

Discussion Guide for
Found Things

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About the Book

One morning River Rose Byrne wakes up talking like nobody else and she doesn't know why. Maybe it's because her beloved older brother, Theron, has abruptly vanished. Maybe it's because that bully Daniel Bunch won't leave her alone. Or maybe it has everything to do with the eerily familiar house that her mind explores when she's asleep, and the mysterious woman who lives there.

River has to puzzle through these mysteries on her own until she makes a strange new friend named Meadow Lark. But when she brings Meadow Lark home and her mother reacts in a way that takes River by surprise, River is more lost than before. Now all that's left for River to do is make wish after wish—and keep her eyes open for a miracle.

This guide is aligned with the following Common Core Standards for fifth grade. If you teach a different grade, you will want to visit the [Common Core website](#) and find the coordinating standards for your students.

Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1

Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3

Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (for example, how characters interact).

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.5

Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.6

Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.

Writing: Text Types and Purposes

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.B

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3.D

Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

Prereading Activity

Have students mark their opinion of the following statements below. Then, place posters around the four corners of your room that correspond with the rankings and discuss the answers as a class, allowing kids to move between their answers.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	WHY I think this
It's more difficult to be the one left behind than the one to leave.					
Everyone needs at least one good friend.					
It's hard to be yourself.					
Adults ignore kids' problems, believing their adult problems matter more.					
All good stories have a happy ending.					

Discussion Guide

1. After reading Chapter 1, list everything you learn about River and her family. Then, Star the things that you think will be most important to the plot. Compare your answers with a reading partner.
2. Describe River's relationship with her parents. What does it show about her as a character? Who is Theron? What does River know about his leaving?
3. Compare and contrast River with Meadow Lark. What is more important—how people are alike or how they are different?
4. What rituals does River share with her parents each evening, on Sundays, and once a month? How does this help a person feel part of a family? What rituals does your family have? Which are most important to you?
5. Explain why River's feelings toward Meadow Lark change. Are the girls good for each other, or not? Why?
6. Describe what happened in art class with Daniel Bunch. What wish does it inspire? Do you believe in wishes?
7. What do Meadow Lark and River find that needs their help? Why do they decide to take it home? What is the reaction? How would your parent react?
8. What does River tell Meadow Lark about Theron? Why does Meadow Lark come to stay with River's family? Would your family take in another kid so easily?
9. Why does River feel responsible for Daniel? What is wrong with him? Do you believe River's actions or wishes had anything to do with it, or is it just a coincidence? What does Meadow Lark believe? What do you believe?
10. Describe what happened at the hospital, and then what happened after River got home from visiting. What consequences might she face?
11. Why do the girls return to the river? What do they discover? Why is it odd that River visits the water so often?
12. Compare and contrast Meadow Lark's wishes for herself with those of River's wishes for her own life. Whose wishes would your wishes be most like? Why do the girls argue?
13. How is life different with Meadow Lark living with River? Would you want someone to stay with you for this long? How does it change even simple things, like dinnertime?
14. In Chapter 14, River says to herself, "In the dark, your mind can talk you into believing lots of things you would laugh about during the day." Do you agree? Why do you think this might be true? What is bothering River?
15. Meadow Lark suffers from sleepwalking. List and explain how this is important to the story. Have you ever known someone who sleepwalks?
16. Discuss River's art class. How is it a place of both good and difficult things? How does Ms. Zucchero help River tell her own story?
17. Why do you think River keeps going to that other house in her mind? Do you think the place is important? Why?
18. Describe River's visit to Daniel once he is home. What does she learn about him? What surprising connection is there between Daniel and Theron? How does this scene develop empathy for Daniel?

19. Why does River visit the water once more? What does it make her realize about wishes? Why do the girls decide to go one last time? What would you wish for? What does River wish for?
20. In Chapter 19, River thinks, "Secrets are holy things." What makes her come to this conclusion? What does she mean by this? What does it make her realize about other people?
21. What important conversation did River and her mother have? What secret finally fell into place for River? Are secrets important to always keep? Why or why not?
22. Why does River go back to the hospital? What does she get Benjamin to agree to? Why?
23. Why was River willing to risk crossing the bridge even though it was so dangerous? What did she decide?
24. What does River learn from her father about Theron and River's own past? What wish do both River and her dad share?
25. Describe what happened on the bridge in the middle of the night. How was Meadow Lark almost lost? What happened?
26. What does River learn from Daniel about the fateful night that pushed Theron away from the family? What will she do with this information?
27. What does River realize is the truth about her strange visions of the house?
28. List three things River found in the house and why each of them matters.
29. Why is Meadow Lark leaving?
30. What does River do with the collage? Why?
31. Which character in the novel is your favorite? Why? Which chapter is your favorite? What will you remember about this book in a year?

Point of View: The Lens of a Story (RL.5.6)

If you ask your friend what happened at the game or a dance, you'll get one story. Ask another friend, and it could be a totally different version of the exact same event. Authors decide what point of view to focus on before they start writing.

Discuss and then write down how the story would be different if it were told through each of these other characters' eyes.

Meadow Lark	Theron	Daniel	Mama
<p>Ex: It would focus on how Meadow Lark didn't have a mom and had to move often. Probably how hard it is to be a new student so often, especially when you look different.</p>			

Discuss: Would we feel differently about what happened if we'd read it through one of these other characters' eyes? How would it change the story?

Character (RL.5.1)

Fill out the following chart below as you read the novel.

Character name	A short description	A key quote or selection (or small part) that best shows this
River		
Meadow Lark		
Daniel		
Ms. Zucchero		
Mama		
Theron		

Vocabulary (RL.5.4)

Here is a list of words that you may want to look up or discuss before reading each chapter. Or, try to define these words as you read by the way they're used in the context of the sentence where they appear.

Chapter	Vocabulary
1	peculiar, lurch, quivered, fugitive
2	awning, descending, bureau
3	prism, churn, prickle, dread, dependable
4	communion, bulletin, murky
5	tarnished, anesthesia, electrocute, persnickety
6	sly, allergic
7	shrine, innocent
8	crochet, trembled
9	coincidence, harping, episode
10	forbidden, duty, glimpse
11	distressed
12	betrayed, <i>situs inversus</i> , solemn
13	collapse, abandoned, contradict, trolley, crystals
14	convincing, ajar, assured
15	bristles, lilacs, landlady
16	especially, overripe, convicted, accused
17	scrawled, crouched
18	duffel, emerald, distract
19	private, gritty
20	obviously, mumbled, fringe
21	refreshments, discharged
22	decaying, thrum, abutment, cavernous
23	dusk, shimmy, shushed
24	dimness, surged, scampered
25	hoisted, rimmed
26	foliage, shuddered, fern, familiar
27	patients, hospitable, ripples

Have students sort the vocabulary words from the novel into the following categories before reading.

Never heard it before	I've heard it or read it before	I could define this word	I could use this word in a sentence that makes sense

Inferences: Be a Reading Detective! (RL.5.1)

Inferences are conclusions that a reader makes about something by reading closely and following the clues. It is something you know without being told. Sometimes it takes detective work. Look closely at the following scenes in the book, and see if you can draw an inference from the text.

Scene	An inference that can be made	Clue and evidence that make me believe this to be true
River is worried about what Daniel will say about her brother.	She's embarrassed about her brother's choices and what people think about him and her whole family.	"I thought of the things Daniel might call Theron—a runaway, a coward, a fugitive..." (Ch.1)
Ms. Zucchero talks to River about the items on her collage.	Ms. Zucchero is a caring teacher who wants to know her students better.	"I hope I can hear that story one day." (Ch.1)
At the end of Chapter 2, River is thinking about her brother and what she remembers most about him.		"... but what I remembered was his hand on someone's shoulder."
In Chapter 4, when Daddy is talking to Mr. Clapton after church.	Daddy doesn't want to talk about an important event on the bridge.	
In Chapter 4, River notices Mama spends extra time at one place in the graveyard.		

Reading Strategy: Comprehension

Summarizing: Good readers know how to sum up the most important parts of a story in just a few words. They can say what the main point of a chapter was about. As you read each chapter, write a brief summary of what happened. Then compare your summary with a reading partner and discuss. After that, make a prediction about what you think will happen next. Remember, predictions don't have to be right, but they should be based on evidence in the story!

Chapter	Summary	Prediction
1	Ex: River, the narrator, talks about her brother being gone and a new girl named Meadow Lark who looks odd to River.	Theron didn't want to leave. Meadow Lark will be important in the story.
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Chapter	Summary	Prediction
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		

Chapter	Summary	Prediction
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		

Chapter	Summary	Prediction
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		

After-Reading Discussion

Highlight any of the chapters where your predictions were correct. Then discuss why you think you got them wrong. Do you think authors want a reader to know what will happen next? How do they balance a surprise event with one that seems real?

Arts and Crafts Activity

1. Find 7 to 10 small things that are interesting to you. (You can look for them outdoors or inside your house.) They can be like River's found things, or very different.
2. Glue each item onto a 14-inch by 22-inch poster board.
3. Write a sentence next to each item that tells its story.

About the Author

Visit [Marilyn Hilton's website](#) for more information and resources.

[Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), author and reading specialist, created this guide.

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