

2007

Weeks, Sarah. *So B. It: A Novel*. HarperCollins, 2004.

SUMMARY:

Heidi It is being raised by her neighbor, Bernadette (who suffers from agoraphobia, a fear of leaving home) and her mom, So B. It. Heidi says her mother has a “bum brain,” but in reality, her mother is mentally challenged with a vocabulary of 23 words.

Bernadette took in both females when Heidi was just a baby and they have become an unusual, yet loving family living in Reno, Nevada. Heidi has a lucky streak that comes in handy when money is tight, but this luck is not always a good thing. Heidi wonders about many things: when and where she was born; the identity of her father; and what does her mother mean when she says “soof” all the time. One day, while rummaging through a closet, Heidi finds an old camera and has the film inside developed. She recognizes her mom as a young woman at a location called Hilltop Place in Liberty, New York. After many unanswered phone calls, Heidi begins a journey to New York to find out about her mom and her own past. The people she meets and the discoveries she makes will change her life forever.

QUESTIONS:

According to the dictionary, what does the word “family” mean? What have you learned about the meaning of family as presented in this story?

Heidi says not knowing something doesn’t mean you’re stupid. All it means is there’s room left to wonder. What does she mean?

Can you understand Heidi’s need to know? Explain with examples from your own experiences.

What might have happened to Heidi, So B. It and Bernadette if they didn’t “fly under the radar”?

After Ruby cuts and styles Heidi’s hair, she says she looks like a different girl. Is it possible that the truth and not the haircut has made her a different girl?

JOURNAL STARTER:

If I were Heidi, I’d have chosen _____ to be my family, because.....

ACTIVITIES:

Like Bernadette, trace Heidi’s journey on a map. How many miles does she travel? What are some sites she could have seen along the way?

Locate some pictures of your ancestors.

Flip some coins and determine if you can predict heads or tails.

Make a listing of twenty-three words that are important to you.

Invite a mental health professional to speak about agoraphobia.

INTEREST LEVEL: Grades 6-8

BOOKTALK:

“I was going to Liberty to chase down a four-letter word....” (page 98). Armed with amazing luck and strong determination, twelve-year-old Heidi It leaves her mother and her neighbor who has helped raise her and travels across the United States in search of her history and the meaning of the four-letter word, “soof.”

READALIKES:

Giff, Patricia Reily. *Willow Run*. Wendy Lamb, 2005
Holt, Kimberly Willis. *My Louisiana Sky*. Henry Holt, 1998.
Konigsburg, E.L. *Silent to the Bone*. Atheneum, 2000.
Micaelson, Ben. *Petey*. Hyperion, 1998.
Peck, Richard. *The River Between Us*. Dial, 2003
Tolan, Stephanie. *Surviving the Applewhites*. HarperCollins, 2002
Wood, June Rae. *The Man Who Loved Clowns*. G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1992.

RELATED WEB SITES:

Sarah Weeks: <http://www.sarahweeks.com>

HarperCollins:

<http://www.harpercollinschildrens.com/HarperChildrens/Teachers/BookDetail.aspx?isbn13=9780066236230&BDMode=7>

Literature Circle Guide: http://teacher.scholastic.com/clubs/lit_circle_pdfs/sobit_t.pdf

William Allen White Children’s Book Award:

<http://www.emporia.edu/libsv/wawbookaward/masterlists/sobit.htm>

Suzy Red: <http://suzyred.com/2006sobit.html>

OTHER RECOGNITION:

Winner of a Children’s Choice Award in each of the following states:

Indiana, 2008; Kansas, 2007; Kentucky, 2006; Louisiana, 2007; South Carolina, 2007.