



Teachers' Guide and Lesson Plan for *Dear Jo: The story of losing Leah ... and searching for hope.*

By Christina Kilbourne

Guide written by Jennifer Fabes and Shibayle Tobe, McGill University

Part 1: Before Reading the Book – Vocabulary

The following are words and terms from the novel that students should understand prior to reading the book.

Abducted (p7)

Amber Alert (p8)

Responsible (p22)

Addiction (p25)

Internet predators (p40)

Psychological profile (p75)

Suggested Activity: Individually, ask each student to find the meaning of each word or term. Break the class into groups of two or three, and have the students, as a group, come up with a definition of each word or term. Each group of students will then be asked to write an essay that incorporates the words or terms listed above. This activity will be evaluated on the mechanics of writing and on how well the vocabulary is used in the proper context.

Part 2: While Reading the Book – Comprehension and Discussion Questions

Pgs 7-12

Question 1: What has Max been thinking about lately?

Question 2: What do you think happened to Leah?

Pgs 13-16

Question 1: Describe Max's family.

Question 2: Why do you think Max has so much trouble writing about Leah?

Question 3: If you had a diary, what kind of things would you write about?

Pgs 17-28

Question 1: Briefly describe each of Max's friends.

Question 2: When and how did the whole internet craze start?

Question 3: How did Max meet 2funE?

Question 4: What does it mean to you to be responsible? Do you think Max was responsible? Why or why not?

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Part 2, Continued: While Reading the Book – Comprehension and Discussion Questions

Pgs 28-42

Question 1: Why did Max enjoy writing to 2funE? What did she enjoy most about him?

Question 2: Why do you think Leah never showed her emails from muscleboy?

Question 3: Why do you think Max doesn't think it was a bad thing that her mom found her email from 2funE?

Pgs 43-45

Question 1: Why didn't Leah and Max talk for 6 days?

Question 2: Do you think Leah's parents made the right decision about continuing to allow her to use the internet? Why or why not?

Pgs 46-49

Question 1: When was the last time Max saw Leah? What did they talk about?

Question 2: How do you think Leah disappeared?

Pgs 50-67

Question 1: What do the police and Max think happened to Leah?

Question 2: What would you do if someone very close to you went missing? How would you feel?

Pgs 67-74

Question 1: Explain Max's reasoning behind why she thinks Leah will come back safe and sound.

Question 2: What would you contribute to a candlelight vigil for a loved one who passed away?

Pgs 74-83

Question 1: Why did Detective Lucas want Max to write to 2funE again?

Question 2: Do you think Max acted in a responsible way when she decided to write to 2funE again? Why or why not?

Pgs 83-89

Question 1: Describe the front of Leah's house since her disappearance.

Question 2: What prized possession would you leave to a loved one if he/she died?

Pgs 89-95

Question 1: Describe Max's dream. How do you think it connects to Leah being missing?

Question 2: What line from a 15-year-old boy has convinced Detective Lucas that he found a lead?

Pgs 95-103

Question 1: Why did Mr. Conroy ask to meet with Max after class?

Question 2: What did you think when you found out what the girl who was invited to play laser tag did?

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Part 2, Continued: While Reading the Book – Comprehension and Discussion Questions

Pgs 104-117

Question 1: How did they find Leah's body?

Question 2: Explain how you would feel if you were in Max's position.

Pgs 117-123

Question 1: Why do you think Max dreads therapy so much? Give at least two examples from this section to support your answer.

Question 2: Why did Mr. Conroy ask Max to stay at recess?

Pgs 123-129

Question 1: What was Detective Lucas' good news?

Question 2: If you were 2funE, would you have written back? Why or why not?

Pgs 130-150

Question 1: Summarize the conversations between Max and 2funE.

Question 2: Question 2: How would you feel if you ever came face-to-face with a murderer? How would you feel if you were in Max's position and were planning on meeting Leah's killer?

Pgs 150-157

Question 1: What is the name of this operation? Why did Detective Lucas call it this?

Question 2: What are some of the things that could go wrong between 2funE and Max? Give at least three examples.

Pgs 157-171

Question 1: Describe Brad and Judee's encounter.

Question 2: What do you think you would have done if you were in Max's position?

Question 3: How would you feel as you watched a murderer finally get arrested?

Pgs 171 to 179

Question 1: What is the purpose of Leah's Wings?

Question 2: Do you think that writing was the best way in which Max could have expressed her feelings? What other ways could she have done this?

Pgs 179-185

Question 1: How does Max describe herself when she was going through her depression?

Question 2: If you could change the ending, how would you change it?

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Part 2, Continued: While Reading the Book – Comprehension and Discussion Questions

After the class has finished reading the book, the following questions can be put to the students in a discussion about the book as a whole:

1. Max acted in a responsible manner throughout the internet ordeal. Give at least 5 examples of this.
2. Do you think Max acted as a good friend to Leah throughout the book? Defend your answers by using examples from the book.
3. What would you have done if you had been in Leah's position? How could she have prevented her disappearance? If you were Max, how could you have saved your best friend from being killed?
4. If you began talking to someone online, would you ever lie to the other person? What kind of things would you lie about? Do you know of anyone close to you who has deceived a person they were talking to online?

Here are sample questions that will get students thinking about major themes or pivotal situations that arise in the book. e.g. "What would *you* do if..."

1. Have you ever been inside a chat room? What did you talk about? With whom did you talk? If you have never been in a chat room, what do you think you would talk about?
2. Would you ever consider meeting someone you met online? Why or why not?
3. What would you do if your best friend went missing?

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Part 3: After Reading the Book – Curriculum Connections and Activities

Language Arts:

Write a letter from Max's point of view that explains to Leah how much she is missed and that she will never be forgotten. After the letters are read, the students will put their letter inside a balloon. Each student will then blow up their balloon and release it into the sky. As a further activity, you could have students write a letter to a loved one who had passed away. The same activity with the balloons could be done, as each student would have the opportunity to release their letters. Each student will fill out a self-evaluation form with regards to their letters to Leah.

Visual Arts:

The show *America's Most Wanted* uses artist renderings of criminals. The teacher will describe a person to the class and each student will have to recreate this person in drawing. When this activity is completed, the students will get into groups of two. Each partner will get an opportunity to describe a 'criminal', as the other partner draws the picture. The person giving the description will be shown a picture for 30 seconds by the teacher. They will then have to recreate this image in their head and try to describe the face to their partner so that he/she may make a sketch. Once this part is done, the partners will switch tasks (the picture of the criminal will not be the same). Students will be evaluated on their attention to detail for their first drawing/sketch. For the second part of the activity, students will be marked on their ability to effectively describe and sketch a person's physical features.

Physical Education:

In the students' physical education class, they will learn different self defense strategies that may help them if they are ever faced with a difficult situation and they need to protect themselves. This will be done in a group setting. Students will be evaluated on their ability to be able to identify in which situations to use these strategies, as well as how well they following instruction.

Math:

Students will work in groups of two or three. They will research the statistics that deal with the number of crimes associated with internet predators and how this number has increased throughout the years. They will have to show their results in a bar graph. This graph will be evaluated on the content, as well as the correct labeling of the graph.

Additional Activities: The following activity suggestions enable students to explore the topic of the book.

Activity 1:

This activity was taken from the website <http://www.netsmartz.org>. It is a pledge that each student must fill out that pertains to acting in a responsible way online. Students will complete this pledge individually. They will also have to take it home and get it signed by their parents. Students will be evaluated on their participation in this activity. The pledge sheet can be downloaded and printed at : http://www.netsmartz.org/pdf/pledgemshs_eng.pdf

Activity 2:

A classroom-guided discussion about being safe on the internet that will center around the following question that will be asked by the teacher: What are the things that we should remember about being safe on the Internet?

The class will be discussing the different things that we should do to be safe on the internet. As a class, we will create a list of the most important things to keep in mind when using the internet so we are safe in doing so. The teacher will create a poster and post this in the classroom. Throughout different parts of the book, the teacher will refer to this list and ask the students if the characters in the book followed the list of safety precautions when using the internet.

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Extras:

Here are several Web sites that give more information about the topic(s) addressed in the book. As a class, visit each site and discuss what they have to do with the story.

<http://safekids.com/>

<http://www.netsmartz.org/>

<http://www.ikeepsafe.org/>

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

<http://www.amw.com>

About the author:

Christina Kilbourne was born in Southwestern, Ontario, but spent her elementary and high school years in Muskoka, a resort area two hours north of Toronto. She graduated with an Honours BA in English Literature and Anthropology from the University of Western Ontario and her Masters degree in Creative Writing and English Literature at the University of Windsor, Ontario. Upon graduating Christina Kilbourne travelled across Africa, Mexico, Central and South America and has lived two years in New Zealand, her husband's home country. She has worked in various jobs writing and designing newsletters, brochures, handbooks reports and websites for such organizations as CIBC, the Auckland University of Technology, the Regional Municipality of York, and most recently, Conservation Ontario. Christina Kilbourne currently lives with her husband, two children and various four-legged creatures near Mount Albert, Ontario.

Other books by this author:

They Called Me Red (young adult novel)

Where Lives Take Root (young adult novel)

Day of the Dog-tooth Violets (adult literary fiction novel)

The Roads of Go Home Lake (adult literary fiction novel)

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