

"Hello, Mr. Wilson," I heard my father say.
"Hello, George."

Para. 5-8

I stopped licking my ice cream cone, and asked my Dad in a loud voice why Mr. Wilson had called him "George."

"Doesn't he know your name, Daddy? Why don't you tell him your name? Your name isn't George."

For a moment I tried to think of who Mr. Wilson was mixing Pop up with. But we didn't have any Georges among the colored people in Piedmont; nor were there colored Georges living in the neighboring towns and working at the mill.

"Tell him your name, Daddy."

Para. 10-14

"He knows my name, boy," my father said after a long pause. "He calls all colored people George."

A long silence ensued. It was "one of those things," as my Mom would put it. Even then, that early, I knew when I was in the presence of "one of those things," one of those things that provided a glimpse, through a rent³ curtain, at another world that we could not affect but that affected us. There would be a painful moment of silence, and you would wait for it to give way to a discussion of a black superstar such as Sugar Ray⁴ or Jackie Robinson.⁵

"Nobody hits better in a clutch than Jackie Robinson."

"That's right. Nobody."

I never again looked Mr. Wilson in the eye.

Para. 15. _____

Once you have read and reread Gates's essay and annotated the text, write out answers to the six Thinking Critically about the Reading questions as well as the Language in Action activity found below. Then compare your answers with those of the other students in class.

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT THE READING

1. In the epigraph to this essay, Gates presents two quotations, one by James Baldwin. What do you think Baldwin meant when he wrote, "The question of color, especially in this country [America], operates to hide the graver questions of self"? How does this statement relate to the theme of Gates's essay?

3. torn.

4. Walker Smith Jr. (1921–1989), American professional boxer and six-time world champion.

5. (1919–1972): The first black baseball player in the National League.