



Walk Two Moons

by Sharon Creech

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

Thirteen-year-old Salamanca (called "Sal") Tree Hiddle's mother disappeared about a year ago. Subsequently, her father moved Sal and himself from Bybanks, Kentucky, to Euclid, Ohio. There, her father is friends with a woman named Margaret Cadaver. Sal doesn't like Margaret at all.

Chapter 2

Sal's grandparents, Gram and Gramps, come up with a plan to take Sal on a 2,000 mile trip from Ohio to Idaho, the same trip her mother had taken a year ago. Sal's mother never returned, although she promised to be back by the time the tulips bloomed. Sal's mother's birthday is seven days away, and Sal desperately wants to reach their destination by then. To pass the time while they are driving, Sal tells a story about a friend named Phoebe Winterbottom, whose mother also vanished and who received secret messages after her disappearance.

Chapter 3

Sal and her father tour their new, tiny home. Sal is very disappointed not only because the house is so small but also because it lacks trees and land. Sal meets Phoebe Winterbottom, a high-strung girl her own age who has few friends. Sal explains that her mother's real name, her Native American name, is Chanhassen, but everyone called her "Sugar."

Chapter 4

Margaret Cadaver had helped Sal's father find a job selling farm machinery. Mrs. Cadaver lives with her mother, Mrs. Partridge, who is blind. Phoebe is terrified of Margaret because her last name is "Cadaver" and

Chapter 5

Gramps, trying to help a woman on their journey, "repairs" her car, leaving it in worse shape than he found it.

Chapter 6

Sal has dinner at the Winterbottoms' house and discovers that Mrs. Winterbottom is not happy. A high-strung perfectionist, she derives little pleasure from being a homemaker. The family acts very tidy and respectable but Sal realizes their despair. Phoebe is convinced that Margaret murdered her husband and buried him in the back yard. She recalls her mother being upset because her father is so thoughtful and kind. Sugar didn't feel that she could live up to his kindness.

Chapter 7

Gram and Gramps are very loving and affectionate with each other and with Sal; they clearly have a close and loving marriage, in contrast to the Winterbottoms. Their next stop on their journey is the Black Hills.

Chapter 8

Sal and Phoebe are at Phoebe's house one Saturday, alone, when a young man appears at the door, asking for Mrs. Winterbottom. Phoebe, beset by fears, is convinced that the young man is a lunatic and

refuses to let him in, although he appears perfectly harmless. Upset, the young man leaves.

Chapter 9

Sal and Phoebe visit Mary Lou Finney. In contrast to Sal's sad father and the strained relationship with the Winterbottoms, Mr. and Mrs. Finney are openly affectionate. It appears that Mary Lou's handsome cousin Ben likes Sal; he kisses her on the collarbone. Phoebe is baffled when she tells her mother about the strange young man who came to the door and her mother wants to keep the visit a secret from her father. Someone has left a mysterious note on the Winterbottoms' doorstep: "Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins."



Chapter 10

Sal and her grandparents have arrived in Madison, Wisconsin. They watch a Native American dance.

Chapter 11

The second message arrives at Phoebe's house: "Everyone has his own agenda." Phoebe is getting more and more worried about the odd messages and what they might mean. Ben mentions that Sal flinches every time someone touches her. She recalls that her family used to be physically affectionate, but now that her mother is gone, she and her father no longer hug. Each is wrapped in their own grief.

Chapter 12

Sal and her grandparents arrive at Pipestone National Monument, where they smoke with some Indians. Sal recalls how her grandparents received their marriage bed and why it is so precious to them. Gramps recalls how he fell in love with Gram and followed her like a lovesick puppy until she agreed to marry him. She did so because he treated his dog so well; she figured that he would therefore treat her well, too.

Chapter 13

Mr. Birkway, the English teacher, collects everyone's journals, their summer homework.

Chapter 14

Mrs. Cadaver is a nurse. One day, the kids see her hugging Mr. Birkway, which mystifies them. What could Mrs. Cadaver and the girls' English teacher have in common? Meanwhile, Sal realizes that Phoebe's mother is worried and miserable, enduring what she calls a "tiny life." Margaret gives Sal a blue sweater as a gift, which Sal rejects outright.

Chapter 15

It is very warm in South Dakota, so Gram, Gramps, and Sal go swimming in the river. A teenage boy comes out of the woods and menaces them, claiming the river is private property and taking Gramps' wallet. Gram is bitten by a snake and the boy sucks out the venom. The boy goes with them to the hospital.

Chapter 16

The next morning, the boy tells Sal that his name is Tom Fleet and gives her his address. Gram, Gramps, and Sal camp out that night.

Chapter 17

The third message comes: "In the course of a lifetime, what does it matter?" Mrs. Winterbottom wants to watch

her daughter Prudence try out for the cheerleading squad, but Prudence doesn't want her to come along.

Chapter 18

Sal explains that her father was one of four boys; all but her father died. A kind and thoughtful man, he loved being a farmer. After his wife went away, he became depressed. The day after he learned that she wasn't returning, Sal's father chipped away at the fireplace hidden behind the plaster wall. He wrote "Chanhassen" in the wet plaster that he replaced.

Chapter 19

Sal still says that her mother is coming home. When she does, her father replies, "You are fishing in the air." After class, Phoebe's "lunatic," the boy who had come to her home, stops her and greets her by name. She runs home in a panic.

Chapter 20

Sal recalls her mother kissing a blackberry tree. In her journal, Sal recalls kissing many different kinds of trees. Ben holds Sal's hand and kisses her ear. Phoebe's mother has left the family for a few days without any explanation. Phoebe is sure that her mother has been kidnapped.

Chapter 21

Mr. Birkway makes everyone draw a picture: Sal and Ben draw the same picture.

Chapter 22

In school, Phoebe lies and says that her mother is on a trip to London. Sal sees parallels between her situation and Phoebe's: neither can accept her mother's absence. Phoebe's mother has left many prepared dinners, showing that she planned her departure.

Chapter 23

Sal's mother was pregnant. Three weeks before the baby was due, Sal fell out of a tree and broke her leg. Her mother carried her home. Later that same day, the baby (a girl) was born dead, the cord wrapped around her neck. Sal names the dead baby "Tulip." Her mother falls into a depression.

Chapter 24

Gram, Gramps, and Sal are heading for Mt. Rushmore. Sensing Phoebe's sadness, Mary Lou invites the girls for dinner.

Chapter 25

Phoebe cannot cope with the loving turmoil of the Finneys' home: she demands a cholesterol-free meal. After dinner, she nags her father to call all her mother's friends to find out if they have any information about her absence.

Chapter 26

Phoebe sleeps at Sal's house and demands the best bed. Sal understands why Phoebe is being so difficult but finds her tedious and very annoying nonetheless.

Chapter 27

Phoebe's mother calls Mrs. Cadaver to say that she is OK, but this doesn't allay Phoebe's fears. In English class, Phoebe gives her report on Pandora. Sal realizes that no one can own their mother.

Chapter 28

Sal, Gram, and Gramps drive through the Black Hills to Mt. Rushmore.

Chapter 29

Phoebe and Sal go to the police to report that Mrs. Winterbottom has been kidnapped. Sergeant Bickle calls Mr. Winterbottom to pick up the girls.

Chapter 30

Phoebe and Sal break into Mrs. Cadaver's house looking for clues that she murdered Phoebe's mother. Mrs. Partridge is there and tells Phoebe that she met her brother. Phoebe explains that she doesn't have a brother.

Chapter 31

Phoebe finds another message—"We never know the worth of water until the well is dry"—which Phoebe takes to mean that her mother has fallen down a well. Mr. Bickway reads some of the journals aloud, horrifying the students. Back at the police station, Sal looks at the photograph on Sergeant Bickle's desk and realizes that his son is the young man who has been coming to Phoebe's house, the teenager Phoebe believes is a lunatic.

Chapter 32

Mrs. Partridge reveals that Mr. Birkway and Mrs. Cadaver are twins and her children. Mr. Birkway reads more journals.

Chapter 33

Mr. Birkway apologizes for reading the journals aloud.

He explains that Mrs. Cadaver's husband died when a drunk driver rammed into his car. Mrs. Partridge was in the car and she lost her sight in the accident. Mrs. Cadaver was the nurse on duty that night when they brought in her husband and mother.

Chapter 34

Sal, Gram, and Gramps see Old Faithful. Gram is entranced.

Chapter 35

Phoebe calls Sergeant Bickle and gets his son's name — Mike—and phone number at college, where the boy is a freshman.

Chapter 36

Sal and Phoebe take the bus with Ben: He is going to visit his mother in the mental hospital and they are going to track down Mike. At the university, the girls are shocked to see Mrs. Winterbottom and Mike sitting on a bench, kissing and holding hands!

Chapter 37

Ben kisses Sal.

Chapter 38

Phoebe's mother calls and announced that she is coming home and bringing someone.

Chapter 39

Mrs. Winterbottom comes home with Mike, whom she reveals is the son she bore out of wedlock. Mr. Winterbottom welcomes Mike to the family, but Phoebe is hostile.

Chapter 40

Mrs. Partridge reveals that she has been leaving the cryptic notes at the Winterbottom home. She thought they would be lovely surprises. Ben gives Sal the perfect kiss.

Chapter 41

Gram has a stroke and dies the next day. Sal takes the car, with her Grandfather's permission, and drives the rest of the trip to meet her mother. She stops at the site of an old bus accident.

Chapter 42

The sheriff catches up with Sal. He takes her in the car to see her mother—her mother's grave. It emerges that Sal's mother died a year ago in the bus crash.

Chapter 43

The sheriff drives Sal back to her grandfather in Coeur d'Alene. The sheriff reveals that Mrs. Cadaver had been sitting next to Sal's mother on the bus when it crashed and Mrs. Cadaver was the sole survivor. Sal knew this already, as she had a long talk with Mrs. Cadaver. Nonetheless, Sal still couldn't accept that her mother had died. Sal's father has been spending time with Mrs. Cadaver to get more information about his beloved wife's last minutes.

Chapter 44

Sal, her father, and her grandfather have moved back to Bybanks. Sal realizes that the trip with her grandparents was their gift to her so that she could retrace her mother's footsteps and come to terms with her death.

Author Sketch

Sharon Creech was born in 1945, in Cleveland, Ohio. After completing her BA degree at Hiram College, she earned an MA at George Mason University. Her first marriage ended in divorce but produced two children: Rob and Karin. Creech's life took an unexpected turn when she decided to teach English at the TASIS England American School in Surrey, England. She lived in England from 1979 to 1994, briefly teaching in Switzerland. As an English teacher, Creech was able to share her love both of literature and of writing.



Creech was an enthusiastic writer throughout grade school and high school and an equally avid reader but didn't consider a career as a writer until her father died of a stroke in 1986. Her father's inability to express himself opened her own floodgates of creativity. *Absolutely Normal Chaos*, Creech's first book for young readers, was published in England in 1990 but didn't find a publisher in America. Five years later, *Walk Two Moons* catapulted Sharon Creech to fame in America when it won the Newbery Medal.

Speaking of winning the Newbery, Creech said: "I still don't know how I feel about it. It's like someone has given me this beautiful suit of Armani clothes. They look nice and everyone admires them, but I'm a little uncomfortable in them. I like to wear them for brief periods of time and then change back to my blue jeans."

Currently, Creech lives with her husband Lyle in New Jersey, where he is the headmaster of a private school and she continues to write. Creech is an often-invited guest at national and regional conferences and literature festivals where she continues to whet the appetites of current and future readers.

Critic's Corner

Walk Two Moons was named a Best Book, *School Library Journal*, 1994; and a Notable Children's Books, American Library Association (ALA). The novel also received the W. H. Smith Award (1996), Young Readers Award, and Virginia State Reading Association, Heartland Award, Sequoia Award, and Literaturhaus Award, Austria, all 1997. The novel was also given the Children's Book Award in England in 1995. Most impressive of all, of course, *Walk Two Moons* received the Newbery Medal from the American Library Association in 1995. Surprisingly, reviews were mixed.

Ilene Cooper, the *Booklist* reviewer, wrote: "The novel is ambitious and successful on many fronts: the characters, even the adults, are fully realized; the story certainly keeps readers' interest; and the pacing is good throughout. But Creech's surprises—that Phoebe's mother has an illegitimate son and that Sugar is buried in Idaho, where she died after a bus accident—are obvious in the first case and contrived in the second. Sal knows her mother is dead; that Creech makes readers think otherwise seems a cheat, though one, it must be admitted, that may bother adults more than kids. Still, when Sal's on the road with her grandparents, spinning Phoebe's yarn and trying to untangle her own, this story sings."

The *Kirkus Reviews* critic agreed, saying: "Creech, an American who has published novels in Britain, fashions characters with humor and sensitivity, but Sal's poignant story would have been stronger without quite so many remarkable coincidences or such a tidy sum of epiphanies at the end. Still, its revelations make a fine yarn."

Deborah Stevenson in the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* was more positive: "Sal finds that recounting Phoebe's story helps her understand the desertion of her own mother... Creech skillfully keeps these layers separate but makes their interrelationship clear, and the plot moves along amid all this contemplation with the aid of a mysterious noteleaver, a local 'lunatic,' an eccentric English teacher, and Sal's budding romance."

The Newbery Award Selection Committee wrote in their commendation: "The book is packed with humor and affection and is an odyssey of unexpected twists and surprising conclusions."

Other Works by Sharon Creech

Absolutely Normal Chaos (1995)
Pleasing the Ghost (1996)
Chasing Redbird (1997)
Bloomability (1998)
Fishing in the Air (2000)
The Wanderer (2000)
A Fine, Fine School (2001)
Ruby Holler (2002)
Ich, Zinny Taylor (2002)
Love That Dog (2003)
Granny Torrelli Makes Soup (2003)
A Baby in a Basket: New-Baby Songs (2004)
A Fine, Fine School (2004)
Heartbeat (2004)
Replay (2005)
Who's That Baby? New-Baby Songs (2005)

Further Readings About the Author

Books

Authors and Artists for Young Adults, volume 21, Gale (Detroit, MI), 1997.
Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults, volumes 9, 11, 12, Gale (Detroit, MI), 2001.
Children's Literature Review, Volume 42, Gale (Detroit, MI), 1997.
St. James Guide to Young Adult Writers, 2nd edition, St. James (Detroit, MI), 1999, pp. 195-197.
Seventh Book of Junior Authors and Illustrators, edited by Sally Holmes Holtze, H. W. Wilson, 1996, pp. 67-69.
St. James Guide to Young Adult Writers, 2nd edition, St. James (Detroit, MI), 1999, pp. 195-197.

Periodicals

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Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, November 15, 1994, p. 590; January, 1995, p. 162; November, 1995, p. 87;

March, 1997, p. 243.
Carousel, summer, 1997, p. 25.
Detroit Free Press, February 7, 1995, pp. 1C, 3C.
Fiction, May/June, 1996, pp. 34-35.
Horn Book, July/ August, 1995, pp. 418-425, 426-429; March/April, 1996, pp. 204-205; May-June, 1997, pp. 316-317; September/October, 1998, Nancy Bond, review of *Bloomability*, p. 605; November/December, 2001, Betty Carter, review of *Love That Dog*, p. 743.
Kirkus Reviews, June 15, 1994, p. 832; February 1, 1997, p. 220; March 15, 2002, review of *Ruby Holler*, p. 408.
Magpies, September, 1991, p. 32.
New York Times Book Review, May 21, 1995, pp. 24, 34; October 21, 2001, Meg Wolitzer, review of *Love That Dog*, p. 30.
Publishers Weekly, February 13, 1995, p. 16; March 20, 1995, pp. 24-25; July 22, 1996, p. 242; January 20, 1997, p. 403; July 20, 1998, review of *Bloomability*, p. 220; June 18, 2001, review of *Love That Dog*, p. 82; July 16, 2001, Jason Britton, "Everyday Journeys" (interview), p. 153; July 23, 2001, review of *A Fine, Fine School*, p. 75; March 4, 2002, review of *Ruby Holler*, p. 80.
Reading Teacher, February, 1996, pp. 380-382.
School Librarian, February, 1997, p. 23.
School Library Journal, November, 1995, p. 119; August, 2001, Grace Oliff, review of *A Fine, Fine School*, p. 144, Lee Bock, review of *Love That Dog*, p. 177; September, 2001, interview with Sharon Creech, p. 21.
Teaching PreK-8, May, 1996, pp. 48-49.
Time, August 27, 2001, Andrea Sachs, "A Writer Who's Thirteen at Heart," p. F17.
Top of the News, spring, 1995, pp. 313-314.
Voice of Youth Advocates, February, 1995, pp. 337-338; June, 1996, p. 94.

General Objectives

1. To probe why Sal and her father have moved
2. To trace the 2,000 mile journey that Sal and her grandparents take
3. To understand what happened to Sal's mother
4. To compare and contrast the different marriages shown in the novel
5. To probe the meaning of the novel's title
6. To analyze the symbolism in the novel
7. To recognize the novel's theme
8. To describe the novel's plot
9. To identify foreshadowing and flashback in the novel
10. To understand the novel's ending

Specific Objectives

1. To understand that Sal's mother has died in a bus crash about a year ago
2. To understand why Sal cannot accept her mother's death
3. To appreciate how Sal's grandparents are helping her come to terms with her mother's death
4. To understand that Sal's mother had a breakdown before she left, due to the stillbirth of her infant daughter
5. To probe the reasons for Mrs. Winterbottom's unhappiness
6. To explore the symbolism of the marriage bed, trees, flowers, hair, and blackberries
7. To understand why Sal's father wants to be with Margaret Cadaver
8. To compare and contrast Phoebe and Sal
9. To understand that Mike is the child Mrs. Winterbottom put up for adoption many years before
10. To determine how Sal changes as a result of her experiences

Literary Terms and Applications

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

Symbolism: occurs when an image stands for something other than what was expected. The ocean, for example, may be said to symbolize "eternity" and the phrase "river to the sea" could stand for "life flowing into afterlife." In most instances the symbol does not directly reveal what it stands for; rather, the meaning must be discovered through a close reading of the literary work and an understanding of conventional literary and cultural symbols. For example, we realize that the "stars and stripes" stands for the American flag. We know this because we are told it is so, for the flag itself in no way looks like the United States. Without cultural agreement, many of the symbols we commonly accept would be meaningless. In *Walk Two Moons*, one of the major symbols is Gram and Gramps' marriage bed. They received the bed from Gramps' parents; it was their bed. The bed symbolizes Gram and Gramps' love for each other and the continuation of that love through generations. In this novel, Creech uses blackberries to symbolize love; trees come to represent the continuing cycle of nature.

Flashback: a scene that breaks into the story to show an earlier part of the action. Flashbacks help fill in missing information, explain the characters' actions, and advance the plot. *Walk Two Moons* included many flashbacks, as Sal recalls life with her mother and events from her grandparents' lives. From the flashbacks with Sal and her mother, readers understand the depth and closeness of their relationship and thus how much Sal misses her mother. From the flashbacks with Gram and Gramps, readers see their love from the beginning of their marriage. This makes Gram's death at the end of the novel even more emotional.

First-Person Narrator: The narrator is one of the characters in the story. The narrator explains the events through his or her own eyes, using the pronouns I and me. Sal is the narrator of *Walk Two Moons*. Thus, readers see events through her eyes only. This gives the book an immediacy and freshness but also limits our understanding of events. For instance, since Sal doesn't accept or acknowledge her mother's death in the beginning of the story, readers may not realize that Sal is going to visit her mother's grave.

The Importance of Setting

Walk Two Moons appears to have many settings, but in reality it has only three: the family's farm in Bybanks, Kentucky; the family's new home in Euclid, Ohio; and the stops on the 2,000 miles trip from Ohio to Idaho.

The farm in Bybanks, Kentucky, is depicted as an idyllic place, filled with towering trees, friendly neighbors, and fields of flowers. It can be said to represent Eden before the Fall. Sal and her parents were happy there, innocent and content. But when the infant Tulip was stillborn, Sal's mother spiraled into depression, took off on a trip, and died when the bus crashed. Sal and her father left the farm for a new life in Euclid, Ohio. There, they found little happiness.

In Euclid, Ohio, Sal and her father live in a small tract house. Sal's father desperately seeks clues about his wife's last minutes from the woman sitting next to her on the bus, Margaret Cadaver. Sal, meanwhile, tries to come to grips with her mother's death in her own way, largely through denial. This setting is important because it represents a way station on the journey from grief to acceptance.

The trip across America symbolizes the journey from childhood to maturity, from loss to recovery. This particular setting is crucial because it allows the author to trace Sal's growing acceptance of her mother's death.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Fiction

William H. Armstrong, *Souder*
Joan W. Blos, *A Gathering of Days*
Betsy Byars, *The Summer of the Swans*
Beverly Cleary, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*
Karen Cushman, *The Midwife's Apprentice*
Sid Fleischman, *The Whipping Boy*
Jean Craighead George, *Julie of the Wolves*
Patricia Reilly Giff, *Lily's Crossing*
Karen Hesse, *Out of the Dust*
E. L. Konigsburg, *The View from Saturday*
Lois Lowry, *Number the Stars*
Emily Cheney Neville, *It's Like This, Cat*
Katherine Paterson, *Bridge to Terabithia*
Katherine Paterson, *Jacob Have I Loved*
Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, *Shiloh*
Armstrong Sperry, *Call It Courage*
Jerry Spinelli, *Maniac Magee*
Cynthia Voigt, *Dacey's Song*
Maia Wojciechowska, *Shadow of a Bull*

DVDs/Videos

Breaking Away
The Horse Whisperer
The Iron Giant
The Mighty
The Muppet Movie
Never Cry Wolf
The Princess Bride
The Secret of Roan Inish
Simon Birch
Waking Ned Devine
When I Was Young in the Mountains
Walking with Dinosaurs

Audio

Walk Two Moons

Internet

Creech, Sharon (Official site)
www.sharoncreech.com/

Kidsreads.com - Sharon Creech
www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-creech-sharon.asp

Sharon Creech Teacher Resource File
falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/creech.htm

BookWire - Meet The Author - Sharon Creech
www.bookwire.com/MeetTheAuthor/Interview_Sharon_Creech.htm -

Scholastic.com.
books.scholastic.com/authorstudies/authorhome.jsp

Spotlight on Children's Author Sharon Creech
childrensbooks.about.com/cs/authorsillustrators/sharoncreech.htm

Sharon Creech - Wikipedia
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharon_Creech

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Sharon Creech's *Walk Two Moons* should include these aspects:

Themes

- death
- desertion
- families
- first love
- friendship
- mothers
- mystery
- Native Americans
- denial
- trees



Motifs

- dealing with your mother's depression and subsequent death
- understanding that your mother has a life of her own and may not obtain complete fulfillment by being a homemaker
- comparing and contrasting families
- experiencing first love
- maturing
- going on a cross-country trip
- being part Native American and learning about Native Americans
- appreciating trees
- making new friends
- tracing the novel's rising suspense and tension

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. Some of the real reasons were: 1. Gram and Gramps wanted to see Momma, who was resting peacefully in Lewiston, Idaho. (Chapter 1, p. 5)
(This casual comment explains that Sal's mother is already dead, although Sal refuses to accept this reality. Gram and Gramps are taking Sal on the same cross-country trip that her mother took a year earlier to help her accept her mother's death. The trip will end at Sugar's grave and with Sal's realization that her mother is not coming home.)
2. "How about a story? Spin us a yarn..." Instantly, Phoebe Winterbottom came to mind.... "I could tell you an extensively strange story," I warned. "Oh, good!" Gram said. "Delicious!" (Chapter 2, pp. 8-9)
(Walk Two Moons has an unusual structure, as the narrative skips back and forth between Bybanks, Kentucky; the family's new home in Euclid, Ohio; and the stops on the 2,000 miles trip from Ohio to Idaho. The story of Phoebe, told during the trip, mirrors Sal's growing realization that her mother has a life of her own. As a result, a parent's needs do not always mesh with a child's needs. Sal's maturity comes in part as a result of her experiences with Phoebe.)
3. "Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins." (Chapter 9, p. 51)
(Phoebe finds this message written on a slip of paper and left in an envelope on her porch. Later, we find that Mrs. Partridge has

left the messages for Phoebe and her family merely to amuse them, but at this point, Phoebe and Sal assume that the messages have some deep meaning, which Mrs. Partridge never intended. Ironically, of course, each of the messages does carry a hidden meaning. This one, for instance, means that we cannot understand people until we have had their experiences. Sal comes to understand her mother far better after she has retraced her mother's footsteps on the 2,000 miles cross-country journey. Phoebe, in contrast, does not understand her mother's pain because she has yet to experience any of the things that her mother has undergone.)

4. Before I left Phoebe's that day, Mrs. Winterbottom handed Prudence her brown skirt with the newly sewn hem, and all the way home I wondered about Mrs. Winterbottom and what she meant about living a tiny life. (Chapter 14, p. 89)
(In many ways, Walk Two Moons is a feminist novel. Neither of the homemakers depicted in the novel, Mrs. Winterbottom nor Mrs. Hiddle, is happy in her role. Both run away from home to resolve unexplained issues: Mrs. Winterbottom to reclaim her son and her youth; Mrs. Hiddle to figure out who she is and what she wants from life.)
5. Phoebe looked over his shoulder and read his note aloud: I had to go away. I can't explain. I'll call you in a few days. (Chapter 20, p. 126)
(Mrs. Winterbottom leaves this note. She has gone to find Mike, the son she put up for adoption, and along the way, to attempt to figure out what she wants from life. She knows that she wants to be more than a handmaiden to her family. Phoebe is unable to fathom that her mother might have a life of her own. Unlike Sal, Phoebe never grasps the narrowness and resulting terror in her mother's life.)
6. "A person isn't a bird. You can't cage a person." (Chapter 22, p. 141)
(Sal's father tells Sal this as Sal struggles to accept why her mother decided to go on the cross-country trip that resulted in her death. Sal's father realizes that a person needs more than love and family to be fulfilled. The person also needs whatever it is that makes them happy: a career, hobby, or public service, for instance.)
7. "No, I mean before I was a wife and mother. I mean underneath, where I am Chanhassen." (Chapter 23, p. 143)
(Sal's mother decides to go to Idaho because she has a cousin there. She wants the cousin to help her discover her identity, who she was before her identity became subsumed into that of "wife" and "mother." One of the threads in the novel describes how mothers struggle to establish their own identities.)

8. "Sometimes you know in your heart you love someone, but you have to go away before your head can figure it out." (Chapter 24, p. 153)
(Sal's paternal grandparents, Gram and Gramps, have an exceedingly happy marriage. Therefore, Sal – as well as the readers— is astonished to discover that many years earlier, Gram had left Gramps to live with the egg delivery man. Although Gram's desertion lasted only three days, it was enough to shake them both up and help them understand what they each needed from the marriage. Gram's desertion parallels the desertions of Mrs. Hiddle and Mrs. Winterbottom.)
9. "It was separate and apart. We couldn't own our mothers." (Chapter 27, p.176)
(As Sal matures, she realizes that even mothers—women supposed to devote their lives to their family's needs—have lives and needs of their own. And no matter what a child's needs, the child cannot prevent the mother from having an entirely separate life and seeking happiness outside the family.)
10. The sheriff parked the car and led me up a path toward the river, and there, on a little hill overlooking the river and the valley, was my mother's grave. (Chapter 43, p. 267)
(Although readers know from the beginning of the novel that Sal's mother is dead, it still comes as a shock. By coming to the grave, Sal is finally able to accept that her mother is gone.)

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. What has happened to Sal's mother Sugar?
(She died in a bus crash about a year ago.)
2. Why does Sal think her father is spending time with Margaret Cadaver? Why does he really want to be with Margaret?
(Sal thinks that her father and Margaret are having an affair. Sal is incorrect; there is nothing romantic between them. Margaret was sitting next to Sugar when she died on the bus. Margaret was the only survivor of the terrible crash. Sal's father wants to be with Margaret to get information about his wife's last minutes.)
3. How does Gram die?
(She has a stroke and dies.)

4. What is the relationship between Norma Winterbottom and Mike Bickle?
(Norma is Mike's birth mother; she had put him up for adoption when he was a baby, before she met Mr. Winterbottom.)
5. Who is leaving the messages at the Winterbottoms' house? Why?
(Mrs. Partridge is leaving the messages merely for fun; she thinks they will amuse the Winterbottoms.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. What does Mrs. Winterbottom mean when she says that she has a "tiny life"?
(She means that her life is narrow and constricted and does not bring her pleasure.)
7. Why did Sugar leave her husband and daughter?
(She was recovering from the stillbirth of her infant daughter, Tulip. She was also trying to find her identity and her meaning in life. She wanted to know who she was outside of being a wife and mother.)
8. How are Sugar and Mrs. Winterbottom similar? How are they different?
(They are both unsatisfied homemakers. Mrs. Winterbottom serves her family slavishly and doesn't get appreciation in return. Sugar's husband, in contrast, worshipped her and appreciated all that she did.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Did you find the ending logical or was it filled with too many coincidences?
(Some students may find it far too convenient that Mrs. Cadaver and Mr. Birkway are twins and that Mike Bickle is Mrs. Winterbottom's son.)
10. Did you like the form of the novel? Why or why not?
(Readers who like intertwining narratives will say that this technique adds to the novel's suspense. Those who were confused by the shift in time and setting are likely to prefer one narrative line.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Describe your identity. Who are you and what makes you special and unique?
12. Working with a partner, role-play a dialogue between Sal and Phoebe, in which they discuss their feelings about their mothers.

Across the Curriculum

Art/Music

1. Draw a new cover for the novel. Be sure that it entices people to read the book.
2. Prepare a travel brochure for Yellowstone National Park. Highlight Old Faithful, the geyser that gave Gram such pleasure.
3. In Chapter 21, Mr. Birkway makes everyone draw a picture: Sal and Ben draw the same picture. Draw the picture they make, using the description on page 130 as your basis.
4. Play some music that Ben would be likely to have on his Ipod.
5. Sal, Gramps, and Gram visit Mt. Rushmore. Draw this historic national landmark. Add a caption explaining its history: how and when was it made?

Language Arts

1. The characters in this novel have unusual names. Give yourself a new name that you believe describes your character.
2. The Winterbottoms receive a series of secret messages. Write four messages that they might have received. Explain how the messages fit with the others.
3. Write the story that appeared in the newspaper after the bus crash in which Sugar died.
4. Imagine that you are Sal on the cross-country trip with your grandparents. Send a postcard to your father, describing one part of your trip.
5. Write a journal that you would not mind having read aloud in your English class.

History/Social Studies

1. Sal says her great-great grandmother belonged to the Seneca tribe. Research the tribe and report on it. Where did the tribe live? What were their beliefs?
2. Choose any ten states and list their nicknames.
3. Imagine that you were taking the same journey

that Sal was. List at least five attractions that you would like to see on the way.

4. Construct a timeline showing the history of the automobile and how it has changed American life.
5. Make a map showing the Native American tribes in your state.

Speech/Drama

1. In a group, debate whether or not the ending is realistic. Provide specific examples to make your point.
2. Working with some friends, retell this story as a legend.
3. Some critics say that Creech's surprises—Phoebe's mother has an illegitimate son and that Sugar is buried in Idaho, where she died after a bus accident—are obvious in the first case and contrived in the second. In a roundtable discussion, debate whether or not these surprises affect your appreciation of the novel.
4. In a speech, explain why Mr. Birkway should or should not have read the journals aloud.
5. Sal sees parallels between her situation and Phoebe's: neither can accept her mother's absence. Decide which parent is more important: a mother or a father. Be sure to justify your opinion with examples, reasons, and causes.
6. Working with a partner, act out a scene in which Sal and Ben are reunited in five years. Is there still an attraction between them?

Science/Math

1. Sal's grandparents come up with a plan to drive 2,000 miles from Ohio to Idaho. Map out their route, using clues in the novel. Then calculate how long it will take them to travel. You may also wish to calculate the cost of the trip, including basic lodging and meals.
2. Explain why Old Faithful, the geyser at Yellowstone, erupts.
3. Gran is bitten by a snake and Tom Fleet sucks out the venom. Is this the best treatment? Find out how to treat a snakebite.

4. Sal kisses many trees. Rather than kissing trees, choose any three trees in your region and report on them. Identify the trees, describe them, and tell what conditions they need to flourish.
5. Phoebe claims that she is getting a migraine. Find out the symptoms, causes, and treatments for a migraine.

Alternate Assessment

1. Mr. Birkway assigns a project on Greek myths. Choose a myth and report on it for the class, as Phoebe and Ben do.
2. Rewrite the novel's ending to resolve the plot but eliminate the coincidences.
3. List five qualities that you look for in an ideal mate. Then decide which character in the novel best fits your criteria and why.
4. Read several of the other novels considered for the Newbery Medal in 1995, the year that *Walk Two Moons* received the medal. Then decide whether or not *Walk Two Moons* deserved the honor, based on its competition.
5. Explain what purpose Ben's mother serves in the novel.

Teacher's Notes

Vocabulary

Complete the following crossword puzzle with these ten words from *Walk Two Moons*.

Clues

Across

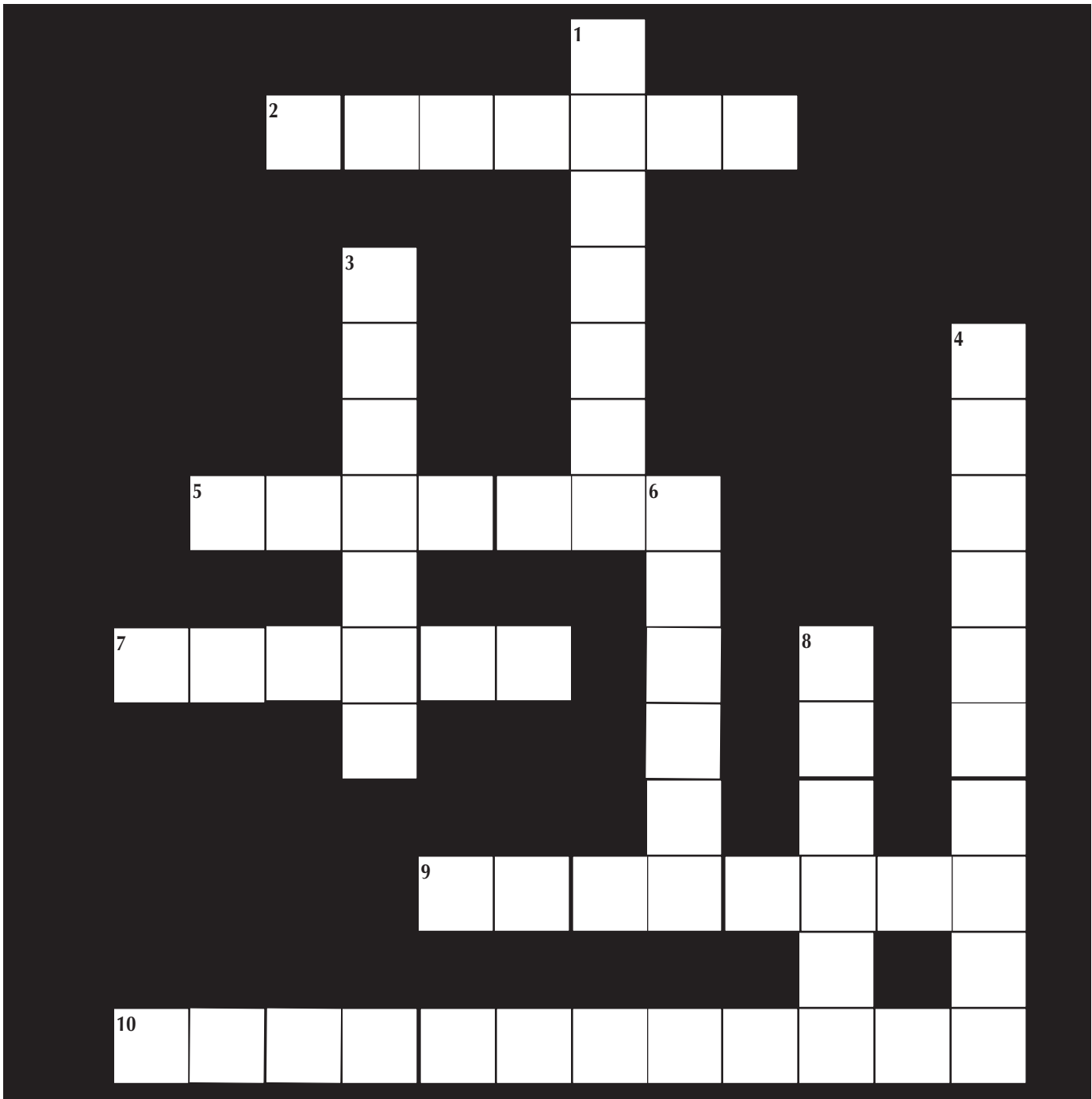
- 2. weak
- 5. twisted
- 7. stubborn
- 9. easily tricked
- 10. evil

Down

- 1. reveal
- 3. dead body
- 4. all powerful
- 6. woman
- 8. fit for consumption

Word List

- | | | | | |
|---------|------------|---------|--------|------------|
| divulge | cadaver | edible | damsel | omnipotent |
| fragile | malevolent | gnarled | ornery | gullible |



Comprehension Test A

Part I: 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 blanks provided.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Phoebe Winterbottom | F. Chanhassen |
| B. Mr. Birkway | G. Prudence |
| C. Margaret Cadaver | H. Salamanca Tree Hiddle |
| D. Tom Fleet | I. Ben Finney |
| E. Sadie | J. Mike the lunatic |

- ___ 1. Gramps' old dog
- ___ 2. The narrator of *Walk Two Moons*
- ___ 3. Sugar's real name
- ___ 4. Girl who believes that her mother has been kidnapped
- ___ 5. Boy who tries to steal Gramps' wallet
- ___ 6. Sal's English teacher
- ___ 7. Phoebe's older sister
- ___ 8. Boy who kisses Sal
- ___ 9. Nurse who is friends with Sal's father
- ___ 10. Mrs. Winterbottom's son

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

- ___ 1. Sal's grandparents drive with her 50 miles from Ohio to Idaho.
- ___ 2. Sal's mother is part Native American.
- ___ 3. Phoebe is convinced that Margaret Cadaver murdered her husband and buried him in the back yard.
- ___ 4. Sal's parents didn't have a good marriage because Sal's father is a critical perfectionist who demands that everything be perfect. He rarely showed any affection toward Sal or her mother.
- ___ 5. Margaret gives Sal a blue sweater as a gift, which Sal rejects outright.
- ___ 6. Phoebe wants her mother to watch her try-out for the soccer team, but her mother is too busy baking brownies and cleaning the house to come along.
- ___ 7. When Sal says that her mother is coming home, her father often replies: "You are fishing in the air."
- ___ 8. Sal recalls her mother chopping down a huge blackberry tree, which brought on the premature delivery of the baby whom Sal named "Tulip."
- ___ 9. Phoebe cannot cope with the loving turmoil of the Finneys' home and demands a cholesterol-free meal.
- ___ 10. Sal's mother died in a bus crash about a year ago. Sal visits her grave.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Quote Identification (30 points)

Briefly explain why each quote is important in the novel.

1. Some of the real reasons were: 1. Gram and Gramps wanted to see Momma, who was resting peacefully in Lewiston, Idaho.
2. One day I realized that our whole trip to Lewiston had been a gift from Gram and Gramps to me. They were giving me a chance to walk in my mother's moccasins—to see what she had seen and feel what she might have felt on her last trip.
3. "A person isn't a bird. You can't cage a person."
4. It was separate and apart. We couldn't own our mothers.
5. The sheriff parked the car and led me up a path toward the river, and there, on a little hill overlooking the river and the valley, was my mother's grave.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain how Sal's pilgrimage mirrors the journey of discovery that is adolescence.
2. Provide three details from the novel that make *Walk Two Moons* seem to be nonfiction, even though it is really fiction.
3. Many critics were disappointed in the novel's ending. Argue that the ending does or does not satisfy the reader.
4. What function do the Finneys serve in the novel?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Choose the word or phrase that best completes each of the following statements.

1. Sal's (**parents, grandparents**) come up with a plan to drive with her 2,000 miles from Ohio to Idaho
2. Mrs. Partridge, Mrs. Cadaver's mother, is (**deaf, blind**).
3. Someone has left a mysterious note on the (**Hiddle's, Winterbottoms'**) doorstep: "Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins."
4. Margaret gives Sal a (**new journal, blue sweater**) as a gift, which Sal rejects outright.
5. Mrs. Winterbottom wants to watch her daughter Prudence try out for the (**soccer, cheerleading**) team, but Prudence doesn't want her to come along.
6. When Sal says that her mother is coming home, her father replies, "You are (**fishing, whistling**) in the air."
7. Sal recalls that her mother (**chopped down, kissed**) a blackberry tree.
8. Mrs. Cadaver's husband died when a (**drunk driver rammed into his car, the bus he was riding in overturned**).
9. Gram's favorite site on their trip is (**the Alamo, Old Faithful**), where she breaks down in tears.
10. (**Tom Fleet, Mrs. Partridge**) has been leaving the mysterious notes at the Winterbottom home.

Part II: Matching (30 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blanks provided.

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. Mrs. Partridge | A. Mike's birth mother |
| ___ 2. Mr. Birkway | B. woman who left her husband for the egg man |
| ___ 3. Margaret Cadaver | C. Margaret Cadaver's twin |
| ___ 4. Norma Winterbottom | D. boy who sucks out the snakebite venom |
| ___ 5. Tom Fleet | E. Mike's adoptive father |
| ___ 6. Gram | F. last person to see Sal's mother alive |
| ___ 7. Chanhassen | G. Sugar's real name |
| ___ 8. Salamanca Tree Hiddle | H. boy who kisses Sal |
| ___ 9. Ben Finney | I. girl who travels cross-country with her grandparents |
| ___ 10. Sgt. Bickle | J. blind neighbor |

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the story.

1. Chickabiddy
2. blackberries
3. the marriage bed
4. Tulip
5. hair

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe how Phoebe's story parallels Sal's story.
2. Sal knows from the very start of the story that her mother is dead. Why does she imply otherwise?
3. Compare and contrast Sal's grandparents to Mr. and Mrs. Winterbottom. Explain how they are the same and different.
4. What role does the novel's setting play in the story? Why is the setting important in this novel?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

Across

2. fragile
5. gnarled
7. ornery
9. gullible
10. malevolent

Down

1. divulge
3. cadaver
4. omnipotent
6. damsel
8. edible

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. B |
| 2. H | 7. G |
| 3. F | 8. I |
| 4. A | 9. C |
| 5. D | 10. J |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F |
| 2. T | 7. T |
| 3. T | 8. F |
| 4. F | 9. T |
| 5. T | 10. T |

Part III: Quote Identification (30 points)

1. This casual comment explains that Sal's mother is already dead, although Sal refuses to accept this reality. Gram and Gramps are taking Sal on the same cross-country trip that her mother took a year earlier to help her accept her mother's death. The trip will end at Sugar's grave with Sal's realization that her mother is not coming home.
2. Sal comes to understand her mother far better after she has retraced her mother's footsteps on the 2,000 miles cross-country journey. This understanding enables her to accept her mother's death.
3. Sal's father tells Sal this as she struggles to accept why her mother decided to go on the cross-country trip that resulted in her death. Sal's father realizes that a person needs more than love and family to be fulfilled. The person also needs whatever it is that makes them happy: a career, hobby, or public service, for instance.
4. As Sal matures, she realizes that even mothers—women supposed to devote their lives to their family's needs—have lives and needs of their own. And no matter what a child's needs, the child cannot prevent the mother from having an entirely separate life and seeking happiness outside the family.

5. Although readers know from the beginning of the novel that Sal's mother is dead, it still comes as a shock. By coming to the grave, Sal is finally able to accept that her mother is gone.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. grandparents | 6. fishing |
| 2. blind | 7. kissed |
| 3. Hiddle's | 8. drunk driver rammmed into his car. |
| 4. blue sweater | 9. Old Faithful |
| 5. cheerleading | 10. Mrs. Partridge |

Part II: Matching (30 points)

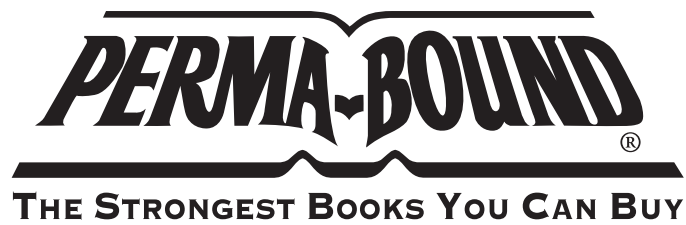
- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. J | 6. B |
| 2. C | 7. G |
| 3. F | 8. I |
| 4. A | 9. H |
| 5. D | 10. E |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

1. "Chickabiddy" is the nickname that Sal's grandparents have for her. It reveals their playful nature and the love they have for their granddaughter.
2. Blackberries come to stand for love. Sal's mother gives the blackberry tree a kiss; Sal thinks that Ben's kisses taste like blackberries. Ben gives Sal a chicken that he has named "Blackberry." The chicken's name serves as a reminder of their love.
3. Gramps refers to their marriage bed every night. The original bed had been a gift from his parents—their own bed—on the night Gram and Gramps got married. It stands for passion and enduring love.
4. Tulip is the name that Sal has given her infant sister, stillborn with the cord wrapped around her neck. Sal's mother had promised to come home by the time the tulips bloomed.
5. Sal has beautiful long, black hair. Her mother had the same hair, which she cut the week before she left home. Sal's father asks her not to cut her hair, which represents a link between daughter and mother.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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