



Penny From Heaven

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Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Chapter 1: Best Seat in the House

Penny thinks a lot about Heaven, but Penny's Heaven has nothing to do with clouds or angels. In Penny's Heaven there is butter pecan ice cream and swimming pools. It is a place where the Brooklyn Dodgers always win and Penny has the best seat in the house, right behind the Dodgers' dugout. She is eleven years old and her real name is Barbara Ann Falucci. No one ever calls her Barbara, with the exception of her teachers. She is called Penny because her father was crazy about Bing Crosby and loved his song, "Pennies from Heaven."

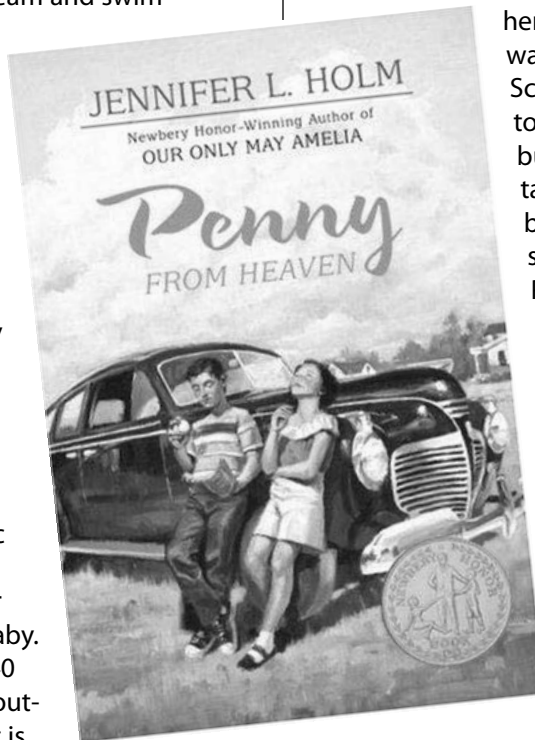
Chapter 2: The Lucky Bean

Uncle Dominic is Penny's favorite uncle. Everyone says Uncle Dominic looks like Penny's father, although Penny doesn't remember her father because he died when she was a baby. Uncle Dominic lives in his car, a 1940 Plymouth Roadking that is parked outside her Grandma Nonny's house. It is 1953, and not exactly normal for people in New Jersey to live in their cars. No one in the family thinks it's weird, or if they do, no one ever says anything. Uncle Dominic is a kind of hermit and wears slippers instead of shoes.

Uncle Dominic is sitting in his car listening to the ball game. Penny and Uncle Dominic's favorite team is the Brooklyn Dodgers and they call them "Dem Bums." While listening to the game, Uncle Dominic gives Penny a present. It is a dark brown bean that Uncle Dominic says is a lucky bean. He tells her to put the bean in her pocket, saying, "It will keep you safe." It is a hot, sticky June day, and school is out for the summer. As Penny walks to her house, the lucky bean rubs in her pocket. Penny lives down the street with her mother, her other grandparents—Me-me and Pop-pop—and her poodle,

Scarlett O'Hara.

Pop-pop is a little deaf and loves talking about World War II. Even though the war is still going on in Korea, Pop-pop loves talking about how the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor while America slept. Me-me is a terrible cook. She boils vegetables until they are pure mush and every bit of flavor is gone. Penny says, "Her liver is worse than her pot roast, which is worse than her beef Stroganoff, and you don't even want to know about her meat loaf." Scarlett O'Hara has bad breath and likes to chase squirrels. She also does her business all over the house. They don't talk about Penny's father in this house because it upsets her mother. Me-me shakes her head when she talks about Penny's father. She says, "Your father's people," but what she really means is that they are Italian and Catholic. Me-me and Pop-pop are American and Methodist.



Penny's mother is late getting home from work. She greets Penny, calling her "Bunny" (her nickname for Penny), and asking about her day. Earlier in the day, Penny's Uncle Ralphie offered her a job working in his butcher shop.

Penny will work with her cousin

Frankie making deliveries and sweeping up the store at night. Penny's mother is afraid of everything and doesn't think the job is a good idea. Penny can't go swimming because there might be polio in the public pool. She can't go to the movie theater because she might catch polio there, too. Penny can't go on the bumper cars because she might break her neck. Everything is too dangerous! The only thing Penny thinks is too dangerous is Me-me's cooking! However, after Penny pleads to be allowed to take the job, her mother relents, as long as her uncle makes Frankie go with her on deliveries.

Chapter 3: Mrs. Morelli's Brains

Penny arrives at the store as Uncle Ralphie is giving Mrs. Chickalos her meat order. He asks her if she needs any ham and when she says she can't afford it, he gives it to

her anyway. Uncle Ralphie is always giving food away. This doesn't make Aunt Fulvia very happy. She sits at the cash register like a sentry, ringing up purchases, putting half the money in the till and half in the pocket of her skirt. Uncle Ralphie's nickname for Aunt Fulvia is *Patanella mia*, which means "my little potato." A lot of Penny's relatives have nicknames. Frankie arrives late, saying he had to help with his little brother. His eyes are wide and innocent as an altar boy's. Frankie's father, Uncle Angelo, spent some time in jail a few years ago. He wasn't a very good criminal and got caught right away. Frankie is crazy about his dad and thinks being a criminal would be neat. Penny worries about him.

Penny and Frankie go to the back of the store, where Uncle Dominic is grinding beef into hamburger. Uncle Dominic greets Penny, calling her "princess." Penny and Uncle Dominic's favorite team is the Dodgers, and they hope they will win the World Series this year. Uncle Dominic used to play in the minor leagues and was invited to spring training with the Dodgers one year, but something happened, and he quit baseball. Now he works in the store for Uncle Ralphie. Uncle Ralphie sends Penny and Frankie out to deliver pork loin for Mrs. Giaquinto, chicken for Mrs. Wiederhorn, and brains for Mrs. Morelli.

The first stop for Penny and Frankie is Mrs. Giaquinto, whom they know as Ann Marie Harrison. Ann Marie dated their cousin Benny until he left for college last fall, but they haven't seen much of her lately. She has beautiful eyes like Elizabeth Taylor, but they're sad eyes too, and the children are surprised to see a purple bruise on her cheekbone when she opens the door. Ann Marie's huge husband appears, and threatens them. They take off on the bike. The next stop is the increasingly forgetful Mrs. Wiederhorn, who surprises Penny by asking after her dad. Finally, they stop at Mrs. Morelli's where they use the brains as a diversion to escape from Mrs. Morelli's vicious dog; the dog stops chasing them and gobbles the meat as they ride away.

Chapter 4 : A Man Who Can Fix a Toilet

Penny dreams that she is standing on a beach. The sky is blue and the sun is shining down on her. Penny hears a voice and wades out into the water. Her father is calling to her, but the farther she swims, the farther away her father seems to be. As the dream ends Penny opens her eyes, discovering that there is water all right, and it's pouring down through the ceiling—the toilet is leaking again, and Pop-pop refuses to hire a plumber, since "Any man worth his salt can fix a toilet." While Pop-

pop works on the toilet, Me-me checks up on him, asking Penny to wait for the milkman. Mr. Mulligan, the milkman, is the nicest delivery man. He is from an Irish family, is balding with a tuft of red hair, and has a good sense of humor.

Later, Me-me decides she wants the porch painted with black lacquer. As Pop-pop and Penny paint, Scarlett O'Hara chases a squirrel through the porch, and Penny falls headfirst into the paint while lunging for the dog. Me-me tries to fix the mess, but Penny ends up with a bad haircut and a black streak that turpentine won't remove. Later, Penny visits Frankie and thinks about her former best friend, Veronica Goodman, who has become her sworn enemy since Penny's Uncle Ralphie refused to rent a building to Veronica's father. Veronica has taken her behavioral cues from her bigoted father (who responded to Ralphie's refusal by shouting ethnic slurs at him), and she has also turned most of Penny's friends against her. Frankie is now Penny's best friend. At night, with the scent of black paint in her nostrils, Penny wonders what her father is doing in Heaven, and if he loved her.

Chapter 5: The Luckiest Fella Ever

Penny is visiting her father's family, the Faluccis. Unlike Me-me's kitchen, the kitchen of Grandma Falucci—Nonny—smells delicious. It is in the basement, which also contains a wringer washing machine in the corner. Aunt Gina uses the kitchen upstairs, and Nonny doesn't like the way she cooks. Penny's father, Alfredo—Freddy—was Nonny's firstborn and favorite. He was the first in the family to go to college, and he became a newspaper writer. His loss was a terrible tragedy, and is the reason Nonny always wears black and cries when she sees Penny.

Upstairs, Uncle Paulie is waiting for Penny and Nonny, to take them to Freddy's grave. The glamorous Aunt Gina is disappointed because Paulie had planned to take her shopping instead. Penny's father is buried in Shady Grove Cemetery. Although it's peaceful and tree-filled, it isn't Catholic—the family wasn't allowed to bury Freddy in the Catholic cemetery because Penny's mother hadn't converted by the time he died. Nonny is crying over her son, and Paulie explains to Penny that her grandmother blames doctors who treated him for pneumonia for mishandling Freddy's case. All this is news to Penny, who has been kept in the dark about her father's death, picking up bits and pieces from her Italian family. Later, Penny finds a keepsake box under her mother's bed; the box includes a photo of her mother in a bathing suit on

a beach, looking uncharacteristically happy and care-free. Penny also finds a postcard with a note written by her father: I am the luckiest fell ever.

Chapter 6: Uncles, Uncles Everywhere

It's Sunday and that means dinner at Nonny's house. Penny is the only one from her household who goes, and it's always been this way. Nonny had six kids—Freddy, Uncle Dominic, Uncle Paulie, Aunt Teresa, Uncle Ralphie, and Aunt Rosa. These family dinners make her wish she could speak Italian, but the older family members don't want the young ones, including Penny and Aunt Gina, to learn. Aunt Gina says this is because during World War II, Italy was on the wrong side, with Germany and Japan, and so the Italians who were in America got in trouble. Even Joe DiMaggio's father had trouble. Frankie thinks the real reason they don't want them to know Italian is so that they can have secret conversations, though Frankie and Penny know all the curse words.

Penny slips away to find Uncle Dominic. He doesn't like big gatherings, and Penny believes that he prefers his dogs to people. He says they are nicer than people and they don't mind that he wears his slippers. Uncle Dominic never eats with the family, and no one pays much attention to him, except Penny. After dinner, the uncles break out their instruments and start playing. There's a trumpet, a mandolin, a violin, and the piano. Soon everyone's singing and dancing and loud, and it's a regular party. Afterward, Uncle Dominic drives Penny home; he never lets her walk. Her silent house is a sharp contrast to Nonny's boisterous one.

The next morning, Penny borrows Frankie's bike and goes to Uncle Nunzio's factory. Uncle Nunzio's secretary comments on how much Penny looks like her mother, who was "the most daring girl I knew." Penny is shocked—she can't picture her mother being daring at all. At the factory, Uncle Nunzio lets Penny pick out a new coat—nubby, cranberry-red wool with rabbit fur on the collars and wrists. It has a matching muff and hat. While the coat is being altered, Penny also picks out a fox stole for her mother. Penny returns to find Frankie at home. It irritates Frankie that the uncles are always giving Penny presents, even though he knows it's because her father is dead and everyone feels sorry for her. Frankie declines her invitation to dinner. Later, Frankie and Penny play ball in the back yard and wonder why Uncle Dominic quit playing.

Chapter 7: The Translator

Penny wakes up to her mother's happy laugh, a sound she's not used to. She goes downstairs, where she finds her mother chatting with Mr. Mulligan, the milkman. Mother tells Penny she won't be at dinner. Penny feels sorry for her mother because she works so hard, and she gives her mother her pay from the job with Uncle Ralphie. Penny's mother asks if she is getting excited about her upcoming twelfth birthday, and reminisces about receiving her first real piece of jewelry—a single-strand pearl necklace. Later, while Mother is at work, Penny goes with Pop-pop to the tobacco shop, and Penny persuades him to buy dinner at the Sweete Shoppe instead of braving Me-me's cooking. Nearby is a café where old Italian men drink dark coffee in small cups; the café has Italian-language newspapers. Penny's father wrote for one of these, even though his main job was writing for an English-language newspaper. Everyone at the café loved Freddy, who would translate for them and help them write letters. A lot of the men at the café fought for Italy during World War I, and Penny wonders why Italy was on America's side during the first World War and on the other side during the second. Her musings are interrupted when Stanley Tietelweig walks by with his older brother, Jack. Penny has never really been interested in boys before, but Jack is different. He sure is cute, with his curly dark hair and green eyes.

Chapter 8: Nonny's Underwear

It's a hot July day, but it's cool in Nonny's basement. Frankie and Penny are helping with the laundry. Penny feeds the clothing through the wringer like Me-me taught her. The clothes get squeezed through the rollers, and the water is wrung out of them. Me-me has warned Penny to pay close attention so her fingers don't get pulled in. Frankie asks Penny what she wants for her birthday; Penny says she has been hinting at a new bike. Both Penny and Frankie are beneficiaries of the uncles' largesse—Penny because of her father's death, Frankie because his father, Uncle Angelo, drinks and keeps losing jobs. Penny knows the aunts sneak money to Aunt Teresa (Frankie's mother), and Aunt Fulvia lets her take anything she wants from the butcher shop for free. Frankie wants to get a real job and earn a lot of money.

While they are talking, they decide to find out if Nonny's underwear is as black as the rest of her clothes. When Nonny takes her bath after lunch, Penny rummages in her drawers, finding an album full of newspaper clippings written by her father. Nonny interrupts her, but instead of admonishing her, she simply asks Penny to brush her long hair. Penny realizes that the black cloth-

ing is armor—it protects Nonny from her own home-sickness, and from a country where she still can't speak the language and is afraid to answer the phone.

Chapter 9: The Slider

Uncle Dominic says the thing about a slider is that you never see it coming. Penny returns home from making her deliveries to find her mother looking glamorous in a strapless lemon-yellow dress. Penny's mother is seeing Mr. Mulligan, the milkman; Penny doesn't approve, and doesn't like the fact that Mother has taken off her engagement ring. They have a brief argument, with Mother defending the milkman, and then Mother goes off to finish getting ready, telling Penny they'll talk in the morning. It turns out that Mr. Mulligan has come over for dinner, and to listen to the baseball game with Penny. Penny would like to visit Uncle Dominic after dinner instead, but Mother won't let her; another argument ensues, and Penny tells Mother that the Italian family is more fun. She also asks why she won't talk about Freddy; Mother tells her "there's nothing to say." Afterward, Mr. Mulligan, annoyingly, talks throughout the game. He also calls Mother by her first name, Ellie. With a shock, Penny realizes that her whole life is about to change: Mr. Mulligan will be her father. Crying, she runs to visit Uncle Dominic, who is sitting in his car, listening to the game. He comforts her when she tells him about Mr. Mulligan. Using their shared baseball terminology to convey her sense of betrayal and shock, she tells Uncle Dominic that her mother ambushed her with the news: "She through me a slider, Uncle Dominic!"

Chapter 10: The Water Boy's Treasure

Penny and Frankie when they overhear their uncles talking about a stash of money that their late Grandpa Falucci (whose nick name was the Water Boy) allegedly buried on his property. Frankie wangles his way into doing yard work for Nonny so he can search. He and Penny go to the house and pick up sticks. While there, Penny visits Aunt Gina, a glamorous former Rockette. Gina tells her she's pretty, puts her hair up for her, and warns her to watch out for Frankie, who she believes is heading for trouble. Later, at night, Penny and Frankie go back to Nonny's house; they dig in a likely spot, but discover nothing but the bones of one of Nonny's deceased pets. They are interrupted by Nonny, who has come out on the back porch with a gun. They escape through the bushes without being recognized, but accidentally leave Frankie's bike behind.

Chapter 11: More Peas, Please

The next day is Saturday, and Mr. Mulligan is coming for

dinner. Frankie and Penny are going to play ball at the park. Frankie is excited that their activities occurred in the newspaper's police blotter, but Penny warns Frankie not to tell anyone. At the park, Frankie puts Penny at shortstop, because she has a good arm and can throw faster than any of the boys. Penny daydreams about Jack Teitelzweig, but Veronica shows up instead and proceeds to taunt Penny until Penny throws a punch and bloodies Veronica's nose. Penny gets a black eye from Veronica in the ensuing free-for-all. At dinner, although Mother has tried to cook everything, Me-me has managed to sneak in a dish of peas and onions, which Penny gleefully foists on Mr. Mulligan. After that, the dinner gets worse: Scarlett O'Hara urinates on Mr. Mulligan's shoe, and while Mother is out of the room looking for something to clean up with, Penny answers Mr. Mulligan's inquiry about her eye by informing him that Mother punched her for not making her bed. Mr. Mulligan leaves shortly thereafter.

Chapter 12: No Poking

The next morning Penny arrives at the butcher shop to discover that Aunt Concetta has died. Frankie is glad because he can collect more death cards, which he uses for trading cards. Penny groans—not because she's said about Aunt Concetta, but because she knows it will mean attending another big, loud Italian wedding—Italians do death big. The evening of the funeral, Cousin Benny gives Penny a ride, because Frankie's father is too "sick" to drive her and Frankie. To Penny's questioning, Benny reminisces about her father's funeral, where Nonny tried to throw herself in the casket. They drive by Ann Marie Giaquinto's house, and Penny notices that Benny slows down. At the funeral, Frankie collects cards, and has to be removed by the funeral director for poking the corpse. Uncle Dominic drives the pair home, stopping to retrieve Cousin Benny, who is at Ann Marie's fighting with her husband. Benny tells Dominic that the husband is "no good at all," but Dominic advises him there's nothing he can do. Penny gives Benny her handkerchief, to use on his bloody nose.

Chapter 13: Better than Angels

It's Penny's birthday. Mother gives her a box; she has had her ruby engagement ring converted into a necklace for Penny. Penny can't help thinking her mother has given her father away. After breakfast, Frankie and Penny bike over to the butcher shop, where Uncle Ralphie sends them with a delivery to Nonny's house. Nobody is home, and the drive is deserted. Penny is disappointed. Frankie suggests they go around to the back, and the whole family surprises her. Everyone's

there—Nonny, Uncle Dominic, Uncle Nunzio, Aunt Rosa, Uncle Paulie, Aunt Gina, Uncle Angelo, Aunt Teresa, Aunt Fulvia, Uncle Sally, and all the rest of them. Penny has a cake and wonderful gifts: a satin skirt, a comb and bush set, black patent Mary Janes from Aunt Gina (“dancing shoes”), and a brand new bike with a big red bow. The best gift, however, is from Uncle Dominic: an envelope containing tickets to the night’s Dodgers game. Later, Dominic and Frankie wait in the car while Penny runs in the house to ask her mother if she can go. Though disappointed, Mother gives her permission, telling Penny they can eat her birthday cake for breakfast. Later, at Ebbets Field, Penny, Dominic, and Frankie take in the colorful sights. They have the best seats in the house—in the front row along the first-base line, right above the Dodgers’ dugout. They are so close to the field that they can almost reach out and touch the ballplayers. They are all there – Pee Wee Reese and Duke Snider and Gil Hodges and Roy Campanella! Penny knows that this is better than anything the angels have to offer.

Chapter 14: All for the Best

A few days later Penny wakes to a foul smell: Scarlett O’Hara is lying on the floor in her own mess, unable to move her legs. She takes Scarlett to the veterinarian, who tells Penny to take the dog home and make her comfortable. Penny puts Scarlett’s dog bed on the summer porch so she can have a nice view of the yard. While there, she spies a disheveled Frankie, hiding in the bushes. He tells her he “borrowed” some money from the collection plate at St. Anthony’s, “to help out at home.” Penny is shocked, but takes him the house to call Uncle Ralphie. Frankie leaves. After lunch, Penny visits Frankie’s house, and discovers that Frankie is being sent away. When she returns home, Pop-pop tells her that Scarlett O’Hara has died; it’s “all for the best.” The next morning, a devastated Penny subsequently begs Uncle Dominic to intervene on Frankie’s behalf, and he promises to help. That afternoon, Frankie comes to visit. He says he doesn’t have to go away after all, because Uncle Dominic talked to Uncle Nunzio, who is friends with the bishop, and the bishop agreed to drop the charges. Later, Uncle Dominic buries Scarlett in Nonnie’s back yard, and that night, Penny dreams of Scarlett and the Kings and Queenies of the past, frolicking together and chasing squirrels. Scarlett is the happiest dog in Heaven.

Chapter 15: A Punishment Worse than Death

It’s a steamy August day. Penny and Frankie finish working at the butcher shop, and Frankie wants to go swimming. Me-me forbids it, asking Penny if she wants to

end up in an iron lung (Me-me and Mother both believe public swimming pools are breeding grounds for polio). Frankie and Penny play cards on the porch when Me-me and Pop-pop tell them they are going over to the Harts and won’t be back till five o’clock. As soon as the car disappears around the corner, Frankie drags Penny to the pool, assuring Penny her mother will never know. At the pool, Penny briefly enjoys floating in the pool and daydreaming about being asked on a date by Jack Teitelzweig, who is a lifeguard. Her reverie is interrupted when he calls her name using the bull horn. At the lifeguard stand, to her shame, Penny sees Mother standing next to Jack; all the local kids, led by the vicious Veronica, laugh and clap. In that moment, Penny believes that ending up in an iron lung can’t be any worse than dying of embarrassment.

Penny is not allowed to leave the house for the remainder of the summer. Not only is her summer ruined, but Mother is dating Mr. Mulligan again. Uncle Dominic arrives one day and asks for permission to take Penny to the beach, and Penny is surprised when Me-me lets her go. There, they swim until they’re tired, then go on amusement park rides: the bumper cars, her favorite, plus the Ferris wheel, the teacups, the Tilt-A-Whirl, and the whip. On the way home, Bing Crosby sings “A Perfect Day.”

Chapter 16: So This Is Heaven

Penny and Frankie are in the basement of Nonny’s house, where Frankie is convinced he can find Grandpa Falucci’s treasure. Frankie has volunteered to do the laundry so Uncle Paulie can take Nonny and Aunt Gina to Uncle Nunzio’s factory for new coats. As Frankie searches, Penny does the laundry on the wringer washing machine. Suddenly, Frankie lets out a yelp—he has found a cigar box filled with cash behind a loose brick. Penny is distracted, and her hand is pulled into the wringer. Penny screams in pain as her arm is pulled in to the armpit. Frankie flies into action, pulling the plug out of the wall to stop the wringers. For a moment, they stare in horror; then Penny begins to scream and Frankie runs upstairs, shouting for Uncle Dominic. Penny is in agony. The last thing she remembers is Uncle Dominic carrying her up the stairs. She passes out. When she opens her eyes, Uncle Dominic is driving her to the hospital. He leans over her, but it isn’t him. “My Penny,” her father is saying. “Cocca di papa.” Penny knows she is dying. At the hospital, Penny wakes to yelling. Her mother is shouting at Uncle Dominic. Uncle Nunzio tells her it was an accident, but Mother won’t be

appeased. "Don't you talk to me about accidents!" she shouts. "He killed Freddy and now he's almost killed my daughter!" The room is filled with family. Uncle Dominic tries to talk to Penny's mother, but, distraught and angry, she slaps him. Penny is crushed to see the two people she loves most in the world hating each other. Finally, Uncle Nunzio pushes everyone out of the room. Afterwards, the handsome Dr. Goldstein, who looks like Gregory Peck, examines Penny. She can't move her fingers; her injuries are severe. The doctor tells her they'll "just have to wait and see" how her arm heals; when she quizzes him, he admits that her arm might not work again.

Chapter 17: Dumb and Unlucky

There are two categories of kids in the pediatric ward: dumb and just plain unlucky. Dumb kids include a boy who was mauled after baiting a dog; unlucky kids include a young girl who has blood cancer and is dying. Penny considers herself both dumb and unlucky. She prefers the nurses to the doctors, since the nurses spend time with her and help her. She gets a lot of visitors, including her mother, who comes by every morning and evening; Me-me and Pop-pop; and her father's family in the afternoons. Penny is sure that the visits have been coordinated to avoid World War III. All of Penny's uncles visit, except Uncle Dominic, the one Penny wants to see the most. Frankie visits, bringing flowers he took from another patient's room. When Penny asks him what happened to the money in Nonny's basement, Frankie says Uncle Nunzio decided it should be used for Penny's hospital bill.

Since Penny has a radio she is popular with the rest of the kids. They listen to *The Shadow* and *The Lone Ranger*. Hearing the familiar voices makes being in the hospital not so bad. Dr. Goldstein tells Penny that if her arm doesn't move in the next few weeks, then it probably never will. Each day she tries to move her fingers, but nothing happens. Penny spends a lot of her time trying to make her mother feel better, even though Penny is the patient. Penny asks her mother if she found her lucky bean and her mom opens her purse and puts it on the bed. It's easy to be brave when the ward is bright and sunny and people are coming and going, but it's hard at night, after lights-out, when Penny is left pondering the things she may never get to do, like drive a car or put both arms around Jack Teitelzweig. She misses home—even Me-me's cooking and the toilet leaking on her bed. In time, the skin in her armpit won't heal, and Penny must have a skin graft operation. Her mother is unhappy about the operation, but Frankie is excited, and hatches a plan to take pictures, which he can

pay people to see. The next day, Penny is scared as she is being taken to the operating room. Her mother is waiting for her, and Dr. Goldstein assures her they'll take good care of Penny. In the operating room, Dr. Goldstein tells Penny that he and her mother started at the hospital at the same time. She asks if he knew her father. He says he didn't, but that her mother was his favorite nurse. The last thing Penny hears is Frankie's voice and one of the doctors saying: "I don't care if you're the president of the United States, kid. No pictures allowed. Now scram!"

Chapter 18: The Last Person on Earth

Penny decides that people love a good tragedy, like her father dying, but they don't seem to know what to do with Penny. The operation was a success, but her arm still doesn't work. All the kids that were in the hospital when Penny arrived are gone, except the girl with cancer, who's hanging on longer than anyone expected. They hear about a new boy who's got polio. He's in an iron lung and the nurses say his mother thinks he got it from a pool. Penny keeps expecting Uncle Dominic to show up, but he doesn't. Frankie promises to find out where Dominic is. The next day, he arrives with a triumphant smile, having learned that Uncle Dominic is in Florida. Frankie theorizes that Dominic is a wanted killer, which would explain his lack of a permanent address. Penny tells Frankie to stop reading crime comics. After Frankie leaves, Penny holds the luck bean in her good hand, and wonders how the most important people in her life can just disappear. Later, she watches her mother's shoulders slump during a conversation with Dr. Goldstein, and realizes her arm will never work again. Despondent, loses her appetite. Everyone starts arriving with food, and Nonny is the one who finally gets Penny to eat. Nonny holds Penny while she cries and cries—for her arm, for Scarlett O'Hara, for Uncle Dominic, for her poor dead father, for the great big mess her life has become. Later, Mr. Mulligan visits, bearing butter pecan ice cream. He doesn't ask Penny about her arm or how she feels—he just unfolds the newspaper and begins reading the sports section out loud. After that, he comes every day after work and reads Penny the paper, cover to cover.

Chapter 19: The Bomb

School has started. Penny misses the hallways and the teacher and even the homework. At the hospital, Penny overhears a conversation between a nurse and an orderly, learning that her father was a spy who died in jail. Penny absorbs this news in horror and shock. Later, when her mother comes to visit, Penny angrily con-

fronts her with the information. Mother runs out of the room without answering, past Aunt Gina and Aunt Paulie, who have heard. Gina sends Paulie after Penny's mother, then explains what really happened. Freddy wasn't a spy, she tells Penny; "it all started with the radio." When Penny was born, her father didn't want to leave her side, so Uncle Dominic brought a radio. However, it was just after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and foreigners from countries hostile to the United States weren't allowed to have short-wave radios. Penny's father had been born in Italy, and her grandfather had never completed the paperwork to have him become a naturalized citizen, so her father was technically an "enemy alien." The FBI found out about the radio, and they took Freddy and Dominic in for questioning. They released Dominic—a U.S. citizen born in America—but kept Freddy, despite his protestations that it was all a mistake. Penny's father was locked up—first at Ellis Island, later at an internment camp in Maryland, and finally at a camp in Oklahoma, where he died. Her father wasn't a spy, Gina tells Penny sadly; "his only crime was being Italian." When Penny's mother returns, Penny tells her that Aunt Gina told her everything. Her mother tells her that she never wanted Penny to know what happened. She assures her that her father was a good man who loved America. She also tells Penny that she no longer blames Dominic; he was himself a citizen, and it never occurred to him there would be a problem—he simply asked for the best radio available. She also assures Penny that Freddy loved her very much. Later, a new kid moves into the next bed. Her name is Vivian and she had her appendix out; she's not dying or anything serious. Mr. Mulligan brings Penny and Vivian ice cream. It's nice to have a new friend. Vivian tells Penny that she wishes she had her lucky rabbit's foot, and Penny tells her she can borrow her lucky bean. As Penny leans over to pick up the bean, she knocks the table and the bean starts to fall. Without thinking, Penny reaches for the bean with her bad arm. Her arm moves, her fingers curl, and just like that, she has her life back.

Chapter 20: What's in a Name

When Penny returns home from the hospital she has a new bedroom. The walls have been painted and there is a new bedspread and lamps. Penny's arm gets stronger everyday, and Dr. Goldstein says she will end up in the textbooks. Aunt Gina takes Penny to a fancy hair salon, and Uncle Nunzio has a bunch of new dresses made for her. Penny looks glamorous, like a new girl. She feels popular when she goes back to school. Boys offer to carry her books. It seems that almost dying is a good

way to improve your social life. Penny wants to tell them that almost dying is awfully easy. It's the living that is hard. One afternoon after school, Pop-pop hands Penny a box. A little black kitten with a smudge of white fur on its side scrambles out. Penny names him Rhett, like Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind*. Penny hugs Pop-pop and tells him she loves him. For once, he doesn't have trouble hearing her.

Everything is better now. Mr. Mulligan comes over all the time, and Frankie's still working at the factory; he loves Uncle Nunzio and wants to be a business man when he grows up, just like Uncle Nunzio, who has promised to help him with college if he stays out of trouble. A new movie opens at the theater and Penny asks her mother if she can go. "You want to end up in an iron lung?" she says. Some things never change. Two more miracles happen that are almost as good as her arm working again. Jack Teitelzweig asks her out, taking her for ice cream since her mother won't let her go to the movies, and when she learns that butter pecan is Jack's favorite too, she knows she's in love. The second miracle is that the Dodgers are in the World Series against the New York Yankees. Penny misses Uncle Dominic because she knows he would be just as excited for "Dem Bums" as she is. Mr. Mulligan shows up with a television set, but still talks too much through the game. Even so, Frankie and Penny agree Mr. Mulligan isn't so bad after all. When the Dodgers lose the World Series again, hearts break all over Brooklyn.

On a quiet Saturday morning, Uncle Dominic comes to visit. Penny confronts him, angry with him for abandoning her and for what happened to her father. Uncle Dominic readily accepts blame for Freddy's death; he confesses that he believes it was his fault for bragging about buying the radio, and Penny watches as he relives the horror of watching his beloved brother taken away. He is still guilt-ridden over his mistake. Watching him, Penny realizes that she has been wrong to judge Dominic; and that he is a good man. Uncle Dominic continues with his story, recalling the last letter he received from his brother. Freddy was sick, and knew he was dying; he wrote that his baby was like a lost penny that he would never hold again.

As her uncle weeps, Penny realizes she needs to give him a gift—the gift of forgiveness. She tells Uncle Dominic he is wrong—her father named her Penny because he loved Bing Crosby, and she was going to be "shiny and bright. . . . As wonderful as my brother Dominic." She also informs him that if it hadn't been for

the lucky bean, her arm probably would never have healed. Then Uncle Dominic narrows his eyes and asks, "Who taught you to lie so good?" Penny makes a face and says, "Frankie."

Chapter 21: A Lucky Girl

Mr. Mulligan shows up after school in a suit and tie, carrying a paper bag. He awkwardly asks Penny for permission to marry her mother, confessing that he loves her mother and will do his best to be a good dad. Penny tells him she'll accept his proposal on her mother's behalf after he reveals the bag contains butter pecan ice cream. On a subsequent night, after dinner, Penny is drying the dishes when she asks her mother why she doesn't get along with her father's family. Mother says the family was overwhelming, a hard family to marry into, and that she doesn't think Nonny has ever forgiven her for preventing Freddy from being buried in a Catholic cemetery. Then, surprisingly, Penny's mother suggests she invite them over for dinner.

Everyone comes: Nonny, Uncle Paulie and Aunt Gina, Uncle Nunzio and Aunt Rosa, Uncle Ralphie and Aunt Fulvia, Uncle Angelo and Aunt Teresa, Uncle Sally, and Frankie and the baby cousins, too. Penny stands next to Pat—Mr. Mulligan—and introduces him to everyone. Everyone shakes his hand and hugs him. By the time he meets the entire family, he looks like he's been hugged to death. Finally, the doorbell rings, and Uncle Dominic is standing there, holding a box with a pretty red bow. Penny asks, "What's in the box?" "This is for your mother," he says, and hands it to her. Ellie undoes the ribbon and opens it, staring in silence; inside are two glistening lamb's eyes in tissue paper. For a moment everyone holds their breath; then Penny's mother gives a wry smile and says, "Maybe you should hold on to them for a while. Help me keep an eye on Penny here." Uncle Dominic smiles at Penny, and everyone laughs. After dinner, Uncle Nunzio pulls out a bottle of Italian *spumante*. "For the happy couple," he says to Ellie and Pat. "May you have many years together." Ellie leans in and kisses Pat, and everyone claps. Then Uncle Dominic stand up and says, "A toast, to our Princess." "To our beautiful Penny," her mother says, smiling. Then the whole family stands and shouts, "To Penny!" Penny just sits there and smiles. Her heart almost bursts knowing what a lucky girl she is.

Chapter 22: A Regular Norman Rockwell Family

Penny had hoped that her father's family would come over all the time after that night, that they would celebrate holidays together, like a Norman Rockwell family,

but that hasn't happened. Instead, they just continue on as they had before—but now it's all right, somehow. She imagines that in Heaven, Uncle Dominic pulls himself together and is playing ball again, and he lives in a house and has a wife and baby. But real life isn't like her Heaven. Every once in a while she finds Uncle Dominic sitting in the car, listening to the radio, watching the world pass by. Penny asks him, "Remember that time we saw Dem Bums play at Ebbets Field?" "Sure," he says. "Those were some good seats, right?" Penny asks. Uncle Dominic grins and says, "Best seats in the house." And they were.

Penny from Heaven Timeline

- 1942** The U.S. government begins a program of "relocation" of Italian and German immigrants shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 and the U.S. entry into World War II. Tens of thousands of Italians and Germans were incarcerated and subjected to petty restrictions, such as curfews, travel restrictions, and confiscation of weapons and short-wave radios. A more widely known internment program for Japanese residents occurred primarily on the West Coast.
- 1945** April 12: President Franklin Roosevelt dies; Harry S. Truman sworn in as president.
July 24: Potsdam conference; President Truman asks USSR to help fight Japan
August 6: Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima
August 8: 120,000 Russian troops invaded Manchuria and Korea
September 9: U.S. accepts Japanese surrender in Korea
- 1948** February 8: North Korean People's Army (NK) officially activated
April 8: President Truman orders withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korea
August 15: The Republic of Korea is formed
September 9: Democratic People's Republic of Korea claims jurisdiction over all Korea
- 1949** June 29: Last U.S. troops leave South Korea
- 1950** June 25: North Korea (N.K.) invades Republic of South Korea (ROK) without

warning
 U.N. Security Council demands N.K. stop its attack and return to its borders
June 30: President Truman commits U.S. troops to enforce U.N. demand
July 7: United Nations Command created, under General Douglas MacArthur
July 29: "Stand or Die" order issued
August 2: 1st Provisional Marine Brigade lands
August 17: Massacre of prisoners at Hill 303
August 29: British Commonwealth 27th Brigade lands at Pusan
September 16-19: U.N. breaks the Pusan Perimeter cordon
September 30: MacArthur and troops cross the 38th Parallel into North Korea
October 15: Truman and triumphant MacArthur meet on Wake Island
November 4: MacArthur intensifies bombing of communications routes to the Yalu
November 25: U.N. offensive begins from the Chongchon River to end the war by Christmas
November 30: President Truman threatens use of atomic bomb against Chinese Communist Forces (CCF)
December 14: U.N. passes a Cease Fire Resolution planes over North Korea
1951 January 3: CCF and N.K. renew their offensive. Seoul is again abandoned.
January 14: General Ridgway stabilizes U.N. lines along the 37th parallel
February 1: U.N. passes resolution to end the Korean War
March 18: U.N. forces take Seoul once again
April 11: Truman relieves General MacArthur —General Ridgway takes command
May 10: Second CCF Spring Offensive begins with the "May Massacre"
May 23: U.N. resumes attack
June 23: USSR U.N. delegate Jacob Malik proposes truce
July 10: Truce talks begin at Kaesong
August 17: Battle of Bloody Ridge
August 23: Communists break off talks
September 5: Battle of Heartbreak Ridge
October 25: Peace talks resume at Kaesong

December 18: Exchange of POW lists
1952 The worst recorded polio epidemic in United States history occurs, with 57,628 reported cases.
January 2: U.N. POW Exchange Proposal
February 18: Riots in Koje-do prison camp
May 27: Syngman Rhee declares martial law at Pusan
June 23: General Clark orders bombing of N.K. power plants
 July 23: Air strikes knock out North Korea's hydroelectric power sources
 August 29: In largest air strike of war, 1,400 aircraft hit Pyongyang
October 18: Truce talks halted. General Clark initiates Operation Showdown
November 3: Battle of Heartbreak Ridge, Hill 851
December: Stalemate continues, President-Elect Eisenhower visits
1953 January 25: Assault on Spud Hill
February 11: General Maxwell Taylor takes command of Eighth Army
March 5: New USSR Premier Georgi Malenkov speaks of peaceful \ coexistence
March 30: Truce talks resume at Panmunjom
April 20: Exchange of sick and wounded POWs
July 27: Cease-fire signed
1954 Dr. Jonas Salk and associates develop a potentially safe injectable vaccine against polio (IPV), given to nearly 15,000 Pittsburgh-area subjects, most children, in pilot trials, 1952-1954
1955 Field trials determine the Salk vaccine is safe and effective. Vaccine becomes available.
1955-57 Incidence of polio in the United States falls by 85 percent to 90 percent after vaccine becomes available.
1961 An oral polio vaccine, developed by Dr. Albert Sabin, is licensed for use in the United States.
1979 Last U.S. case of polio.

Author Sketch

Born in California and raised primarily in Audubon, Pennsylvania, Jennifer Holm was born to a pediatrician

father and pediatric nurse mother. Along with her four brothers, she had an active childhood, playing softball and kickball, climbing trees, holding spitting contests, and swimming in the creek. She was also an avid reader. After graduating from high school, Holm attended Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where her writing career really began. After graduation, she moved to New York City, where she became a broadcast producer of television commercials and music videos for clients like Nickelodeon, MTV, American Express, and Hershey's. Although she enjoyed working in television, her true passion remained writing. Intrigued by her father's stories of life on a farm in Washington state and spurred on by a photocopy of a great aunt's diary sent to her by relatives, Holm began writing, basing her efforts on her family's. Her first novel, *Our Only May Amelia* (1999), received a Newbery Honor. Married to Jonathan Hamel, with whom she has collaborated on a series of books, Holm lives in the Northeastern United States and divides her time between writing and caring for her son. She also owns a cat named Princess Leia Organa.

Critic's Corner

Holm won critical praise and her second Newbery Honor for 2007's *Penny from Heaven* (her first Newbery Honor was for *Our Only May Amelia*, published in 1999). Other well-known books by Holm include *The Stink Files*, a series co-written with her husband, Jonathan Hamel, about a British "cat of mystery"; and the popular *Babymouse* series, illustrated by her brother, Matthew. Holm has won a number of other awards besides the Newbery, including a *Publisher's Weekly's* "Flying Start" and Best Book awards, an American Library Association Notable Children's Book Award, and a Parent's Choice Silver Award. *Booklist* wrote of *Penny from Heaven*, "Holm impressively wraps pathos with comedy in this coming-of-age story, populated by a cast of vivid characters," and *School Library Journal* noted that "the period is lovingly re-created, from the fear of catching polio to Penny's use of the word 'swell.'" Holm's story of an eleven-year-old girl struggling to find the truth about her father's death and unite her estranged family during the summer of 1953—a story inspired by her own Italian-American family—recalls a time when fans dreamed of the Brooklyn Dodgers winning the World Series and where it was safe for kids to wander unaccompanied on the streets of a small town, but also where the silent threat of polio lurked, ethnic and racial prejudice were considered socially acceptable by many,

and people remembered when being born in a certain foreign country could automatically mark a person as an enemy of the state.

Bibliography

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Korean War, <www.rt66.com/~korteng/SmallArms/TimeLine.htm>
Internment, <www.fear-itself.com>
Jennifer Holm official website, <www.jenniferholm.com>
"Jennifer Holm," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jennifer_L._Holm>
Jennifer Holm's books, <www.powells.com/biblio/>
Jennifer Holm's books, <www.amazon.com/gp/reader/>

Selected Other Works by Jennifer Holm

The Creek (2003)
Middle School Is Worse than Meatloaf: A Year Told Through Stuff (2007)
An Adventure (2001)
Wilderness Days (2002)
The Claim (2004)

Babymouse series:

Queen of the World (2005)
Beach Babe (2006)
Camp Babymouse (2007)
Monster Mash (2008)

Stink Files series (with Jonathan Hamel):

The Postman Always Brings Mice (2004)
To Scratch a Thief (2004)
You Only Have Nine Lives (2005)

Awards

- 2000 and 2007 Newberry Honors
- *Publisher's Weekly* "Flying Starts" Author
- ALA Notable Children's Book
- Parent's Choice Silver Honor
- *Publisher's Weekly* Best Book
- Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies (NCSS/CBC)
- Utah book Award (Gr. 3-6)
- 00-01 Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award Masterlist

General Objectives

1. To analyze the novel's title
2. To understand historical fiction
3. To comment on human reactions to change
4. To assess the main character's personality
5. To sympathize with the main character's loss
6. To find examples of compassion
7. To comment on human reactions to loss
8. To evaluate relationships between author, narrator, characters, and reader
9. To recognize the significance of setting
10. To evaluate social conventions

Specific Objectives

1. To understand the intricacies of family
2. To understand fear of perceived enemies
3. To grasp the fear of an epidemic
4. To understand the plight of the foreigner
5. To understand the effects of secrets
6. To determine how the novel generates humor and emotion
7. To understand Penny's confusion over the animosity between her two families
8. To understand Penny's reluctance to accept Mr. Mulligan
9. To describe how Penny copes with illness
10. To see how Penny grows and matures

Literary Terms and Applications

Characterization: the different ways an author tells readers about characters. Writers can describe characters directly, or can let readers reach their own decisions about a character indirectly by showing comments, thoughts, and actions. Holm uses both direct and indirect characterization to show Penny as a caring, maturing young girl.

Conflict: 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. Penny From Heaven has strong external conflicts as Penny struggles with an arm that just won't work, and internal conflicts dealing with her feelings for her two families.

Historical fiction: a make-believe story based on real people and events. Penny From Heaven is based on real events, but the main character in the novel is fictional. Although Penny may be fictional, Italians really were

placed in internment camps, polio was a real threat, and the Brooklyn Dodgers ("Dem Bums"), did make it to the World Series.

Metaphor: a figure of speech that is the substitution of one idea or object for another, used to assist expression or understanding. "Even though I'm wearing the thinnest cotton pajamas set I have, I'm still sweating up a storm."

Simile: a figure of speech that compares two unlike things. Similes use the words "like" or "as" to make the comparison. "The box goes flying into the air, and bills start fluttering out like butterflies set free."

Cross-Curricular Sources

Books

- Lawrence Distasi, *Una Storia Segreta: The World War II Evacuation and Internment of Italian Americans*
- Eric Fein, *Mystery at Manzanar: A World War II Internment Camp Story*
- Ruth Tenzer Feldman, *The Korean War*
- Stephen Fox, *UnCivil Liberties: Italian Americans Under Siege during World War II*
- Mary Matsuda Gruenewald, *Looking Like the Enemy: My Story of Imprisonment in a Japanese American Internment Camp*
- Stephanie Sammartino McPherson, *Jonas Salk: Conquering Polio*
- Stephanie True Peters, *Polio*
- R Conrad Stein, *The Korean War: The Forgotten War (America War Series)*
- Salvatore Tocci, *Jonas Salk: Creator of the Polio Vaccine (Great Minds of Science)*

DVDs and Videos

- Pork Chop Hill*, MGM, 1959
- The Bridges of Toko-Ri*, Paramount, 1954
- M*A*S*H*, 20th Century Fox, 1970

Documentary

- The Korean War: Fire and Ice*

Internet

- "Largest Polio epidemic in recent years looms, West and Central Africa," <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/9784.php>
- "Dr. Henry Writes about the Virginia Polio Epidemic of 1950," <http://www.ott.zynet.co.uk/polio/lincolnshire/library/drhenry/virginiaepidemic.html>
- "Korean War: Remembering Our History,"

<http://korea50.army.mil/history/index.shtml>
The National Italian American Foundation, www.niaf.org
"World War II Internment," www.segreta.org

Themes and Motifs

Themes

- family
- history
- tragedy
- perception
- generosity
- secrecy
- kindness
- love
- coping skills
- war

Motifs

- coping with family relationships
- learning family history
- surviving the loss of family
- learning about perceived enemies/prejudice
- being generous
- coping with effects of secrets
- experiencing and showing kindness
- showing love
- coping with the fear of epidemics
- understanding effects of war

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. "We don't talk about my father in this house because it upsets my mother." (p. 10)
(Penny wants to know about her father, especially what he thought about her and if he loved her. Her mother, Me-me, and Pop-pop refuse to talk about him. If her father is mentioned at Nonny's house, Nonny starts to cry. Penny has no one to talk with about him, and she is confused.)
2. "I don't know when this started, me going over to my father's family on Sundays; it's been this way forever. And it's always just me, never mother or Me-me or Pop-pop." (p. 58)
(Penny has two families, her mother's and her father's. When Penny's father died, her mother agreed to let Penny see them, but she never goes

along. Penny loves both families and feels torn.)

3. "Aunt Gina says the reason they don't want us to learn Italian is that during World War II, Italy was on the wrong side, with Germany and Japan, and so the Italians who were in America got into trouble for it." (p. 59)
(Penny realizes that American Italians were viewed as the enemy during World War II and that the family is still concerned with their welfare. She is beginning to understand why the family does not want her to learn the Italian language.)
4. "He's like a shadow; he just drifts in and out with nobody paying much attention to him, except maybe me." (p. 63)
(Penny is talking about her beloved Uncle Dominic. He lives in his car and wears bedroom slippers instead of shoes. Although others think him odd, she is deeply connected to him. He is her favorite uncle and she loves him very much.)
5. "Soon everyone's singing and dancing and loud, and it's a regular party." (p. 66)
"I go into the parlor, and for a moment I think everybody's asleep or something. They're so quiet, I hardly know they're there." (p. 66)
(Penny is revealing the differences between her families. Her Italian family is loud and boisterous, while her mother's family is reserved and quiet. They are like the food they serve, one full of flavor, the other dry and flavorless.)
6. "Okay, I feel bad for my mother sometimes. She works so hard. None of the other kids I know have mothers who have to work. But then, most of them have fathers." (p. 78)
(Penny understands that her mother has to work to support the family, but she wishes her life could be like the other kids'.)
7. "Sometimes I fell like a translator. Mother is always asking me this or that about my father's family, and I have to try to figure out what she means, like it's a different language." (p. 85)
(Penny attempts to understand the significance of her mother's questions when speaking about her father's family. She knows that there are ill feelings between the families, but she tries to cope as best she can.)
8. "I look at Mr. Mulligan's beefy hand on my mother's slender one, and I see my whole life changing in

the blink of an eye." (p. 107)
(Penny feels threatened by her mother's relationship with Mr. Mulligan. She thinks he is boring, and she fears losing her father's family, especially Uncle Dominic, who she would rather see her mother marry.)

9. "Yeah, he died in that camp. Near about killed your mother when she heard. Your uncle, too. Dominic ain't been right since." (p. 226)
(Aunt Gina tells Penny what really happened to her father. She explains that her father was arrested because Uncle Dominic bought him a short-wave radio, which "enemy aliens" weren't supposed to own during World War II. Both Penny's mother and her Uncle Dominic were devastated by Freddy's death in the internment camp. In particular, Uncle Dominic's guilt over what happened to Freddy changed him forever. He never recovered from the tragedy of his brother's death.)

10. "I wanted to tell them that almost dying is awfully easy. It's the living that's hard." (p. 233)
(After her arm heals and she returns to school, Penny's social life takes off, and Veronica Goodman leaves her alone. Ironically, it's not as big a victory for Penny as it once would have been; she has matured, and now realizes that life is far more difficult to get through than any injury.)

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 from the novel.

Character

1. Contrast Penny's Character to Frankie's.
(Although Penny and Frankie are close in age, their responses to events are quite different. Penny is a responsible, moral young girl. Frankie, in contrast, is always in trouble. His morals are more lax and he is always thinking up ways to pull a fast one—partially out of misplaced hero-worship of his small-time criminal father, partly out of a desire to help support his family, which has been impoverished by his father's irresponsibility. When Frankie finds out about the money that Grandpa Falucci may have hidden, he wants to find it and keep it. Even though his intentions are good—he wants to help his family—his actions are wrong, a fact he doesn't fully realize. Penny understands that taking Grandpa Falucci's

money is stealing. Still, Frankie, like Penny, is fundamentally a person of goodwill, a loyal friend who loves his family and wants to do right as he understands it. By the end of the novel, he, too, has matured, adopting a new role model, the honest and honorable Uncle Nunzio, and developing a new, positive ambition—to work hard, go to college, and become a successful businessman.)

Style

1. Characterize the style.
(The novel is written in narrative style and often uses humor to depict the nature of the main characters. Everyone's reactions to Me-me's cooking provide humor, and Penny's thoughts and feelings are expressed through the narrative, helping the reader understand her character better.)

Character Development

1. How does the relationship between Penny and Mr. Mulligan change?
(Penny barely tolerates Mr. Mulligan at first. She fears that if he marries her mother she will not be able to see her father's family, and her whole life will change. But Mr. Mulligan's efforts to become involved in the activities that Penny loves, like baseball, help to change their relationship. His kindness toward her when she is in the hospital, the love he shows her mother, and his honoring of her previous connection to her father and his family, help Penny to accept him, and eventually their relationship warms.)

Conflict

1. Explain the conflict between the two families.
(From the start, Ellie felt overwhelmed by Freddy's boisterous Italian family. They, in turn, were deeply wounded by her failure to convert to Catholicism before his death, which precluded his being buried in a Catholic cemetery. Further, Dominic's purchase of the short-wave radio, was the incident that led directly to Freddy's incarceration and death. His mother's blame of Dominic, and Dominic's own guilt, cause further estrangement. Interestingly—and in a way that is perhaps characteristic of the time—nobody seems to blame the FBI and military people for what seems to a contemporary reader to be cruel, arbitrary, and ridiculous misapplication of wartime laws. Penny is in the middle of this conflict because she loves both families, especially Uncle Dominic, and can't understand why they don't like each other. Hiding the truth from Penny only adds to her confusion.)

Interpretation

1. Is knowing what happened to Italian American's during World War II important to an understanding of *Penny From Heaven*?

(It is very important to the reading of the novel. Me-me's attitude toward Freddy's family, and the hospital staff buying the story that Penny's father was a spy, convey how Italian Americans were viewed at the time. Uncle Dominic's inability to function, how the uncles treat Penny, and Penny's mother's feelings toward Freddy's family, are all explained by the characters' culture, and by Penny's father's arrest, internment, and death, which wouldn't have occurred if he hadn't been targeted due to his Italian heritage. As Aunt Gina points out, Freddy's only "crime" was being Italian.)

Motivation

1. Why did Penny's mother stop being a nurse and find other work?
(Because of Freddy's arrest and internment, everyone believed he was a spy. Penny's mother found it impossible to continue working in an atmosphere of suspicion and prejudice.)

Author Method

1. How does the reader learn the character of Penny?
(The author uses Penny's words and thoughts to express what she is thinking and feeling. She also draws the reader into the lives of the characters by the descriptions of people and places.)

Text

1. List and discuss the different kinds of text displayed in the novel.
(The main text drives the narrative and records Penny's thoughts and feelings; the dialogue moves the plot forward while highlighting cultural and personal differences. For instance, Nonny's inability to talk on the phone illustrates not only her poor grasp of the English language, but also her fear of America.)

Across the Curriculum

Drama/Performance

1. With fellow students, re-enact a dinner at Nonny's house and then Me-me's house. Note the difference in atmosphere and enjoyment of food.
2. Select sections of dialogue from the novel and per-

form them. Do characters have recognizable speech patterns or accents?

3. Debate whether or not *Penny From Heaven* should be mandatory reading in your grade level.
4. Working with a partner, role-play a scene where Penny confronts her mother about what really happened to her father.

History/Social Studies

1. Write a report about internment camps. Were Italians the only social group subject to incarceration?
2. Investigate why the Italian government sided with Germany during World War II. Who was the military leader of the Italian people? What happened to him?
3. Write a report on the Korean War. What major events happened during the Korean War? Why was General Douglas MacArthur relieved of his duties? Who was president of the United States during the Korean War?
4. Did the Brooklyn Dodgers ever win a World Series? What happened to the Brooklyn Dodgers? Is Field still standing?
5. Penny's father was first brought to Ellis Island. Write a report on Ellis Island. What was Ellis Island used for? Is it still being used?
6. What other events in history have caused prejudice and fear?

Psychology

1. What caused the fear of the Italian people during the Korean War?
2. Why was the truth about Penny's father kept from her? How did this secret affect her?
3. What is a possible cause of prejudice?

Art

1. Make a model of an internment camp.
2. Using a scene from the novel, create a mural of the main events.
3. Construct or draw a picture of the rotunda at Field.
4. Draw a picture of Penny's bedroom, poodle and all!
5. Draw a poster warning against speaking a foreign language.

Cinema/Film

1. Select quotes from the novel that best capture Penny's personality. Using these passages, make a short film.
2. Watch a Bing Crosby movie. What was he famous for? Did he really record the song "Pennies from Heaven"?

Language

1. Why was speaking Italian frowned upon?
2. Write a speech about internment camps. What is the opinion of these camps today?
3. Write a dialogue for Penny and her mother, discussing why Mother kept the truth about Penny's father a secret.

Journalism

1. Write a newspaper article about polio and its effects.
2. Write a review of *Penny From Heaven*. Include a short synopsis and brief author biography.
3. Write an article of "local interest" that Penny's father might have written.
4. Stage an interview with Uncle Dominic. Ask him about his arrest and how this event changed his life.
5. Create a poster advertising the sale of items belonging to the Brooklyn Dodgers. Would they be valuable today?
6. Write an article on the dangers of wringer washing machines.

Literature

1. Write an essay in which you find humor in *Penny From Heaven*. What generates the humor? Is the humor situational, linguistic, or a combination? Does the humor enhance the story?
2. Write an essay in which you contrast Penny'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?
3. Read aloud passages that give a clear sense of the main characters' personalities. Discuss the main features of each character's personality, and how these features are communicated. Is the character primarily defined through how he or she thinks, speaks, or acts, or through a combination of these factors?
4. Penny and Veronica Goodman are the same age. Write a paper comparing their lives. How are they alike, and how are they different?

Composition

1. Compose diary entries from Nonny's perspective. How does she feel about what happened to her son? What does she think of America?
2. Write a letter that Penny's mother might have written to her father during his internment. Is she lonely? What does she say about his "lost Penny"?
3. Compose a letter that Penny might have written to her father. What would she say? What questions

would she ask? What does she most want to know about him?

4. Rewrite one of the chapters from Frankie's point of view.

Science

1. Investigate polio. How is it transmitted? Have there been new cases? What is the treatment? Is there a cure?
2. What is an iron lung?
3. Are there epidemics today? What are they? Who is affected?
4. What is an epidemic? What is a pandemic?

Economics

1. Penny's mother worked to support the family. How difficult was it for a single parent—especially a woman—to support a family during this period?
2. Did many women work during this period? If so, what jobs did they hold? Did women working affect the economy? How has it affected our economy since World War II?

Education

1. Make an oral report on the treatment of foreigners during World War II. Has our fear of foreigners diminished?
2. Research attitudes in the United States toward internment camps. Has the government of the United States ever recognized its culpability? Has the United States apologized to those interned?

Alternate Assessment

1. Discuss what you learned about life and family in *Penny From Heaven*.
2. Make a list of actions in the novel that show Penny matured.
3. Compare another novel by Holm to *Penny From Heaven*.
4. Write a story from Penny's perspective ten years later. Does she have siblings? Does she still go to the family dinners on Sunday night? Is she in school? What is Frankie doing?

Vocabulary Test

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

- _____ 1. appalled
A. clapped
B. horrified
C. climbed
D. relieved
- _____ 2. ignore
A. salutes
B. disobey
C. disregard
D. greets
- _____ 3. mutters
A. speaks low
B. female relative
C. Italian dish
D. scarf
- _____ 4. rickety
A. nickname
B. spicy
C. shaky
D. rich
- _____ 5. sentry
A. 100 years
B. guard
C. money
D. a mission
- _____ 6. gestures
A. motions
B. eats
C. invitations
D. ideas
- _____ 7. glancing
A. gliding
B. cutting
C. hiding
D. looking
- _____ 8. hesitates
A. skips
B. collides
C. marks
D. wavers
- _____ 9. mourning
A. time of day
B. grieving
C. singing
D. anchor
- _____ 10. cowardly
A. bravely
B. hover over
C. lacking courage
D. actively
- _____ 11. doily
A. linen mat
B. newspaper
C. rag
D. clothing
- _____ 12. sweetbreads
A. candy
B. pasta
C. ground meat
D. animal parts
- _____ 13. rotunda
A. large person
B. round barn
C. domed hall
D. large vessel
- _____ 14. diplomat
A. peace keeper
B. furniture covering
C. foreigner
D. nerd
- _____ 15. ration
A. rash
B. cook
C. deliver
D. food allowance

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

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

- _____ 1. gave Penny a lucky bean
- _____ 2. only wears black
- _____ 3. died in an internment camp
- _____ 4. was a dancer with the Rockettes
- _____ 5. took money from the church
- _____ 6. was a milkman
- _____ 7. owns a butcher shop
- _____ 8. chases squirrels
- _____ 9. hid money in the basement wall
- _____ 10. talks to his dead nephew over the radio
- _____ 11. a bad cook
- _____ 12. marries the milkman
- _____ 13. owns a clothing factory
- _____ 14. Dem Bums
- _____ 15. arm pulled through a wringer washing machine

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

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

- 1. Uncle Dominic was correct in blaming himself for Freddy's arrest.
- 2. Uncle Ralphie owned a clothing factory.
- 3. Frankie's father had trouble keeping a job.
- 4. Mr. Mulligan was a mailman.
- 5. Aunt Gina told Penny what really happened to her father.
- 6. Me-me was a good cook.
- 7. Penny's mother should not have kept the truth about her father from her.
- 8. Frankie tried to photograph the operation on Penny's arm.
- 9. Penny's father was a spy.
- 10. Penny's father should have been buried in a Catholic cemetery.

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

Briefly explain the character's motivation for each action.

- 1. Why does Frankie run away?

- 2. Why does Nonny wear black all the time?

- 3. Why was Penny's father arrested?

- 4. Why does Veronica Goodman dislike Penny?

- 5. Why did Penny and Frankie dig up Nonny's yard?

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Chose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Which character did you admire the most?
- 2. What was the significance of the title of the book?
- 3. Describe what life was like for Italian Americans during the Korean War.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Identification (30 points)

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

- _____ 1. "It's a lucky bean. I got it for your father before he died. I want you to have it."
- _____ 2. "That dog of yours is sneakier than the Japs."
- _____ 3. "You were the best nurse in your graduating class."
- _____ 4. "We'll be in the poorhouse at this rate."
- _____ 5. "Let's see, you have four bottles of milk, right?"
- _____ 6. "I tell ya, it's a crying shame, you being a girl."
- _____ 7. "None of the other kids I know have mothers who have to work."
- _____ 8. "If we can survive Me-me's liver, we can survive anything."
- _____ 9. "You got a good eye, doll."
- _____ 10. "And then they let me go but not him."
- _____ 11. "Frankie's not a criminal."
- _____ 12. "You want to end up in an iron lung?"
- _____ 13. "Cause that way if he got shot down and captured by the Nazis, he wouldn't starve to death."
- _____ 14. "There's nothing to say."
- _____ 15. "His only crime was being Italian"

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Provide an answer to each of these questions.

- 1. What does Penny lose?
- 2. Why does Me-me cut Penny's hair?
- 3. What is the name of Penny's new kitten?
- 4. Where does Penny live?
- 5. Who is Mr. Hendrickson?
- 6. What does Uncle Dominic wear?
- 7. What does Mrs. Morelli order from the butcher shop?
- 8. Who has a bruise on the cheek?
- 9. What is Penny's full name?
- 10. Why can't Frankie's father hold a job?

Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

Fill in the words that complete each statement.

- 1. The toilet leaks in **(the dining room/Penny's bedroom)**.
- 2. Uncle Dominic gave Ellie **(lambs eyes/a necklace)**.
- 3. The **(Bronx Bombers/Brooklyn Dodgers)** are Penny's favorite team.
- 4. Frankie finds money **(in the yard/behind a brick in the wall)**.
- 5. Uncle Dominic lives in his **(basement/car)**.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Explain Penny's feelings toward Mr. Mulligan. Is he a good man?
- 2. How would the story be different if it happened today?
- 3. Explain how Penny changes over the course of the novel.
- 4. Is this novel a good read for teens? Why?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. A | 11. A |
| 2. C | 7. D | 12. D |
| 3. A | 8. D | 13. C |
| 4. C | 9. B | 14. A |
| 5. B | 10. C | 15. D |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Uncle Dominic | 9. Grandpa Falucci |
| 2. Nonny | 10. Pop-pop |
| 3. Penny's father | 11. Me-me |
| 4. Aunt Gina | 12. Penny's mother |
| 5. Frankie | 13. Uncle Nunzio |
| 6. Mr. Mulligan | 14. Brooklyn Dodgers |
| 7. Uncle Ralphie | 15. Penny |
| 8. Scarlett O'Hara | |

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

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

Part III: Motivation (20 points)

- Frankie ran away because he took money from the church and broke a window.
- Nonny is in mourning for her husband and son. It was traditional wear for widows.
- After the United States entered World War II, laws were passed restricting freedoms for many people whose ethnicity was that of the country's enemies (Germans, Italians, and Japanese), especially those who had never obtained U.S. citizenship. Freddy was one of these latter--technically, an "enemy alien," even though he actually loved the United States and had lived here most of his life. He was arrested for owning a short-wave radio.
- Uncle Ralphie owned the building next to the butcher shop. Veronica's father wanted to rent it to put in a shoe store, but Uncle Ralphie rented the shop to someone who could pay more.
- Frankie thought Grandpa Falucci buried the money in the yard.

PART IV: ESSAY (30 POINTS)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Identification (30 points)

- Uncle Dominic
- Pop-pop
- Me-me
- Aunt Fulvia
- Mr. Mulligan
- Frankie
- Penny
- Penny's mother
- Aunt Gina
- Uncle Dominic
- Penny
- Me-me
- Pop-pop
- Penny's mother
- Aunt Gina

Part II: Short Answers (20 points)

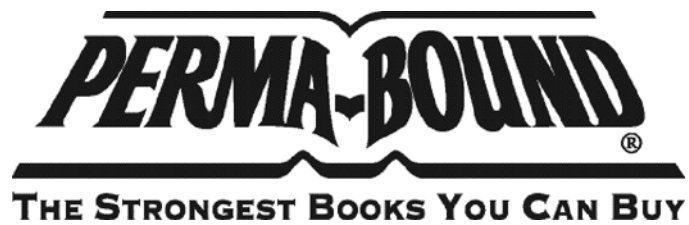
- lucky bean
- because she gets black lacquer paint in it.
- Rhett
- New Jersey
- Penny's mother's boss
- slippers
- brains
- Ann Marie
- Barbara Ann Falucci
- because he has a drinking problem

Part III: Fill-In (30 points)

- Penny's bedroom
- Lamb's eyes
- Brooklyn Dodgers
- Behind a brick in the wall
- Car

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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4. Discuss Nonny's views on being buried in the Catholic cemetery.