

The McCoy Game

Two cousins find themselves in a high-stakes game that's full of surprises.

About the Story

Lexile: 740L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to *Scope Online*.

Learning Objective: to analyze the conflict between the two main characters and how it is resolved

Key Skills: text structure, interpreting text, author's craft, inference, character

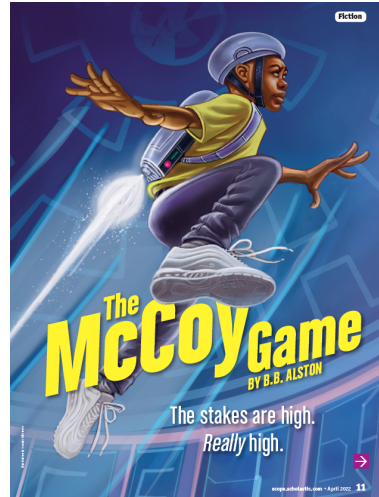
Essential Questions:

- How can we resolve our conflicts with family and friends?
- What impact does family have on us?
- How do people live on through others?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, W.2, W.9, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to *Scope Online*.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Author read-aloud
- Text-to-speech

Vocabulary Slideshow

Connected readings from the *Scope* archives:

- Drama: *The End of Jimmy Valentine*
- Fiction In a Flash: "The Worst"
- Fiction: "Plan B"
- Fiction: "The Message"
- Fiction: "Follow the Water"

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Preparing to Write: Jamal and Dre
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Vocabulary: Definitions
- Core Skills Workout: Inference
- Choice Board
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

20 minutes

Listen to Motown (10 minutes)

- In the story students are about to read, Motown music plays an important role—particularly the Temptations’ “My Girl” (released 1964) and the Supremes’ “Stop in the Name of Love” (released 1965). Play these two songs for your students. You might even invite them to get up and dance as they listen! Let them know that these songs belong to a musical genre known as Motown, which they will learn more about in the **Vocabulary Slideshow**.

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project the **Vocabulary Slideshow** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. The audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Words: *coordinates, Motown, partial, spectator, unison, will*

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

- Read the As You Read box on page 12 or at the top of the digital story page.
- Point out the directions at the top of the column on the far right side of page 13 and read them aloud to your students.
- Optionally, for students’ first read, have them follow along as they listen to author B. B. Alston read his story aloud. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Divide students into groups to read the story again, pausing to discuss the close-reading questions that appear in the margins of the print magazine or by clicking on the bolded words on the digital story page. Have students record their answers in their own document or on the **Close-Reading Questions activity**.

Close-Reading Questions

(20 minutes)

The close-reading questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **Why is the letter from Big Mac important to the story?** (text structure) *Big Mac's letter introduces the idea of Big Mac living on through his grandsons, which is developed over the course of the story. The letter also creates suspense, raising the question in Jamal's mind as well as in the reader's mind of whether Big Mac is literally still alive. Plus, as Jamal realizes at the end of the story, the letter contains the answer to how Jamal and Dre can open the golden door and inherit their grandfather's house (and his spaceship).*
2. **Explain what Big Mac meant about being a doer or a spectator.** (interpreting text) *Big Mac meant that, in life, there are those who tend to step forward, take action, and make things happen—and those who tend to hang back and watch the action without getting involved.*
3. **How does Jamal feel about Big Mac's stories? Why might the author have wanted to make this clear?** (author's craft) *Jamal never believed Big Mac's stories—he calls the stories "crazy" and "made-up" and compares them to a Netflix series. Perhaps the author wanted to make it clear that Jamal thought of the stories as pure fiction so that the reader, like Jamal, goes on a journey from being sure that Big Mac had made up his stories about space travel and aliens to knowing that the stories were true.*
4. **What do you think the hunks of stone with the drawings are? (Make sure to read the whole story before you answer!)** (inference) *Answers will vary, but students might infer that they are chunks of cave walls in Africa on which early humans made drawings depicting their interactions with extraterrestrials—the "caretakers" that Big Mac told Jamal and Dre about.*
5. **How does the author build suspense and excitement as Jamal and Dre compete for the floating key?** (author's craft) *As Jamal and Dre compete for the floating key, the author builds suspense and excitement by having Jamal describe what is happening moment by moment. Establishing that there is a time limit of two minutes and reminding the reader that time is quickly disappearing creates a sense of urgency that also adds to the suspense and excitement. The author's choice of words and phrases like "zip forward," "heart pounding," "frantically," "slams," and "out of control" add to the suspense as well.*
6. **Describe the key droid's character. Support your answer with details from throughout the story.** (character) *The key droid is impatient, judgmental, and sarcastic: It rolls its eyes and asks, "Have you really never seen a key droid before?" when the boys first meet it; when Jamal asks what to do with the helmets and backpacks, the droid says with exasperation, "Clearly the helmets go over your head, and the backpacks go on your back"; when Dre makes observations about the model solar system, the droid rudely says, "Ah, so you do know something! I really was*

beginning to question the old man's judgment." However, the droid is also rather cute and funny in the way it "waddles" around, and it seems to ultimately have the boys' best interests in mind: It warns them that the breathworm is dangerous and tells them that no one will think less of them if they decide not to face it, and when Jamal finally figures out how to unlock the golden door, the key droid does a little dance, revealing its joy in the boys' success.

7. **Does your impression of Dre change over the course of the story? Explain.** (character) *Students are likely to say yes, their impression of Dre changes. At the beginning of the story, readers will probably take Jamal's side in the conflict between the two cousins, simply because Jamal is the narrator and seems likable. When Jamal states that the previous summer, Dre decided he was "too cool" to hang out with Jamal and their grandfather, readers will be inclined to accept this as true and perceive Dre as conceited and uncaring. However, once Dre reveals the truth—that he failed the space camp test and was ashamed to tell Jamal and Big Mac, and that his father has long pressured him to pursue basketball and abandon his passion for space—readers will likely see Dre in a new light and feel a great deal of empathy for him.*
 8. **Why might Big Mac have made it so that Jamal and Dre would need to unlock the door together?** (inference) *It seems likely that Big Mac was aware of the rift between Jamal and Dre and believed that working together to open the door would help them repair that rift. Big Mac says in the recording that his memory will live on as long as Jamal and Dre "stick together," which shows how important it was to Big Mac that his grandsons remain close. Plus, by arranging it so that the boys would be standing side by side as the golden door opened, Big Mac ensured that they would also have to work out between them who would inherit the house and who would inherit the spaceship.*
- As a class, discuss the following questions.

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **Were you surprised by the end of the story? What other ideas did you have about what might happen?** *Answers will vary.*
2. **Would you rather inherit the house or the spaceship? What do you think Jamal and Dre will decide about who inherits what?** *Answers will vary.*
3. **Jamal and Dre were best friends before they stopped speaking to each other. Can you think of a way either or both of them might have handled things differently so that they did not become angry at each other—or at least so that they did not stay angry at each other for so long?** *Answers will vary. Students may say that Dre could have been honest with*

Jamal and Big Mac about failing the test for space camp—that he should have allowed himself to be vulnerable in front of them and trusted them to be supportive. Students may also suggest that Jamal could have approached his cousin with questions about the sudden change in his behavior rather than assuming the worst of his cousin. Or Jamal could have told Dre that his feelings were hurt, and they could have worked things out instead of just giving each other the silent treatment for so long.

4. Big Mac tells Jamal and Dre that his memory will live on in them, and in that way, he'll never be truly gone. Can you think of anyone whose memory lives on in you? It doesn't have to be a family member or even someone you knew personally; it could be a person from the past who you admire and whose ideas are carried on in you. *Answers will vary.*

3. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Jamal and Dre**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 16 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

Suggested readings from the Scope archives for exploring conflict:

- [The End of Jimmy Valentine](#) (Drama; person v. self and person v. society; December 2021/January 2022)
- ["The Worst"](#) (Fiction In a Flash; person v. self; October 2021)
- ["Plan B"](#) (Fiction; person v. self and person v. society; February 2021)
- ["The Message"](#) (Fiction; person v. self and person v. nature; September 2019)
- ["Follow the Water"](#) (Fiction; person v. person; September 2016)