Okay for Now

By: Gary Schmidt
Publisher: Clarion Books (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)
Copyright: 2011
Genre: Realistic Fiction
Setting: Present day, United States

SUMMARY: Doug Swieteck, from Schmidt's The Wednesday Wars, returns in his latest novel. Doug and his family move from their home to upstate New York, a strange town, filled with strangers. Struggling to belong in his new town, Doug meets Lil Spicer and begins to work delivering groceries at her father's deli on Saturdays. Through his deliver route, Doug meets many interesting residents in Marysville. Doug matures throughout the course of the novel, through his friendship with Lil and others in town and experiences. With the guidance of those in his life, Doug learns about the meaning of family, friendship, hard work, and perseverance.

Throughout the course of the story, Doug matures as a character as he navigates first love, his abusive father, unfair prejudices against him based on assumptions about his family, kindness shown to him by some in the community, determination and encouragement to reach his full potential.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:
Gary D. Schmidt lives in Alto, Michigan, where he is a professor of English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is the author of seven books. For more information on Gary Schmidt, visit his website www.hmhbooks.com/schmidt
Website http://www.hmhbooks.com/schmidt

Interviews and Online Resources
YouTube Interview http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtv3UOi9HNg
Vimeo – Author reads an excerpt http://vimeo.com/32860201

Educator's Guide

Other books written by the author:
Anson's Way
Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy (2005 Newbery Honor Book; 2005 Printz Honor Book)
Martin de Porres: The Rose in the Desert
Trouble
Straw Into Gold
Wednesday Wars (2008 Newbery Honor)

Revised 2/01/2012
**SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:**
*Wednesday Wars* by Gary D. Schmidt (companion book)
*Close to Famous* by Joan Bauer
*1968* by Michael T. Kaufman

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** (If question is related to a specific chapter, chapter is in parenthesis following question)

1. Doug is in eighth grade and cannot read. In what ways would your life be different if you could not read in school and your daily life? *(throughout the book, pg 85)*

2. Joe Pepitone is Doug's hero. In what ways does Joe Pepitone influence Doug's actions and perspective on life?

3. Doug's father is not a positive role model with his verbal and physical abuse. How do other males in the story provide a positive male influence in Doug's life (Joe Pepitone, Mr. Powell, Mr. Ferris, Mr. Bob Ballard (Doug's father's boss), and others)?

4. Doug's older brother, Lucas, comes home from Vietnam wounded from the war. How do his injuries impact Doug and his family, both positively and negatively? *(pg 209)*

5. How does the knowledge that Doug's gym teacher, Coach Reed, draws pictures of Vietnam change the relationship between Doug and Coach Reed? *(pg 216 - 225 - continued throughout the story)*

6. How does learning about Audubon's drawings of birds impact Doug?

7. Lucas returns from Vietnam depressed and very angry. With time, he begins to experience a shift in attitude *(pg 239)*, even going out to look for work *(pg 282)*. How does his change to a positive outlook change the dynamics of Doug's family?

8. Lil tries to maintain a positive attitude during her illness, even talking about her future with Doug. How does Lil's illness make Doug realize his feelings about Lil? *(pg 331-334)* How does watching *Apollo 11* with Lil change Doug *(pg 360)*

9. How does learning to draw the Audubon birds change Doug's life?

10. Doug's father has a shift in his actions, even returning Joe Pepitone's jacket to Doug that Ernie Eco had *(pg 347)*. What does this shift in his actions suggest about his future behavior? Do you think he can become a stronger role model for his family? Why or why not?
11. What does being “okay for now” mean? Who in the story is okay for now? (Taken from the educator’s guide.)
12. Doug changes and begins to like living in Marysville. What clues did the offer supply along the way that tells you Doug is changing his opinion? (Refer to the text.)
13. The story does not really end. What do you think happens next for Lil and for Doug? Why?

**LITERARY LINKS or ACTIVITIES:**

**Language Arts** (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):

7.RI.3 Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events) *How does Mrs. Windermere influence the events in Doug Swieteck's life after he begins delivering groceries to her and they become friends?*

8.RI.7 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea. *How does incorporating the pictures of the Audubon birds positively and negatively affect the text?*

**Pre-Reading Research**
The people, places, and events that shaped America in 1968-1989 are throughout this book. As readers, you were not yet born in 1968 and may have no idea who or what these reference.

**Conduct a short research on one of the following:**
(Page #s for at least one reference are included.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe Pepitone, flap &amp; 1&lt;br&gt;Horace Clarke, flap &amp; 1&lt;br&gt;John Audubon, flap &amp; 23&lt;br&gt;Viet Cong, 6&lt;br&gt;Elizabeth Taylor, 23&lt;br&gt;Lucille Ball, 50&lt;br&gt;Yul Brynner, 50&lt;br&gt;Danny Kaye, 50&lt;br&gt;Babe Ruth, 153&lt;br&gt;Roger Maris, 162&lt;br&gt;Mickey Mantle, 162&lt;br&gt;President Johnson, 170&lt;br&gt;Jim McKay, 212&lt;br&gt;Jimmy Stewart, 312</td>
<td>A &amp; P (grocery), 7&lt;br&gt;Catskills, 10&lt;br&gt;Twilight Zone (TV) 42&lt;br&gt;Gulf (Gas station) 306&lt;br&gt;Sunoco (Gas station) 306&lt;br&gt;Broadway, 296&lt;br&gt;Yankee Stadium, 4&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Thing</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sting Ray, 58</td>
<td>Vietnam War, 100&lt;br&gt;War protests, 205&lt;br&gt;Landing on the Moon, 343</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Locate photos or videos to share with your classmates. Write a short description about the topic and tell why you believe the author placed this person or place in the book.

As the topic is mentioned in the book, share your research, media, and ideas to create a 1968-1969 montage.

**Language Arts**

**Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

7.W.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

7.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

7.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

a. Apply grade 7 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.").

**Mathematics** (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):

**Science** (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):

6-8.WS.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of explanation. Research one of the Audubon birds featured in the book to discover what makes the bird unique? What is the current information about the bird (habitat etc...)?

**Social Studies** (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):

6-8.RH.5 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, casually). How does Doug Swieteck present the information in the novel for the reader?

6-8.WH.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events. Provide a brief explanation of the causes of the Vietnam War and the impact of the war on soldiers who fought in war, like Lucas and Coach Reed.

6-8.RH.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary
source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

6-8.RH.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

6-8.RH.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Other (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):

**Challenging Words (pronunciation, spelling, defining) (include chapter and/or page #):**

- Pummeled p.2
- Barbarian p. 99
- Hordes p. 99
- Abridgement p. 99
- crux p. 103
- quadratic equation p. 111
- supersaturated p. 111
- specimens p. 115
- gallant p. 122
- suspicious p. 128
- servitude p. 130
- soliloquized p. 130
- pastrami p. 134
- spatial p. 135
- apparatus p. 140
- rendezvous p. 151
- skinflint p. 153
- mercilessly p. 190
- technique p. 190
- subtler p. 196
- linearly p. 196
- fascist p. 210
- traipsing p. 219
- gypped p. 220
- endurance p. 225
- chiinged p. 292
- esquimaux p. 301
- curlew p 301
- scatcherd p 302
- shrieker p. 303
- addled p.307
- mezzanine p 319

Battle of the Book questions available from a link on the Young Hoosier Book Award page.