



***Bud, Not Buddy* (1999), by Christopher Paul Curtis** **Argument-Based Small Group Discussions**

Debatable Issue

The debatable issue that we will be using for this unit on *Bud, Not Buddy* is:

Is 10 year-old Bud Caldwell able to remain a kid through the course of the novel *Bud, Not Buddy*, or does he have his childhood taken from him?

Method and Procedure

1. For this project, students should be divided into groups of three.
2. Groups should be given 5 minutes to discuss each of the following passages from the novel. For each passage through their discussion they should try to respond to these three questions:
 - A) Which position on that debatable issue does the passage support?
 - B) What reason does the passage suggest for why that position on the debatable issue is truer than the opposing position on the same debatable issue?
 - C) Through an analysis or close reading of the passage, explain why it supports that reason.

3. Each student should write out responses to each of the questions on their own form. If there are disagreements during the discussion – which is perfectly fine, and often reflects the kind of independent thinking we are encouraging – students should write out the responses they believe in, noting that group members had a different view. At the end of class, these forms should be collected and formatively assessed.
4. After the small group discussion period has ended – and the discussions can be timed fairly closely – the teacher should lead a share-out, asking groups to report back on the responses they feel reflect their best collective thinking, or that featured their strongest internal disagreements. The teacher should ask groups to respond to other groups’ answers, culling out differences, asking how groups would counter or refute an opposing response, and calling on students to evaluate clashing responses. All of this is to build in critical thinking that comes when students engage with each other’s ideas. The key is not to get to a right answer on these passages, but to practice and sharpen students’ interpretive argumentation.

Model

“This was the third foster home I was going to and I’m used to packing up and leaving, but it still surprises me that there are always a few seconds, right after they tell you you’ve got to go, when my nose gets all runny and my throat gets all choky and my eyes get all sting-y” (3).

- A) **This passage supports the position that Bud Caldwell is able to retain his childhood.**
- B) **Bud keeps his emotional sensitivity despite being an orphan and he continues to get sad like a kid would when he is moved around from one foster family to another.**
- C) **Bud acknowledges that his having to move around so much has made him “used to” the process, but his emotions are real and they express themselves each time he has to go to a new foster family. One way to define childhood as distinct from adulthood is that kids are closer to their feelings and freer to express them. Crying becomes an important symbol of feeling sadness, the way that kids can but that some adults (especially men, in our society) often cannot. Bud is telling us early in the novel that he is still capable of being sad and of crying and therefore is still a kid inside, where his emotions are.**

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1. “Mrs. Amos was going to be the hardest because just like her ears were set to believe everything that came out of Todd’s lips they were set not to believe anything I said. And if I didn’t lie good enough she was going to use that strap on me” (17).

A)

B)

C)

2. “If I was like a normal kid I would’ve busted out crying, but I just stood there breathing hard. It was a good thing I’d bit my tongue, because I came real close to saying those stupid begging words to Mr. Amos” (20).

A)

B)

C)

3. “A bud is a flower-to-be. A flower-in-waiting. Waiting for just the right warmth and care to open up. It’s a little fist of love waiting to unfold and be seen by the world. And that’s you” (42).

A)

B)

C)

4. “All these people,’ the mouth organ man said, ‘are just like you, they’re tired, hungry and a little bit nervous about tomorrow. This here is the right place for y’all to be ‘cause we’re all in the same boat. And you boys are nearer to home than you’ll ever get. . . . You might think or you might hear that things are better just down the line, but they’re singing the same sad song all over this country” (68).

A)

B)

C)

5. “Deza said, ‘No it’s not, and you should quit pretending that it is.’ ‘Who said I’m pretending anything?’ ‘I know you are, my daddy says families are the most important thing there is. That’s why me and my momma are going to wait together for him to come back or write for us to come to him.’ I said, ‘My mother said the same thing, that families should be there for each other all the time’” (72).

A)

B)

C)

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6. “She would tell me every night before I went to sleep that no matter what happened I could sleep knowing that there had never been a little boy, anywhere, anytime, who was loved more than she loved me. She told me that as long as I remembered that I’d be OK. . . .’ ‘I guess you sort of carry your family around inside of you, huh?’ ‘I guess I do. Inside my suitcase, too’”(73).

A)

B)

C)

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7. “Ideas are a lot like that, that’s what the idea of Herman E. Calloway being my father started as, something so teeny that if I hadn’t paid it no mind it would’ve blown away with the first good puff of wind. But now here it was so big and important and spread out” (92).

A)

B)

C)

8. “I had to stop and think, it’s one thing to lie to a grown-up, most times adults want to hear something that lets them take their attention off you and put it on something else. That makes it easy and not too bad to lie to them. You’re really just giving them what they want. It’s different when you lie to another kid. Most times kids really do want to know what they’re asking you”(122).

A)

B)

C)

9. “I knew if I was a regular kid I’d be drying buckets of tears now, I didn’t want these men to think I was a baby so I was real glad that my eyes don’t cry no more. My nose plugged up and a little growl came out of my mouth but I kept my finger pointed, cleared my throat and said, ‘I know it’s you’” (148).

A)

B)

C)

10. “As long as I kept Herman E. Calloway being my father to myself the whole thing made real good sense, but as soon as I tried to tell other folks about it, it seemed like maybe it was something some stupid had dreamed up, like it was wishing and hoping instead of something true and real” (169).

A)

B)

C)

11. “All of a sudden I knew that of all the places in the world that I’d ever been in this was the one. That of all the people I’d ever met these were the ones. This was where I was supposed to be . . . I was smiling and laughing and busting my gut so much that I got carried away and some rusty old valve squeaked open in me then . . . woop, zoop, sloop . . . tears started jumping out of my eyes so hard that I had to cover my face with the big red and white napkin that was on the table” (172-173).

A)

B)

C)

12. “‘You’ve got to remember that both Herman and I love your mother just as much as you do.’ This didn’t seem like it could be true, not just because it didn’t seem like anyone could love my mother as much as I do, but because it didn’t seem like Herman E. Calloway could love anyone at all” (227).

A)

B)

C)