

Teachers' Notes Keepinitreal

Don Henderson

Teachers' Notes by Don Henderson

OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Fiction
Title	Keepinitreal
Author	Don Henderson
Extent	240 pp
Age	13+
Australian RRP	\$17.99
Binding	Paperback
Printing	Mono
ISBN	978 1 86291 770 5
Format	198 x 128

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	2
About the Author.....	2
Writing Style....	2
Before Reading the Text.....	3
Reading the Text.....	3
After Reading the Text.....	5
Appendix 1.....	6

INTRODUCTION

Stevie Goodes is the opposite of cool and going places. Unless those places are the streets of Victory Gardens, where he spends his days collecting discarded cans to sell at the local recycling centre. The high point of his day is the possibility of being served at the recycling centre by his secret love, Helen. Stevie has spoken hundreds of words to her but unfortunately every one of them has been 'yeah'. Stevie is the world's worst conversationalist.

That starts to change the day Kid Kabula rides his bike through the Victory Gardens Mall and accidentally knocks the leader of the local bikie gang, the Victory Rats, into a pond. Stevie faces a dilemma: the Kid is a mate, but the Victory Rats are customers.

Stevie and his adoptive parents, Uncle Boff and Auntie Peg, are huge greyhound fans and when the local track is earmarked for closure he finds himself caught up in yet another fight. The tragic death of Auntie Peg then forces Stevie to consider if anything is worth fighting for. So for him, this is a story about 'keepinitreal'.

Keepinitreal is ideal to use as a starting or reference point for social justice and values clarification topics.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Don Henderson, originally from Minlaton, South Australia, lives in Adelaide with his family. As an English teacher for many years – and a football coach – Don has long felt that there was a need for high interest books for boys. Don is inspired by his favourite author, Charles Dickens.

WRITING STYLE

Keepinitreal is written in the first person, through the eyes of Stevie Goodes. Stevie has an individual take on the world and this is reflected in his interpretation of events. Much of his narration is colloquial, but he is also able to draw on a good store of general knowledge because his family is the only one in the street with satellite TV.

The narrative moves at a fast pace and is driven by three key problems:

- staying out of the way of the local bikie gang, the Victory Rats
- trying to save the local greyhound track from closure
- dealing with Auntie Peg's death.

BEFORE READING THE TEXT

Two areas of discussion could be useful prior to reading:

- 1.) What do students know about greyhound racing? Have they been to a greyhound racing track? Is there a local track? Do they know anyone who follows the sport?

2.) What do they think 'keepinitreal' might mean? Students could record what they think this word means on pieces of paper and these could be collected by the teacher and handed back for discussion once the novel is finished.

READING THE TEXT

NB - A Student Study Booklet is attached to these study notes as Appendix 1. A range of questions and activities are provided in that. A few suggestions for theme-based exploration and discussion are suggested here.

It will be useful to point out that the three main parts of the novel's structure are *roughly* defined by the major problem facing Stevie during that part of the story.

Chapters 1-13 – Problem #1 – The Victory Rats

Chapters 14-22 – Problem #2 – Closure of the Victory Gardens Dog Track

Chapters 23- 31 – Problem #3 – Auntie Peg's death

These three sections overlap and are also tied together by other problems such as Stevie's lack of confidence and the impact this has on building relationships. Each of these sections lends itself to particular thematic discussions.

Section 1 (Chapters 1- 13)

Childhood adventure/experiences

Students could share experiences or write about their most exciting childhood adventure.

Bogeymen/groups

In Victory Gardens the Victory Rats are the local 'bogeymen'. A group to be feared and blamed. Students could brainstorm a list of other bogeymen (and women) and this could be used as the basis for further discussion or writing.

Meeting/talking to the opposite sex

This is something Stevie finds quite difficult, as his conversation with Helen on page 38 reveals. Students could write a dialogue between a boy and a girl where one or both of the character is 'interested' in the other. Alternatively students could draw up lists of what they think the opposite sex is most interested in talking about and 'killer lines' for impressing the opposite sex. These ideas could be shared and commented on in mixed sex groups.

Section 2 (Chapters 14-22)

Heritage

Is it worth saving? A class debate could be held as to whether the Victory Gardens Dog Track is worth saving.

Students could also draw up lists of places in their local area which should be preserved and record reasons why these places should be saved. Individual research could be based on places on this list and further debates could be held related to specific local places. (Topics can be 'made up' e.g. 'The former residence of (an early explorer) should be knocked down to make way for a new skate park.')

Section 3 (Chapters 23-31)

Perseverance

Saving the racetrack becomes a difficult exercise. Every time people try to achieve something there are obstacles that get in their way. These obstacles challenge people's belief that they can achieve whatever it is that they are striving for. Draw up a list of all of the obstacles that make saving the Victory Gardens Dog Track difficult.

Give students the task of planning a short lesson designed to teach other students how to persevere no matter what obstacles are thrown in front of them. This does not have to be a 'teacher-talk' lesson – it could be a role-play, PowerPoint, group exercise, viewing a relevant film, reading/writing based etc.

Luck

Stevie works hard but also experiences luck. This theme can form the basis of lively discussion. A good starter would be for students to write down the 'luckiest' (or 'unluckiest') thing that ever happened to them. The class could then rate the degree of luck involved in each incident on a scale of 0-5 where 0 = no luck and 5 = totally luck. While doing this the other factors contributing to people's perceived luck could be recorded.

Death/Grief

This is a theme not to be entered into lightly.

Keepinitreal could be used in this context in conjunction with a broader spiritual or life skilling program. Students would need to be given a range of options and be allowed to respond personally and at a suitable level. A couple of possible tasks would be:

1. Imagine you are Stevie and write an obituary for Auntie Peg.
2. Write a 'How to Cope with Grief' article for a young adult magazine.

AFTER READING THE TEXT

Treat the class to an essay. Suitable topics are listed below:

1. Stevie Goodes: scavenger or environmental entrepreneur. Discuss.
2. *Keepinitreal* starts with the line, 'Because this is pretty much a story about how I stopped being an egg-headed idiot ...' Describe how Stevie stops being an 'egg-headed idiot'.
3. Would you like to live in Victory Gardens? Discuss.
4. Who saves the Victory Gardens Dog Track? Discuss the roles of the characters who play a part in saving the dog track.
5. In the end, Stevie is happy with the fact that Crash is his father. BUT is Crash really a good father? Discuss.
6. What characters in the novel are best at 'keepinitreal'?
7. 'There is no such thing as luck.' Discuss this statement with particular reference to *Keepinitreal*. (You may agree or disagree.)
8. Discuss the changes the new Member of Parliament for Victory Gardens, Carley Marples, makes. Suggest some other changes that she should initiate.

APPENDIX

1

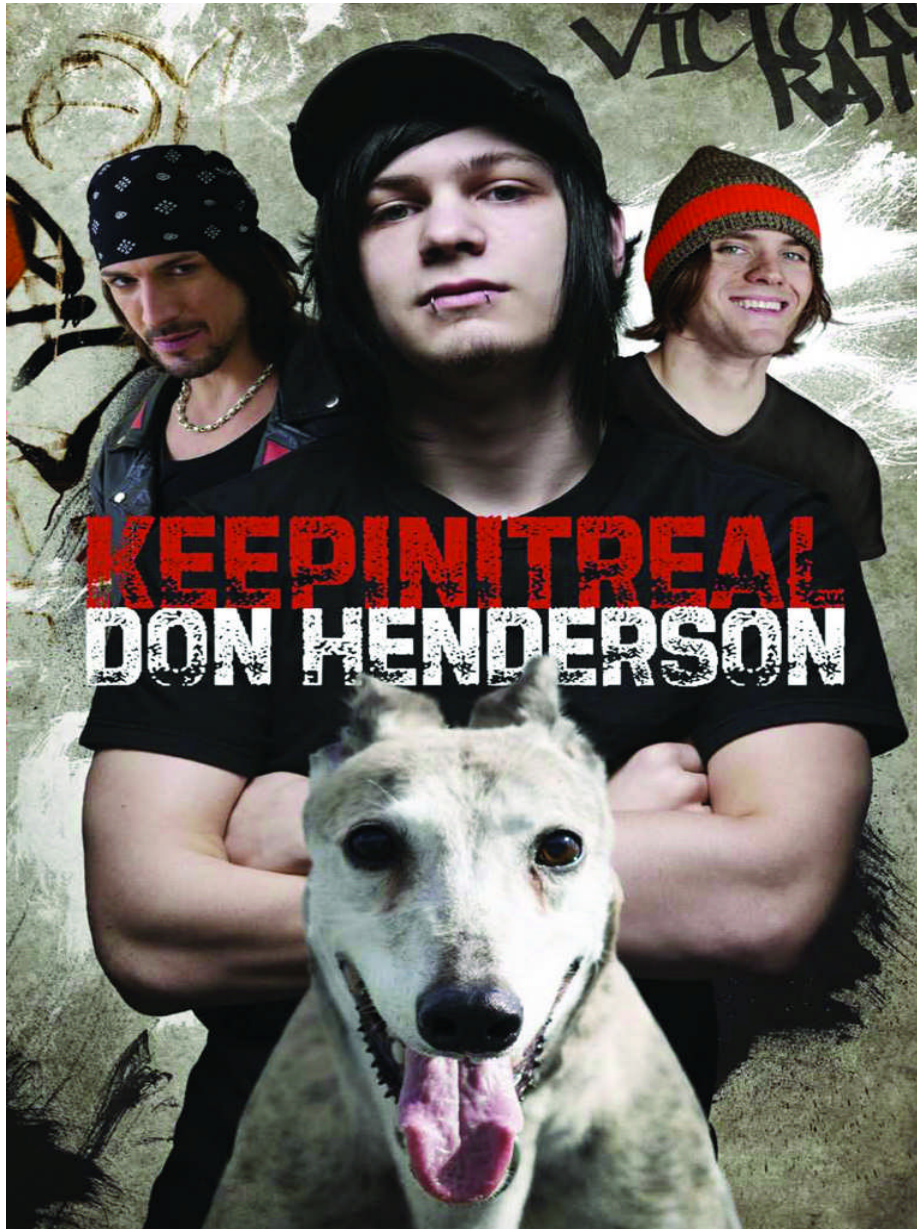
KEEPINITREAL

BY DON HENDERSON

Student Study Booklet

Student -

Teacher -



Due:

Cover Page

What subject matter/themes are suggested by the cover page?

Consider both the pictures and title. (Including colour and style of print used.)

Imprint Page

Research – Refer to the publisher's website <www.scholastic.com.au> and record four facts about the author.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What does the symbol © represent?

What do the initials ISBN represent and what is the importance of an ISBN?

Chapter Headings

As you read through the novel, write one or two sentences explaining the reasons for the various chapter headings.

Gunnin' it
Dobbin' in
Collectin' cans
Still collectin' cans
Watchin' telly
Jumpin' jetties
Trainin' dogs
Stressin' out
Casin' out
Puntin' time
Shittin' bricks
Dodgin' bikies
Lyin' low
Freakin' badly

Makin' moves
Thumpin' hearts
Stayin' alive
Feelin' crook
Scabbin' tickets
Spewin' poisonous crap
Stayin' home
Playin' chess
Cryin' like Odysseus
Livin' each day
Keepinitreal
Clutchin' straws
Rememberin' the diggers
Hittin' the fan
Chuckin' boxes
Playin' our cards
Lookin' back / Lookin' forward

Teacher's Revenge Word Find

Find and highlight the chapter headings in the following word find. After highlighting each chapter heading place a tick alongside that chapter in the above table:

N	Q	K	Q	H	T	F	V	E	X	N	G	W	G	U	S	N	N	P	S	W	I	M	V	H	L	R	C
A	F	Z	W	R	H	B	Y	W	L	X	D	R	P	W	J	S	B	N	K	J	Z	G	G	F	K	C	P
F	G	L	F	J	L	F	F	W	V	O	M	I	A	T	D	H	A	S	U	Q	N	U	H	R	C	N	U
E	M	G	P	C	X	K	O	Z	D	T	X	R	J	R	Y	C	C	V	M	S	N	S	E	S	R	T	Z
H	F	E	J	V	V	L	X	G	U	E	T	Z	A	O	N	A	D	P	O	N	N	M	V	F	O	R	Z
T	F	R	G	F	N	A	I	O	M	S	V	C	U	I	B	L	I	B	I	E	E	D	I	R	N	A	L
N	Q	L	G	I	S	N	N	W	N	Q	R	K	T	B	G	E	Q	N	B	M	C	R	B	E	C	I	C
I	O	W	Y	M	B	I	N	I	A	U	O	C	I	I	B	D	I	S	B	C	R	A	H	A	X	N	P
T	H	L	L	I	S	J	H	J	O	A	E	N	O	Y	W	T	E	E	T	I	C	W	Z	K	V	I	U
T	P	X	K	A	S	C	N	N	V	L	T	K	I	L	Z	F	R	S	Z	J	V	R	P	I	U	N	J
I	I	I	C	J	T	K	I	K	L	I	E	N	S	L	H	I	N	W	N	Q	D	O	A	N	O	D	U
H	E	V	K	U	D	Y	R	O	C	E	F	B	S	E	N	G	T	D	G	I	S	F	R	B	K	O	M
S	Q	Q	L	R	A	R	C	K	P	Q	C	M	E	T	G	D	X	O	G	T	K	N	C	A	S	G	P
K	F	C	E	L	Z	L	E	I	M	H	Q	P	H	N	B	D	O	B	G	B	C	I	S	D	T	S	I
E	R	U	P	Q	L	T	N	B	U	R	S	E	C	I	U	K	L	B	W	U	I	K	U	L	W	V	N
T	A	Z	P	I	S	I	R	C	S	P	D	V	N	H	K	W	W	I	G	Y	R	O	O	Y	N	F	J
C	K	P	T	X	T	M	K	T	U	I	W	X	I	C	B	R	S	N	B	B	B	O	N	C	F	N	E
E	G	S	V	R	R	I	A	N	G	C	R	Y	Y	T	B	Q	E	I	F	S	N	L	O	R	E	W	T
U	D	H	E	S	N	Y	T	G	Z	W	F	M	A	A	B	B	V	N	E	U	I	K	S	S	E	A	T
Y	Z	A	B	B	I	I	E	B	K	M	H	D	L	W	X	A	O	F	M	G	T	C	I	Y	L	W	I
C	L	O	O	N	N	R	H	E	M	M	E	Q	P	K	I	F	M	B	K	X	T	A	O	W	I	H	E
X	F	X	H	T	S	C	O	L	L	E	C	T	I	N	C	A	N	S	R	Z	I	B	P	O	N	M	S
N	E	O	I	S	U	E	S	S	Y	D	O	E	K	I	L	N	I	Y	R	C	H	N	N	V	C	A	P
S	M	M	V	Z	B	J	R	V	G	T	Y	A	S	N	I	Y	K	N	Q	B	S	I	I	R	R	P	Z
E	E	M	W	C	Y	A	D	H	C	A	E	N	I	V	I	L	A	V	F	U	C	K	W	Z	O	O	U
A	S	T	R	A	E	H	N	I	P	M	U	H	T	C	H	O	M	W	L	K	X	O	E	J	O	X	G
U	Z	D	T	S	O	V	M	W	E	V	I	L	A	N	I	Y	A	T	S	Q	J	O	P	H	K	R	H
H	B	T	U	O	N	I	S	S	E	R	T	S	L	U	P	Q	G	H	X	I	X	L	S	J	J	J	A

Reading Comprehension

NB – The questions in italics are designed so that you can relate your response to your own experience.

Chapter 1 Gunnin' it

1. What are your first impressions of Victory Gardens? *How does it compare with your own suburb?*
2. What aspect of Kid Kabula's character is emphasised when he rides past the *No Bikes Beyond This Point* sign? *How well can you relate to this type of character?*

Chapter 2 Dobbin' in

3. *Keepinitreal* is a first-person narration. What does this mean? Who is the first-person narrator? *Does he sound like someone you would like?*
4. Why does Stevie 'dob in' the Kid? *What do you think you would have done in this situation?*

Chapter 3 Collectin' cans

5. What evidence is there early in this chapter that Stevie has an active imagination? *Do you ever have similar 'flights of fancy' where you imagine you are something else?*

6. List the various ways mentioned in this chapter that Uncle Boff earns money. Do you think his business would be a good one? Why / Why not? *How do you make money?*

Chapter 4 Still collectin' cans

7. What do you think is meant by Father Neill's philosophy that, 'What goes around, comes around'. *Do you agree with this philosophy?*

8. What indication is there in this chapter that the Victory Gardens Dog Track is important to Boff and Stevie? *Is there a particular place that is equally as important to you?*

Chapter 5 Watchin' telly

9. Why is Stevie so reluctant to admit that he has dobbed in Kid Kabula to the Victory Rats? *Have you ever dobbed someone in and how did you feel about it?*

10. Describe the arrival of Kid Kabula in this chapter. What do we learn from this about his character? *Are you a risk-taker?*

Chapter 6 Jumpin' jetties

11. Describe Stevie's feelings at the end of this chapter and say why you think he is feeling like this. *Can you recall similar feelings after having done something for the first time?*

Chapter 7 Trainin' dogs

12. Why does Stevie feel even guiltier in this chapter about dobbing Kid Kabula in to the Victory Rats? *Have you ever kept a 'secret' from a friend?*

Chapter 8 Stressin' out

13. What does Stevie agree to do for Kid Kabula at the end of this chapter? *What would you have done?*

Chapter 9 Casin' out

14. What indication is there in this chapter that there is 'another side' to Fatts Charvetto? *Do you know anyone similar to this? – i.e. they appear tough but have a softer side.*

Chapter 10 Puntin' time

15. What metaphor is used in this chapter to describe the importance of the racetrack to Victory Gardens? *What is the most significant place in your town/suburb?*

Chapter 11 Shittin' bricks

16. What ability does Stevie reveal to Crash in this chapter? *What are your abilities? Do you ever conceal your abilities?*

Chapter 12 Dodgin' bikies

17. When confronted by the Victory Rats, Stevie and Kid Kabula have different ideas about how to handle the situation. Describe their different approaches. *Which approach do you most relate to? How would you have handled this situation?*

Chapter 13 Lyin' low

18. Who does Stevie blame for the awkward situation he finds himself in and do you think he is right? *Have you ever been 'led astray' by a friend?*

Chapter 14 Freakin' badly

19. This chapter is a turning point in the novel. What significant piece of information do Stevie and Boff find out about and how is this likely to impact on them? *Have you ever read about something in a newspaper that shocked you or had a significant impact on you?*

Chapter 15 Makin' moves

20. What development has there been in the relationship between Stevie and Helen? How does this put Stevie in an awkward situation? *Have you ever said more than you would have liked? What were the consequences?*

Chapter 16 Thumpin' hearts

21. In this chapter Stevie feels his life is 'spinning out of control' and that there isn't anything he can do about it. Why does he think this and do you think his perception is correct? *Have you ever felt the same way?*

Chapter 17 Stayin' alive

22. Why is Stevie so surprised by the fact that he is still alive? *Have you ever had a 'lucky escape'?*

Chapter 18 Feelin crook

23. What situation emerges in this chapter that is likely to have a significant impact on the plot? *Is Auntie Peg responsible for her illness?*

Chapter 19 Scabbin' tickets

24. What habit of Stevie's does Helen object to in this chapter? Do you agree with Helen? *How do you feel about Stevie's attitude and occupation? Is he a scab or someone who recognises opportunities?*

Chapter 20 Spewin' poisonous crap

25. In this chapter, what and who are spewin' poisonous crap? *Have you ever been in a situation where people pretended your view was important when in actual fact it wasn't valued?*

Chapter 21 Stayin' home

26. How does Auntie Peg's illness affect Stevie and his role in the household? *Have you experienced a situation where a negative became a positive as it allowed you to grow?*

Chapter 22 Playin' chess

27. Why does Stevie think that Commo Mick might be useful in saving the track? *Have you met someone like Commo Mick who has been disheartened by life?*

Chapter 23 Cryin' like Odysseus

28. Why does Stevie think he should switch off the TV?

Chapter 24 Livin' each day

29. How do Stevie and Boff react to Auntie Peg's death? *How can people deal with grief?*

Chapter 25 Keepinitreal

30. What advice is Stevie given in this chapter? *What is the best advice you've ever been given?*

Chapter 26 Clutchin' Straws

31. What makes Stevie think that they have very little chance of saving the Victory Gardens Dog Track? *Have you experienced occasions when you have felt like giving up? What do you do to overcome these feelings?*

Chapter 27 Rememberin' the diggers

32. How is Kid Kabula's attitude to saving the track different from Stevie's in this chapter? *Do you know of anyone who is unrelentingly positive?*

Chapter 28 Hittin' the fan

33. Describe Kid Kabula's actions in this chapter. What affect do his actions have on other community members? *Do you know of an instance where someone has defied authority for a good cause?*

Chapter 29 Chuckin' boxes

34. What does Stevie discover when he opens the blue box? *Should Stevie have opened the red box?*

Chapter 30 Playin' our cards

35. What critical piece of evidence did Commo Mick discover? *What role does persistence have to play in saving the track?*

Chapter 31 Lookin' back / Lookin' forward

36. How have Stevie's and Boff's circumstances improved and what are the reasons for this? *Stevie made a moral judgment in deciding to claim the lotto win. Was he right? What would you have done?*

Post Reading Activities

Character Descriptions

Complete the following activities *without* reference to the book.

Note: _____ indicates a missing word and indicates a missing phrase.

Once you have completed each exercise, refer to the relevant page and check the actual words and phrases used and write them in red above.

Uncle Boff (page 17)

He was standing in the doorway in his _____ and _____
_____. A _____ fold of gut _____ from under his
singlet and _____ over the front of his Ys. Balanced on top of all this
_____ underwear was Uncle Boff's head. It was as round as
....., and his _____ eyes peeked out from the top like
..... .

_____ stubble covered his scalp and some of the inside parts of
his _____ nose and _____ ears. The bags
under his _____ eyes looked like spare _____ .

Keepinitreal (page 63)

... Keepinitreal twisted her head _____ in my direction as if daring me
to have a _____ opinion. She was a _____ and somehow
_____ - _____ bitch. I say 'whitish'
because her coat was more like the white you end up with when
.....

Her coat was also _____ with _____
dots as if
.....

Who Saved the Day?

Rank the following characters in order of how important they were in saving the Victory Gardens Dog Track. Also, write a brief comment about their contribution.

- Commo Mick
- Carley Marples
- Stevie
- Uncle Boff
- Freddie Knight
- Helen
- Crash
- Auntie Peg
- Fatts Charvetto
- Kid Kabula

Character	Comment
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Writing Activity

Write a transcript of one of the following:

- Madeline Fox's news report (end of chapter 30)
- Archie Shakes and Crash chatting in their prison cell
- Fatts Charvetto explaining his latest renovation on TV
- Desmond Smoothie and Jeremy Small chatting as they clean up doggie poos
- A speech by Carley Marples after the track has been saved
- The greyhound race that is about to start as the book ends (end of chapter 31).

Marketing

Back Cover Blurb

You have been asked to write a new blurb for a new edition of *Keepinitreal*. Write your new blurb in the space provided below.

Analysis

Answer the following questions.

1. What issues do you think prevented Stevie from being successful at school? How might these issues have been overcome?
2. Stevie is proud of his work – would you feel the same way if you were in Stevie’s situation?
3. Stevie has a real issue with brand names. How do you feel about his reluctance to wear brand names?
4. What factors enable Stevie to come to terms with his grief at losing Auntie Peg?
5. Comment on the ending of *Keepinitreal*. Do you think the final race should have been run? Explain your answer.

Word Find Solution:

N S . . . S
A D . . W . S . N G
F W . O . . A . D . A S . . . U . R . . .
E O . D T . R . R . C C . . . N . E . . T .
H L . G U . T . A . N A . . . N . M . F . R .
T N . I O . S . C . I B . . . I . E D . R . A .
N . . . I . N N . N . R . T B . . . N . M . R . E . I .
I . . Y . B I . I . U . C I . . . I . B . . A . A . N .
T . L . I S . H . O . E N . Y . T . E . . . W . K . I .
T . . K A . C . N . L T K . L . . R R P I . N J
I . I C . T . I . L I E . S L . I O A N . D U
H E . . U . Y . O C E . . S E N . . D . . S F R B . O M
S . . L . A . C K P . C . E T . . . O . . K N C A . G P
. . C . L . L E I . H . . H N . . . B . . C I S D . S I
. . . P . L T N . U . . E C I . . . B . . I K U L . . N
. . . . I S I . C S P D . N H . . . I . . R O O Y . . J
. . . T . T . K T U I . . I C . . S N . . B O N . F . E
. . S . R . I A N G . . . Y T . . E I . . N L O . E . T
. . . E . N Y T G A A . . V N . . I K S . E . T
. . A . B I I E L W . . O . . . T C I . L . I
. L . O N N R P . . . M . . . T A O . I . E
. . X H T S C O L L E C T I N C A N S . . I B P . N . S
. E O I S U E S S Y D O E K I L N I Y R C H N N . C . .
S M M K . . . S I I . R . .
E E . . . Y A D H C A E N I V I L A K W . O . .
. S T R A E H N I P M U H T . . . M O E . O . .

. E V I L A N I Y A T S . . O P . K . .
. . T U O N I S S E R T S L S

N.B. Do not include this page in the student booklet!