

Name: _____

Student Journal

Stuck in Neutral

by Terry Trueman

Reading Schedule

Group members: _____

<i>Stuck in Neutral</i>	Student Journal	Due Date	Discussion Date
Introduction	Pages 2-4		
Chapters 1-6	Pages 5-6		
Chapters 7-10	Pages 7-8		
Chapters 11-16	Pages 9-10		
The Exchange			
Assessment			

THE EXCHANGE

If you can't
communicate,
how can anyone
really know you?

Getting Started

What If?

Your family moves to a different country just as you are about to start your first year of high school. You don't speak the language, so you can't communicate with your new classmates.

There are so many things you want to tell your new classmates. Until you become fluent in your new language, you have no idea how you are going to get to know people and make new friends. Your parents suggest joining a sports team or club at school, but you are nervous about it.

Make notes about how this would affect you.

- What would you do?
- Do you think people can get to know you even if you do not speak the same language?
- What other ways would you communicate?

Connect to The Exchange Question Discuss how this situation could relate to The Exchange Question: **If you can't communicate, how can anyone really know you?** Summarize your discussion.

Introduction

Read the Introduction on pages 7–9 in *Stuck in Neutral*. The Introduction will help you understand key concepts in the book. Knowing them will help you discuss and write about the book.

The Introduction includes information about

- the causes and effects of cerebral palsy
- what inspired Terry Trueman to write *Stuck in Neutral*
- the character of Shawn
- reactions to the book

After you read the Introduction, answer these questions to check your understanding.

1. What is cerebral palsy? How does it affect the people suffering from it?

2. Where did Terry Trueman get his inspiration for the main character, Shawn? Why did he write this book?

3. What was the public’s reaction to *Stuck in Neutral* when it was first published?

Introduction: Key Concepts

Concept Map

Study the **Concept Map** for *controversy*. Write a sentence using the word *controversy*.

Key Concepts

acceptance
 communicate
 controversy
 cope
 frustration

Concept Map

Key Concept

controversy

Characteristics of concept:

anger
 fighting
 strong feelings

Not characteristic of concept:

agreement
 calm
 happiness

Definition of concept

disagreement between people because of different opinions

Examples of concept

driving age
 immigration laws

On a separate sheet of paper, create a similar **Concept Map** for each of the **Key Concept** words. Write what the word is like (Characteristics) and what the word is not like. Use a dictionary to include a definition of the word and examples. Then write a sentence for each **Key Concept** word.

Respond to Chapters 1-6

1. **Personal Response** Shawn is extremely frustrated because he cannot communicate. If you were in Shawn's life, how would you try to communicate with him?

2. **Character's Point of View** If Shawn could communicate, how would he explain to others how he feels about his life and how he is 'stuck in neutral'? Use the word *communicate* in your response.

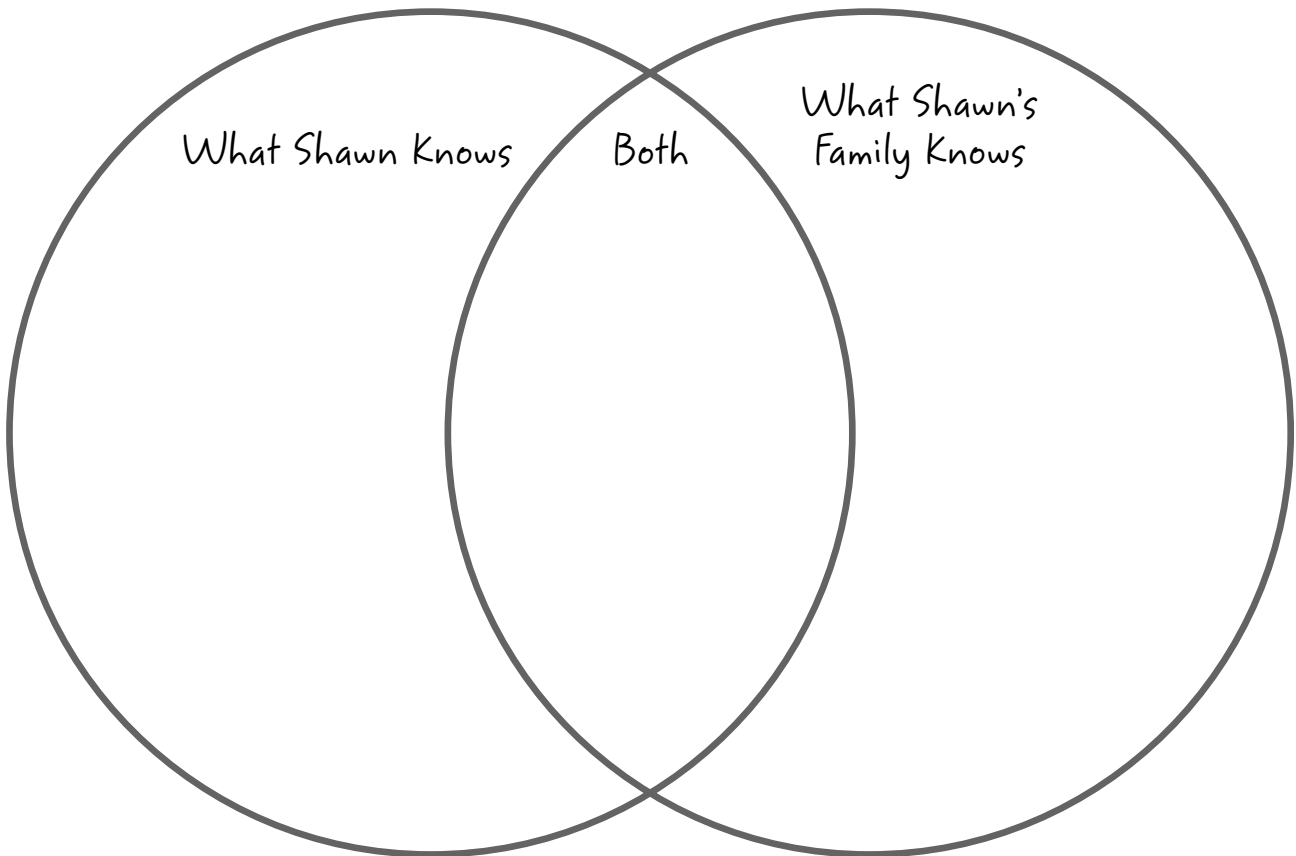
3. **Comparisons** Compare Cindy and Paul. How do they cope with the burden of Shawn's condition differently?

4. **Generate Questions** Write a question about this section for someone else reading this book. Exchange questions with them. Do you agree with their answer?

Respond to Chapters 1–6, continued

5. **Conclusions** In Chapters 1–6, you learn about Shawn’s condition. List what Shawn knows about his condition and what Shawn’s family knows or thinks about his condition. Then list what they both know.

Venn Diagram



There is a lot that Shawn’s family does not know about him. What would they be surprised to find out about the real Shawn? Why?

Respond to Chapters 7-10

1. **Personal Response** Shawn and his father both have double-jointed thumbs and this connects them. Do you have anything in common with another person that makes you feel close to that person?

2. **Character** How does Shawn's dad cope with the frustration he feels because of Shawn's condition? What does this tell you about the type of person he is? Use the words *cope* and *frustration* in your response.

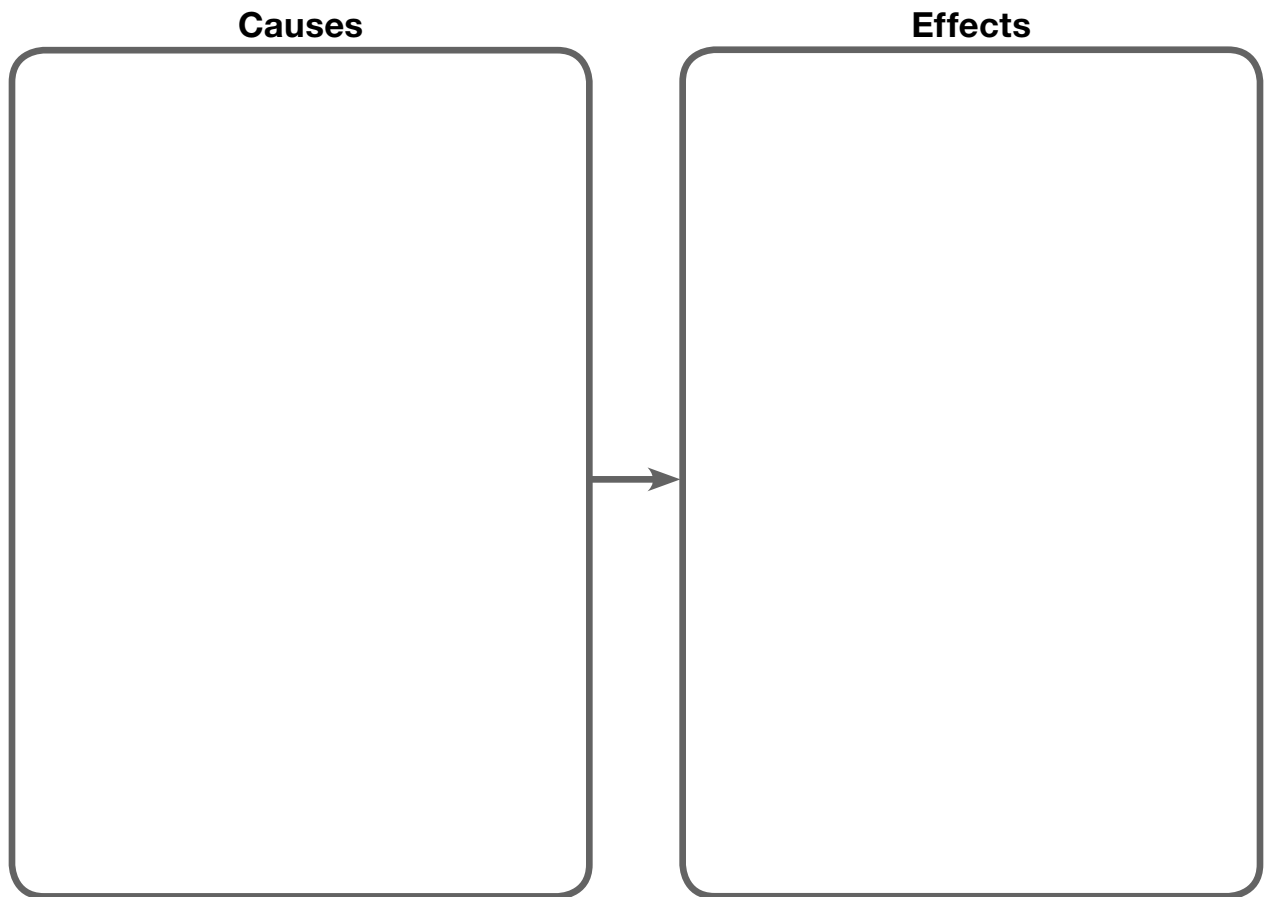
3. **Judgments** Do you agree with Shawn's father when he states that to educate the uneducable is a waste of money? Why or why not?

4. **Generate Questions** Write a question about this section for someone else reading this book. Exchange questions with them. Do you agree with their answer?

Respond to Chapters 7–10, continued

5. **Character's Point of View** In Chapters 7–10, Shawn is forced to think about his future. Write what his father does in the Causes column and then write the Effects of these actions in the **Cause and Effect Chart**.

Cause and Effect Chart



Why does Shawn think that his dad wants to kill him? What does this make Shawn realize?

Respond to Chapters 11-16

1. **Personal Response** Shawn's brother defends Shawn against the two boys that were teasing and trying to hurt him. How would you feel if you were Shawn's sibling?

2. **Author's Point of View** What is the controversy in this book? How does writing the story from Shawn's point of view add to the controversy? Use the word *controversy* in your response.

3. **Mood** What is the mood in Chapter 14 when Shawn is dreaming about speaking to his father? How did it make you feel?

What If?

4. **Connect** Look at your notes on **Student Journal, page 2**. Think about what might happen if you could not communicate anything about yourself. Compare this to *Stuck in Neutral*. Can anyone really know Shawn if he is unable to communicate?

Respond to Chapters 11-16, continued

5. **Evidence and Conclusions** Shawn's dad struggles with what to do with Shawn. List evidence that makes you believe Shawn's dad will kill him and evidence that he will not. Use the **T Chart** to answer the question.

T Chart

Evidence That Shawn's Dad Will Kill Him	Evidence That Shawn's Dad Will Not Kill Him

The author does not tell what Shawn's dad does at the end of the story. Do you think that Shawn's father kills him? Why?
