

e-mail no matter how premature it was.

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A huge and enthusiastic THANK YOU to all the coaches and players who have labored for the University of Nebraska Cornhuskers over the years. You just can't know, rightly or wrongly, how important you are to us and how much you enrich our lives. It's what makes a young Navy surgeon fly from Okinawa, Japan to San Francisco, across eleven time zones, for only a few hours just to watch *live* the Huskers compete against Clemson for the National Championship.

Thank you from all of us that are blessed  
to be able to call ourselves  
**HUSKERS.**

## CHAPTER QUESTIONS FOR **HUSKERS** BY STRAT WARDEN

### CHAPTER 1:

1. The author claims that Chuck "was not a leader". What are some qualities that a leader would need? Does he display any qualities of a leader in this first chapter? Why or why not?
2. Chuck is hurting for many reasons at the end of chapter one. What are some of the reasons for Chuck's pain? What does this tell us about his character?
3. Jimmy is the most talented football player, not Chuck. Why is that? What are some of Jimmy's character traits that you can see through the way he plays football?
4. (Advanced) The chapter ends with Chuck hurting with the pain of "becoming *less of* and *more than* just a boy". What has he just faced that might cause him to become "less of" a boy? How can a young person become "more than" a boy?

### CHAPTER 2:

1. Why are Chuck's friends irritated with him for accepting the football challenge? Why does Chuck accept the challenge? What do you think about his decision?
2. Many people say of sports, "It's only a game," as Chuck does

at the end of this chapter. What are your feelings about this common saying?

**CHAPTER 3:**

1. The setting of the novel is in 1960s Nebraska. Chuck's family dinner is described at the beginning of this chapter. How do you feel about the manners that must be displayed by all family members at the Wardens' nightly family dinner? How does this type of etiquette compare to that seen in families today?
2. Why does Chuck's dad stop the conversation about the football game after looking at Chuck's hands and arms?

**CHAPTER 4:**

1. What does the first paragraph of this chapter tell you about the setting in which this story takes place?
2. (Advanced) What is ironic about the source of the town and county's names?
3. (Advanced) What literary device is the author using when he writes, "This night, Tecumseh was beehive alive. Its townspeople swarmed toward the radiance of their high school football field." Is this device used effectively? Explain.
4. As Chuck stares at the high school football players, he does not "watch" them, he "studies" them. What is the difference?
5. How can a football game be magic and mysterious?

**CHAPTER 5:**

1. What details from the Wardens' morning routine and their trip to church best demonstrate differences between the book's setting and today's world? Explain.

2. Do you agree with Chuck's father's opinion about sports? Why or why not?

**CHAPTER 6:**

1. What do you learn about Chuck's mother from the two paragraphs about her?
2. Though the author does not directly tell the reader, most football fans will know what Chuck is drawing on his paper. What is he drawing? Why does he immediately draw this sketch upon waking?
3. What can you learn about Chuck from the physical description given of his appearance and his clothes?
4. What do you learn about each of Chuck's friends? How does the author give you this information? E.g. What do you learn about Jimmy from the description of his family? Why is Billy's head "infamous?" etc.
5. Chuck ends this chapter with the thought, "Does he [Dennis] hate Packer more than he fears him, or fear him more than he hates him?" Which emotion is stronger: fear or hatred? Which causes more damage? Explain.

**CHAPTER 7:**

1. What is "different" about the kids in the split level class?
2. How does Samantha differ from the other girls, such as Charlotte?

**CHAPTER 8:**

1. Why do Chuck and Dennis both roll their eyes when Chris says, "Geez, I don't wanna be sick. Chuck, do I look sick? My throat's scratchy."?

2. After Kenny Anderson shows Chuck the option play, Chuck calls him “coach”. What makes someone a coach? Why does Chuck see Kenny Anderson as a coach?
3. As Chuck starts home, he thinks of his father’s advice to “play smarter”. How do you predict that he is going to take his father’s advice?

#### **CHAPTER 9:**

1. This chapter begins with a scene concerning Jack Packer’s stepfather. What details does this scene include that provide insight into why Jack Packer might act the way he does toward the other boys?
2. In Chapter 6, Chuck had wondered if Dennis hated Packer more than he feared him – but here, the emotion Dennis admits to having is anger. Consider your response to question #6, chapter 6. How does anger rank amongst these emotions? Can anger cause damage? Which is the greatest motivator: fear, hatred, or anger? Explain.

#### **CHAPTER 10:**

1. When Jack asks his mother, “Just one?”, she replies, “No. You know why.” Why won’t she allow him to keep any of the puppies?
2. Why does Dennis feel less pain when he sees Jack Packer in this chapter?
3. What information does Chuck’s father reveal about Keith Ramsey?

#### **CHAPTER 11:**

1. Why does Jimmy keep looking at Chuck in this chapter?

#### **CHAPTER 12:**

1. Why does Chuck make the boys run *The Hill*?
2. Why do Chuck and Jimmy go down the hill to help all of their friends to the bottom?

#### **CHAPTER 13:**

1. How do the boys’ fall Saturdays differ from yours?
2. How can Jimmy’s home life give insight into the way he acts around his friends?
3. In this chapter, Dennis, not Chuck, is the one who commands the boys to run the Hill. Jimmy, who never smiles, smiles for the first time in the book. How are the boys changing through the process of preparing for the rematch?
4. The description of the courthouse square is detailed; this area makes Chuck feel “big inside”. What does it mean to feel “big inside”? Why does the courthouse square make Chuck feel this way?
5. As Jonathan’s mother passes the courthouse square, she makes a comment to Jonathan about which he “feared” she “might be right”. What does she say to him? Why does he “fear” that she might be right? What insight does this comment give into Jonathan?

#### **CHAPTER 14:**

1. In the 1960s, schools did not have organized sports for girls. Would Sam’s life differ if the school did have sports for girls, like they do today? Why or why not?

#### **CHAPTER 15:**

1. How does Mrs. Graham treat Chuck during his after school

stay? What is Chuck's reaction to this treatment?

2. How does Kenny Anderson help Chuck with his team? Why is Kenny being so helpful?
3. What decision does Dennis make that demonstrates how much he has changed?

#### **CHAPTER 16:**

1. Chuck's father's advice was to "practice harder" and "play smarter". How are Chuck and his friends practicing harder? How are they playing smarter? Do you think they are ready to face the other sixth grade team? Why or why not?

#### **CHAPTER 17:**

1. Why do Chuck and Chris go to Dr. Schultz's house? What amazed them about their experience?
2. As Chris leaves, Chuck thinks, "He didn't blow his nose all day." Why is this significant?

#### **CHAPTER 18:**

1. As Dennis makes it to the top of the Hill, he "stand[s] taller than Chuck could remember". Why?

#### **CHAPTER 19:**

1. What are some of the emotions Chuck demonstrates in this chapter? How do his actions show these?

#### **CHAPTER 20:**

1. What details in this chapter seem realistic? What details seem unrealistic?

#### **CHAPTER 21:**

1. Why does Chuck wait until recess is half over to speak with Jonathan about the game?

2. What is unexpected about the way the boys approach Jonathan and his friends? How do you think Jonathan and his friends feel about the rematch?

#### **CHAPTER 22:**

1. As readers, we know from earlier chapters that Jack Packer loves puppies. Here, when Chuck and Dennis catch Packer playing with Spunk, Packer kicks the puppy hard enough for it to tumble away. Why does Packer kick Spunk?
2. (Advanced) Chuck and Dennis see Keith Ramsey in the pool hall. Keith Ramsey tells the boys not to ever forget that "ya play...ya win." Then Ramsey says, "I neva do." What do you think these two comments mean?
3. Why do you think the character of Keith Ramsey is included in this novel? In what way has he added to the novel? What purpose does he serve?

#### **CHAPTER 23:**

1. Who do you think Chuck is getting the mouthpiece for, and why?
2. In this chapter, Chuck looks around his class and notes that he "had never seen his friends so unified in purpose". In what purpose are they unified? Why is this purpose important to each of them?

#### **CHAPTER 24:**

1. Compare the personalities of Billy and Chuck, as they are demonstrated through the task of fitting the mouthpiece. Why does Chuck wonder about the differences between himself and Billy at the end of this chapter?

**CHAPTER 25:**

1. What happens between Dennis and Packer at the bike rack?  
What happens right after Dennis enters the building?

**CHAPTER 26:**

1. As Chuck collects Dennis's "new" football helmet, he "beam[s] for at least a couple of reasons". Can you think of some of the reasons why he would beam?
2. After Chuck returns to his friends, he sees Dennis holding his stomach, "trying to keep from losing what he had left of himself". What had happened? What was "left" of Dennis that he might be trying to hold in?
3. (Advanced) When Dennis sees Packer, the author tells us that Dennis "looked into Packer's soul" and said, "Jack." At that comment, Packer's "face froze," and he "turned and fled".
  - a. What does it mean to look into someone's "soul"?
  - b. Why does Dennis simply say "Jack" here?
  - c. Why does Packer turn and run at the sound of his name?
4. Why was the new helmet the perfect gift to give Dennis at this moment?

**CHAPTER 27:**

1. In this chapter, Chuck pinpoints the moment when he decided to go for a rematch against the boys in the *other* sixth grade class. When was it? Though only a short time has passed, how can it be that, on "that particular night...he was a boy who laughed at sillier things"?

2. Have you ever been so excited about an afternoon that you had difficulty focusing on school? How does the author describe this feeling?
3. What did Chuck's father bring to school? Why did he choose the color red? Why did Chuck's father purchase these items for Chuck and his friends?
4. In their first huddle, Chuck says to his friends, "Tell me one of them who's studied plays or climbed the *Hill*?" Why does he choose these two points of reference?

**CHAPTER 28:**

1. What are the main differences between the way Chuck and his friends play football and the way Jonathan and the other sixth grade team play football?

**CHAPTER 29:**

1. Chuck is surprised when he catches a look at Jonathan's face while Chris is having an asthma attack. Why?
2. How does Chuck know that Mike was out of bounds on his touchdown play?
3. Chuck and his teammates chant "The Hill" when breaking from their huddle. What is the significance of the Hill to them?

**CHAPTER 30:**

1. When Dennis, "draped over his archenemy," sees Chris's face, he has a feeling he never had felt before. What is it?
2. Dennis then makes a comment similar to the comment he made when he finally made it to the top of the Hill by himself. What does Dennis say? How are the two situations similar?

3. What action does Dennis make toward Packer? What does this action tell you about the difference between Dennis's personality and Packer's personality?
4. (Advanced) As Dennis makes this action, again he calls Packer "Jack". What is the significance of Dennis using Packer's first name? What does Jack's response tell you about him?

#### **CHAPTER 31:**

1. Dennis's brother returns home in this chapter. Chuck notes that Dennis stands "straighter, taller, and more like his brother than Chuck could remember". Why does Dennis look so much like his brother now?
2. (Advanced) The writer tells us that David, Dennis's brother, "didn't notice his younger brother's mud. He never had." What double meaning can "mud" have in this statement?
3. Find the paragraph beginning, "Chuck considered the first football game and felt the crushing hurt, the crying, so long ago." In this paragraph, he outlines many of his friends and hints at how each has changed. Who, do you think, has changed the most? Why?
4. Why does Chuck reflect now on Keith Ramsey's words, "Ya play, ya win"? What have he and his friends won?

## **BOOK SUMMARY QUESTIONS FOR**

# **HUSKERS**

**BY STRAT WARDEN**

1. How are the lives of the characters in the story different from yours today? How are they similar?
2. How did some of the characters in the story evolve from the beginning to the end? Give examples of their actions that demonstrate how they grew and changed.
3. Who was your favorite character in the book? Why?
4. What are some of the lessons to be learned through participation in sports? How might learning these lessons help you later in your life?
5. After reading the book, do you have a new understanding, or appreciation, for the "true values" to be learned playing sports? Explain your answer.

