



“The book that finally answers that age-old question: what if you were a castaway thrown up on the shores of your own life.”

—Tim Wynne-Jones, winner of the Boston-Globe Horn Book Award for *Blink & Caution*

ABOUT THE BOOK

Set in a small island beach town, this is the story of a teenage girl who weathers a devastating super storm and must confront both the terrible aftermath of the storm and the truth about her family’s past.

Gripping and poetic, *This Is the Story of You* is about the beauty of nature and the power of family, about finding hope in the wake of tragedy, and recovery in the face of overwhelming loss. A compelling literary YA novel by Beth Kephart, the author of *Going Over* and *One Thing Stolen*.

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978-1-4521-4652-2 · \$13.99 E-Book

AGES 14 AND UP · F&F TEXT LEVEL GRADIENT: Z+ · LEXILE® MEASURE: 850L

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This teacher guide contains discussion questions and activities aligned with the Common Core State Standards. See inside for reference to the Reading and Writing strands and grade-specific standards.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Before introducing the book, set the context by assigning a research project on a major recent storm.

Encourage students to research the development of hurricanes, and their impact on actual communities.

- View news coverage clips on YouTube. The *Wall Street Journal* has several classroom-friendly clips that may be of interest to the students.
- Have students identify one compelling image that captures the gist of a recent hurricane for them, and share with their classmates.
- Ask students to “adopt” one of the following communities that was deeply affected by Hurricane Sandy, one of the most powerful recent storms to strike the East Coast:

Seaside Heights, NJ

Atlantic City, NJ

Mantoloking, NJ

Breezy Point, Queens, NY

Red Hook, Brooklyn, NY

Direct students to locate photos of their adopted community prior to 2012 and to identify a feature article from a local newspaper that offers a glimpse into daily life before Hurricane Sandy hit.

Ask the class to share what they’ve learned about their adopted communities. Circle back to this assignment after reading the novel and have students find photos and articles that represent daily life in their adopted community one year after the hurricane. What is each town’s status a year later? What seems to have “returned to normal”? What is still in progress? What might never be the same?

Correlates to CCSS RL.2-3.1, SL.2-3.1, L.2-3, W.2-3.1.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

After finishing the book, discuss the following topics and questions with the class and ask students to share their answers:

1. What is one adjective that you would use to describe Mira? Deni? Eva? How are Deni and Eva foils to Mira, the novel’s protagonist? What roles do each of them play in their friendship?
2. Mira explains early on in the novel, “Knowing the names of things is one small defense against the sad facts of reality” (7). What does she mean by this? Identify three examples of Mira naming things in the novel. In each of these cases, how does knowing a name act as a defense against reality?

3. Ms. Isabel reads a passage from Elizabeth Kolbert’s book *The Sixth Extinction*, including the following quotation: “With the capacity to represent the world in signs and symbols comes the capacity to change it, which, as it happens, is also the capacity to destroy it”. What are some of the many ways humans “represent the world in signs and symbols”? How does this immediately lead to the ability to change it?
4. Who is Old Carmen, and what does Mira know about her at the beginning of the novel? What doesn’t Mira know about her? How is this significant to Carmen’s role later in the story?
5. Foreshadowing is a literary device that an author uses in order to hint at what’s to come later in the novel. List several examples of foreshadowing that you notice in the first five chapters of the novel. What mood or tone does the author set by using foreshadowing? What do you predict will happen?
6. What role does Jasper Lee play in the novel? What is the relationship between his character and Hurricane Sandy?
7. While the majority of the action takes place in 2012, the author makes use of several flashbacks in the novel, such as in Part 1, Chapter 18. What does each flashback contribute to the development of the storyline?
8. In Part 2, Chapter 8, Mira discovers Jasper Lee’s paper birds and the stories that he has been writing. Read each of the stories aloud. Why do you think Jasper Lee has been collecting sand from around the world? What is the purpose of the stories he has been writing? Why does Mira react to the stories the way that she does?
9. Mira says, “Tragedy is a public thing. It is also a private condition” (166). Explain your understanding of this quotation.
10. Who is lost and who is found in this novel? What is lost, and what is gained and learned? Discuss how each of these tragedies and miracles is significant to the overall course of the narrative.
11. Describe a collection that you kept as a child. What were the items in your collection? What was the history of these items—where, when, and from whom did you get them? Why did you collect these things? Think about collections in this novel—who collects things, and why?
12. What does *This Is the Story of You* ultimately teach readers about survival?

Correlates to CCSS RL.9-12.1, 9-12.2, 9-12.3, 9-12.4, 9-12.5.

SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES

This Is the Story of You is a compelling fictional account of one girl and one coastal community's experience in the aftermath of a devastating hurricane. Consider teaching this novel as part of an interdisciplinary study involving environmentalism and weather studies. Use the books listed in the author's Acknowledgments as a starting point for researching hurricanes, global warming, and other related topics.

The character Jasper Lee is a brother, a poet, and a hero. He is also battling Hunter syndrome, a rare enzyme disease. Have students research more information about Hunter syndrome and other rare disorders at rarediseases.org, the official website of the National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD).

Correlates to CCSS W.9-12.7, 9-12.8.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Beth Kephart is the award-winning author of nineteen books for readers of all ages, including *You Are My Only*, *Small Damages*, *Handling the Truth: On the Writing of Memoir*, *Going Over*, and *One Thing Stolen*. She teaches creative nonfiction at the University of Pennsylvania.

ALSO BY BETH KEPHART



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