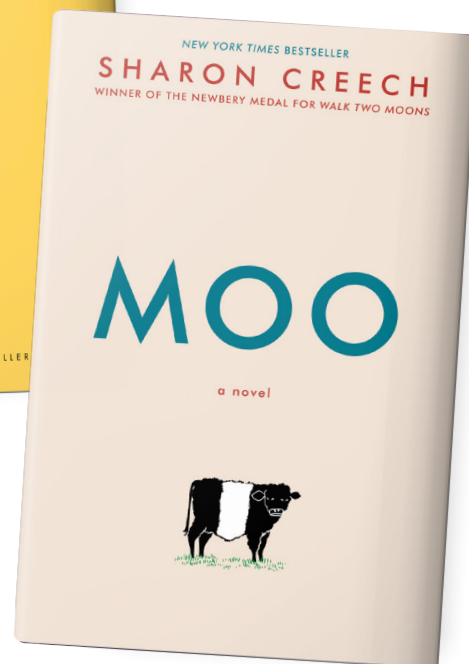
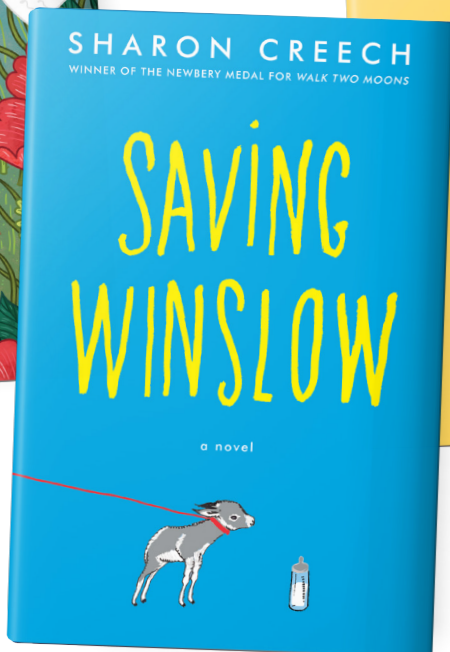




A Discussion Guide Featuring the Works of Sharon Creech



ONE TIME

Grades 3–7



BOOKTALK

Perfect for fans of *Love That Dog*, this tale is about the transformative power of imagination and the journey to becoming who you are meant to be. Gina Filomena has been told she has an overactive imagination. With her bright clothing and artistic spirit, she's always felt different from the other kids in her class. That is, until she meets her new neighbor, a mysterious boy named Antonio with a wide, welcoming smile. Add in a creative new teacher, Miss Lightstone, and a world of possibilities opens up for Gina, Antonio, and their classmates. With the help of Antonio and Miss Lightstone, will Gina find the answers to the questions *Who am I?* and *Who do I want to be?*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the story begins with a letter that Gina writes to Miss Lightstone? What does the letter tell you about Gina and what questions does it raise about her? How many ways does letter-writing appear in this story?
2. What does Gina like about Antonio when she first meets him? How would you describe Antonio from that first meeting? Does he remind you of anyone you know in your own life?
3. Describe the differences between Gina's family, Antonio's family, and the Clafferty family. What is the effect on Gina's family of the visits from Auntie and Uncle Pasta? Why are her Nonna's letters and stories so important to Gina?
4. Who are Gina's best friends in her class? Discuss her statement: "We weren't tightly bonded but felt natural together." (p. 35) How do her feelings change after Antonio starts coming to school? How do the others in the class react to Antonio?
5. Compare Miss Lightstone to what Gina remembers about her previous year's teacher. How are her teaching methods different? How does the class react to the question on the board: Who are you? Discuss Renaldo's thought: "Maybe the answer is different every day." (p. 38) What causes Miss Lightstone to add the sentence, "Who could you be?" (p. 86)
6. Discuss some of the unusual phrases and words in this story, such as the one Gina hears from her mother, "Shiyou ga nai. What can you do?" (p. 34) or Renaldo's word, "Mangata" (p. 73). How does learning about these phrases change and enhance the way the students write?
7. How does the class react when Antonio stops coming to school? How does his absence affect Gina? Why do you think Carlotta acts so unfriendly toward Gina when she asks about Antonio?
8. Compare the new boy Gerald to Antonio, and the effect that each of them has on the rest of the class. How has Antonio made an impact on his classmates? What is the meaning of the gift he leaves for Gina after he moves?
9. Discuss the meaning of the title *One Time*. How does Gina feel when Miss Lightstone suggests to the class "You might want to try what Gina does. . . Try starting with 'One time.'" (p. 221) How does that help Gina make meaning in her life?
10. Why do you think the author included the final chapter, "Onward Time: Twenty Years Later"? Were you surprised at what happened to any of the characters when they grew up? Discuss the poem by Mary Oliver on the final page. How does it reflect the story you have read?

LOVE THAT DOG

Grades 3–7



BOOKTALK

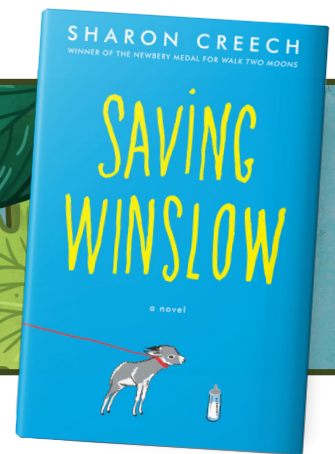
“I don’t want to,” begins Jack, the narrator of *Love That Dog*. “Can’t do it. / Brain’s empty.” Jack’s story is told as a narrative poem: It chronicles how a boy learns to write but also poignantly illustrates his love for his dog, his growing admiration for words and images, and his relationship with Miss Stretchberry, the teacher who helps him believe he might really have something to say. In a voice that’s sometimes irreverent and always accessible, Sharon Creech explores what makes a poem and what makes a poet, inspiring readers to believe that they can write something that “is really / a poem / really really / and a good poem, too.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In his first journal entry, Jack says that “boys / don’t write poetry.” Do you agree? What kind of a person do you picture when you imagine a poet?
2. Jack’s beliefs about poetry change throughout the year. What do you believe about poems? What makes something a poem? How are poems different than stories and other kinds of writing?
3. When he’s first learning to write poetry, Jack borrows a lot of ideas from other poets’ works. Why? Does borrowing from others help him to develop his own style? Where do you draw the line between being inspired by someone else and copying his or her work?
4. Jack feels nervous about having his work displayed in the classroom. Why does he want his early poems to be anonymous? How does he expect his classmates to react? Do you ever have a hard time sharing your work? Why?
5. Jack is enchanted with how Walter Dean Myers’s voice sounds when he reads aloud. What makes someone good at reading out loud? Try reading aloud your favorite poem from *Love That Dog*. How does it sound different from when you read it in your head?
6. Look back at Jack’s poems about his dog, Sky. How do these poems build on each other? How does Jack reuse his own words, and where can you find lines that were inspired by other poets?
7. Jack wants to cut the final four lines of his poem from January 24th. Why? Do you think the poem is stronger with the final lines or without? Explain.
8. What makes Miss Stretchberry a good teacher? How does she teach? What kinds of things do you imagine that she writes in Jack’s journal? What does she do to build Jack’s confidence?
9. Which of Jack’s poems is your favorite? How does it make you feel? Describe Jack’s writing style and compare it with your own.
10. Are you at all similar to Jack? Discuss Jack’s growth as a reader and as a writer using quotes from the book. Which one of his statements about poetry most echoes your own feelings?

SAVING WINSLOW

Grades 3–7



BOOKTALK

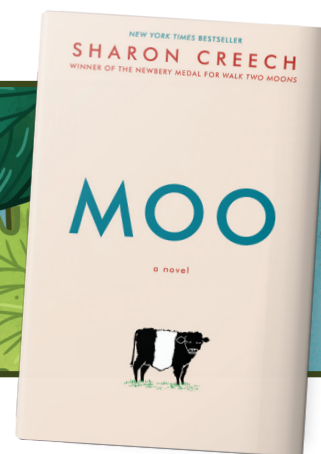
Louie has never had much luck nurturing small creatures as pets—hamsters, goldfish, worms, lightning bugs—all had died or escaped no matter how hard he tried to care for them. But when his Dad brings home a small, trembling, newborn miniature donkey, Louie is determined that this time will be different. His parents and friends try to prepare him for the chance the donkey will not survive, but Louie feels a rush of love for the helpless creature and is sure he can keep it alive. Naming the donkey Winslow, feeding it with a bottle, and even learning to give it shots of medicine to control an infection . . . everything Louie does reflects his positive faith in his new pet's survival. It isn't always easy, and new challenges arise as Winslow begins to grow. How can Louie solve each new difficulty, and navigate his responsibility to family and friends, while trying to keep Winslow safe and happy?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Compare Winslow's birth and early weeks to what you learn about Louie's early life. Why do you think Louie feels a "sudden rush" when he first sees the donkey (p. 2)? What makes him say, "I accept the mission" (p. 4)? Why does he see caring for the donkey as a mission?
2. What are the differences between Louie and his brother Gus? How does Winslow help fill the hole in Louie's life since Gus left for the army? Why does he feel anxious about Mack spending so much time with Claudine?
3. What do you think Gus means when he starts signing his letters from the army, "Remember me" (p. 26)? How does Louie feel about that signature? What does he do to keep remembering his brother?
4. Compare Claudine's reaction to Winslow with Nora's reaction when they first see him. What is Louie's first impression of Nora and why is she so negative about Winslow? Discuss what Louie means when he thinks to himself, "It was surprising . . . how much one simple sentence could affect your opinion of someone" (p. 31).
5. Why does Nora run away when Winslow is sick and Louis is giving him his medicine? Why do you think Nora keeps coming back to Louie's house? Why does she walk up and down the street but doesn't knock on the door?
6. Why does Louie find Nora so hard to talk to? Compare his experience of becoming friends with Nora to the earlier experience he remembers with the new girl named Cookie. What makes Louie sit at Nora's lunch table to keep her company?
7. Louie asks Nora, "Why do you always expect the worst?" and she replies, "Why do *you* always stupidly expect the best" (p. 79). Discuss the differences between their outlooks and why they might each feel this way. Is it "stupid" to expect the best? What is the difference between those expectations and Louie's reply, "I *worry* about the worst, but I *hope* for the best."
8. What problems arise as Winslow gets older? What is Louie's reaction to Mrs. Tooley's complaints and to the woman from the Board of Health? When does Louie start to wonder what would be best for Winslow and where Winslow truly belongs?
9. What does Louie understand about Mrs. Tooley and her baby after the fire forces them to sleep at Louie's house? How do his feelings change about them, and how do Mrs. Tooley's feelings change about Winslow?
10. Why is Uncle Pete's farm the right place for Winslow to live? After Louis expects to feel "infinitely sad" (p. 162) when he takes Winslow to the farm, what changes his mood? Discuss the importance of the sign that Louie adds to Winslow's pen at the farm.

MOO

Grades 3–7



BOOKTALK

When Reena, her little brother, Luke, and their parents first move to Maine, Reena doesn't know what to expect. She's ready for beaches, blueberries, and all the lobster she can eat. Instead, her parents "volunteer" Reena and Luke to work for an eccentric neighbor named Mrs. Falala, who has a pig named Paulie, a cat named China, a snake named Edna—and that stubborn cow, Zora. What begins as farm chores turns to fun as Reena and Luke learn that even the most stubborn and short-tempered of beings can become true friends. This heartwarming story, told in a blend of poetry and prose, reveals the bonds that emerge when we let others into our lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do Reena's friends react to the news that she is moving to Maine? What is Reena's response to her friends?
2. How does Luke's drawing help him communicate? How do his drawings express his emotions?
3. Why does the author use the spacing and shape of the letters in a word? Find an example to share with the class.
4. What character traits does Mrs. Falala exhibit that make her seem mean? How does Mrs. Falala's past continue to affect her future?
5. Why do Reena and Luke's parents volunteer them to help Mrs. Falala? What are Reena's and Luke's reactions to their parents' idea?
6. How does Reena react to Zora when she begins to work with her? How and why does her relationship with Zora change?
7. Zora is a Beltie cow. What is unique about Beltie cows and special about Zora's bloodlines?
8. What is Luke's reaction when he learns that the meat he eats comes from animals like Zora and Paulie? How does Mrs. Falala reassure him?
9. What role does Zep play in helping Reena understand Zora? How does Zep's cow, Yolanda, help Zora?
10. How does Reena's experience at the fair help build her confidence? How do her parents react to all that she has accomplished?
11. Why is it ironic that Mrs. Falala is found in her "remembering room"? What is Luke's reaction to Mrs. Falala's drawings?
12. What does Reena suggest to Mr. Colley that helps her family, Mr. Colley, and Mrs. Falala's animals?

Nobody Tells a Story Like Newbery Medalist

SHARON CREECH

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

