

## IDEAS FOR WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. Do some research and make a list of the major news events of 1968-1969. What are some ways people would have probably felt due to news events, and how might that have influenced their behavior towards each other? Do you think younger people are more sheltered from the news or more vulnerable? Give examples from the novel to support your thoughts.
2. Repeat the exercise in #1 with the events of 2019-2020. What are some similar ways people responded to the events happening 50 years later? Describe the human reaction to stressful news and whether we can control/manage our responses and in what ways.
3. Family values are often passed down through behaviors rather than taught directly. Construe what Nell's parents value according to their behavior. Explain how Nell and Donald reflect and/or challenge the values of their parents.
4. Repeat the exercise in #3 with two other families of your choosing: one from the book and your own family, or two from the book.
5. In 1969 there were no cell phones and no internet. How has the evolution of that technology changed how we communicate: its frequency, privacy, and immediacy? What in the novel, if anything, would have been different had that technology been used? Would the friendships have been on a different level with different modes of communication? Write an essay that explains your opinions with examples.
6. Think about the casting in the play. Do you think the teacher was trying to prove a point or trying to help the students get along? Do you agree with the principal's decision to cancel the play? How does that relate to how school boards and parents are seeking to ban books today? Reread the letter to the editor (pp 92-93) and either write a persuasive reply, or compose a new letter to the editor about a debated topic in your school today.

7. Read “On the Rainy River” in *The Things We Carried* by Tim O’Brien.  
<https://www.oneida-boces.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=1719&dataid=1932&FileName=On%20the%20Rainy%20River.pdf>  
At the end he says, “I was a coward. I went to war.” Explain what you think O’Brien meant. Describe how that comment relates to Donald’s decision and how you think it impacted the rest of his life.
8. Reread the epilogue and consider what Fergy is asking Nell to do. If Nell decides to return to Richmond, what difference do you think she could make? Think creatively of ways that one white person can have an impact on a community that is struggling with racial equity and design an action plan for Nell.
9. Read *United in Rivalry: Richmond’s Armstrong-Maggie Walker Classic* by Michael Whitt. Write an essay about the perceived values of this competition and what was lost due to busing. Think creatively of anything that could have been done to save this tradition or design a similar tradition that would honor and include both races in equitable ways.
10. Choose two of the themes in *Hey, White Girl* and trace their trajectory through the novel with examples. Form options include essay, outline, and mind-mapping.
11. Write a poem ( free verse, haiku, elegy, etc.) depicting something you’ve learned from *Hey, White Girl*.
12. Choose any two characters from the novel other than Nell: a dynamic one (changes through the course of the book), and a static one (remains relatively unchanged). Write an essay about how the same events can affect people differently by comparing these two characters and their situations.