. Explain what Clem means when he says, “Like for the first time, she [Momma] saw just me and not the part that reminds her of my daddy” (p. 231). How does learning to swim give Clem courage to speak up for himself at home?





- Setting is when and where a novel takes place. Identify people, places, events and things in the novel that reveal the setting.

*Correlates to CCSS in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1, RL. 3-5.2, RL. 3-5.3; Craft & Structure RL. 4-5.4, RL. 3-5.5, RL. 3-5.6; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-5.1, SL. 3-5.2, SL. 3-5.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.*

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

**Language Arts/Writing** – Write a two-page paper that discusses the hardest part of being Clem. Cite scenes, and use direct quotes to illustrate your point. Write a concluding sentence that states how Clem changes by the end of the novel.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-5.3*

**Language Arts/Writing** – At the end of the novel, Clem gets a paper route. He thinks that he may become a journalist. Write a guest editorial for the *Chicago Defender* that Clem might write about what's it's like having a paper route.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-5.3*

**Language Arts/Writing** - Clarisse calls Clem the Cowardly Lion from *The Wizard of Oz*. Read about the lion in *The Wizard of Oz* on the internet, or by reviewing L. Frank Baum's novel. Then write a one-page paper that draws a comparison between the Cowardly Lion and Clem. How does each character find courage?

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-5.3*

**Social Studies/Writing** - Edwin Rosskam was a photographer for the Farm Security Administration charged with documenting the Great Migration. Ask students to locate photos that he took of daily life in Chicago's South Side in the 1940s. The following website is helpful:

<https://rawnakedart.com/2021/02/20/the-photography-of-edwin-rosskam-chicago-1941/>.

Then ask them to write a one-page description of one photograph through Clem's eyes.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-5.9; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-5.3*

**Social Studies/Writing** - Momma sends Clem and his sisters to Washington D.C. every summer to visit Aunt Dorcas and Aunt Bethel. Research one of the monuments that Clem might have seen, and write a brief paper about the monument's significance. Include at least five interesting facts.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-5.9; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-5.3*

**Social Studies** - Clem was fifty-nine-years-old when The Port of Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial was dedicated in 1994. Prepare and deliver a brief speech that Clem might have made about how the disaster changed his family. Speak of his father's bravery and dedication to country.

*Correlates to CCSS in Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-5.4.*

## VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE

The vocabulary in the novel isn't difficult, but students should be encouraged to jot down history.com/this-day-in-history/port-chicago-disaster unfamiliar words and try to define them taking clues from context. Such words may include:

*Ventriloquist* (p. 12), *sacrificing* (p. 15), *compensate* (p. 20), *hypnotized* (p. 119), *spinster* (p. 123), *modest* (p. 204), *enterprising* (p. 232), *hospitality* (p. 234), *reverberated* (p. 242), and *retribution* (p. 243).





## INTERNET RESOURCES

### Encyclopedia of Chicago, Community of Bronzeville

[encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/171.html](http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/171.html)

*This is information about Bronzeville, where Langston and his father lived.*

### Chicago Public Library Hall Branch

[chipublib.org/about-hall-branch/](http://chipublib.org/about-hall-branch/)

*This site offers information about the Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library.*

### Muddy Waters

[muddywatersofficial.com/](http://muddywatersofficial.com/)

*Official website of Muddy Waters.*

### National Blues Museum

[nationalbluesmuseum.org/](http://nationalbluesmuseum.org/)

*Official website for the National Blues Museum.*

### Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial

[nationalparks.org/connect/explore-parks/port-chicago-naval-magazine-national-memorial](http://nationalparks.org/connect/explore-parks/port-chicago-naval-magazine-national-memorial)

*Official memorial website with information on the Port Chicago Disaster.*

### Bud Billiken Parade

[budbillikenparade.org/](http://budbillikenparade.org/)

*Official website of Chicago's Bud Billiken annual parade.*

### Chicago's South Side

[encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1177.html](http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1177.html)

*Official online encyclopedia page with information on the history of Chicago's South Side.*

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

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Photo credit: John Halpern



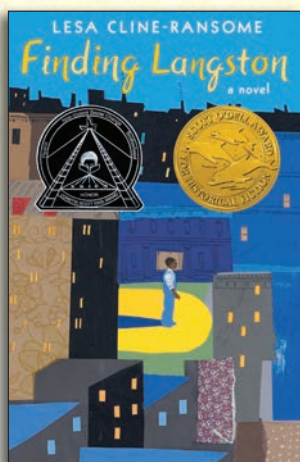
**Lesa Cline-Ransome** is the author of almost twenty books for young readers. Her work has received NAACP Image Award nominations, Coretta Scott King Honors, dozens of starred reviews, and a Christopher Award, and has been named to ALA Notable Books and Bank Street Best Children's Books lists. She lives in upstate New York.

For more on the Finding Langston Trilogy, check out Lesa in conversation with Fully Booked podcast host Megan Labrise [here](#). You can also listen to Lesa's read-aloud of *Being Clem*'s first chapter [here](#).

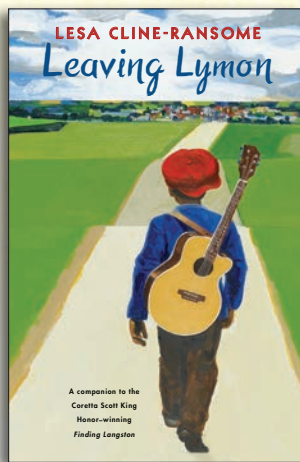




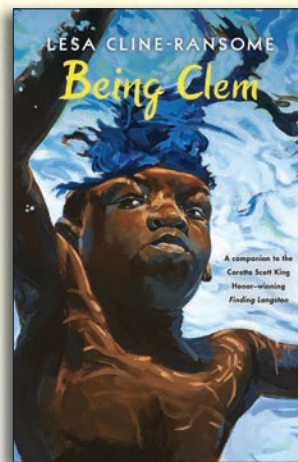
## CONNECTING FINDING LANGSTON, LEAVING LYMON, AND BEING CLEM



HC: 9780823439607  
PB: 9780823445820  
E-BOOK: 9780823441105



HC: 9780823444427  
PB: 9780823449422  
E-BOOK: 9780823446339



HC: 9780823446049  
E-BOOK: 9780823448968

Compare and contrast Langston's and Lymon's relationships with their fathers. How do both fathers demonstrate love for their sons? Which boy has the longer journey in developing a relationship with his father?

*Correlates to CCSS in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1, RL. 3-5.3; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 5.9.*

Write a paper that discusses the importance of the Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library to Langston and Clem. Compare what they find at the library with what Lymon discovers in the band room of the Arthur J. Audy Home. How do these places change the course of each boy's life?

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3*

Which characteristics of the bullied best fit Langston and Clem? Which of the reasons for being a bully best apply to Lymon? Role-play a scene where Langston, Clem, and Lymon sit down and talk about the things they have in common as well as their differences. Langston likes poetry, Clem skipped a grade and loves to read, and Lymon likes music. Work in pairs to write a poem or song lyrics that Langston, Clem, and Lymon might write together.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-5.4, W. 3-5.5; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-5.7, W. 3-5.9.*

In *Being Clem*, Langston and Clem have a conversation about losing a parent. Langston says, "Maybe your daddy and my momma are looking down on the two of us. Maybe they're gonna help us get through. Together" (p. 186). How is this a conversation Clem needs? Lymon loses his beloved Grandpops in *Leaving Lymon*. Compare and contrast how Clem, Langston, and Lymon deal with grief.

*Correlates to CCSS in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1, RL. 3-5.3; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 5.9.*

A mentor is someone who plays an important role in another person's life as a guide and a teacher. Identify the mentor in the lives of Langston, Lymon, and Clem. Discuss how each boy follows the guidance of his mentor.

*Correlates to CCSS in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1, RL. 3-5.3; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 5.9.*

Lymon is sent to the Arthur J. Audy Home, a detention facility, after he tried to run away from home. His father eventually comes to take him home to Milwaukee. Write a letter that Lymon might write to Clem and Langston that lets them know what his life is like in Milwaukee. Include a concluding paragraph that apologizes to the boys for his bullying behavior.

*Correlates to CCSS in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-5.4, W. 3-5.5.*

