



Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World

by Katherine Hannigan



Teacher's Guide
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CLASSROOM FAVORITES

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

Ida B races to finish the dishes. Her father tells her to slow down, saying, "There's plenty of time to do whatever you're planning," which she knows is "two miles beyond wrong." Ida B can already hear the brook calling to her to come out and play. She calls to Rufus the dog; as they head out the door, Ida B. tells her father, "There is never enough time for fun."

Chapter 2

On her way out the door, Ida B grabs paper, a pencil, and some string to make a raft to send notes down the brook. Then she heads to the apple orchard, where she greets the trees: Beulah, Charlie, Pastel, and others she has named. She realizes that the trees are unusually silent. Paulie T, one of the trees (whom Ida B describes as a "punk") pipes up, telling her the trees have heard "something bad" is coming her way. Ida B leaves for the brook, and when they arrive, Ida B asks the brook if it has heard anything about trouble brewing for her family. The brook tells her to ask the old tree. Ida B climbs into the tree and asks it for any news. After a long time of waiting, she gets a cold feeling, and a dark cloud appears in front of her closed eyes. However, since nothing bad happens in the next two days beyond a thunderstorm and a dinner that includes brussels sprouts, Ida B discounts the warning.

Chapter 3

We learn some details about Ida B, including the information that the "B" in her name is to distinguish her from her mother, whose name is also Ida. Ida B says she doesn't usually get in trouble, although there are times she has caused "a stir," such as when she created a "High-Rise and Exotic Resort" in the living room for her

cat, Lulu. Another remembered incident serves to foreshadow upcoming events in the story: when she had to go to the doctor's office because a Soap Mask she invented for her face caused an allergic reaction. Besides worrying her parents (who initially feared she might have scarlet fever), the incident prompted her mother to admonish her to always tell them "if something's wrong or if it's not," because "a trip to the doctor is expensive."

Chapter 4

On a starry night, Ida B and her father go for a walk, something they do regularly. During his walks, Daddy tells Ida B "deep and abiding truths." Tonight, he tells her that someday she will own the land, and will be able to "pretty much do what you want with it"; but she is always to remember that "We don't own the earth. We are the earth's caretakers."

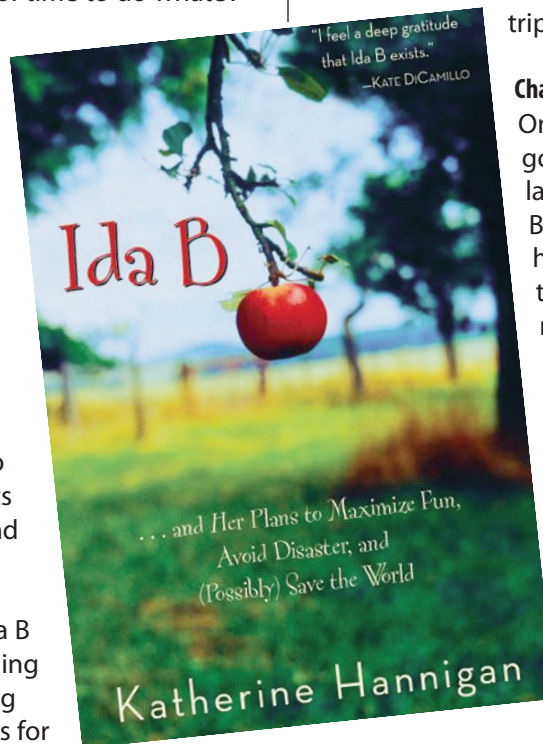
Chapter 5

At dinner, Ida B's mother turns common dinnertime experiences into schoolwork, such as "What is the verb in the sentence: Mama reluctantly served Ida B another slice of pie?" This is because Ida B has been home-schooled. The world is

Ida B's classroom, and Mama is constantly concocting lessons from real life, which is how Ida B likes it. Ida B gets to spend most of her time outdoors, and every year she does exceptionally on the test the state requires to pass her to the next grade level. This arrangement gives Ida B time to make many plans, which she believes are the best way to maximize fun, avoid disaster, and, possibly, save the world.

Chapter 6

We learn why her parents started home-schooling Ida B: when she was five years old and a kindergartner, she attended school for a while, and it was a disaster. Her teacher, Ms. Myers, seemed more interested in imposing rules than fostering learning: she had a classroom rabbit that couldn't be held and books that couldn't be read, except briefly at appointed times. But most of all, Ms.



Myers refused to call Ida B by her “nickname,” renaming her “Ida.” The “too many rules” and enforced loss of her name gave Ida B a bad feeling. After school, Mama asked her about her day, and she told her. Mama suggested she give it another try.

Chapter 7

The third week of school, Ida B’s mother came to school to observe Ida B’s class. She wanted to see what was making Ida B so forlorn. By the end of the day, Mama was as droopy as Ida B. At home, she went out to the field to talk to Daddy while Ida played. That evening, her parents told Ida B that she’d be home-schooled, starting Monday. Ida B was so happy she felt she was floating. The home-school arrangement had continued for the next four years, and Ida B had begun to believe it would continue forever.

Chapter 8

Back in the present, Ida B wakes up after a night’s sleep. She is a slow riser, unlike her parents, who get up with the birds. Almost at once, Ida B realizes something is not right. In the kitchen, her parents are sitting at the breakfast table, not eating. Daddy asks Mama if she’s made the doctor’s appointment. Ida B asks if something’s wrong. Despite their assurances that “it’s nothing to worry about,” Ida B knows something’s wrong, and she feels a quiet that’s never been there before.

Chapter 9

The “nothing” turns out to be a lump with cancer in it. At first, Ida B thinks the solution will be simple: remove the lump, and then it’s over. Soon, however, they all learn that the cancer has spread. Mama must have surgery, then undergo “treatments” that leave her too exhausted even to speak with Ida B. Ida B’s formerly happy home becomes miserable, as Mama undergoes exhausting rounds of treatments while Ida B and Daddy keep as quiet as possible so as not to disturb Mama; all the while, Ida B and Daddy fear Mama might die, although they can’t talk about their fears. The only happy times are when Ida B can sit quietly on Daddy’s lap while he reads her a book; but those times are infrequent. Between treatments, Mama slowly recovers her strength, but just as Ida B is beginning to hope, it’s time for another treatment, and the cycle begins again. At those times, when she thinks nobody’s paying attention, Ida B closes herself in her room, sits on the floor behind her bed, and cries and cries.

Chapter 10

One especially miserable day in August, Ida B decides to

visit the old tree again, something she hasn’t done in a long time. She tells the tree of her loneliness, and how she misses both her parents and the way they used to be. The tree tells her, “It will be all right.” She tries to pump the tree for more information, but none is forthcoming. After a while, feeling more peaceful and hopeful than she has in a long time, although no less lonely, Ida B climbs down from the tree and goes back to the house. There, Daddy tells her that Mama is getting new medicine and will be doing better soon; Ida B is happy, but Mama tries to keep everyone’s hopes from getting too high, warning that the medicine might not work as planned. The next morning, an excited Ida B runs down to the brook to give it the good news, but the brook is not its usual bubbly self. Finally, after Ida B has almost given up on receiving a response, the brook tells her, sadly, “It’s not over yet.”

Chapter 11

One day in September, Daddy takes Ida B to the barn to tell her some news: He must sell part of the farm to pay Mama’s medical bills. He’ll be selling two lots at the farthest end of the valley to developers, who will build houses. Ida B is horrified when she realizes that the lots in question are part of the orchard, and selling them will necessitate cutting down Alice, Harry, Bernice, and Jacques Cousteau. The worst news is yet to come, though: Ida B will have to return to school, starting on Monday. Ida B begs and cries and protests, and Daddy finally loses his temper: Mama is sick, and he has to work, and she has to go to school. He gives her this final word, then walks away.

Chapter 12

After Daddy leaves, Ida B curls up in a ball on the barn floor and cries until she can’t cry anymore. As her crying winds down, she feels her heart transforming: shrinking and hardening, until it becomes a sharp, black stone, small enough to fit in her palm, an unbreakable heart that would hurt anyone who tried to touch it. With the new heart, Ida B formulates a new plan: She will do whatever she needs to do to survive the craziness that has taken over her family, including go to school, but she won’t like it, or her parents, or the new neighbors, or any aspect of her new life. She will “win.” Once the crying stops, Ida B goes to the old tree. At first, she pretends to thank it for its kind assurance in Chapter 10; then she turns on it and viciously kicks it and berates it. Afterwards, she limps down the hill. “And that,” says Ida B, is “the end of me listening to anybody or anything, other than myself and my new heart, for a long time.”

Chapter 13

The night before Ida B starts school, Daddy packs her lunch and Ida B lays out her clothes. She refuses Mama's offer of hair ribbons: Ida B will wear nothing but black to protest her being chucked into the Sacrificial Pit of Never-Ending Agony, otherwise known as "school." Mama asks to come in her room, and sits on Ida B's bed, stroking her hair; Ida B has decided she will not enjoy this, and does not respond. When Mama starts to cry, it takes a great effort on Ida B's part not to soften, and tears threaten to overwhelm her; she wants to comfort her mother and cry too, but, driven by her new, angry resolve and a fear that if she cries, she'll never stop, Ida B remains impassive. Eventually, Mama kisses her good-night and leaves.

Chapter 14

For the fourth time, Daddy tells Ida B that the school bus will arrive at seven-thirty sharp. After a silent breakfast, Ida B goes out to greet the bus early so as to avoid any conversation with her parents. On the bus, Ida B radiates meanness, and no one sits next to her. At school, she goes to the office, introduces herself as "Ida Applewood," and is assigned to Room 130. Ida B realizes she doesn't belong at school or at home anymore. She is filled with misery, but pushes down her desire to cry.

Chapter 15

Ida B stops at the doorway of Room 130, observing the classroom like a soldier going into battle. She can tell the classroom is a warm, inviting place. Still, her new hard heart won't let her feel it. Her teacher, Ms. Washington, turns out to be better than Ida B expected, which temporarily disrupts her plan to remain uninvolved and feign complete lack of interest. At recess, a classmate, Claire, asks Ida B to play, but she refuses. Ms. Washington comes over and sits next to Ida B. "Anything you want to talk about?" she asks. Ida B responds, "No, ma'am." Ms. Washington tells Ida B that she'll be there to listen when Ida B is ready to talk. Ms. Washington lingers a bit, but Ida B doesn't soften.

Chapter 16

The school bus—a.k.a., The Yellow Prison of Propulsion—drops Ida B off at her driveway. Ida B makes a plan to go directly to her room so she can avoid her mother's questions and tired eyes. Instead, her father (whom she mentally refers to as the Deputy of Doom and Disaster) commands Ida B to come to the kitchen. Her mother asks if she wants to talk, but Ida says she is tired. Her father asked how her day went. Caught between her impulse to be brutally honest and her desire to avoid her father's wrath, she tells him it

was O.K., which, she thinks to herself, now stands for "Outrageous Katastrophe." Her father is about to confront her for being rude, but her mother intervenes; Ida B escapes the table.

Chapter 17

At dinner one night, Daddy announces that they've sold the lots to a single family, and they may keep some of the trees. Mama hopes the family has children Ida B can play with. That Saturday, Ida B watches with Rufus from a distance as the builders start clearing the land with a backhoe. When they begin cutting down trees and digging up the roots, Ida B, sickened, runs back to her room to block out the noise, repeating "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," over and over again. Days pass, and Ida B is too depressed even to think up a plan. She feels as if she, too, has been cut down. The remaining trees aren't talking to her, but she hears them lamenting amongst themselves the loss of their companions. Finally, her new heart devises a plan: she will embark on a campaign to scare away the new neighbors. She makes up hand-drawn posters warning of the most dangerous and deadly things she can think of, such as tarantulas and snakes. She tapes the posters everywhere, even to the frame of the new house. She is sure this will keep the interlopers away.

Chapter 18

Back at school, Ms. Washington tries to wear Ida B down. Every day she sits next to her on the steps and waits for her to talk, which Ida B refuses to do. But Ms. W. is wearing Ida B down in other ways: she gives Ida B books she thinks the girl will enjoy; she reads aloud to the class, and her warm, rich voice gives Ida B a sense of peace and caring, and inspires Ida B to try reading aloud at home to Rufus the dog and Lulu the cat. Finally, she asks Ida B to help Ronnie learn the multiplication tables. Ida B agrees, despite her resolve to be cold, because Ms. Washington's voice reminds her what it feels like to be loved.

Chapter 19

Ida B takes pity on Ronnie, knowing he's a good guy who is embarrassed by the need for tutoring. He's the fastest runner in the fourth grade but thinks he's "not too good at brain stuff." Ida assures him he is—he just doesn't know it. Ida shrewdly assesses Ronnie as a competitor, so she turns learning the times tables into a game, with regular competitions. Ronnie insists they play for quarters; Ida says she'll challenge him to a race after school whenever they play the multiplication game, giving him a chance to win the quarters back. The plan works, and Ida can tell Ronnie's been practic-

ing the multiplication tables at home because he loves to win. The experience expands Ida B's hard heart, although she tells herself that she can't really consider Ronnie a friend because she met him at school.

Chapter 20

One day after lunch, Ms. W. has a sore throat and can't read to the class. She suggests a guest reader: Ida B. Taken off-guard, Ida B agrees to read the book, which is one of her favorites. At first nervous, Ida B soon loses herself in the reading. The kids are enthralled, Ms. W. praises her, and Ida B gets a warm glow that stays with her all the way home.

Chapter 21

Everyday when she comes home, her parents ask Ida B how school was, and everyday she tells them it was "O.K." Today, though, is different: Ida B cannot contain her happiness at having read for the class. Even though she's still "making a stand" against the changes in her family and her valley, she allows the joy to spill over, and sees answering joy in her mother, for the first time in a long time. Happiness floods Ida B. But the conversation reminds her of how things used to be, and the old pain returns. The fear that nothing's really changed, and that she will once again have to experience the loss of closeness with her mother, overwhelms her, and she ends the conversation, sadder and lonelier than ever.

Chapter 22

Ida B watches the new family walk around the lots where their house is being built. The family includes parents, a little boy, and a familiar-looking girl about her age. As Ida B watches, the kids discover her threatening handmade posters, which they think are funny. Ida recognizes the girl as Claire, the classmate who'd tried to be nice to her at the beginning of school. Seeing the happy family triggers rage and jealousy in Ida B, and when Claire and her brother come to introduce themselves, she reacts with hostility, yelling at them to get off her property and go away. The little boy bursts into tears, and Claire tells Ida, "You're mean." Ida feels remorse, but her "cold heart" won't let her make amends. It tells her she's "won."

Chapter 23

At dinner that night, there is more unwelcome news: Ida B's parents plan to plant new apple trees in the south field and give the new orchard to her. Instead of being grateful, Ida B is angry, seeing it as an attempt to "buy her off" with a new orchard after the destruction of the old one. She tells them the new orchard can't bring the

old trees back, and accuses them of breaking their promises to her. Her mother is understanding, but her father reacts with outrage. Part of Ida B wants to forgive and accept the gesture, but her new heart won't let her. She runs from the table without being excused, while her new heart tells her she's "won" again. However, she feels terrible and can't sleep that night.

Chapter 24

On the way to school Monday morning, Ida B prepares for an encounter with Claire, convinced that Claire will retaliate. She tries to anticipate all the ways in which Claire might get her revenge. But Claire confounds Ida B by doing nothing other than avoid her. Ida B actually wants Claire to retaliate, to even the score, but Claire isn't cooperating. This confuses and disturbs Ida B.

Chapter 25

The idea now occurs to Ida B that maybe Claire isn't as evil as she'd thought, that maybe Ida B "yelled at the wrong people about the wrong thing at the wrong time." She is plagued by the worry that maybe she *is* just "mean." In class, Ida B claims she isn't feeling well when Ms. Washington asks her to read. The real reason is that the idea of Claire listening bothers her.

Chapter 26

On Wednesday, Mrs. W. sits down next to Ida B at recess and asks if there is anything she wants to talk about. Ida B has been holding everything in for so long she thinks she will burst. She asks Mrs. W., "Did you ever do something that seemed right at the time, but later it seemed kind of wrong?" When Mrs. W. tells her she has, Ida B is relieved. Mrs. W. advises that Ida B apologize. Suddenly, Ida B's heart feels light and free; she decides to say "I'm sorry" to Claire.

Chapter 27

Ida B makes plans to apologize, but she draws the line at exposing herself to public humiliation. Therefore, since she expects Claire to respond with hostility, she resolves to catch her alone in the girl's bathroom.

Chapter 28

Ida B keeps careful watch on Clare, waiting for her chance, but every attempt to catch Clara alone is unsuccessful. Finally, Ida B gets permission to go to the bathroom, and when she comes out of the stall, Clara confronts her, demanding to know why Ida B is following her. Ida B tries to explain, but is so stunned the words won't come out. Claire demands to be left alone and stalks out. Ida B ends up feeling worse than ever.

Chapter 29

On Saturday morning, Ida B is sitting doing nothing when she sees the DeLunas' car pull in the drive. Ida B crosses over the imaginary line of the property and approaches Mrs. DeLuna, Claire, and Claire's brother, who hides behind his mother's leg. She apologizes to Claire and her brother for her bad behavior in the woods, and explains to Claire that she was following her so she could apologize. Ida B considers telling them about her mother being sick, and the trees being killed, and going back to school, but she doesn't know where to start. They don't respond to her apology, but as she leaves and returns home, she feels better.

Chapter 30

Ida B realizes she isn't finished with apologies. She makes a trek to the orchard, stands in the middle, and apologizes to the trees for failing to protect their friends. Crying, she tells the trees everything: about her mother, and the lump, and school, about her treatment of Claire and her brother. She explains that she has avoided them because she thought they would be angry with her. Finally, her tree-friends forgive her. Heartened, she walks to the brook and apologizes for her absence. Finally, she apologizes to the old tree, not just for her mean behavior but for the cruel intention behind it. The old tree accepts the apology and sends her a message of love in return, and the last bits of hardness crumble away from her heart.

Chapter 31

On Monday, Mrs. W., as always, asks Ida B is there's anything she'd like to talk about; Ida B says, "No, ma'am"—but this time she does it with a smile. Although Claire and Ida don't become friends, the hostility is gone and they acknowledge each other again. Finally, at recess, Ronnie invites Ida B to join the game of dodgeball, and for the first time, Ida B joins the other children. She's quickly tagged out the first game, but by the end of recess, she decides she can become a dodgeball player "of great skill and fame."

Chapter 32

At home, Ida B is drying the dishes with her mother. There's a silence between her and Mama that Ida B knows she needs to cross. When Mama asks Ida B if she'll read the story to her sometime, Ida B says yes; the line is crossed, and the warm glow of love and acceptance is restored between them. As Mama and Ida B are finishing the dishes, Daddy comes in and asks Ida to go for a walk. Ida B is nervous during the first alone time

with Daddy since the incident in the barn when he told her she had to go back to school. They wordlessly apologize to each other, and exchange words about the earth: people's role as caretakers, and the earth's care for people. Ida B's heart fills up again. Later, she lingers on the porch after Daddy has gone inside. She observes the land, the mountain, the trees, and the stars, and ponders her connection with them. Then she wishes them goodnight, and for the first time in a long time, they wish her goodnight in return.\

Author Sketch

Katherine Hannigan grew up in western New York with a family that included two brothers and an assortment of cats and dogs. She has undergraduate degrees in mathematics, education, and painting, and a graduate degree in studio art. She has worked as an education coordinator for Head Start and, most recently, as an assistant professor of art and design. Katherine moved to Iowa and fell in love with the space, the hills, the woods, and the friendliness of the people. Moving to Iowa prompted her to begin writing. She started many books, but it wasn't until she heard author Kate DiCamillo speak that she was truly inspired. That night, she returned home and began to write *Ida B*.

Katherine and her family try to be ecologically responsible. They grow their own vegetables organically, recycle, and compost all organic waste. In the future they plan to work toward using renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and geothermal power. Ms. Hannigan practices what she preaches in that all copies of *Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World* are printed on 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper. No trees were cut down to create the paper to print these books. As Ida B's father says, "We are the earth's caretakers."

Critic's Corner

Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World, has earned generally glowing reviews from critics. *Kirkus Reviews* called it "a poignant, affirming, and often funny debut from a promising new author"; *School Library Journal* praised its "spot-on grasp of human emotions, and Ida B's delightful turns of phrase"; and *Publishers Weekly* noted that "Hannigan shows a remarkable understanding of a stubborn child's perspective in her honest, poignant portrayal of loss and rebirth." The book garnered a number of awards as well, including the Josette Frank Award, the William

Allen White Children's Book Award, the Publisher's Weekly Best Book Award, and the Bluebonnet Award, and was named an American Library Association *Booklist* Editor's Choice.

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<http://www.kansashomeschool.org/cms/content/view/27/78/>

Objectives

General Objectives

1. To understand change
2. To analyze the novel's title
3. To assess main character's personality
4. To comment on human reactions to change
5. To understand loss
6. To sympathize with the main characters plight
7. To find examples of compassion
8. To analyze style and its function
9. To evaluate relations between the narrator, characters, and reader

Specific Objectives

1. To understand the difficulty of a child facing a parent's illness
2. To sympathize with Ida B's reaction to the upheaval in her life
3. To recognize the importance of encouragement and caring
4. To determine how the novel generates humor and emotion
5. To see how Ida B matures
6. To describe how Ida B copes with loss
7. To sort the web of relationships between characters
8. To grasp Ida B's motivation in frightening Claire and her brother
9. To evaluate the novel as literature

Literary Terms and Applications

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

Characterization: the different ways an author tells readers about characters. Writers can tell about charac-

ters directly or let the readers reach their own decisions about a character indirectly by showing the comments, thoughts, and actions of the other characters. Hannigan uses both direct and indirect characterizations to show how Ida B copes with the changes in her life.

Conflict: in literature, a struggle or fight. There are two kinds of conflict. In an external conflict, characters struggle against a force outside themselves. In an internal conflict, characters battle a force within themselves. *Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World* has strong external and internal conflicts as Ida B struggles with being forced to return to public school, coping with her mother's illness, and the loss of her beloved trees.

Metaphor: a figure of speech that directly compares two seemingly unrelated subjects. "All the world's a stage" is a metaphor. "When she'd read, her voice wrapped around my head and my heart, and it softened and lightened everything up" is an example of a metaphor from the book.

Simile: a figure of speech that compares two seemingly unrelated subjects using "like" or "as." "My love is like a red, red rose" is a simile. "And his voice was soft like rabbit's fur, light like smoke" is an example of a simile from the book.

Cross-curricular sources

DVD and Video

Stepmom (1998)
The Family Stone (2005)

Internet (cancer)

<http://www.kidskonnected.org/html/bodyfaq.htm>
www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/content/CRI_2_6X_Psychosocial

Literature

Patricia Reilly Giff, *All the Way Home*
Kate DiCamillo, *Because of Winn-Dixie*
Peg Kehret, *Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio*
Barbara Park, *The Graduation of Jake Moon*
Tracey Chevalier, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*
Louise Borden, *Good Luck, Mrs. K!*
Rita Geller, *Victoria's Smile*
Trudy Krishner, *Kathy's Hats: A Story of Hope*

Internet (environment)

<http://www.acornnaturalists.com/store/>
<http://www.ibuydifferent.org/>

Literature (environment)

Elizabeth Rusch, *Generation Fix*
 Pamela Roberts, *Kids Taking Action*
 Gregory Smith and Dilafruz R. Williams, *Ecological: Education in Action*

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Katherine Hannigan's *Ida B... and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World* should include these aspects:

Themes

- family
- change
- illness
- loss
- kindness
- love
- maturing
- understanding
- coping skills
- nature

Motifs

- fear of losing a parent
- loss of family security
- losing trust
- respecting nature
- evolving maturity
- personal discovery
- experiencing and showing kindness
- reconnecting with other children and school
- situational humor
- adaptation

Meaning Study

Below are significant quotes from the novel. Explain each in context. Page numbers pinpoint each entry so that you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. "The best I've gotten so far is some old man from way up in Roaring Forks called up Mama and Daddy and told them I was sending out notes with my name and address on them and they might want to discourage that." (p. 6)
(Ida B believes that the brook ends either in Canada or the ocean. She sends notes on little rafts that she has built, hoping to get answers. An elderly man found one of her notes and notified her parents that

she was sending out her name and address, which he thought was a potentially dangerous pastime.)

2. "There's more than one way to tell each other things, and there's more than one way to listen, too. And if you've never heard a tree telling you something, then I'd say you don't really know how to listen just yet." (p. 9)
(Ida B is an intuitive young girl and very imaginative. She is also so in tune with nature that she believes the trees are trying to tell her something. While sitting in the old tree, she gets a cold feeling inside and realizes that something is wrong in her family.)
3. "We take care of it and all of the things on it. And when we're done with it, it should be left better than we found it." (p. 30)
(Ida B's father is explaining about the responsibility we all have of taking care of the earth. He wants her to realize that even though their farm land will be hers one day in the eyes of the law, from a moral standpoint she really doesn't own it. She is just a caretaker.)
4. "Now, even when I was little, I liked to make plans. I wanted to know what was coming so I could stay away from the bad stuff as much as possible and get ready for the good stuff." (p. 47)
(Ida B is a long-range thinker by nature; she's a planner. She collects information in an effort to better understand her world and make informed decisions. This is her intrinsic personality. One of the things that made kindergarten especially difficult for Ida B was that Ms. Myers was too controlling. She withheld information unnecessarily in an effort to exert her power and keep kids in line. This kind of approach is antithetical to Ida B's worldview, and to that of her parents, or at any rate, her mother.)
5. "But by then three weeks would be up and it'd be time for another treatment. All the happiness that thought it might be safe to come back to our house had to turn around and go back to where it came from. Even the glowing that was Mama's disappeared from her eyes, and I couldn't find it no matter how long I looked at her." (p. 71)
(The break between cancer treatments for Ida B's mother was three weeks. By the end of the third week, Ida B's mom would begin to feel better and would return to her old self again, teaching Ida B and helping her father. However, just as Mama began to feel better, it would be time for another

treatment, and the painful cycle would repeat itself, leaving Mama too exhausted to be a parent, and Ida B filled with fears of losing her mother permanently.)

6. "I don't mean to complain and I don't want to whine, but Mama's not Mama, and Daddy's not Daddy, and I miss them, and I miss the life we used to have, and I am so lonely." (p. 72)
(Ida B is having a difficult time adjusting to the drastic changes at home. After her mother's surgery she returned home, but was still sick. Her mother was unable to continue teaching her and her father was busy with the farm. Ida B and her dad had to be so quiet she wasn't sure if they were trying not to wake her mother or trying not to wake the cancer. Ida B would sit in her room and cry. She missed the normal day-to-day activities with her parents. She missed the way her life used to be.)
7. "But as I cried, my heart was being transformed. It was getting smaller and smaller in my chest and hardening up like a rock. The smaller and harder my heart got, the less I cried, until finally I stopped completely." (p. 87)
(The creation of a "new heart" that is small and hard is Ida B's metaphor for the negative emotional transformation she undergoes in the wake of her mother's illness and its associated changes. Ida B is filled with anger and fear, and makes a decision to close herself off emotionally from her loved ones and others who would try to help her. In effect, her anger becomes her refuge.)
8. "I could tell this was a warm place. Not a warm temperature place, but a warm-feeling-inside place. Some part of me knew it, but my heart refused to feel it." (p. 101)
(Ida B has dreaded going to school, but when she arrives at Ms. Washington's room, she is surprised to find it inviting. However, she refuses at this point to let go of her anger, instead opting to remain uninvolved and unresponsive in the classroom.)
9. "Nobody, I could tell, was thinking that this land used to belong to somebody else, that here were trees that lived here that had names and were alive, and they got cut down so this house could get built. None of them was thinking that the only reason they were here was because my mama got sick. But I was." (p. 163)
(Ida B is thinking these thoughts as she observes the new family, which includes Claire, visiting the site of

their future home in what used to be part of the orchard. She reflects bitterly on the real reason the land has become available and all the other changes have come into her life: Mama's illness.)

10. "Well, I was so relieved, because Ms. W. understood and she was still sitting there next to me, that all of a sudden it felt like my heart was light and free and rising up and taking me along with it."
(Ida B confides in Ms. Washington her sense of guilt over her hostile outburst toward Claire and Claire's little brother. Ida B is relieved when Ms. Washington admits that she, too, has said and done things she regrets, in a show of acceptance that helps Ida B admit her wrongdoing and resolve to apologize.)

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 with quotations.

Character

1. Contrast Ida B's intellectual and emotional abilities.
(Ida B is intelligent and intuitive. She has a creative imagination and a sensitive understanding of the natural environment, and is intellectually sophisticated. However, emotionally, she is merely a ten-year-old girl who is incapable of processing the terrible changes her mother's illness has brought. On a practical level, the illness results in the short-term loss of her mother, since the treatment makes Mama too weak and exhausted to care for Ida B. The illness also brings with it the threat of a greater loss, since Ida B is justifiably worried that her mother might die. In addition, many other things that have given Ida B a sense of stability change as well: Daddy, the most important person in her life after Mama, changes, becoming stressed and angry in the face of his wife's illness; her daily routine changes drastically, as she must adjust to less time with both her parents, as well as being forced back to school when she had been home schooled; even the familiar farm landscape, to which she had felt inextricably linked and which had given her an added sense of stability, is compromised. Nothing remains the same, and it is too much for her.)

Style

2. Characterize the style of the novel.
(The novel is written in narrative style that often uses humor to depict the nature of the main characters.)

The style mirrors Ida B's personality.)

Character Development

3. How does Ida B change or develop during the novel?
(Ida B begins to realize that her mother's illness isn't anyone's fault, and that her parents were just as shaken by the cancer as she was. She begins to understand that selling part of the orchard was necessary and not a broken promise. Ida B also learns to adapt to new situations and people, and to accept that change is a part of life and can be a good thing. Ultimately, she realizes that even though things change, there is still love and a place in the world for her, and that she has the power, through right actions, to make a place for herself.)

Conflict

4. Explain the conflict Mr. Applewood has with selling the land, knowing the trees will be cut down.
(Like Ida B, Mr. Applewood derives a sense of security from the land; the view of himself as a caretaker of the earth is one he has imparted to his daughter as well. Though he takes pride in the land and understands the consequences to the orchard if he sells, he feels forced into it by the economic circumstances of his wife's illness.)

Interpretation

5. Is knowing the background of the Applewood family important to a reading of *Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World*?
(Understanding the family's pride in their land is essential to reading the novel. Ida B has been taught that the land is important and should be treated with care. Selling the land and cutting down the trees is something the family needs to do to pay for the care of Ida B's mother, but it's a decision that is not taken lightly. The decision is even more significant in light of Ida's father's view of himself as a mere "caretaker" of the land. Mama's illness is a devastating event for the whole family.)

Motivation

6. Explain Mr. and Mrs. Applewood's decision to send Ida B back to public school.
(Mrs. Applewood is too sick to continue teaching Ida B at home, and Mr. Applewood is too busy working the farm to keep the family afloat financially. Therefore, the decision to send Ida B to school is mainly an economic one, as is the decision to sell part of the land; however, her parents may also feel

that Ida B needs the new friends and coping skills that school can provide.)

Author Method

7. How does the author create the character of Ida B?
(The author uses Ida B's words and thoughts to express what she is thinking and feeling. She also draws the reader into the lives of Ida B and the other characters with descriptions of people, places, and events.)

Across the Curriculum

Drama/Performance

1. Select sections of dialogue from the novel and perform them. Do characters have recognizable speech patterns or accents?
2. Recast one chapter from Claire's point of view.
3. Debate whether or not *Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World* should be mandatory reading in your grade.
4. Working with a partner, role-play a scene between Ida B and Mrs. Washington in which Ida B tells Mrs. Washington about her mother's illness.

Math

5. Is cancer treatment more expensive for the uninsured? Why?
6. Play Celebrity Challenge with multiplication tables as Ida B and Ronnie did.
7. How much does it cost to remove a tree? What is the cost to the environment when trees are cut down?

Psychology

8. Make a website about helping children deal with ill parents. Include links to related sites.

Art

9. Draw a picture of Ida B's old tree, the apple trees, and the brook.
10. Make a model of Lulu and the High-Rise and Exotic Resort Ida builds for her.
11. Make a model of Mrs. Washington's fourth-grade classroom.

Ida B...and Her Plans Katherine Hannigan

12. Write a comic book illustrating an average day at school for Ida B.

Cinema/Film

13. Select quotes and passages from the novel that you think capture Ida B's personality best. Write a vignette based on your selection, and perform it.

Language

14. Do Ida B and her parents speak with an accent?

Journalism

15. Write a review of *Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World*. Include a short synopsis, a brief author biography, comments on the book's critical success, and a summary judgment on its literary value.

16. Learn more about the environment. Write an article about organizations that help the environment.

Literature

18. Write an essay in which you find humor in *Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World*. What sort of humor appears in the novel? What generates the humor?
19. Write an essay in which you contrast Ida B's internal reactions to events or scenarios with the reader's internal reactions to the same situations. How does the contrast between the two generate emotion in the novel?
20. Read aloud passages that give a clear sense of the main characters' personalities. Discuss the main features of each character's personality and these are communicated. Are the characters primarily defined through how they think, speak, or act, or a combination?

Composition

21. Write a short scene about how Claire and Ronnie feel about Ida B. Compare their feelings. Does Claire really think she is mean? Do Claire and Ronnie understand what Ida B is going through?
22. Compose a diary from Mrs. Washington's perspective. Explain how she feels about Ida B. What plans does she make to help break through to Ida B?
23. Write a letter that Mrs. Applewood might have written to Ida B explaining her illness and the need to sell the land. How does Mrs. Applewood feel about the events that changed her daughter's life?

Science

24. Write a report on the continuing effort to cure cancer. Investigate new treatments and equipment that have been invented to help find and fight cancer in the early stages.
25. What happens to paper when it is processed using chlorine? Why is chlorine used in processing paper?
26. What are dioxins? How do they effect the earth and it inhabitants?
27. Why did Ida B's face turn red after leaving the soap mask on her face all night?

Economics

28. How many people in the United States do not have health insurance? Why?
29. How does recycling affect the economy?

Education

30. Make an oral report on the differences between being home-schooled or attending regular classes in a public school.
31. Research teaching strategies for educating home-schooled children and children who attend public school.

Alternate Assessment

1. Discuss what you learned about life from *Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World*.
2. Make a list of actions that show Ida B is angry with her parents. Does she blame them for the changes in her life?
3. Write a story from Ida B's perspective several years later. How does she feel about her actions toward her parents and the children at her school? Does she still keep in touch with Ms. Washington?

Vocabulary Test

Circle the definition that best matches how the word is used in the novel.

_____1. fierce

- a. level
- b. fierce
- c. flame
- d. smooth

_____2. ruckus

- a. disturbance
- b. playroom
- c. truck
- d. party

_____3. repel

- a. clean
- b. damage
- c. keep away
- d. indent

_____4. ponder

- a. water
- b. sell
- c. yell
- d. contemplate

_____5. exotic

- a. unusual
- b. familiar
- c. leave
- d. island

_____6. solution

- a. salute
- b. mixture
- c. greeting
- d. melody

_____7. furrow

- a. crease
- b. nest
- c. animal
- d. sign

_____8. patience

- a. sick person
- b. anger
- c. irritation
- d. tolerance

_____9. nervous

- a. uneasy
- b. calm
- c. singing group
- d. goofy

_____10. schedule

- a. rule
- b. plan
- c. book
- d. thought

_____11. impenetrable

- a. stupid
- b. thoughtless
- c. dense
- d. calm

_____12. somber

- a. cheerful
- b. musical instrument
- c. dance
- d. sad

_____13. vivacious

- a. lively
- b. successful
- c. hungry
- d. clever

_____14. occasion

- a. shoe
- b. sound
- c. event
- d. food

_____15. curious

- a. cabinet
- b. interested
- c. boring
- d. sleepy

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Name the character(s) who fit(s) these descriptions.

- _____ 1. won't let Ida B do anything until it's "time"
- _____ 2. is the fastest runner in the fourth grade
- _____ 3. tells Ida B that something bad is heading her way
- _____ 4. family is building a house on land sold by Ida B's family
- _____ 5. makes a soap mask
- _____ 6. believes we are the earth's caretakers
- _____ 7. is diagnosed with cancer
- _____ 8. whispers to Ida B that "it will be all right"
- _____ 9. is more talkative than the old tree
- _____ 10. is called "the Dungeon of Deadly Dullness"
- _____ 11. invites Ida B to play on her first day of school
- _____ 12. smells of peanut butter and flowers
- _____ 13. is called "the Yellow Prison of Propulsion"
- _____ 14. gets help learning the multiplication tables
- _____ 15. believes making plans helps make a better life

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true, F for false, or O for opinion.

- Ida B was better off being home-schooled.
- The Old Tree is the first to warn Ida B of the trouble coming her way.
- Ida B builds a home for Lulu.
- Ida B enjoys having Ms. Myers for a teacher.
- Claire has trouble learning her multiplication tables.
- Ida B posts scary signs on the new family's property.
- Mrs. Applewood should have talked more about her cancer.
- Ida B apologizes to Claire and her brother.
- Ms. Washington is a good listener and a helpful teacher.
- Ida B receives a better education at home than at school.

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

Briefly explain the character's motivation for each action.

- Why does Ida B post the warning signs?
- Why does Ms. Washington sit next to Ida B?
- Why are plans so important to Ida B?
- Why do Ida B's parents decide to home-school her?
- Why does Ida B apologize to Claire and her brother?

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- Which character do you admire most, and why?
- What is the significance of the book's title?
- Describe how life would be different for a home-schooled child.
- Discuss Mr. Applewood's attitude about taking care of the earth.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Identification (30 points)

Identify the person, place, action, or thing that matches the description.

- _____ 1. "I need you to help Ronnie with his times tables."
- _____ 2. "Well, Ida, there are different times for different things. I'll let you know when it's time for each thing."
- _____ 3. An impenetrable wall of disinfectant for your face
- _____ 4. Grinned like a jack-o'-lantern with bad intentions
- _____ 5. "I'm not good at brain stuff"
- _____ 6. Her Someday Friends' Big City High-Rise and Exotic Resort
- _____ 7. Dungeon of Deadly Dullness
- _____ 8. "Do you want to play with us, Ida?"
- _____ 9. Deputy of Doom and Disaster
- _____ 10. "I just love making words into stories with the sound of my voice"
- _____ 11. Outrageous Katastrophe
- _____ 12. Saliva Factory
- _____ 13. Beulah, Charlie, Jacques Cousteau, and Viola
- _____ 14. Yellow Prison of Propulsion
- _____ 15. "I think the earth takes care of us"

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Provide an answer to each of these questions.

- How long is Ida B home-schooled?
- What does Ida B compare cancer to?
- How many weeks are there between Mrs.

Applewood's treatments?

4. What does Ida B send down the brook?
5. What does Ida B help Ronnie with?
6. Why does Ida B think her parents broke their promise?
7. What does Ida B compare herself to when waking up in the morning?
8. What does Ida B's heart change into?
9. Why does Ida B apologize to the Old Tree?
10. What is the name of Ida B's school?

Part III: Completion (30 points)

Pick the word that best completes each statement.

1. (**Claire, Emma**) confronts Ida B in the bathroom at school.
2. Ida B wants to (**yell at, apologize to**) Claire and her brother.
3. Ida B makes (**phone calls, signs**) in order to scare away the new family.
4. Ida B puts (**her mother's, Ms. Washington's**) hair in a "Bag of Assorted Things for Not Yet Determined Plans."
5. Ida B's father believes we are the earth's (**inhabitants, caretakers**).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Why does Mrs. Washington sit with Ida? Is she an important character in the story?
2. Analyze how the story would be different if Ida B were older.
3. Do Ida B and Claire become friends? Should Claire forgive Ida B?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

1. b
2. a
3. c
4. d
5. a
6. b
7. a
8. d
9. a
10. b
11. c
12. d
13. a
14. c
15. b

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

1. Ms. Myers
2. Ronnie
3. Paulie T
4. Claire
5. Ida B
6. Mr. Applewood
7. Mrs. Applewood
8. the Old Tree
9. the brook
10. the fourth-grade classroom
11. Claire
12. Ms. Washington
13. the school bus
14. Ronnie
15. Ida B

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

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

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

1. Ida B is upset about having to sell part of the orchard. She thinks she can scare the new family away.

2. Ms. Washington understands the difficulty of making new friends at a new school, and she knows Ida B is having emotional difficulties. By sitting next to Ida B, she lets her know that she is willing to talk and help her with her problems.

3. Ida B's life changes drastically. In the past, plans kept her from getting in trouble. They have kept her focused and helped her to retain some control over her life.

4. When Mrs. Applewood visits Ida B's kindergarten class, she realizes that Ms. Myers is controlling and not creative, and therefore is unable to provide a stimulating enough classroom environment for someone as bright as Ida B.

5. Ida B begins to realize that what is happening is not Claire's fault, and that selling the property was necessary. She starts to mature and to understand that what she did was wrong.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Identification (30 points)

1. Ms. Washington
2. Ms. Myers
3. the Soap Mask
4. Paulie T
5. Ronnie
6. Lulu
7. fourth-grade classroom
8. Claire
9. Mr. Applewood
10. Ida B
11. O.K.
12. Rufus
13. the trees in the orchard
14. the school bus
15. Ida B

Part II: Short Answers (20 points)

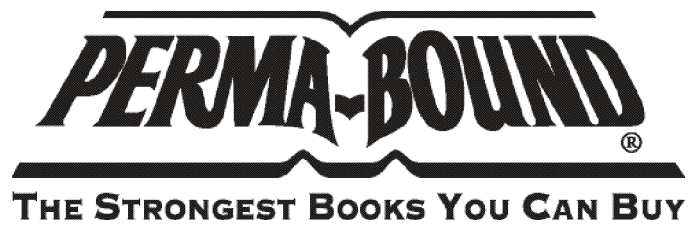
1. four years
2. bugs in a tree
3. three weeks
4. rafts with notes attached
5. multiplication tables
6. because they sold part of their land and sent Ida B back to public school
7. a snake in spring
8. a hard, sharp, black stone
9. she kicked it
10. Ernest B. Lawson Elementary School

Part III: Completion (30 points)

1. Claire
2. apologize to
3. signs
4. her mother's
5. caretakers

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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