



Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.

Teacher's Guide
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Synopsis

Chapter 1

Margaret Simon, eleven years old, has just moved with her father Herb and her mother Barbara from New York City to Farbrook, New Jersey. Margaret suspects that her family has moved to the suburbs to put some distance between them and her father's mother, Sylvia Simon. Margaret is very fond of her grandmother. Margaret shares her worries and insecurities with God.

Chapter 2

The day that the Simons move in, Nancy Wheeler comes to call for Margaret. The two girls are the same age and will be in the same class. They discuss puberty and boys. Margaret is relieved that Nancy has not developed breasts either or kissed a boy on the lips. Nancy lends Margaret a bathing suit and the two girls go through the sprinkler together. Margaret meets Nancy's fourteen-year old brother Evan and his friend Moose Freed. Moose wants to cut the Simons' lawn, but Herb wants to do it himself.

Chapter 3

The next day, Herb buys a mower. He has a minor accident while mowing, the family goes to the hospital, and they hire Moose to mow the lawn. At the hospital, they are attended by Dr. Potter, who eagerly tells Margaret that his daughter Gretchen will also be in the sixth grade at Delano School. Margaret is shocked when Grandma Sylvia shows up at their door. She is laden with bags of New York deli food.

Chapter 4

Margaret starts school, not wearing socks because Nancy said that socks are not cool. The children are shocked that their teacher is a man, Miles J. Benedict Jr. He makes them fill out a questionnaire about themselves.

Chapter 5

Janie Loomis, Gretchen Potter, Nancy, and Margaret have formed a club, which they call Four PTS's. The club rules mandate that every member has to wear a bra. The girls are shocked when Margaret explains that she is being raised without a firm religious identity: her father is Jewish and her mother is Christian and Margaret is free to choose her own religion when she grows up. Janie is concerned that Margaret will not know whether to join the Y or the Jewish Community Center, a fear that Margaret picks up. That night, Margaret shares her concern about not having a bra with God.

Chapter 6

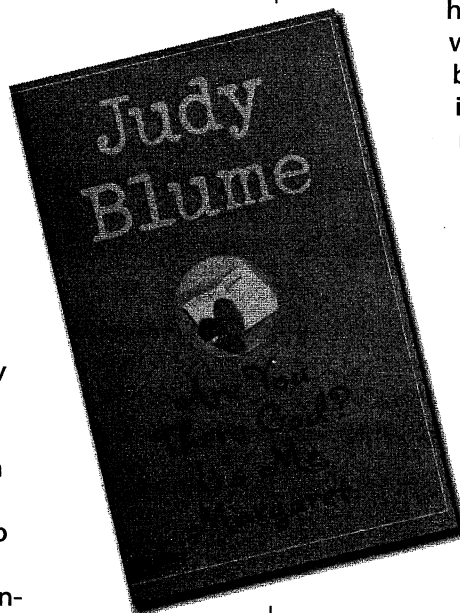
Margaret's mother takes her to get fitted for a bra. Margaret meets Janie also buying a bra at the store and both girls are embarrassed.

Chapter 7

Mr. Benedict gives the kids a project. At the club meeting, the girls discuss their bras. The girls rank the boys in their class by popularity, Philip Leroy ranking first. All the girls detest Laura Danker because she has developed. They spread cruel rumors about her being free with her sexual favors. The kids try to humiliate the teacher by not signing their test papers.

Chapter 8

The next day, Mr. Benedict returns the test papers with everyone's name written in, showing that the kids' joke did not work. Margaret decides to make choosing her religion her school project. Margaret meets Grandma Sylvia in New York City and asks



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her to take her to the Jewish temple. Grandma Sylvia, who is Jewish, is overjoyed at Margaret's request.

Chapter 9

Margaret and Grandma Sylvia attend Rosh Hashanah services. Margaret counts the number of hats that people are wearing. After the service, she meets the rabbi.

Chapter 10

Laura Danker attracts much notice when she wears a sweater to class. Margaret attends church with Janie Loomis. The principal announces the 6th grade will have a square dance. The dance is both stressful and fun. Margaret returns home to see her stay-at-home mother painting another of her innumerable still-life paintings.

Chapter 11

Gretchen borrows one of her father's medical books and the four girls look at naked men. Then Margaret takes one of her father's *Playboy* magazines and they stare at the model's breasts. They are astonished and envious of their size. The girls do exercises to increase their busts.

Chapter 12

Grandma Sylvia takes her annual cruise to the Caribbean. The school holds its holiday concert, some students refusing to sing the songs that are not part of their religious heritage.

Chapter 13

Margaret, along with the entire class, is invited to Norman Fishbein's dinner party. The preparation is elaborate and nerve-wracking. Margaret stuffs her bra.

Chapter 14

Although the kids are all dressed up, they are still very immature and throw the food around. Then they play kissing games, including "Spin the Bottle." Margaret kisses Philip and Norman.

Chapter 15

On Christmas Eve, Margaret attends Methodist services with the Wheelers. Margaret sees the movie about menstruation. A week later, Gretchen announces that she has gotten her period for the first time. Later, Margaret tells God how upset she is that she has not gotten her period yet. Nancy next announces that she has her period as well.

Chapter 16

In Florida, Grandma Sylvia has met a nice man, Mr. Binamin.

Chapter 17

Margaret spends the day in New York City with Nancy and her family. Nancy gets her period for the first time, revealing that she lied about having gotten it earlier.

Chapter 18

Margaret turns twelve. In school, the class forms new groups for the project on countries and Philip acts like an immature fool. One of the group members is Laura.

Chapter 19

Margaret meets Laura in the library, researching the class project. Margaret tells Laura that everyone knows she kisses Moose behind the A&P. Laura starts crying and denies it. Margaret realizes that Nancy made up the cruel story and apologizes, but the damage is done. Laura goes to confession at the Catholic Church. Margaret follows, but the church upsets her so much that she leaves.

Chapter 20

The Simons get a letter that Mary and Paul Hutchins, Barbara's parents, are coming for a visit. The Hutchins have not spoken to their daughter since she married a Jew. Barbara had contacted them via a Christmas card. The Hutchins announce they are coming for a visit and to meet Margaret.

Margaret is crushed when her parents say that she must stay home and cannot visit Grandma Sylvia in Florida, as planned. Margaret pours out her anguish to God.

Chapter 21

The Hutchins arrive and the visit goes very poorly. They are determined that Margaret become a Catholic, their religion.

Chapter 22

Margaret and Janie buy some sanitary napkins, just in case. Back at home, the Hutchins have decided to cut their week-long visit to one day and go to a hotel in New York City.

Chapter 23

Grandma Sylvia and Mr. Binamin show up. Sylvia reminds Margaret that Margaret is Jewish.

Margaret says that she is not and denies believing in God.

Chapter 24

Margaret turns in her project on religion. She explains that she did not enjoy the project and has not made up her mind about which religion to follow. She concludes that twelve is too late to adopt a religion.

Chapter 25

At the 6th grade farewell party, the class presents Mr. Benedict with a gift. Margaret tells Moose that she does not believe he kissed Laura. Moose is astonished that she would even believe the rumor. Margaret finally gets her period. She thanks God for it.

Timeline

- 1938 Judy Blume born
- 1941 December 7, America enters World War II
- 1948 State of Israel founded
- 1950 Korean War begins
- 1952 Elizabeth II crowned Queen of England
Car seat belts introduced
Polio vaccine invented
- 1954 Supreme Court issues Brown v. Board of Education, making segregation illegal
- 1955 Disneyland opens
McDonald's corporation founded
- 1956 Sabin invents oral polio vaccine
- 1957 Dr. Seuss publishes *The Cat in the Hat*
- 1958 NASA established
- 1960 First televised U.S. presidential debate

- 1961 Peace Corps founded
Berlin Wall built
Alan Shepard is first American in space
Judy Blume graduates from college
- 1963 President Kennedy assassinated
- 1967 First Super Bowl
First heart transplant
Six Day War in Middle East
- 1969 Neil Armstrong is the first human on the moon
- 1970 *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* published
- 1974 President Nixon resigns
- 1979 Sony introduces the Walkman
- 1981 First woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court
Pac-man video game is very popular
Judy Blume establishes the KIDS Fund
- 1983 Sally Ride becomes first woman in space
- 1989 Berlin Wall taken down
- 1990 Nelson Mandella is freed in South Africa
- 1991 Collapse of Soviet Union
- 1997 Scientists clone sheep

Author Sketch

Judy Sussman Blume was born in Elizabeth, NJ, in 1938. Her father was a dentist. She earned her B.S. from New York University in 1961. While still in college, Blume married John Blume, a lawyer. The couple had a son and a daughter and divorced in 1975. Blume has married two more times. She is currently married to her third husband, writer George Cooper.



Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. Judy Blume

Many of Blume's books, such as *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, reflect Blume's interest in sexuality. When she first began writing, she "knew intuitively what kids wanted to know because I remembered what I wanted to know," she explained to John Neary of *People Weekly*. "I think I write about sexuality because it was uppermost in my mind when I was a kid: the need to know, and not knowing how to find out. My father delivered these little lectures to me, the last one when I was ten, on how babies are made. But questions about what I was feeling, and how my body could feel, I never asked my parents."

Some people are disturbed by Blume's treatment of mature issues and her use of frank language. "Menstruation, wet dreams, masturbation, all the things that are whispered about in real school halls" are the subjects of Blume's books, related interviewer Sandy Rovner in the *Washington Post*. As a result, Blume's works have frequently been the targets of censorship, and Blume has become an active crusader for freedom of expression. She has answers to those who would censor her work for its explicitness. "The way to instill values in children is to talk about difficult issues and bring them out in the open, not to restrict their access to books that may help them deal with their problems and concerns," she said in a *Toronto Globe and Mail* interview.

Blume is concerned that by focusing on the sensational issues, people miss the point of her novels. As she explained in an interview: "What I worry about is that an awful lot of people, looking at my example, have gotten the idea that what sells is teenage sex, and they'll exploit it. I don't believe that sex is why kids like my books. The impression I get, from letter after letter, is that a great many kids don't communicate with their parents. They feel alone in the world. Sometimes, reading books that deal with other kids who feel the same things they do, it makes them feel less alone."

Blume feels so strongly about the lack of communication between children and their parents that she used the royalties from *Letters to Judy*, among other projects, to help finance the KIDS Fund, which she established in 1981. Each year, the fund contributes approximately \$45,000 to various non-profit organizations set up to help young people communicate with their parents.

Critic's Corner

Judy Blume has received numerous awards, including Children's Choice Awards in 27 states, Australia, England, and Germany. Over 50 million copies of her books are in print and her stories have been translated into 14 languages. *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* was Blume's breakout novel that brought her widespread fame. The amazon.com reviewer noted that "Judy Blume and her character Margaret Simon were the first to say out loud (and in a book even) that it is normal for girls to wonder when they are ever going to fill out their training bras."

"With sensitivity and humor Judy Blume has captured the joys, fears, and uncertainty that surround a young girl approaching adolescence," *Publishers Weekly* said about *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*.

Other Books by Judy Blume

The One in the Middle Is the Green Kangaroo (1981)
Iggie's House (1970)
Then Again Maybe I Won't (1971)
Freckle Juice (1971)
Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing (1972)
Otherwise Known As Sheila the Great (1972)
It's Not the End of the World (1972)
Deenie (1973)
Blubber (1974)
Forever (1975)
Starring Sally J. Freedman As Herself (1977)
Wifey (1977)
Superfudge (1980)
Tiger Eyes (1981)
The Judy Blume Diary (1981)
The Pain and the Great One (1984)
Smart Women (1984)
Letters to Judy: What Your Kids Wish They Could Tell You (1986)
Just As Long As We're Together (1987)
The Judy Blume Memory Book (1988)
Summer Sisters (1998)
Fudge-a-Mania (1990)
Here's to You Rachel Robinson (1993)
Double Fudge (2002)

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Books

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American Writers for Children since 1960: Fiction, Gale (Detroit, MI), 1986.
- Fisher, Emma, and Justin Wintle, *The Pied Pipers*, Paddington Press, 1975.
- Gleasner, Diana, *Breakthrough: Women in Writing*, Walker, 1980.
- Lee, Betsey, *Judy Blume's Story*, Dillon Press, 1981.
- Rees, David, *The Marble in the Water: Essays on Contemporary Writers of Fiction for Children and Young Adults*, Horn Book (Boston, MA), 1980, pp. 173-184.
- Weidt, Maryann, *Presenting Judy Blume*, Twayne (New York, NY), 1989.
- Wheeler, Jill C., *Judy Blume, Abdo and Daughters* (Edina, MN), 1996.

Periodicals

- Boston Globe*, January 30, 1971.
- Chicago Tribune*, September 24, 1978; March 15, 1985.
- Christian Science Monitor*, May 14, 1979; March 14, 1984.
- Commentary*, March, 1980.
- Commonweal*, July 4, 1980.
- Detroit Free Press*, February 26, 1984.
- Detroit News*, February 15, 1985.
- Detroit News Magazine*, February 4, 1979.
- English Journal*, September, 1972; March, 1976.
- Five Owls*, November-December, 1993, pp 37-38.
- Lion and the Unicorn*, fall, 1978, R. A. Siegal, "Are You There, God? It's Me, Me, Me: Judy Blume's Self-Absorbed Narrators," pp. 72-77.
- Los Angeles Times*, December 26, 1987.
- Los Angeles Times Book Review*, October 5, 1980; August 31, 1986.
- Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, May, 1981.
- New Yorker*, December 5, 1983; December 13, 1993, p. 116-7.
- New York Times*, October 3, 1982; February 21, 1984.
- People Weekly*, October 16, 1978; August 16, 1982; March 19, 1984

General Objectives

1. To analyze the novel's title
2. To understand how Margaret feels about moving to the suburbs
3. To analyze the role of religious identity in a child's life
4. To recognize the novel's theme
5. To describe the novel's plot
6. To sympathize with Margaret's worries about puberty
7. To explore why Margaret has monologues with God
8. To explore the ways that kindness can be shown
9. To relish the author's use of humor
10. To understand the family strife over religion

Specific Objectives

1. To probe Margaret's relationship to her parents
2. To analyze why Margaret feels so close to her grandmother
3. To compare and contrast life in New York City and New Jersey
4. To analyze the novel's subtle concern with anti-Semitism
5. To think about why Margaret wants to menstruate so badly
6. To explore why Barbara Simon sends a holiday card to her parents
7. To appreciate the importance of fitting in to teenagers
8. To analyze the role that God plays in Margaret's life
9. To decide whether someone can have a relationship with God without formal religion
10. To identify with Margaret and her friends

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Judy Blume's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

humor parts of a story that are funny. Blume incorporates subtle touches of humor in *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. For example, on page 69, it is humorous that the girls stop using their secret names because they can't keep them straight. It is also humorous (in this same chapter)

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when the girls sneak a look at naked men in an anatomy book. They are appalled at what they see!

irony occurs when something happens that is different from what was expected. In verbal irony, there is a contrast between what is stated and what is suggested. In dramatic irony, there is a contrast between what a character believes and what the audience knows is true. In irony of situation, an event reverses what the readers or characters expected. Blume uses irony of situation because readers do not expect that Nancy Wheeler lied about getting her period. They also do not expect that cool Nancy would be so hysterical about the occurrence.

dialogue the conversation in fiction or drama. It is the exact words a character says. In a story or novel, quotation marks are used to point out the dialogue. One of the key elements in *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* is the dialogue that Margaret has with God. Blume sets off Margaret's direct words with italics rather than quotation marks to indicate that they take place in Margaret's mind rather than being expressed out loud.

The Importance of Setting

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret is set in the mythical suburb of Farbrook, New Jersey. Blume chose to set her novel in a New Jersey suburb for two reasons: location and affluence. New Jersey borders New York, which allows Blume to have Margaret and her grandmother access culture. They attend concerts at Lincoln Center, for instance. This telegraphs the family's interest in culture and their prosperity. It suggests to readers that the Simons are educated, members of the upper-middle class. This is reinforced by the fact that New Jersey is the second richest state in America, with a per capita income of \$27,006 (2000) and a personal per capita income of \$40,427 (2003). Its median household income is \$55,146 (2000), ranked first in the country, and its median family income is \$65,370 (2000), the second highest in the country. Often rivaled with Connecticut, the richest state, in terms of wealth, New Jersey's close proximity to the metropolitan giants of New York City and Philadelphia greatly influences its wealth. A vast majority of the state consists of suburbs of these two cities, an explanation for much of the state's high incomes.

Approximately 76% of New Jersey townships have per capita incomes above the national average, and only about 8.5% of the population lives below the poverty line. Northern New Jersey (where Blume set her mythical "Farbrook") is part of the New York Metropolitan Area. It is by far the wealthiest area of New Jersey. It lies in the middle of a wealth corridor that runs from the suburbs of Washington, DC all the way into southern New Hampshire.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Novels

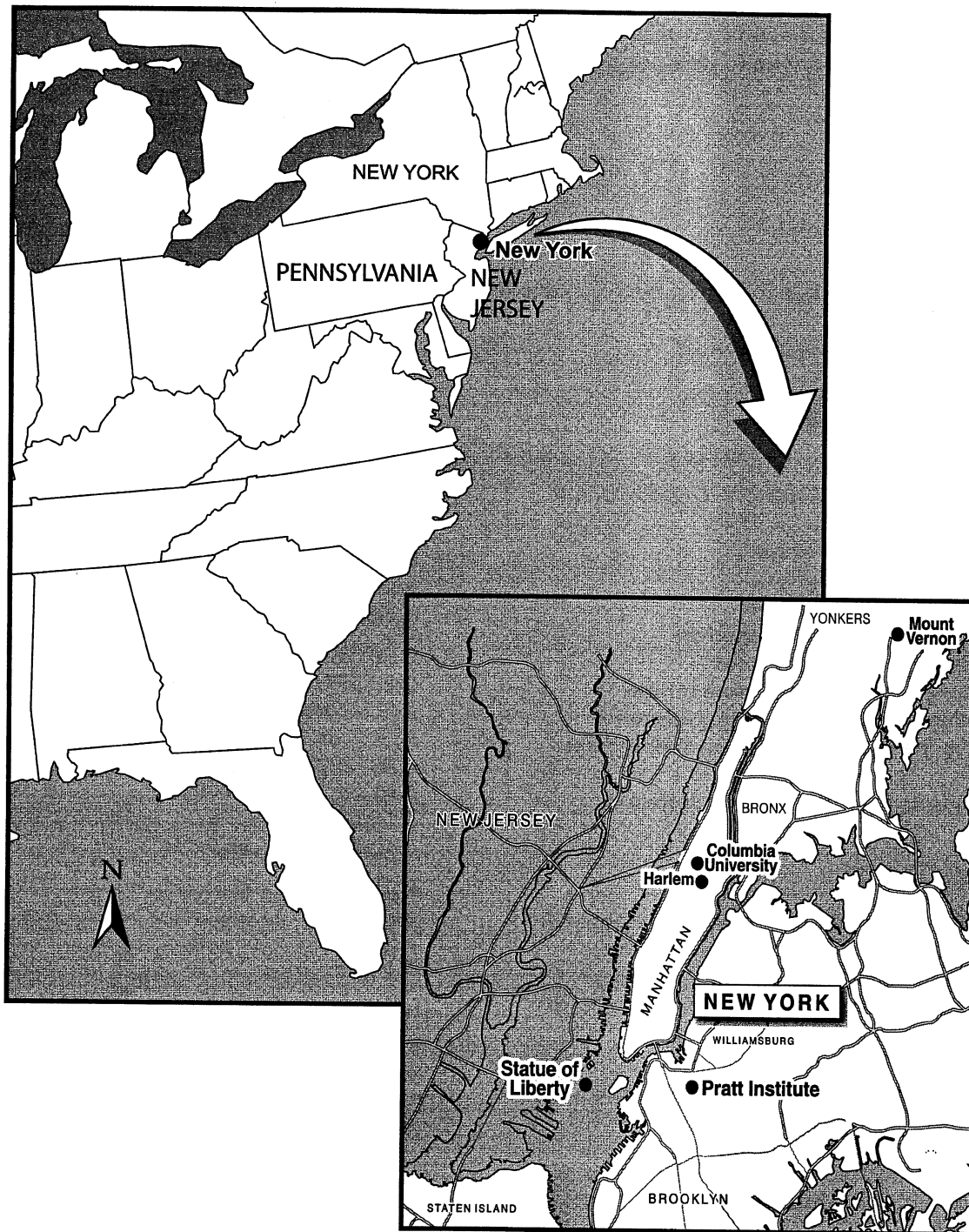
Laurie Halse Anderson, *Prom*
Avi, *The Secret School*
Ann Brashares, *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*
Meg Cabot, *Teen Idol*
Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
Julie Dannenberg, *First Day Jitters*
Kate Dicamillo, *Because of Winn-Dixie*
Lisi Harrison, *The Clique*
Gordon Korman, *No More Dead Dogs*
Patricia Reilly Giff, *Pictures of Hollis Woods*
Carl Hiasen, *Hoot*
Barbara Park, *Skinny Bones*
Louise Rennison, *Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging*, *Confessions of Georgia Nicholson*
Stephanie Tolan, *Surviving the Applewhites*
Jerry Spinelli, *Loser*
Jerry Spinelli, *Stargirl*

Audio/Media

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret (read by Laura Hamilton)
Forever was adapted as a television film, 1978
Freckle Juice was adapted as an animated film (1987)

DVDs and Videos

Blazing Saddles (1974)
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2004)
High Anxiety (1977)
History of the World (1981)
Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004)
The Producers (1968)



Internet

Official Judy Blume Web site
<http://www.judyblume.com/>

Judy Blume

[www2lhric.org/pocantico/womenenc/
blume.html](http://www2lhric.org/pocantico/womenenc/blume.html)

Kidsread.com- Judy Blume

www.kidsread.com/authors/au-blume-judy.asp

Authors Online Biography: Judy Blume

www2.scholastic.com/

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Judy Blume's *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* should include these aspects:

Themes

- menstruation
- puberty
- God
- religion
- family strife
- relocation
- humor
- anti-Semitism
- grandparents
- religious stereotypes

Motifs

- dealing with the changes in your body that come with puberty
- coping with peer pressure
- trying to find a religion
- dealing with grandparents
- dealing with subtle anti-Semitism
- moving to a new environment
- spreading rumors and harming others
- benefiting from a generous grandmother
- enjoying the cultural resources of New York City
- using God as an outlet for your feelings

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. Are you there God? It's me, Margaret. We're moving today. I'm so scared God. (Chap. 1, p. 1)
(Although raised without formal religion, inter-faith Margaret Simon has a deeply personal relationship with God. God has become her sounding board and closest confidant as she navigates the move from New York City to New Jersey and the concurrent difficulties of puberty. This underscores the highly personal nature of a person's relationship to God.)

2. She was taller than me and had bouncy hair. The kind I'm hoping to grow. Her nose turned up so much I could look right into her nostrils. (Chap. 2, p. 4)
(In this subtle passage, Blume alludes to the difference between the WASP look and the stereotypical Jewish look. Margaret is enthralled by Nancy's bouncy hair and her upturned nose, in contrast to what we can assume is Margaret's curly hair and her straight nose. It is a clever way to introduce the family's religious differences and the strife between Margaret's parents and her maternal grandparents.)
3. Nancy's rule was, we all had to wear bras. (Chap. 6, p. 33)
*(Today, books dealing openly with puberty, menstruation, bras, pubic hair, and related personal concerns are routine. This was not the case when *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* was published in 1970. These topics were considered very shocking at the time. In part, this explains why the novel was Blume's breakout book.)*
4. "They eloped." (Chap. 5, p. 35)
(Margaret explains that her maternal grandparents, Catholics, did not accept her father, a Jew. As a result, her parents eloped. Margaret has never met these grandparents because they refuse to have anything to do with their daughter and her family. This incident shows religious strife within families.)
5. Then he kissed me. (Chap. 14, p. 92)
(Margaret is delighted when the most handsome boy in class, Philip Leroy, kisses her. Later, she discovers that he is an immature jerk, but for this moment, she is delighted.)
6. "They want to see you, not me! They want to see Margaret! To make sure she doesn't have horns!" (Chap. 20, p. 121)
(Livid over his in-laws' anti-Semitism, Herb Simon rages that his wife's parents have decided to acknowledge the marriage and Margaret after fourteen years. His suspicion that they are anti-Semitic proves to be correct.)
7. "Their beliefs were that important to them. Am I making any sense to you?" (Chap. 21, p. 128)

(Margaret's mother Barbara tries to explain why her parents did not support her marriage to a Jew. This passage shows the strength of a person's beliefs and how those beliefs—especially religious ones—can tear a family apart if people are not flexible.)

8. "Nonsense," Grandmother said. "A person doesn't choose religion." "A person's born into it!" Grandfather boomed. (Chap. 21, p. 133)
(This exchange summarizes the differences between the Simons, who want Margaret to choose her own religion when she is mature, and Barbara's parents, who do not believe that religion is a matter of choice. It is a gulf that cannot be bridged in the novel.)
9. "Just remember, Margaret...no matter what they said...you're a Jewish girl." (Chap. 23, p. 140)
(Margaret's beloved Grandma Sylvia proves no different from her intolerant Catholic counterparts on the other side of the family: she considers Margaret to be Jewish. The novel suggests that religious compromise rarely succeeds.)
10. There was blood on them. (Chap. 25, p. 147)
(At the end of the novel, Margaret gets her period, to her great delight and relief.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. Why have Margaret and her family moved from New York City to Farbrook, New Jersey?
(They want to see less of Herb's assertive mother, Sylvia.)
2. Why does Herb Simon go to the hospital?
(He injures himself while mowing the lawn because he does not know what he is doing.)
3. Who is Philip and why does Margaret like him?
(He is one of Margaret's classmates. She likes him because he is handsome and all the other girls admire him.)
4. What subject does Margaret choose for her independent project? What is her conclusion, if any?

(She does a year-long experiment in religion. She does not come to any conclusion about what religion she wants to be when she grows up—if she wants any religion at all.)

5. What does Margaret thank God for at the end of the book?
(She thanks God for being there for her.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. Why has Barbara Simon sent a holiday card to her parents after fourteen years?
(It seems likely that she misses them and wants to show them how well her family has turned out, despite her parents' prejudice and anti-Semitism.)
7. Why do Margaret's parents want her to choose her own religion?
(Perhaps they feel this is the most fair way; perhaps they do not want to impose their own belief system on her; perhaps they are too afraid of asserting their own religious beliefs and upsetting the underpinnings of their marriage.)
8. Explain what role God fulfills in Margaret's life.
(God serves as touchstone and a sounding board. Margaret tells God her innermost secrets and concerns.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. What parts of the novel did you find humorous? In what ways?
(The interplay between Sylvia Simon and her son and daughter-in-law is humorous. So are some of the silly tricks the kids play on their teacher, Miles Benedict, and how he gets the upper hand.)
10. The novel was considered very shocking when it was first published in 1970. Explain why.
(The frank discussion of menstruation, public hair, religion, and sex was all shocking because none of these subjects was discussed openly, much less written about in young adult novels.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Describe how you would resolve the family strife over religion between the Simons and the Hutchins.
12. Working with a small group of classmates, role-play a dialogue between Margaret and Moose in which they discuss their feelings for each other.

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Across the Curriculum

Art/Music

1. Grandma Sylvia knits sweaters for Margaret. Design a sweater that you would like someone to knit for you.
2. This book was published first in 1970. Make a sketchbook of the 1970s fashions for boys and girls your age. See what you would be wearing if you lived back then.
3. Working with three classmates, learn to square dance. Demonstrate some steps with your group.
4. Learn a holiday song to share with your class. Choose one from your own heritage or any religion that interests you.
5. Make a model of Lincoln Center in New York City.

Language Arts

1. Judy Blume was the first to write that it is normal for girls to wonder when they are ever going to go through puberty. List at least five concerns that pre-teens have about the changes they undergo at puberty. Rank these concerns from most to least common.
2. Complete the questionnaire that Mr. Benedict gives to his students on the first day of class.
3. Do a major project on a subject that interests you, as Mr. Benedict assigns to his students.
4. Writing as Nancy, explain why you tell nasty lies about Laura Danker.
5. Describing the writing of this novel, Blume says: "For the first time since I'd started writing, I let go and this story came pouring out. I knew Margaret. When I was in sixth grade, I longed to develop physically like my classmates. I tried doing exercises, resorted to stuffing my bra, and lied about getting my period... And like Margaret, I had a very personal relationship with God that had little to do with organized religion. God was my friend and confidant." Write a journal entry that Judy Blume might have written at Margaret's age.

Social Studies/Geography

1. Explain the major beliefs of Catholicism.
2. Margaret and her Grandma Sylvia attend Rosh Hashanah services together. Explain what this holiday and Yom Kippur symbolize for Jewish people.
3. Margaret and her Grandma Sylvia attend events at Lincoln Center. Access the Lincoln

Center web page and print out the programs for the rest of the year. Choose two that you would like to attend and write a brief explanation of your choices.

4. Report on the major Catholic holidays. Explain what each one signifies. Include at least two holidays.
5. Prepare a report on a country, as Margaret and her classmates are assigned.

Speech/Debate

1. In a roundtable discussion, discuss the advantages of having a grandparent actively involved in your life.
2. Enact the scene in which Mr. and Mrs. Simon tell Margaret that she cannot visit her Grandma Sylvia in Miami.
3. Debate whether or not children should be allowed to choose their own religion.
4. Role-play a scene in which Laura confronts Nancy about Nancy's lies.
5. Working with some friends, create your own club. Decide on a name, purpose, and various rituals.

Science/Math

1. Explain the difference between the year as calculated on the Jewish calendar and the Gregorian calendar.
2. Make a chart showing the major world religions and the number of people who identify themselves as members of each one.
3. Calculate how much a round-trip airplane ticket from your home to Miami, Florida, would cost.
4. Make a visual display comparing the average age of puberty for boys and girls in 1970 and today.
5. Learn about the different hormones that cause puberty in boys and in girls.

Alternate Assessment

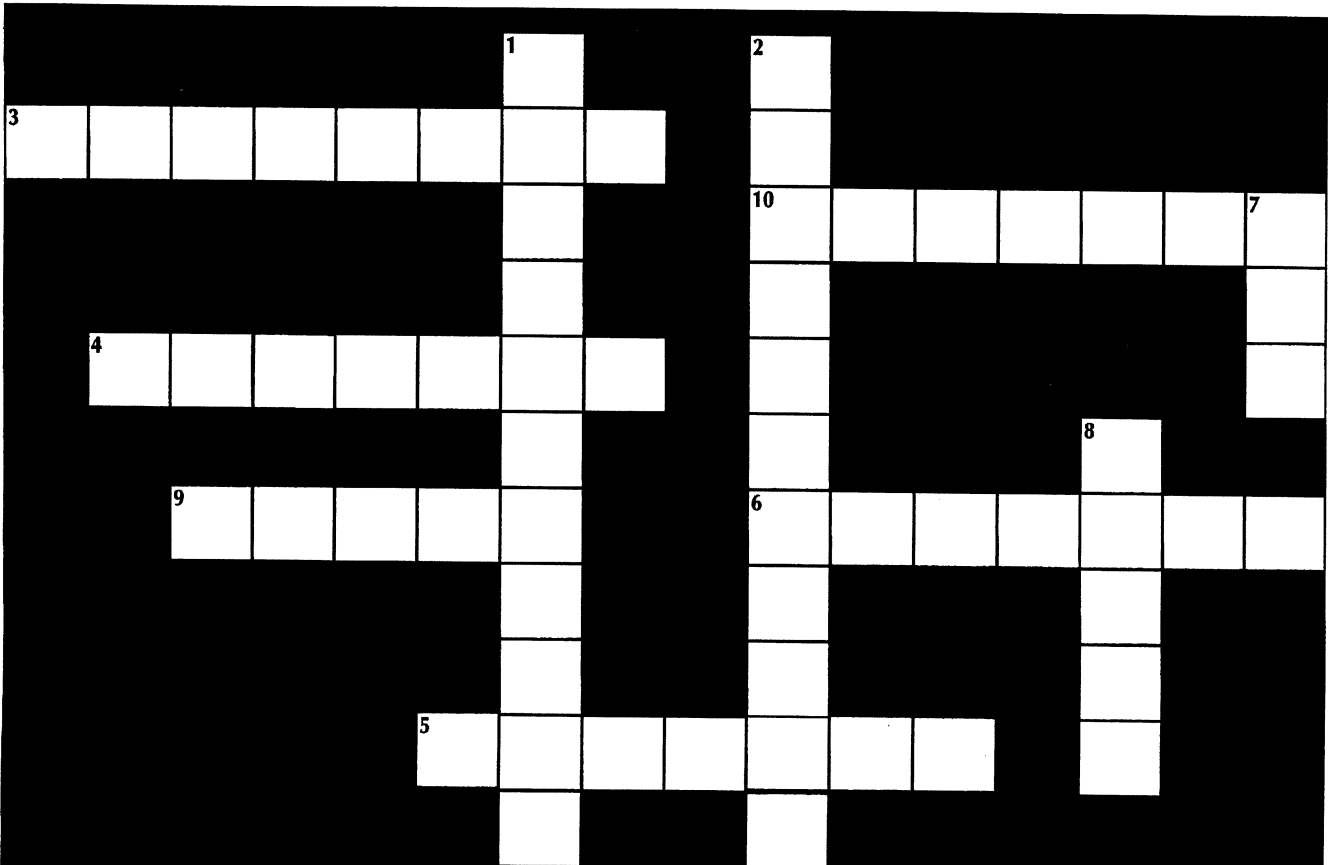
1. Write a character sketch for Margaret.
2. Imagine what life is like for Margaret a decade in the future. Working with some classmates, perform a skit in which you show how things have changed for her.
3. Read another novel by Judy Blume and compare and contrast it to *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*.
4. Create a scale model of Margaret's neighborhood.

Vocabulary

Complete the crossword puzzle with the following words from *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*.

Word Bank

tuition	linen	fanatic	expelled	impractical
posture	prude	pageant	sentimental	elf



Across

- 3. thrown out
- 4. enthusiastic supporter
- 5. celebration
- 9. prig
- 10. the way you stand

Down

- 1. romantic
- 2. unrealistic
- 6. money paid for college classes
- 7. mythical character
- 8. fabric

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match each description with a name from the list. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| A. Herb Simon | F. Rabbi Kellerman |
| B. Margaret | G. Philip Leroy |
| C. Grandma Sylvia | H. Grandma Hutchins |
| D. Nancy Wheeler | I. Miles Benedict |
| E. Moose Freed | J. Mr. Binamin |

- ___ 1. Margaret's paternal grandmother, the grandmother on her father's side
- ___ 2. Margaret's maternal grandmother, the grandmother on her mother's side
- ___ 3. Grandma Sylvia's boyfriend
- ___ 4. The spiritual leader of Grandma Sylvia's synagogue
- ___ 5. The girl who comes over to meet Margaret when Margaret first moves in
- ___ 6. Margaret's father
- ___ 7. Margaret's teacher
- ___ 8. The boy who mows the Simons' lawn
- ___ 9. The handsome boy in Margaret's class whom all the girls like
- ___ 10. The girl who sends messages to God

Part II: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the term that best completes each of the following statements.

- 1. The Simons move from New York City to (**Teaneck, Farbrook**), New Jersey.
- 2. Margaret attends the (**Delano, Harwood**) School.
- 3. Grandma Sylvia brings (**flowers, food**) when she comes to visit.
- 4. Margaret does not wear (**a belt, socks**) the first day of school because she wants to seem fashionable.
- 5. Janie Loomis, Gretchen Potter, Nancy, and Margaret have formed a club, which they call Four (**Tops, PTS's**).
- 6. The club rules mandate that every member has to wear a (**bra, sneakers**).
- 7. Margaret decides to choose her (**middle name, religion**) as her school project.
- 8. The principal announces the entire sixth grade will have a (**field trip, square dance**).
- 9. Margaret's mother spends a lot of her spare time (**playing tennis, painting pictures**).
- 10. Margaret and Janie buy some (**mouth wash, sanitary napkins**), just in case.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if a part is false.

- ___ 1. When the story opens, neither Margaret nor Nancy has developed breasts or kissed a boy on the lips.
- ___ 2. Margaret and her friends are in the 8th grade.
- ___ 3. The children are astonished that their teacher is a man.
- ___ 4. The girls are shocked when Margaret explains that she is being raised without a firm religious identity.
- ___ 5. Margaret's mother is Jewish and her father is Hindu.
- ___ 6. The kids try to humiliate the teacher by not signing their test papers.
- ___ 7. Gretchen Potter attracts much notice when she wears a sweater to class.
- ___ 8. When the children put on their holiday concert, some students refuse to sing the songs that are not part of their religious heritage.
- ___ 9. At Norman's party, Margaret refuses to play any of the kissing games and bursts into tears.
- ___ 10. Margaret decides that she wants to be Catholic.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Argue that children should or should not be allowed to chose their own religion.
- 2. Summarize the plot (story line) of *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*.
- 3. Describe what you learned about religion from this novel.
- 4. Compare and contrast the two grandmothers described in the novel. How are they the same and different?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Motivation (20 points)

Write a reason or motivation to complete each sentence.

1. Margaret and her parents move to New Jersey because
2. Margaret talks to God because
3. Herb only mows his lawn once because
4. The girls mock Laura because
5. Margaret does not have a religion because
6. Margaret gets a bra because
7. Grandma Sylvia is overjoyed at Margaret's request to attend synagogue because
8. At the holiday concert, some children refuse to sing the songs because
9. The guests misbehave at Norman Fishbein's dinner party because
10. Margaret is not allowed to visit Grandma Sylvia in Miami because

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each person, place, or thing and explain why it is important in the story.

1. bras
2. Boy Book
3. Private Lady
4. holiday card
5. Spin the Bottle

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left. Use each name only once.

- _____ 1. Margaret's mother
A.
Nancy Wheeler
- _____ 2. The Jewish spiritual leader
B.
Grandma Sylvia
- _____ 3. The girl rumored to kiss Moose behind the A&P
C.
Miles Benedict.
- _____ 4. Margaret's Jewish grandmother
D.
Margaret
- _____ 5. The boy who mows lawns
E.
Grandma Hutchins
- _____ 6. Grandma Sylvia's boyfriend
F.
Rabbi Kellerman
- _____ 7. The eleven-year-old narrator
G.
Barbara Simon
- _____ 8. The girl who starts the club and spreads rumors
H.

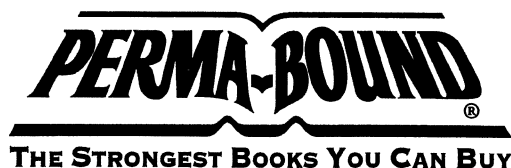
Laura Danker

- _____ 9. Margaret's Catholic grandmother
I.
Moose Freed
- _____ 10. Margaret's teacher
J.
Mr. Binamin

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain why *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* was considered so shocking when Judy Blume published it in 1970. Does it still have the ability to shock? Why or why not?
2. Compare and contrast your life to Margaret's. How is it the same and different?
3. Explain the conflict between the Simon and Hutchins families. Give them some advice for resolving it.
4. Analyze how the story would be different if told from a different point of view.



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