

Read your way into SUMMER

Family Discussion Questions for *A Long Way from Chicago*

+ Did something in the book make you laugh out loud? Read one of your favorite funny sections aloud and discuss what makes it so funny. Try assigning parts to people and acting out the scene.

+ Compare the places that you go in the summer to the places your parents and grandparents went when they were young. Is anything the same? What's different?

+ List all the things (activities, money, tools, food, transportation, etc.) that were different in the 1930's from today. Then make a list of things that are the same.

+ What were some things you learned about life during the "Great Depression?"

+ How did you feel about Grandma Dowdel at the beginning of the book? Did your feelings change by the end?

+ Do you think Grandma Dowdel was bad influence or a good influence on Joe and Mary Alice? What did Joey and Mary Alice think? Why?

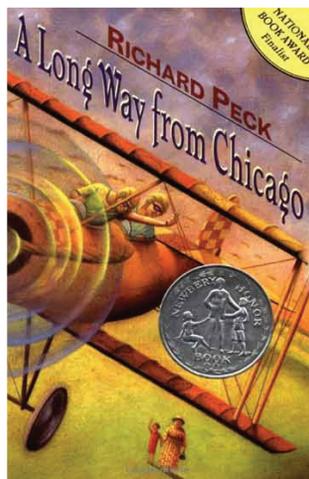
+ Is it true that Grandma Dowdel doesn't "give two hoots about the town?" Why or why not?

+ When did Grandma Dowdel break the "rules?" Do you think she had good reasons for breaking them?

+ Do you think Grandma Dowdel deserved the blue ribbon for gooseberry pie at the fair? Why?

+ How do Joey and Mary Alice change during The Day of Judgment chapter (the one about the gooseberry pie Grandma Dowdel entered in the county fair contest)? What do they believe about Grandma Dowdel at the beginning of the chapter? What do they believe at the end?

+ Describe how Grandma Dowdel got justice from the Cowgills who



knocked down her mailbox and Effie Wilcox's outhouse. How do you think Grandma would define "justice?"

+ Do you notice any different rules or expectations for men and women in Grandma Dowdel's town? Are there things men can do that women can't? Are there things that women can do that men can't? Would Grandma Dowdel behave differently if she were a man?

+ How does Joey feel about Grandma Dowdel's fish trap? Does he have any problems with it? What does he like about it?

+ Who is a better role model for the kids: the Sheriff O.B. Dickerson or Grandma Dowdel? Why? What is a role model supposed to provide?

+ All of the characters in this book speak informal English, and there are many times when the grammar is not right. The author used many similes and metaphors. (In a simile, the word "like" or "as" signals a comparison. In a metaphor, these words are omitted.) When Joey says that Grandma is "tough as an old boot," he is using a simile. Later, when he says that Grandma "wasn't no oil painting herself," he is using a metaphor. What similes or metaphors do you use in your everyday language? Is someone in your family "as smart as a -----?" or "as sweet as -----?"

+ Look at the words the little boy recites in the talent contest at the end of the book. What is its message? Do you think it is the same message as the book?

+ What do you think the main messages of the book are?

+ This book is made up of several short stories about different summers that Joey and Mary Alice visited Grandma Dowdel. What did you like or not like about this way of telling a story?

+ Which story was your favorite and why?



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