Introduction:
In the second paragraph of your seventh grade summer reading novel, Gary Schmidt’s Trouble, you’ll learn about the hometown of the main character, Henry Smith:

The Smiths lived where their people had lived for exactly three hundred years, far away from Trouble, in Blythbury-by-the-Sea, where the currents of the Atlantic give up their last southern warmth to the coast of Massachusetts before they head to the cold granite shores of Maine.

Two pages later, you’ll discover more about this town:

Blythbury-by-the-Sea was the kind of town where oaks and maples shaded quiet clapboard and brick and stone houses that had seen a whole lot of New England winters and were doing fine, thank you. Tight and prim, their windows presided over Main Street, whose two narrow lanes meandered into the town center, where tourists up from Boston and New York came to visit boutiques and rare-book shops and antique stores and fancy-jewelry artisans and gourmet delis.

If this town sounds a bit familiar, it’s no coincidence. Although Trouble is a work of fiction, Blythbury-by-the-Sea seems to be the spitting image of Brookwood’s hometown, Manchester-by-the-Sea.

And this is just the beginning. If you keep an eye out for them, you will encounter many other connections between this story and your own experience, connections that go far beyond Trouble’s setting on the North Shore. For instance, have you ever loved a mischievous dog? Hiked to the top of a mountain? Confronted racism? Kept a heavy secret? Felt abandoned by the world? Have you read other books or seen a movie in which two friends go on a road trip together? Connections to Trouble can come in all shapes and sizes.

To complete this assignment, you’ll need this packet, a pen/pencil, and a copy of Trouble.

Assignment:
1) As you read Trouble, make note of any moments that spark a connection to your own experience. “Making note” could mean highlighting, writing something in the margin of the book, or jotting down the page number.

2) After finishing the novel, review each of your connections. (If you’ve been watchful, you’ll probably have dozens!) Identify the three most significant connections. ‘Significance’ can involve lots of factors; but an easy way to measure significance is to ask two questions: Does this connection help me better understand the story? Does it help me better understand my own life?

3) Explain each of these significant connections by answering the three questions (a, b, c) on the sheets that make up the rest of this packet.

NOTE: You may handwrite your answers on the sheets provided, or you may type using your favorite word processing software. Either way, bring your copy of Trouble and your connections to the first day of class. Have fun, and see you in September!
CONNECTION #1

Page # _______  Paragraph(s): _______________

a)  Describe your connection to this moment in Trouble. How is/was your experience similar to this aspect of the story? Be specific, and answer in complete sentences.

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b)  How is/was your experience different from this aspect of the story? Be specific, and answer in complete sentences.

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c)  Why is this connection significant to you? Does it help you better understand the story—or better understand your own life? Be specific, and answer in complete sentences.

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b) How is/was your experience different from this aspect of the story? Be specific, and answer in complete sentences.

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C) Why is this connection significant to you? Does it help you better understand the story—or better understand your own life? Be specific, and answer in complete sentences.

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