

# Skill-Building Book Tips

## 7 Essential Life Skills

You can read *Freedom Summer* in a way that highlights Perspective Taking, a Life Skill that promotes Executive Functions. This Life Skill goes far beyond empathy. It involves **figuring out what others think and feel** and forms the basis for children's understanding of the intentions of their parents, teachers and friends. Children who can take the perspectives of others are also much less likely to get involved in conflicts.

### Tip

You can ask your child:

- “How are John Henry and Joe different and the same?”
- “Why were people with different color skin not supposed to swim or eat together? How did John Henry and Joe feel about these rules?”
- “How do you think you would have felt if you lived at that time?”

### Freedom Summer By Deborah Wiles

In this powerful story, two best friends are thrilled that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 allows them to swim together at their local pool for the first time. When they arrive, they learn the town has decided to fill the pool with asphalt rather than integrate it.



### Skill

Perspective Taking involves **being able to understand what others feel and think**. To do so, you have to **recognize your own views**, but also **put them aside so you can take the viewpoint of others**, which calls on **Executive Function** skills.

### Tip

This book offers an historical view of racial relationships.

You can ask your child:

- “Why do you think the town officials filled the pool with asphalt?”
- “How did the new law change and not change things for the two best friends?”
- “How have things changed and not changed today?”

When the town pool is filled with asphalt, Joe says that he didn't want to swim there anyway, but John Henry replies: “I wanted to swim in this pool.”

Ask your child:

- “Why did Joe say he didn't care about swimming in the pool? Was he telling the truth?”
- “Do you sometimes say things that aren't really true to try to make people feel better? Does it work? Why or why not?”

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### Skill

This book's story lends itself to great discussions of each boy's perspectives in the context of a different era.

Studies have found that when **people can truly understand the perspectives of others, they are less likely to get into conflicts.**

### Tip

In the beginning of the book, the author, Deborah Wiles, talks about why she wrote this book.

You can share her story and ask children to consider her perspective as a white child who wondered about “what it must be like to be a black child my age.” The author also wondered whether children can bring about change.

You can ask your child:

- “Do you think the two boys in the book changed things by going into Mr. Mason’s store together?”

### Skill

Those who bring about change are **driven by goals**, which involves using **Executive Function** skills.

These tips sheets were developed by *Mind in the Making*, in collaboration with First Book. Find more books and materials on the First Book Marketplace, a resource available exclusively to educators and programs serving children in need. **Visit: [www.fbmarketplace.org](http://www.fbmarketplace.org).**