



**Christopher Paul Curtis**

## **TeachingBooks Movie Transcript**

**Christopher Paul Curtis, interviewed in his studio in Windsor, Ontario, Canada on April 22, 2002.**

**This is a transcript of the movie available on TeachingBooks.net. It is offered here to give you a quick assessment of the program topics, as well as to enable people with auditory disabilities access to the words.**

**Because this is a transcript of an edited movie, it should not be used as an assessment of Mr. Curtis's writing. Many of the sentences found here were edited, and all editing decisions are the sole responsibility of TeachingBooks.net.**

I'm here at the Windsor Public Library. This is where I do the majority of my writing. I think I came about being a writer in a very unusual way. I started working in the General Motors factory. My job was to put doors on cars. They were very heavy, very demanding, very repetitive, over and over and over. While I was working, I was thinking about what I was going to write. It was therapeutic for me. My wife had read stories that I had done. And we had a long distance relationship, and I used to write love letters to her. And she thought that these were the greatest letters in the world. She felt that I had a skill as a writer. So, we worked it out so that I was able to take a year off work. And I would go to a public library, and I'd sit, and I would write every day.

### **On Families**

Everything in life is about family. Human beings are fragile, and if you don't get the support and the encouragement that comes in a family, you're going to have problems growing and becoming a stronger person. In *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, it's a story of a family, and Kenny trying to find his place within the family — Byron trying to find his place. And in *Bud, Not Buddy*, it's Bud searching for a family. I'm going to be reading from *Bud, Not Buddy*. But since the story takes place during the Depression, Bud has a problem in that he doesn't know where he's going to be eating while he's on the road. So, he decides to eat at the mission for breakfast.

"The line turned all the way around two corners, then crossed over one street before I saw the last person. Shucks. I walked up to get behind him.

He said, 'Line's closed. These here folks are the last ones.' He pointed at a man standing next to a woman who was carrying a baby.

I said, 'But sir . . .'

He said, 'But nothing. Line's closed. These here folks are the last ones.'

It was time to start lying. If I didn't get any food now, I'd have to steal something out of someone's garbage or I wouldn't be able to eat until the mission opened for supper.

I said, 'Sir, I—'

The man raised his hand and said, 'Look, kid, everybody's got a story and everybody knows the rules.'"

### **On Humor**

When I write, I have a riot. I sit in the library, and I'm almost in a trance, really, because I'm really focused on what I'm writing. I've got my head down writing away, and I'm laughing to myself. I'm getting a lot of strange looks if there are people who don't know who I am. I look at life in a very humorous way, I think. In *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, the family was a teasing, a fun family. Humor gives you strength, I think. It allows you to build up antibodies to all the horrible things in the world. Immunities.

### **On Bullies**

In both *The Watsons* and in *Bud, Not Buddy*, bullies do play an important part because they really kind of set the growth of the character. Bud realizes he can't stay in his foster home and has to hit the road. Kenny knows that his brother and his best friend, Larry Dunn are bullies, and it's really the torment of his life. And I think, in both cases, when the boys are bullied, that it starts their growth.

### **On Race**

When I write about Kenny and Bud and Byron, a lot of times the kids will say to me, "I didn't know they were Black." I think that it kind of comments on the way that people look at race differently. Hopefully, what my books can do is provide some kind of entrée to young Black kids, and to all kids really. But particularly to young Black kids, where they have somebody that they can look at and say, "You know, that's me."

### **Follow Your Dream**

The thing that I like to share most with students, that it's almost never too late to follow your dream and that dreams do come true. There's no greater feeling than to be able to make a living doing something that you love doing. It's just the greatest feeling in the world.

### **Books by Christopher Paul Curtis**

- BUCKING THE SARGE, Wendy Lamb Books / Random House, Inc., 2004
- BUD, NOT BUDDY, Delacorte Press / Random House Inc., 1999
- WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM — 1963, THE, Delacorte Press / Random House, Inc., 1995

*Note: Bibliography created in 2003.*

Many thanks to the Delacorte, Random House folks, including Linda Leonard, Melanie Chang, Judith Haut and Carol Christiansen. Thanks also to Charlotte Sheedy and Carolyn Kim.

Additional thanks to Gretta Miller, Rich Matheson, MJ Baumann and all at Clotho Advanced Media, Inc for their invaluable, professional help with this production.

Of course, this entire Author Up-close program occurred because of the kindness and generosity of Kay and Christopher Curtis and their family, who shared their home, time, energy and food with me in order to make this production.

This program is a production of TeachingBooks.net LLC and may only be used in accordance with the Subscriber Agreement found on the TeachingBooks website.

TeachingBooks.net obtained permission to reproduce the images and text from Christopher Paul Curtis's books.

From BUT, NOT BUDDY by Christopher Paul Curtis. Copyright ©1999 Christopher Paul Curtis. Published by Delacorte Press, a division of Random House, Inc., a division of Bertelsmann AG. All rights reserved. The text, book cover images and reading used by permission. No material shall be published, re-transmitted, broadcast, modified or adapted (re-written), manipulated, reproduced or otherwise distributed and/or exploited in any way without the prior written authorization of Random House, Inc.

From THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM — 1963 by Christopher Paul Curtis. Copyright ©1995 Christopher Paul Curtis. Published by Delacorte Press, a division of Random House, Inc, a division of Bertelsmann AG. All rights reserved. Cover image used by permission.

This Movie Transcript is created for educational purposes and may be copied and distributed solely for these purposes for no charge as long as the copyright information remains on all copies.

Questions regarding this production should be directed to: [info@teachingbooks.net](mailto:info@teachingbooks.net)

Copyright ©2003 TeachingBooks.net LLC. All rights reserved.