Since none of my friends knew I was scared of anything, I was thought to be a tough little kid.

My bravery (and the rest of me) was about seven years old when I was selected by the neighborhood to test ride The First Skateboard in the History of the World. I didn’t even know what a skateboard was. This was the summer of 1935. Skateboards hadn’t been invented back then. But that did not stop our neighborhood from making one.

Here’s what went into The First Skateboard in the History of the World:
  One board.
  Forty-two assorted nails.
  One roller skate.

Back then, roller skates were made out of metal and could be adjusted to stretch waaaay out for long feet, which a lot of us had. We stretched this skate out so far that it came apart. This suited us just fine. We nailed the front half of the skate to the front of the board and the back half to the back.

This passage introduces the author and the subject of her memoir.

- When do the events in this memoir take place?
- How do the other children think of Byars?
- What is Byars selected to do?
- What do the children make? What materials do they use?
The First Skateboard in the History of the World
Betsy Byars

Targeted Passage #2 – lines 24-32

The whole construction took less than five minutes, and the skateboard was ready to go. By this time we knew it was a skateboard because the leader of the neighborhood—a sixth grade girl named Bee—said, “Who wants to go first on the skateboard?”

There was a silence.
Then Bee answered her own question. “Betsy will.”
There was a sort of echo from the rest, “Betsy will-ill-ill-ill-ill.”
And that was how I—seven-year-old Betsy Alice Cromer—got the honor of testing The First Skateboard in the History of the World.

This passage shows how the author was chosen to take the first ride on the hastily constructed skateboard.

- Who gives the skateboard its name?
- How is Bee different from the other children?
- Whom does Bee pick to test ride the skateboard?
The First Skateboard in the History of the World
Betsy Byars

Targeted Passage #3 – lines 85-97

The first thing that happened was that all the skin was scraped off my knuckles. (I was holding onto the sides of the board and my weight in the center of the board brought it closer to the road than anticipated.)

The next thing that happened was a three-part miracle.

The skate broke off the back of the board, the back of the board acted as a brake, and The First Skateboard in the History of the World ground to a halt twenty feet down Red Hill.

There were cries of disappointment and of determination to renaill the skate and start all over again, but these cries were drowned out by my own.

“I knew it wasn’t going to work! Look what it did to my fingers! If you don’t know how to make skateboards, don’t make skateboards! Anyway, there is no such thing as a skateboard and there never will be!”

This passage relates the climax of Byar’s story: she rides the skateboard down a steep hill until the skateboard breaks apart.

• Does Byars ride the skateboard all the way down the hill? Explain.
• How is Byars injured?
• How does Byars respond when the other children talk about fixing the skateboard?