

- Celine attempts to teach Jayna manners. As a class, make a list of the manners that Celine emphasizes. What other manners might Jayna learn? Ask students to create a humorous one-frame cartoon with caption that Celine might use to make a point to Jayna about one of the lessons.
- Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, and signed the official surrender document on September 2, 1945, on board the USS *Missouri*. Jayna relates the celebration in the streets of Brooklyn on the day the war ended. Use books in the library, sites on the Internet, or family recipe books to find a soup that Jayna might call “Surrender Soup” and serve at the Gingersnap. Write a paragraph about the soup and why it’s appropriate for this national celebration.

**Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standard Reading: Literature Key Ideas and Details RL.5.1, 6.1; Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing 5.4, 6.4.**

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 5.7, 6.7; Text Types and Purposes W. 5.3, 6.3.**

## Looking at Literary Elements

### Making Thematic Connections

The need to belong and the search for family are the central themes in the novel. Discuss how Jayna’s feelings of being “alone” fit into these themes. Have students write direct quotes from the novel that supports the central themes. Display the quotes on a bulletin board and label them “search for family” or “need to belong.” How do these themes contribute to the overall conflict of the novel?

**Correlates to common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL. 5.1, 6.1; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL. 5.3, 6.3.**

### Establishing Setting

The setting of Gingersnap is extremely important to the plot. It’s essential that a historical setting be clear and accurate. Jot down details in the novel that define the setting. Based on research in the above activities, how are the references to the war in the Pacific and life on the home front accurate? Compare North River to Brooklyn.

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL. 5.1, 6.1; Speaking and Listening: SL. 5.3, 6.3**

### Understanding Symbolism

A symbol in literature is an object, scene, or character that suggest a meaning beyond the obvious or literal meaning. Discuss the symbolism of the recipe book. What is symbolic about both Jayna and Elise losing the book? Discuss the symbolism of the ghost. What is the symbol of hope in the novel?

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL. 5.1, 6.1.**

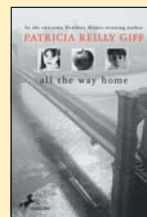


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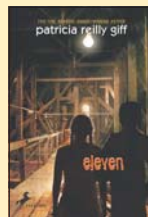
## About the Author

Patricia Reilly Giff is the author of many beloved books for children, including the Kids of the Polk Street School books and her two Newbery Honor books, *Lily’s Crossing* and *Pictures of Hollis Woods*. Her most recent novels are *R My Name Is Rachel*, *Storyteller*, *Eleven*, and *Wild Girl*; her books for younger readers in the Zigzag Kids series include *Number One Kid*, *Big Whopper*, and *Flying Feet*.

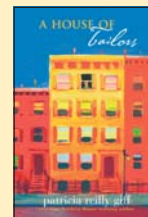
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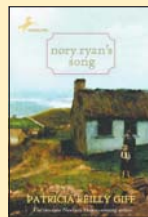
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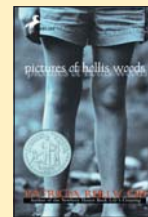
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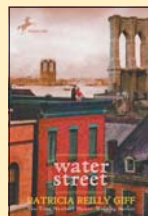
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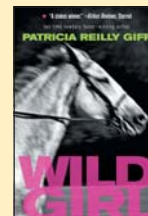
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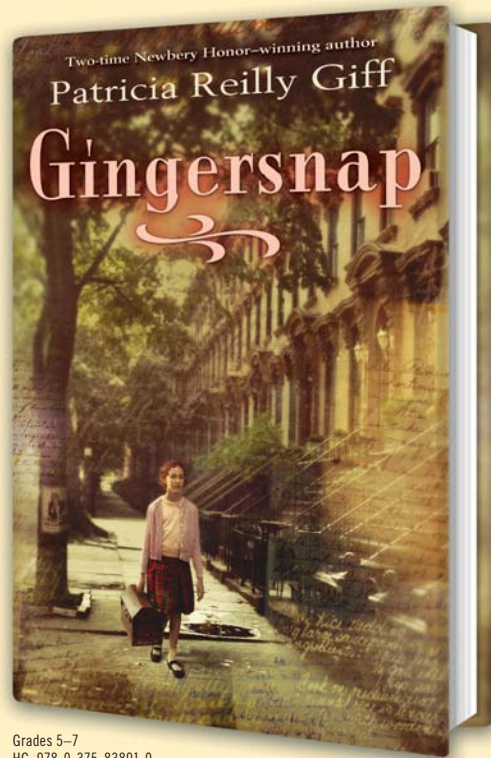
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# Gingersnap

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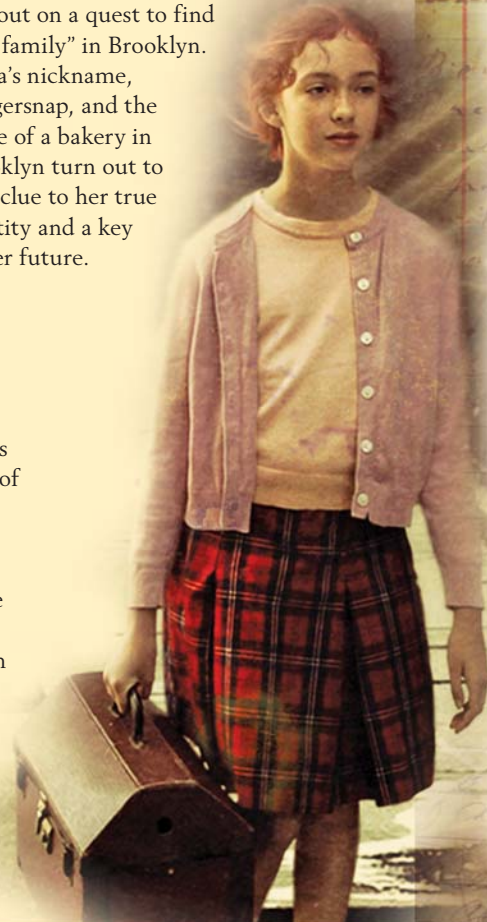
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## About the Book

Jayna has no memory of her parents who were killed when she was a baby, but she does have Rob, her older brother who took custody of her once he became legal age. When the United States enters World War II, Rob is deployed to the Pacific and Jayna is left with the landlady. Before he left, Rob told Jayna about an old recipe books bearing a name and address in Brooklyn. In one of her quiet visits to the house that she and Rob had occupied, Jayna discovers the book. Could it have belonged to her grandmother? Then Rob is reported missing in action, and Jayna, guided by the voice of a ghost, sets out on a quest to find her “family” in Brooklyn. Jayna’s nickname, Gingersnap, and the name of a bakery in Brooklyn turn out to be a clue to her true identity and a key to her future.



## Questions for Group Discussion

- Discuss the role of the ghost in the novel. Who might the ghost be? How does the ghost frighten and confuse Jayna when she first appears? How does the ghost make Jayna brave? What is significant about the final appearance of the ghost?
- Define family. Jayna says that she and Rob just made themselves into a family a year ago. Discuss Rob’s efforts to remain part of Jayna’s life even when they were in different foster homes. Describe their efforts to put their family back together after the war.
- Rob tells Jayna that she is tough like their mother. Explain why Jayna likes the comparison to her mother. Debate whether Jayna is tough. Rob says that Jayna should remain brave. Cite scenes from the novel where Jayna is tough and brave. Discuss moments when she loses her toughness.
- Jayna has never seen a picture of her parents, so it’s difficult for her to picture them. Discuss her reaction when she finds a picture of Rob with their parents. Why hasn’t Rob ever shown the picture to her? Jayna also discovers a book of recipes. How does this book hold a clue to Jayna’s grandmother and her past?
- Describe Celine and Jayna’s relationship. Explain Jayna’s reaction when she overhears Celine say, “Someday I’ll have my life back.” (p. 39) Debate whether this statement gives Jayna the courage she needs to leave. Why does Jayna feel sorry for Celine as she is preparing to leave?
- Jayna makes reference to the number of things that she broke at her foster mother’s house. Then she breaks Celine’s almost-genuine Ming vase. Why does ruining the cake at the bakery feel so much worse than the other things she has broken?
- Elise feels that Jayna must belong someplace, and to someone. Jayna tells everything to Elise. What does she say about her parents, Rob, Mrs. Alman, the last foster mother, and Celine? Why does Jayna leave out information Rob has told her about her grandmother, the recipe books, and the name Gingersnap?
- Describe Jayna’s reaction when she sees the initials “ML” carved on the banister at Elise’s house. How does this make her more determined to crack the mystery surrounding her mother, Elise, and her family?
- Discuss what Jayna feels when Elise tells her that she isn’t her grandmother. How does Jayna relate to Elise’s story of her family’s plight during the Great War? Why does Elise allow Jayna to stay? Discuss Celine’s reaction when Jayna calls her. How does Elise become a surrogate grandmother to Jayna?

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Key Ideas and Details RL. 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3; Speaking and Listening Comprehension and Collaboration SL 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3.

## Curriculum Connections

- Rob’s ship is part of a huge convoy with the mission to take the following islands from Japan: Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Honshu, and Hokkaido. Divide the class into four groups and ask them to use books in the library or sites on the Internet to research each invasion. Include: map, date of invasion, U.S. troops involved in the invasion, U.S. and enemy casualties, and outcomes. Develop a four-part class Powerpoint presentation on the war in the Pacific. Groups should edit for clarity, grammar and spelling. Each group should present their part of the production to the class.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading: Informational Text Key Ideas and Details RL. 6.1, 6.3; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL. 6.7, 6.8; Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9; Text Types and Purposes W. 5.2, 6.2; Production and Distribution of Writing W.5.4, 5.5, 5.8, 6.4, 6.5, 6.8; Speaking and Listening Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL. 5.5, 5.4, 6.4, 6.5, 5.5; History/Social Studies Key Ideas and Details RH.6-8.1, 6-8.2; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 6-8-7, 6-8-8

- The Cornerstone of Peace was erected to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the invasion of Okinawa. Read about this memorial on the following website: [cspwm.ucsc.edu/projects/okinawa-peace-memorial-park-project](http://cspwm.ucsc.edu/projects/okinawa-peace-memorial-park-project).

Write a brochure for the park that states the purpose of this memorial, items found in the museum, and why it’s called Cornerstone of Peace. Include quotes from fictional survivors of the invasion like Rob, who are called The Greatest Generation. Encourage peer editing for clarity, grammar, and spelling.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading: Information Text Key Ideas and Details RL.6.1, 6.3; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL. 6.7, 6.8; Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 5.7, 5.9; Production and Distribution of Writing W. 5.4, 5.5, 6.4, 6.5.

- Kate Smith, a famous radio singer and personality during World War II, told Americans that they were wrong if they didn’t write to those fighting the war. Jayna tries to write to Rob, but she doesn’t feel that she has anything to say. Write a letter that she might write when the ghost first appears. Write another letter after she arrives in Brooklyn. What will she tell Rob about Elise?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standard: Writing Text Types and Purposes: W. 5.3, 6.3; Production and Distribution of Writing W. 5.4, 6.4.

- Elise talks of ration books. Read about the rationing program during World War II on the following website: [www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/events/rationing.htm](http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/events/rationing.htm)

Why was it necessary to ration goods? What items were rationed? How did the rationing program affect businesses like Gingersnap, Elise’s bakery? Ask students to write an article for a Brooklyn newspaper called “Tips for Running a Bakery Under the Rationing Program.” Quote Elise in the article.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standard Reading: Informational Text Key Ideas and Details RL. 6.1, 6.2. Writing: Text Types and Purposes 5.2, 6.2; Production and Distribution of Writing W. 5.4, 6.4

## Pre-Reading Activity

Help students connect to the historical setting of the book by asking them to use books in the library and sites on the Internet to construct a time line for the invasion of Okinawa, known as Operation Iceberg. The following website is helpful: [www.historynet.com/battle-of-okinawa-operation-iceberg.htm](http://www.historynet.com/battle-of-okinawa-operation-iceberg.htm). What prompted the invasion? How many ships were involved? What was the result? Display the time line in the classroom so that students can follow along in the novel as Jayna, the main character, deals with her brother’s fate on board the Muldoon, a destroyer involved in the invasion.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading: Informational Text Key Ideas and Details RL. 6.1, 6.3; Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge 5.7, 5.9, 6.7, 6.9