READER'S GUIDE

About the Book

When she is an infant, Heidi and her mentally disabled mother arrive rain-drenched at the doorstep of Bernadette, who suffers from agoraphobia. Throughout Heidi's childhood, Bernadette takes good care of Heidi and her mother, but eventually Heidi begins to question her past and the mysterious word her mother constantly repeats: "Soof." Each time Heidi asks Bernadette where she and Mama came from, Bernadette simply answers that the day they walked into her life was the best thing that ever happened to her. When Heidi finds an old camera and develops the film, she sees glimpses of her family's past in the pictures. Twelve-year-old Heidi then sets out on a cross-country bus trip to find answers to her many questions. What she discovers will not only change the way she lives, but forever change how she views life.

Discussion Questions

1. The Title, So B. It, could have several meanings. What do you think the title means?

2. Bernadette selflessly and patiently takes care of Heidi and her mother, who both need a caretaker. Why do you think she is willing to spend her time and money on people she does not know? What benefits, if any, does Bernie receive?

3. As a young child, Heidi has tremendous responsibilities; shopping with her mother, running errands for Bernie, and baby-sitting for a neighbor to earn money. How do these experiences influence Heidi as she grows up?

4. When Heidi develops the mysterious roll of film and brings the pictures home to view, Bernie asks her, "What's the worst it could be?" Heidi responds: "nothing. The worst would be if there was nothing" (p50). Why would nothing have been the worst thing for Heidi to find?

5. Heidi is afraid she will end up like her mother, full of missing pieces, if she does not go to Liberty to discover her past (p85). Do you think that taking this journey is worth the pain it causes Bernie?
6. Heidi is afraid to take the trip to Liberty alone, and several times en route she is ready to turn around and return home to Bernie. What is the driving force that keeps her on the road to Liberty? Does she have any regrets. If so, what are they?

7. When Heidi lies to Alice, she realizes her lies are unnecessary but that she doesn't feel remorseful until she gets caught (p117). What do you think this indicates about Heidi's character and her search for identity?

8. Heidi realizes she doesn't miss her dad because she has never known him, therefore life without him seems normal. She tells Georgia, "You can't miss what you don't remember having" (p126). Do you think this is true? Why or why not? What are some experiences you have longed for even though you have never had them.

9. Ruby tells Heidi that it probably doesn't mean anything that Elliot says "soof" regularly, but Heidi says, "I think everything means something, even when you don't know what it is" (p181-182). Based on Heidi's life experiences, how would you support her belief?

10. Roy and Ruby cannot understand why Mr. Hill is not telling the truth about Heidi's mother. But even though Heidi does not know why, she knows that "sometimes people lie because the truth is too hard to admit" (p201). What truth is Mr. Hill afraid to admit? How do the choices he made affect Heidi's life?

11. Mr. Hill tells Heidi that someday he would like to know her (p240). Do you think Heidi will ever allow him to know her? How do you think she will get to know her father, Elliot?

12. One of the lessons Heidi learns is that life is not fair. Discuss the people and events in Heidi's life, and list the ones that are unfair. How do these life experiences help Heidi become a stronger person?

13. Until Heidi's trip to Liberty, she lives a sheltered life with only one friend and very little communication with anyone other than Bernie. Even though Bernie teaches her a multitude of lessons, do you think Heidi's social development suffers? How do you think Heidi will adjust to attending school for the first time in junior high? What hurdles will she have to overcome?

14. In chapter one, Heidi says, "I'd be lying if I said that given a choice I wouldn't rather know than not know." What does Heidi learn about knowing and not knowing on her journey to find her identity?
15. After Heidi's journey to learn about her personal history ends, her lucky streak seems to disappear. What is the significance of Heidi losing her luck?

AWARDS & HONORS

Notable Children's Book in the Language Arts (NCTE)
ALA Best Book for Young Adults
Texas Bluebonnet Award nominee
IRA/CBC Young Adults' Choice
Virginia Young Readers Award
Parents' Choice Gold Award
ALA Booklist Editors' Choice
New York Public Library's "One Hundred Titles for Reading and Sharing"
ALA Notable Children’s Book

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by Fred Gipson

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by Betsy Byars

Listening for Lions
by Gloria Whelan

Troll Fell
by Katherine Langrish