

Moonpie and Ivy

By Barbara O'Connor

Frances Foster Books (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

A Reading and Discussion Guide

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SUMMARY:

After being abandoned by her mother, Pearl must discover who she is and how to fit into a way of life she has never experienced. She meets Moonpie, a young boy who is her nearest neighbor on her Aunt Ivy's farm. His mother has also abandoned him, yet Pearl realizes that he is loved by those around him. Pearl begins to see what it means to be a "normal" family by watching Moonpie and Ivy. During the time Pearl lives with her Aunt Ivy, she writes notes on postcards to her mother even though she doesn't know where to send them. Her notes allow her to keep in touch with her mother and express her feelings. One day, Moonpie and Pearl go exploring and Pearl discovers the graves of Ivy's two babies surrounded by sunflowers. Through the sunflowers, she learns the meaning of hope.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the story, Pearl steals the silver dollars and throws them in the river so Ivy will stop liking Moonpie. When Moonpie and Pearl are picking up the silver dollars, Moonpie advises Pearl: "Then maybe you should try doing something to make people like you." What are some things a person can do to make friends? What are some things a person shouldn't do to make friends?
2. Just before Pearl is abandoned at her Aunt Ivy's house, Ruby tries to make Pearl steal a ham. Pearl refuses and her mother begins to ignore her. Can you think of instances where an adult might ask a child to do something that the child should refuse?
3. Pearl writes postcards to her mother reflecting her changing feelings. What lessons has Pearl learned that are conveyed in these notes to her mother? How have her feelings toward her mother changed? How about her feelings towards Aunt Ivy and Moonpie?
4. Ivy tells Pearl that she finds hope in the sunflowers she plants. Where does Pearl find hope? What gives you hope?

ACTIVITIES:

1. Ask everyone to bring a postcard to share with others. Discuss the reasons people send postcards. On blank 4 x 6 index cards, draw a picture on one side. On the opposite side write a short note about your day, leaving room for an address. Mail these postcards to someone you care about.
2. Plant sunflower seeds either in pots or in a small garden and watch them grow.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

For more information about Barbara O'Connor, please visit <http://www.barboconnor.com>



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