



Teacher's Guide for  
Moonpie and Ivy  
by  
Barbara O'Connor

(The following teacher's guide has been prepared by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#).)

*Note:* Another lesson plan prepared by librarian Nina Hunt for the Massachusetts Center for the Book, is located [here](#).

## Prediction Guide

### Pre-reading

1. Who do you suppose Moonpie and Ivy are? Do you think one is the main character?
2. Just by looking at the cover of the book, predict what you think the story will be about.
3. Read just the first page. "I hate to tell you this, honey, but your mama's done gone off the deep end." Predict what this means to Pearl and what will happen to her Mama.

### Chapter 1

1. Is her Mama just getting groceries at the 7-Eleven or buying cigarettes? What makes you think so?
2. Why do you think her granddaddy, "liked to cried his eyes out at the site of that picture?"
3. Does Pearl really hate her Mama?

### Chapter 2

1. Will Pearl and Ivy get along? What makes you think so?
2. Will her Mama be back today? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 3**

1. Will Moonpie and Pearl become friends?
2. What will happen next?

### **Chapter 4**

1. Why does Pearl keep shoving stuff back into her duffel bag? Will she keep doing this?
2. What did Pearl steal? Will she get caught?

### **Chapter 5**

1. Do you think her Mama's hurt? Why or why not?
2. Will they find Pearl's father?

### **Chapter 6**

1. Will Pearl ever go into Moonpie's house?
2. Will Pearl send her Mama all those postcards? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 7**

1. Will Pearl like John Dee or not?
2. What will happen with Moonpie's social worker?
3. Will Pearl stay jealous of Moonpie, Ivy and John Dee?

### **Chapter 8**

1. Will Pearl ask Ivy about what she saw in the woods?
2. Do you think Pearl will want to learn more about her family?

### **Chapter 9**

1. What will happen with Mama Nell?
2. Will she end up going to Moonpie's to play games?

### **Chapter 10**

1. Will Ruby come back and make amends with both Pearl and Ivy?
2. Who will love Pearl, too?

### **Chapter 11**

1. Will Pearl go back to the cemetery? Why do you suppose she wants to?
2. Will Pearl keep the secret?

### **Chapter 12**

1. Will the police find Ruby?
2. Will Pearl stay with Ivy? Why or why not?
3. Why does Pearl write that message on the postcard?

### **Chapter 13**

1. Will Pearl be like Ruby someday?
2. Mama Nell could use some help. Will Pearl help and become her friend?

### **Chapter 14**

1. What will happen to Moonpie?
2. Do you think Pearl will keep the bird?

### **Chapter 15**

1. What were John Dee and Ivy doing?

### **Chapter 16**

1. Can Pearl be adopted, too?
2. What will happen when they find out what she did?

### **Chapter 17**

1. Can Pearl find happiness for herself?
2. Will Ivy someday say what Pearl wants to hear?

### **Chapter 18**

1. How will Pearl be different in the future?
2. Do you think she'll steal ever again? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 19**

1. Will Pearl someday see Moonpie and Ivy again?
2. Who will Pearl be more like someday: Ivy or Ruby?
3. Where and when will she find hope growing? What makes you think so?

### **Comprehension/ Quiz Questions**

**Knowledge:**

1. Tell who the main characters are in this story. What is the relationship of each character to Pearl?
2. List at least three mistakes Pearl makes while staying at Ivy's

**Comprehension:**

1. Retell the key events of the story in your own words.
2. Explain why Pearl is not very good at getting along in a "normal life."

**Application:**

1. Decide what consequences Ruby should face when she returns for Pearl.
2. Make a list of things Pearl has learned in her brief stay with Ivy.

**Analysis:**

1. How would this story be different if told through the eyes of Moonpie?
2. How do the postcards that Pearl writes reflect how she is feeling at Ivy's house?

**Synthesis:**

1. How would you feel if you were Pearl? Moonpie? Ivy?
2. How would you have handled Pearl's stealing of the necklace? Would you have confronted her?

**Evaluation:**

1. Predict what will happen in Arizona.
2. How do you think this story would have been different if there was no Moonpie?

**Multiple Intelligence Projects for**  
**Moonpie and Ivy by Barbara O'Connor**

**Verbal/ Linguistic**

Create a found poem using Moonpie and Ivy as the text of inspiration. Find your favorite scene and then condense all the words into the smallest amount to keep the meaning. Play with line breaks, and even single word sentences for impact. Be sure to give Barbara O'Connor original credit, but give yourself credit for unearthing a poem inside a prose piece!

Here is an example from the web site of Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, the creator of this teacher guide.

**If I Had a House**  
from Matilda by Roald Dahl  
found by Ashley Ausman (7th grader)

If I had a house  
my sitting room  
would be as big  
as a schoolroom  
with more windows  
than my heart  
could bear.

If I had a house  
the curtains would be blue  
and green with pink  
and yellow stripes-  
six feet long.

Instead of planks-  
beautiful satin carpet  
instead of wooden boxes-  
the finest sitting chairs  
in town....

If I had a house.

### **Logical/ Mathematical**

Create two venn diagrams (intersecting circles) comparing: Ruby and Ivy and another comparing Moonpie and Pearl. Be sure to brainstorm all the ways they can be compared: personality, family, looks, etc.

### **Visual/ Spatial**

Create a collage to represent the themes of the novel. As a class, or on your own, think about what the theme of the book was: hope? family? love? You can use newspapers for words, magazines for pictures, even real objects (like a sunflower seed maybe?) to create your artwork. Be sure to put the title and author somewhere on the piece, and then display it!

### **Body/Kinesthetic**

Brainstorm a list of several scenes where Pearl does not say or do what she is thinking. Many times Pearl could have made stronger connections with people had she simply trusted her own heart. After you've found one you're particularly fond of, act out the scene with a partner, as if Pearl HAD followed her inner voice. Discuss how the outcomes might have been different.

### **Musical**

Pretend that you are scoring the movie version of Moonpie and Ivy. Choose a scene and also a song that you think would work well as background music, or in the CD that will be available to accompany it. Explain why you picked that piece of music in a short journal.

## **Interpersonal**

### **Cooperative Learning:**

In partners, summarize each chapter in no more than two sentences. Be sure you've addressed the main idea!

## **Intrapersonal**

In the final scene, Pearl is blocking out her mother's crazy scheming, and concentrating on her own thoughts. She is repeating Ivy's phone number over and over in her head to soothe her, kind of like a lullaby. What things do you say to yourself when you're nervous or upset? Can you make a list of three things that you could turn to if you were in a negative situation? What item could you keep near you to remind you of others who love you (like the ballet necklace and the sunflower seeds)?

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