

Teachers Guide - See You Down the Road

See You Down the Road addresses many important issues such as ethics and morality and challenges teen readers to think about their place in society, their families, and the differences in various cultures. The following is a teachers guide to be used to teach the book. Warning: it contains many plot spoilers.

Brief History of the Irish Travelers in America

The Travelers descended from nomadic Irish traders and tinsmiths, known as the Tinkers. Because of poor conditions in Ireland in the 1600s many Irish people left their homes in search of food and work, traveling around the country and earning a living from various activities, including horse trading, tinsmithing, and selling homemade crafts. These itinerant workers were referred to as Tinkers. They still exist in Ireland, although the term Tinkers has taken on a derogatory meaning. Travelers in Ireland can still be seen camping in parks. They typically travel by car and trailer although occasionally they can still be seen with horse-drawn wagons.

Travelers immigrated to the States 150 years ago at the time of the Potato Famine in Ireland. They settled in different regions of the country, although they settled primarily in the South where their horse trading skills were most profitable given that so many southern farms used horse and mule power. As the need for horse and mule power dwindled, the Travelers spread further across the country. Population figures on the Travelers are hard to determine based on the secrecy and itinerancy of their lifestyles. Estimates, however, put population numbers at around 30,000.

Before the 1930s Travelers used horse-drawn wagons. With the introduction of the automobile, they began using trucks and camping out in tents. Small trailers replaced tents in the 1960s and now most use mobile homes. They have also set up small camps or villages. The biggest settlement is Murphy Village in South Carolina. Families travel throughout the year and particularly in the summer, and they return periodically to their villages.

In the 1920s, some Travelers began peddling linoleum and spraypainting in addition to dealing in livestock. Travelers were generally welcomed in small towns where they provided solid labor at reasonable prices. In 1927 the Georgia legislature passed a law that heavily taxed horse traders and Gypsies. Since many Travelers worked in Georgia they were forced to seek alternative ways to earn a living. Over the years they have taken up various jobs including roofing, barn painting, and driveway paving. The Travelers remain committed to strict customs that seem foreign to most mainstream Americans. Children often drop out of school by grade 7 or 8 and girls are given in arranged marriages in their teen years.

Further Reading Material for Additional Research

- *Time Magazine*, October 7, 2002--Unwelcome Exposure: The Irish Travelers dwell in a mysterious parallel universe, temporarily invaded by one mothers scandal
- *The Washington Post*, October 20, 2002--Unwelcome Stares at Quiet Clan; After Child Beating, Secret Life Ends for Irish Travelers
- *Scam: Inside Americas Con Artist Clans*, Don Wright, Cottage Publications, 1996.
- *The Irish Tinkers: the Urbanization of an Itinerant People*, George Gmelch, Waveland, 1985.

Pre-Reading Activities

1. Ask students to define morals and ethics.
2. Ask students to think of a time when they had to make a tough moral decision. Then have them write down what factors they considered in making their decision and share them with the class. Next, give them a scenario where an important person in their life has asked them to do something against the law (an example would be to lie to the police about the persons whereabouts on the night of a robbery). Discuss how they would feel if this happened. Would they lie?

Prediction Guide

1. Have you ever heard of the Travelers? If so, what do you know about them? If not, what kind of

people do you think they might be from looking at the cover of the book?

Thematic Connections: Questions for Group Discussion

Family

1. When Jimmy and Douglas don't talk about the fight they had in the beginning of the book, Bridget comments: Like so often, instead of dealing with it we ignored it. This is a trend throughout the book. Find specific examples of moments where people in the family would benefit from more open communication.
2. How does Bridget and Jimmy's relationship change from the beginning of the book to the end? Cite specific events or turning points.
3. What kind of a relationship do Bridget's parents have with each other? Is this a typical Traveler marriage? How would Bridget want her relationship and possible marriage to Patrick to be different?

Ethics

1. What reasons do characters in the book give to justify their scams?
2. Why is Bridget bothered by their actions? What makes her different?
3. Does her decision to stay at the end of the book mean that she accepts what they do?

Gender Roles

1. What does it mean to be a woman in Traveler society? What expectations are placed on women? How does this differ from the expectations placed on the men?
2. Why is it all right or even condoned for Traveler boys to have casual sexual relationships with Country women but Traveler women are expected to remain virgins until they marry?
3. How do Ann and Bridget differ in terms of what they want for themselves from life?

Chapter Questions

Based on Blooms Taxonomy

Ch. 1-3

- 1) Where has Jimmy gone? Will he come back?
- 2) What will happen between Jimmy and his father if Jimmy comes home?
- 3) How does Bridget feel about Jimmy?
- 4) Does Bridget want to marry Patrick? Why, or why not?
- 5) What does Bridget mean at the end of chapter three when she says, But swimming didn't feel like enough. Something was still missing.

Ch. 4-6

1. Why does the woman fall for the pigeon scam?
2. Why isn't Douglas happy about the money Jimmy made?
3. What is really upsetting Jimmy when he fights with Patrick?
4. What does it mean to Bridget that Patrick paid for the CD?
5. How are Bridget and Ann different?

Ch. 7-8

1. Why doesn't Bridget's mother want to talk about her own marriage?
2. Why does Bridget run away?
3. What does she hope to accomplish when she gets in the car with Jared?
4. What is Jimmy doing with the Country man?
5. Why doesn't Patrick press Bridget further about what happened with Jared?

Ch. 9-10

1. How are Big Jim and Douglas different?
2. Why does Jimmy tell Bridget not to talk about what happened with Jared?
3. Why does Big Jim defend Douglas to Jimmy just after Big Jim and Douglas have fought?
4. What are all the calls to Bridget's mother about? Is Ann right about who Russell Berger is?
5. Will the scam work out?

Ch. 11-13

1. Why do Bridget's parents seem more worried about Jimmy going to Arizona than Bridget?
2. Why isn't it a good idea to take pictures?
3. What does taking a bath symbolize to Bridget?
4. What reason does Jimmy give for not marrying Ann?
5. Is it surprising that Big Jim goes to church? Why or why not?

Ch. 14-16

1. What strategy does Big Jim use to sell Mr. Ruby on the condo? Do you think he will buy one?
2. Give three examples of how Big Jim makes the realty business seem legitimate.
3. Why does Ann get so angry with Bridget? Will they be friends again?
4. How does Patrick justify the scam to Bridget?
5. Does Mr. Ruby know about the scam?

Ch. 17-21

1. What is the first thing Patrick does when the scam falls apart?
2. What does Bridget find out when she calls Russell Bergers number?
3. Why doesn't Bridget take all the money from Mrs. Forbes?
4. Why does Jimmy feel he must leave?
5. Why does Bridget stay?

Vocabulary

Have students look up any words they do not understand. Here is a list of more difficult words:

suspicious (p. 13)
convincingly (p. 15)
skeptical (p. 16)
murky (p. 31)
mocked (p. 31)
selfish (p. 44)
deliberately (p. 54)
warily (p. 66)
coursed (p. 66)
dismembered (p. 70)
heritage (p. 76)
swindled (p. 89)
toxic (p. 114)
alternative (p. 132)
predominantly (p. 174)

Comprehension Guide/Quiz Questions

Based on Blooms Taxonomy

Knowledge

1. List five details that define the Traveler lifestyle.
2. What is Bridget's situation? Why is she unsure about Traveler life?
3. What is the plan Big Jim lays out?

Comprehension

1. Describe the difference between how Bridget's father feels Travelers should live and how Big Jim feels they should live.
2. In your own words explain how Bridget feels about Patrick.

Application

1. What events in the novel test Bridget's sense of right and wrong?
2. Find three current event stories in the newspaper where people tried to scam someone.

Analysis

1. Compare and contrast either Bridget and Ann, or Jimmy and Patrick. How are they alike? How are they different?
2. How do the characters in the book justify their scams? Do their justifications make sense to you?

Synthesis

2. What would you do if you were in Bridget's situation? What if you were in Jimmy's?
3. Do you think Bridget should be held less accountable for her actions because of the culture she lives in and their beliefs?

Evaluation

1. Will Bridget and Patrick get married? If they do, will they be happy together?
2. Which scene was the most vivid for you? Why?
3. What will happen to Jimmy? Will Bridget see him again?

Multiple Intelligence Projects

Multiple Intelligence theory is based on the work of Howard Gardner at Harvard. The thrust of his research shows that people have a variety of intelligences, not just the two that schools typically focus on (math/language) and that many students can reach higher degrees of success when they are allowed to use the one at which they excel.

Verbal/Linguistic

On page 175-176 Bridget contemplates what life would be like for her if she left her family to go live with Winnie. Pretend Bridget had left. Write a letter from her point of view to Ann, Patrick, or Jimmy explaining what her life is like at Winnie's. Does she miss traveling and her family? What does she do on a daily basis?

Logical/Mathematical

On page 52 Bridget says: During the next few weeks we logged a lot of time on the road. We passed through town after tiny town. Make a route map of the Daughertys' travel with notes as to what important events happen in which towns.

Visual/Spatial

Using newspapers, magazines, or any other print media create a series of public service advertisements aimed at trying to convince the children of Travelers not to cheat people. Be able to explain the reasoning behind your ad campaign.

Body/Kinesthetic

What if *See You Down the Road* was going to be made into a film? Pick a scene and rewrite it as a script. What scene can you imagine translating well into film? (For an example of how to format a screenplay see: <http://www.scriptologist.com/Magazine/Formatting/formatting.html>)

Musical/Rhythmic

Pick three songs that best match Bridget, Jimmy and Ann's moods at a certain specified point in the book. Write a short paragraph about each song, the point in the book you are imagining, and why the song fits the character at that moment.

Intrapersonal

Individual Project

Bridget and Jimmy have a lot of expectations placed on them that they never really talk directly about with anyone. Write a letter to a close friend where you share the expectations placed on you in your current life.

Group Project

Divide the class into two groups. Have each group take opposite standpoints in the debate of the following questions. Challenge each side to support their arguments with direct citations from the book.

- 1) Should Travelers be considered thieves; or is it just the way of life they were born into?

2) Should Bridget have left at the end?

Questions for Discussion or Short Writing Assignments

1. In the first few pages of the book Bridget explains how making the townies Hispanic would get Mrs. C on her side. What does she mean by this?
2. There are many paradoxes in the Traveler world. Come up with three examples from the book and explain why they are paradoxes.
3. Bridget differs from other characters in that she seems to be conflicted about some of the scams she is involved in. Find three instances where Bridget considers the victims in the crimes.
4. Jimmy and Patrick seem like opposites. First, consider their differences. Then, consider why they are still friends. What do they have in common?
5. When Bridget runs away she explains that she felt like laughing and screaming at the same time. Screaming, Im free! What does she feel shes free from? And why does she then get in the car with Jared?
6. Why do Douglas and Big Jim have such a contentious relationship?
7. Why does Jimmy tell Bridget not to talk about what happened with Jared?
8. Is it surprising that religion is important to Bridgets family, even Big Jim? Explain why or why not.
9. When Bridget questions Patrick about why it is acceptable to swindle people like Todd and Lizzy Patrick explains that he just doesnt think about it. Do you think hes telling the truth? How do Travelers like Patrick justify their crimes to themselves? Do they have to?
10. Why is Bridgets mother so concerned with Jimmy? Why does she always seem to be less concerned with Bridget?
11. In the end Jimmy says he feels he has to leave. Does he have to? What do you imagine would happen if he stayed?
12. Why did Bridget decide to stay in the end? What factors may have contributed to her decision? Was it the right decision?
13. What would you have done in Bridgets situation? Would you have stayed or gone to Winnies?

Longer Writing Exercises or Essays

1. Pick one of the characters in the book and write a journal entry describing one day in his/her life.
2. Imagine if Bridget had left. What would her experience of Country life be? Would she fit in easily? What might be hard for her to get used to?
3. Describe a moral dilemma you have faced in your life and how you handled it. What was the outcome? If faced with the same situation again would you act differently? Explain why or why not.
4. As readers, can we sympathize with characters in the book, even though they are essentially criminals? Do you think the author intends us to sympathize with them? Why, or why not? What do you think the overall message is about the line of demarcation between good and bad, and right and wrong, in our society?
5. Whether or not you agreed with Bridgets choice to stay, explore what you feel this ending means in the greater context of the book. What might it say about justice, family, and personal strength?