***The Contender***

**Chapter One**

1. **In the first chapter, we are introduced to the main character (the protagonist), Alfred Brooks. What do you know so far about him? Make a list.**
2. **Alfred spends some time with guys at the clubroom. Who are they and what do you think of them?**
3. **Major makes fun of the people Alfred works for and also his job. Why do you think Major does this?**
4. **Which character, aside from Alfred, do you like the best. Why?**
5. **Do you think Alfred and his best friend, James, had a good childhood? Why or why not?**
6. **Your prediction: Do you think Alfred and James will remain friends? Why or why not?**

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**Chapter Two and Three**

1. **In chapter two, what do you think was the author’s purpose of describing what Alfred was watching on television? Is Alfred’s reaction to the show important? Why?**
2. **Why do you think Alfred decides to become a boxer at the end of chapter two?**
3. **In chapter three, what does Donatelli tell Alfred to watch out for after he starts his training?**
4. **What does Donatelli tell Alfred he has to be before he can become a champion? Why is this important? What does he mean?**

**The Contender Chapter Four**

**1. What differences do you see between the description of Aunt Dorothy’s house and Aunt Pearl’s apartment? What words and images are used to describe the setting of the house? Of the apartment?**

**2. Why do you think Uncle Wilson keeps telling Alfred that the ‘world is changing’?**

**3. Alfred decides not to tell Uncle Wilson about Mr. Donatelli and his decision to train to be a boxer. What do you think stops him?**

**4. On page 48, the author presents us with Alfred’s thoughts. They are a combination of many things that have happened to Alfred plus things he has heard. What do you think is the author’s purpose in doing this? What is he trying to tell us about Alfred?**

**The Contender Chapters 5 and 6**

**1. In chapter 5, what is Alfred's struggle at the end of the chapter?**

**2. Why do you think the author created the character Henry? What is his purpose in the story?**

**3. We get a view of the gym through Alfred's eyes in Chapter 6. How is it different from the first time he was there? What is Alfred's reaction? What does his reaction say about his character?**

**4. With Chapter 1, you were asked to name your favorite character besides Alfred. Is this person still your favorite character? Why or why not? If not, which character do you like best?**

**The Contender Chapters 7 and 8**

**1. Who is Willie Street? What do you learn about him?**

**2. Why does Mr. Donatelli have the fight stopped? Do you think he did the right thing?**

**3. Who is Spoon? Why doesn't he fight anymore?**

1. **What sort of daydreams does Alfred have in Spoon's car?**

**The Contender Chapters 9 and 10**

**Questions:**

**1. How does Aunt Pearl feel about Alfred's dreams of becoming a boxer?**

**2. Why do you think Alfred has a bad dream during his first week of training? What do you think he was dreaming about?**

**3. Why does Aunt Pearl take Alfred to Reverend Price?**

**4. Why is the hour in the park the best time of Alfred's day?**

**5. What is Lou Epstein's advice about boxing?**

**6. How can you tell that Alfred is getting discouraged about boxing toward the end of Chapter 10? Should Donatelli pay more attention to him?**

**The Contender Chapters 11 and 12**

**1. In Chapter 11, why does Hollis pat his jacket pocket when he says he is sure that James is coming to the clubhouse?**

**2. Were you surprised with the description of James in Chapter 12? Why or why not?**

**3. Throughout the novel, Alfred struggles with trying to become a boxer. What is the other big challenge he faces in these two chapters? Use a supporting quote with a page reference.**

**4. What is Major doing to Alfred in Chapter 12? Should Alfred blame Major for his situation or himself? Why or why not?**

**5. Henry is looking for Alfred in Chapter 12. Why do you think Alfred avoids him?**

1. **Near the end of Chapter 12, Mr. Donatelli says to Alfred, "Anyone can be taught how to fight. A contender, that you have to do yourself." What does he mean?**

**The Contender Chapters 13 and 14**

**1. In Chapter 13, Alfred's short dream is described. What do you think the dream means?**

**2. Henry is learning how to fight despite his crippled leg. What is Alfred's reaction? Do you think Henry is a contender in his own way? Why or why not?**

**3. In Chapter 14, Alfred is surprised by Betty's concern for one of her students. Why do you think this surprises him?**

**4. What happens to Alfred when he is given his robe before the fight? Why do you think he reacts this way?**

**5. What did you think of the fight scene in Chapter 14? Was it realistic? Why or why not?**

**The Contender Chapters 15 and 16**

**1. In chapter 15, what does Aunt Pearl share with Alfred (about her past)?**

**2. Why do you think Aunt Pearl shares her story with Alfred?**

**3. In chapter 16, what is Alfred's reaction after he knocks out Griffin?**

**4. What does Alfred's reaction to the knockout tell us about his character?**

**5. At the end of chapter 16, Alfred has some internal conflict. What is troubling him?**

**The Contender Chapters 17 and 18**

**1. Jeff sees a change in Alfred in chapter 17. What is that change? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?**

**2. Alfred sees James again in chapter 17. What does James want?**

**3. Do you think Alfred did the right thing with James? Why or why not?**

**4. In chapter 18, Alfred has a chance to hit Barnes, but does not. What stops him?**

**5. Why does Donatelli want Alfred to stop boxing? What is Alfred's response?**

**6. Alfred realizes Donatelli was talking about more than just boxing when he spoke about being a contender. What else do you think he was talking about?**

**The Contender Chapters 19 and 20**

**1. What does Alfred find out that Henry did for him in chapter 19?**

**2. In chapter 19, we see how close the friendship is between Alfred and Henry. Why do you think they became such close friends?**

**3. What do you think causes the 'cold spot' that Alfred feels before a fight? Why do you think he wonders if he will ever feel it again after he is done boxing?**

**4. In chapter 19, why does Donatelli not want Alfred to fight his last boxing match?**

**5. What do you think of the book's ending? Did you think Alfred and James would reunite? Why or why not?**