

7th Grade LA
17 February 2009

They Cage the Animals at Night¹ Essay

Written by Jennings Michael Burch, They Cage the Animals at Night is a book about a boy named Jennings who is trying to find his way through life². He faces ruptures in his family and friendships, and is forced to adapt to changes almost every day in order to survive³. Jennings' mother is having trouble taking care of her children, and sends Jennings to an orphanage. She continues having problems, so as a result he is faced with living in many different homes, each time with new people and situations. Jennings is able to overcome his new challenges and persevere through his tough childhood because he is friendly and independent⁴.

Jennings' independence is a character trait that⁵ influenced⁵ his ability to overcome his challenges⁶. This character trait⁶ is important because Jennings needs to be independent when he is alone or in a difficult time⁷, he needs to be able survive. "'We don't ever have to leave the zoo, Doggie. We can stay there till I get big.' The sun was nearly down by the time we got there. The zoo was closed, but not for me. I went to my old door and slipped in."⁸ (p. 265). This quote⁸ demonstrates⁹ that Jennings is independent because he knows how to solve his problem. He sets up a place where he can spend the night and feel safe, and he does all of this by himself. This also demonstrates that Jennings can overcome challenges with his independence by acting more mature and taking care of himself. "I was out. I didn't know where I was going. I only wanted to get away from there. I walked for about an hour along some highway. I was tired and hungry, but I wouldn't stop. I wanted to get as far from that place as possible."⁹ (p. 265) **Var.** This quote reveals that Jennings is independent because he is making decisions for himself; deciding where he will end up the next day. This also shows that Jennings is independent because he is able to overcome

his loneliness by remembering places he has been before, asking for directions, taking advantage of the bushes to hide for the night. This shows that Jennings is independent because he can take care of himself. There is also another trait that helps Jennings overcome his challenges; friendliness.

Jennings' friendliness gives him the ability to make new friends more easily, which helps him with constantly changing homes. "He smiled. I smiled back" (p. 81) Jennings was at a new orphanage named St. Teresa's. In the dining room, he exchanged smiles with the boy sitting across from him. His ¹³ friendly trait gives him someone to talk to and ¹² ¹² play with, share, and cope, which helps with his challenge of going to so many different orphanages. Being friendly to people and making friends easily helps him survive in the orphanages because he can learn from his new friends. "Oh, it's a long story. I lived in some homes and missed a lot of school." (p. 123) When Jennings ¹⁴ ¹⁴ started talking to the bus driver, he was willing to share enough information about himself ¹⁵ that he discovered he had something in common with the bus driver named Sal. They both had lived in orphanages. This friendship helps Jennings throughout the book. The first encounter between Jennings and Sal ended up being a critical friendship for Jennings. It not only helped him to understand friendship, but it also changed his life because Sal came for him at the ¹⁶ end. These quotes show that Jennings is friendly and being friendly helps him get through challenging situations, of constantly moving to new orphanages, meeting new people, and helping him cope with all the misery. He also learned some survival techniques.

Jennings overcomes his challenges with his independent, friendly personality and is able to persevere through difficult ¹⁸ situations. His friendliness and independence helped him overcome his challenges by allowing him to make friends with other children at the homes and make decisions for himself ¹⁹. From this story, a lesson learned is to persevere, not to give up, and have

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hope. The story of Jennings is about an innocent boy that manages to overcome very difficult situations; the loss, cruelty and abuse is gripping, but his friendly and independent personality help him to persevere through his tough childhood.

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