

Educator Discussion Guide

The Disappearance of Emily H.

By Barrie Summy

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2018

Grade 6-8

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Raine is frustrated with constantly moving because of her mother's bad luck with relationships. This time she finds herself in Yielding, New York to begin 8th grade at Yielding Middle, her fifth school. She has the gift of seeing glittering sparkles on objects. Once in her hand, these sparkles help her read memories from the past. She makes new friends, one of whom is Shirlee, who is being bullied by Jennifer. Jennifer is also suspected of having something to do with the disappearance of a girl named Emily who once lived in Raine's house. As the plot thickens, Raine and Shirlee devise a plan to find the truth behind Emily's disappearance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barrie Summy grew up in Toronto, Canada with her mother, father, and two younger sisters. As she was growing up, the children were only allowed to read "dessert" books if they read at least one "meat-and-potatoes" book. For Barrie, Nancy Drew mysteries were her favorite dessert books. She told her sisters one day she would write Nancy Drew mystery books. The first book she wrote was *I So Don't Do Mysteries* starring thirteen-year-old Sherry Holmes. Some of her other books include *I So Don't Do Spooky*, *I So Don't Do Makeup*, and *I So Don't Do Famous*. Barrie Summy is a resident of Southern California where she lives with her husband and four children. She has a website entitled *Barrie Summy: Tween/Teen Author Website and Blog* at <http://barriesummy.blogspot.com/p/my-books.html>

Biographical information taken from the publisher's website and the author's website at

<http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/80975/barrie-summy>

<http://barriesummy.blogspot.com/p/my-books.html>

Accessed 18 June 2017.

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Bullying

Divide the students into small groups and have them discuss and answer the following questions: Have you or someone you know ever had to deal with a bully at school? How did you handle the

situation? Would you stand up for a friend who is being bullied? Are there adults in your life you can trust to help? Who are they? How do you think your school should handle bullying? Write some ideas or guidelines of what you think should be done to handle bullying at your school. When the students are finished answering the questions, discuss each group's answers as a class.

Social Media/Texting

Begin a discussion about using social media and texting by asking the students if they use social media. What types of social media do they use? What do they use it for? Have the students write a list of the pros and cons of using social media. Ask them to also write a list of what they like and dislike about social media. Have students share some of their ideas with the class. Ask the students how their online social life affects their day to day life offline? How does it affect their relationships with their family? Their friends? Their school life? As a follow-up, ask the students to keep track of how much time they spend on their cell phone or computer for three days, what they generally were using them for, and report back for further discussion.

Special Talents

Have the students to work in pairs to answer the following questions:

What is your special talent? What special talents do some of the people at your school possess? What about famous people? How have you used your talents? How can yours and other's talents/gifts be used for the good of others? Can a talent/gift be something other than a physical one like singing or dancing? Can you name any of these types of talents or gifts? As a class, discuss the students' answers. Point out to them that not only are there talents others can easily see, but there are talents like being a good listener, empathy, wisdom, humor, enthusiasm, high energy, negotiating skills, initiative, imagination, etc. These talents are also very important and can be very beneficial to them and others. Ask the class if they can think of any other talents/gifts similar to these.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Analyze the cover of the book. What clues does it give you about the content of the story? Write an opening paragraph for the book based on the cover.
2. What are some ways you can help make a new student feel welcome at your school? What are some things you could do to make friends if you were a new student? List some important characteristics of a good friend.
3. Do you think Raine made the right choice when she discovered the secret? Please explain. What could she have done differently?
4. Do you think Raine made the right choice when dealing with Jennifer? Why? How would you have dealt with her?
5. Why do you think Jennifer is a "mean girl"? Do you think her "accessories" are mean girls too? Why or why not?
6. How does Shirlee deal with Jennifer's bullying? What, if anything, could she have done differently? What would you have done?
7. Do you think Raine's mother can change? How can she help improve her relationship with Raine? What are some indications she is trying to change?

8. Raine is extremely worried when her mother doesn't answer her text. Do you think parents and children should have rules when it comes to calling or texting each other when they are out and about? If so, list a few.
9. Was it okay for Raine to take Jennifer's necklace? Please explain.
10. Why do Emily and Raine not trust adults to help them? Do they do the right thing? What consequences could they have faced because of their choices?
11. Why does Emily's sister Tasha keep Emily's whereabouts a secret? Please explain.
12. On page 115 when Raine says, "It's my turn for a fresh start", what is she talking about? Do you agree with Raine's argument? Why or why not?
13. Do you think Emily made the right choice to fake her own disappearance? Why or why not? What could she have done differently?
14. How would this story be different without Raine's special ability to read sparkles? Do you think it is necessary to make the book complete? Please explain.
15. Raine and Shirlee decide to use information about Jennifer and Michael against her by sending fake texts to Jennifer from "Michael." Do you consider this a form of bullying? What could have been some of the consequences of such actions? Do you agree or disagree with their choice? Please explain.
16. Choose two of your favorite characters in the story and list your reasons for choosing them and why they are your favorite.
17. Pick a problem one of the characters faces. Give that character advice on how you would solve his/her problem.
18. How would this story be different in your hometown?
19. How do Jennifer's actions affect her group of friends in the story?
20. Choose one character you would most like to be like. What is it about that character that influenced your choice? What special talents/gifts does this character have?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Art:

- Have students create their own book covers depicting their interpretation of the "sparkles" Raine sees. Display students' creations in class.
- Raine and her friends Torrie, Sydney, and Willow get Henna tattoos at the mall. Have students research the history of henna tattoos and create their own patterns at:
<https://www.art-is-fun.com/henna-hand-designs>
<https://www.lessonplanet.com/goto/mehndi-art-gloves>

Language Arts, Health, Self-Awareness:

Some of the main themes of this book are bullying, conflict, and making the right decisions. Students in grades 6 – 8 can learn about the consequences of violence and bullying behaviors, how to be an upstander, how to be kind, how to respectfully resolve conflict, and many other life lessons through these Lesson Plan Units designed by RandomActsofKindness.org. Multiple lessons for each individual grade are provided here:

<https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>. Select *For Educators, Educator Resources*.

Technology and Digital Citizenship:

Raine and her friends make questionable decisions when it comes to technology and texting. Are you using technology responsibly? Find out more:

http://www.educationworld.com/a_tech/responsible-student-technology-use.shtml

(Suitable for grades 7–12).

Language Arts:

- Students can research and demonstrate knowledge of the mystery genre. Learn more at readwritethink’s *Everyone Loves a Mystery: A Genre Study*:
<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/everyone-loves-mystery-genre-796.html?tab=4#tabs>.
- Students can write a character sketch about someone they know well or a character in the story. See http://www.educationworld.com/a_tsl/archives/04-1/lesson017.shtml .
- Students can chart the relationship between characters’ actions and their traits using adjectives at: <http://www.readwritethink.org/resources/resource-print.html?id=175>.
- Raine sees past memories on sparkles. This gift was passed down from her grandmother, and it helps Raine solve Emily’s disappearance. Have students write an essay about what their special gift would be and how they would use it to solve Emily’s disappearance.
- Have students learn about story plot and then work in pairs to complete a story plot map. PowerPoint lesson:
<https://www.lessonplanet.com/goto/plot-a-chain-of-events>.
Story plot map: <https://www.lessonplanet.com/goto/story-plot-map>.
- The characters in this story frequently converse via texting. Have students rewrite actual social media posts using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
<https://www.lessonplanet.com/goto/social-media-madness>

Science and Math:

- Raine inherited the gift of seeing the past in sparkles. In this lesson, students will collect data identifying traits among their classmates and record data on specific traits.
<https://www.lessonplanet.com/goto/inherited-traits> (You may have to sign up for a free trial to access Lesson Planet’s lesson plans)
- Using the *Generations of Traits* hands-on activity, students track and record the passage of colored pom-pom “traits” through three generations of gingerbread people.
<https://www.lessonplanet.com/goto/generations-of-traits-4th-8th> (You may have to sign up for a free trial to access Lesson Planet’s lesson plans)

Vocabulary:

mural	obscenely	seizure
deadbeat	craning	sheepishly
linoleum	shenanigans	asylum
incredulously	ravenous	evicted
cubicle	whimpery	vengeance
saunter	tinge	bizarre
diorama	simultaneously	knickknack

RELATED WEBSITES

Kindness in the classroom

<https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>

A wide variety of lesson plans and educator resources, games, activities, and projects.

Barrie Summy's Blogspot

<http://barriesummy.blogspot.com/p/book-review-club.html>

Information about the author, her books, and her book review club.