

**Crispin: The Cross of Lead**  
by Avi

Strategy/Tip: To respond in a complete sentence and completely answer the question, restate part of the question. This strategy will help you stay on topic.

1. When and where does the story take place?

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2. What was Crispin called before he learned his name?

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3. How does Bear become Crispin's master?

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4. What skills does Bear teach Crispin?

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5. What is Bear's real profession?

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6. Who is Crispin's father?

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7. What unusual skill did Crispin's mother have?

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8. What does Bear believe is the right of every person?

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1. In what ways is Crispin an outsider in his village?

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2. What crimes is Crispin accused of? Why is he accused of them?

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3. How is Crispin useful to Bear?

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4. What was Bear studying to become before he became a mummer? How does that keep him from the gallows?

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1. Compare and contrast the village of Stromford, where Crispin is from, and the town of Great Wexly.

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2. Why does Crispin leave the room at the tavern after Bear has told him to stay?

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3. Why does Crispin decide to follow Bear to his meeting, even after he experiences the dangers of the town?

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Show your work.

1. At a time when few people could read, pictures were used to help tell many stories. In particular, stories from the Bible were depicted on the walls of churches. Choose part of the story to tell through pictures. (Attach pages as needed.)
  
2. There are 150 people living in Stromford, Crispin's village. Imagine 70 of these are adults, who each earn a penny per day for their labor. Bread costs a quarterpenny per loaf, and each adult buys two loaves per day. How much do they spend per day on bread, combined?
  
3. Crispin was born in 1363. If the average life expectancy in the 14<sup>th</sup> century was 32 years, until when might he hope to live? How many more years would this be?
  
4. Create a math problem that might apply to Crispin's life (how much he and Bear need to earn to buy bread, the cost of staying at the tavern, or how long it would take to travel a certain distance, for example).

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1. Crispin tells Bear that he is not sure he has a soul, because he has never felt it. At the end of the book, Crispin describes his “new-found soul, a soul that lived in freedom”. How do you think Crispin found his soul?

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2. When Crispin runs away from Stromford, he must make decisions for himself. Why is this difficult for him? How is it different from his old life?

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3. Bear tells Crispin that “it’s only questions that keep you living,”and later Crispin wonders “if I *were* to live by questions, what questions would they be?” What are two questions that Crispin comes to live by in the story?

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1. Crispin says that he is traveling through a “new world”. In what ways is it a new world to him?

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2. How does Crispin learn to trust Bear?

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3. Why does Crispin reject his father and what he stands for?

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1. The book ends with the same quote it began with - “‘In the midst of life there is death.’ But, Crispin, can’t you see the new truth we’ve made? In the midst of death there’s life!” (261) How are each of these statements true in the story?

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2. At the beginning of the book, Crispin does not know his name. Put yourself in his place. What would it be like to learn your name after so many years? How is your name important to you?

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1. Few people in Crispin’s time knew how to read or write, but words and the ability to read held great power. Compare the significance of reading in Crispin’s time and in your own.

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2. What aspects of Crispin’s world can you relate to? What, if anything, appeals to you about his life? What would be most difficult for you, if you lived in 1377?

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3. When Crispin follows Bear, he overhears John Ball saying that “no man, or woman either, shall be enslaved, but stand free and equal to one another” (p. 200). In what ways do we have that freedom today? In what way, if any, do you see inequality in your world?

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4. Imagine a world in which few people could read, such as Crispin’s. How would this affect how you learn? How you entertain yourself? How you communicate with other people? What are some other effects of reading or not reading?

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**A note on the questions:**

The questions presented here are designed to follow the outline of Bloom's taxonomy, with questions gradually increasing in the level of abstraction. These levels of abstraction were characterized by Benjamin Bloom as:

1. knowledge
2. comprehension
3. application
4. analysis
5. synthesis
6. evaluation

In recent years, there have been some newer versions of the Bloom's taxonomy, including one by Lorin Anderson, which characterizes the levels as:

1. remember
2. understand
3. apply
4. analyze
5. evaluate
6. create

The questions presented here follow the basic outline of the taxonomy. The difficulty of the questions, as well as the depth of answer required from the students, gradually increases from one page to the next. This type of questioning is intended to help students achieve a deeper understanding of the books they read. Because the answers for the last three categories vary widely, answers have only been provided for the first three levels, and even then are intended as suggestions. Reasonable student answers should be accepted at all levels.

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### **Page 1**

1. The story takes place in England in 1377. The story begins in Stromford and ends in Wexly.
2. Crispin was called “Asta’s son” before he learned his name.
3. Bear becomes Crispin’s master after Crispin unlawfully runs away and the first free man to find him and claim him becomes his master.
4. Bear teaches Crispin to play the recorder, to juggle, to observe the world around him, and to defend himself. (Answers may vary.)
5. Bear’s real profession is spying.
6. Crispin’s father is Lord Furnival.
7. Crispin’s mother unusual skill is that she knows how to read.
8. Bear believes every person has the right to freedom and to be his own master.

### **Page 2**

1. Crispin is an outsider in his village because he has no name, no father, and people shun him and his mother. What he does not learn until the end of the story is that they really were outsiders who were sent to live there by Lord Furnival when Crispin was born.
2. Crispin is accused first of stealing money, and then of murdering the village priest. He is accused as an excuse to have him killed, so that he does not try to inherit his father’s estate.
3. Crispin is useful to Bear because once he learns to play the recorder, he can provide music while Bear dances, juggles, or drums, enabling Bear to earn more money.
4. Bear was studying to become a priest before he decided to become a mummer instead. This keeps him from the gallows because priests cannot be hanged, and all who can read are treated as priests.

### **Page 3**

1. Stromford is a small village with only 150 people, the houses are small and only one story, most inhabitants work the land and are poor, there is one wealthier family, the refuse is tossed behind the houses, everyone knows everyone, and strangers are rare. Great Wexly is a larger town, with too many people to know everyone and many strangers coming in on business; its houses are larger, sturdier, and often have upper floors, many people work at trades in the city rather than farming, there are many wealthy people as well as poor, and refuse is tossed in the street. Both places are under the control of Lord Furnival, both have a curfew, and both operate under the feudal system where allegiance is owed to the lord and the king.
2. Crispin leaves the room at the tavern because he has just arrived in the town and is very curious to explore it. The room at the tavern is smelly, he has a penny of his own to spend, and he is becoming a bolder person who makes his own decisions.
3. Crispin disobeys Bear and leaves because he sees that the one eyed man is following him, and he believes Bear to be in danger.

### **Page 4**

1. Answers will vary.
2.  $\frac{1}{4} \times 2 = \frac{1}{2}$  penny per adult.  $70 \text{ adults} \times \frac{1}{2} = 35$  pennies, per day.
3.  $1363 + 32 \text{ years} = 1395$ . Crispin might live until 1395.  $1395 - 1377 = 18$  more years.
4. Answers will vary.

**All subsequent answers should vary. Accept all reasonable answers.**

11(questions based on Bloom’s Taxonomy)