

# My Diary from the Edge of the World

By Jodi Lynn Anderson

## Reading Group Guide

A Reading Group Guide to

***My Diary from the Edge of the World***

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### **About the Book**

Gracie Lockwood lives in Cliffden, Maine, which may seem like an ordinary place, but in fact, it's quite the opposite. In Cliffden, Gracie may encounter a vampire on the way to McDonald's or see a dragon near TJ Maxx. And if someone is going to die, a Dark Cloud appears above their home. Stunned when such a cloud looms over their house, Gracie's family tries to outrun it. First they seek help from Gracie's grandmother, a witch. Then they set off to find the Extraordinary World, a safer—but possibly imaginary—world near Cape Horn. Their danger-filled journey binds together Gracie's family and her orphaned friend, Oliver, but can they ever reach safety and escape the threat of death?

### **Prereading Questions**

1. The novel's narrator thinks at one point, "Sometimes silence is best." When and how can silence be a good thing?
2. What are the possible benefits of keeping a diary?

### **Discussion Questions**

1. On the first page, Gracie imagines herself like Joan of Arc. What are some traits of Joan of Arc? How might mentioning her serve as foreshadowing for the story?
2. Early on, Gracie encounters a father dragon who seems more attentive to its offspring than her own father does. How does her father treat her at the beginning of the story? How does that change?
3. Gracie's father believes in the Extraordinary World even when no one else does. How does he try to convince the family that he's right? Discuss whether they have reason to be angry with him, and how

they feel when it turns out he's right.

4. Mr. Lockwood is particularly interested in physics and what Sam calls "count 'em mechanics." Why does he think that science helps to prove the existence of the Extraordinary World? What does he mean when he says there are endless possibilities? How does it tie into what Gracie says near the end about snowflakes?
5. Gracie describes her mother as "the opposite of my dad." Compare and contrast her parents. Why do you think Gracie sees them as opposites?
6. Why is Sam the center of the family? Describe him and his personality. Why do they believe that he's the one in danger? How do different family members react to, and interact with, the cloud?
7. Why does Sam love to have Gracie tell him about when he was born? Explain how the story changes in the final telling. What does the story reveal about Gracie and how she feels about Sam?
8. Gracie and Millie don't get along when the book begins. Describe their relationship and how it changes throughout the course of the book.
9. What does her mother mean when she describes Gracie as having a "restless heart" and "loud personality"? Give examples from the story that show these aspects of Gracie.
10. Their mother says that Gracie was born with "an inner compass" but that Millie has to find hers. What does she mean? Do you agree? Do you think Millie eventually finds her inner compass?
11. How can you tell that writing is important to Gracie? Why does it matter so much to her?
12. Describe Oliver when Gracie first meets him. How does he change over the course of the book? Why do he and Gracie like each other so much?
13. Gracie has never visited Grandma before. What is the Crow's Nest like? Describe Grandma and compare her to Gracie's father.
14. Oliver lost his parents in an attack by sasquatches, yet he is kind to Daisy. What do his actions reveal about his character? When the family decides not to sell Daisy, what does it show about them and how their views have evolved?
15. Describe Daisy and how she changes during her time with the family. How does she save the family from a fatal accident? How do they respond to her deed?
16. Why does Oliver call Big Tex "a beast"? After leaving the circus, Gracie thinks that "who's the beast and who isn't" depends on "where you're standing." What does she mean?
17. What is Virgil like and what role does he play in the story? What are his strengths? Discuss his

relationship to the family, especially Millie.

18. Prospero is the name of a magician in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Describe Prospero in this book and why he might have that name. What does Gracie's father think of him? What impact does the visit to Prospero have on the plot?

19. Explain why the girls find Captain Bill to be a romantic, dashing figure. Why does their opinion change? Describe his attitude toward their mother and why he thinks she shares the same feelings.

20. Discuss how the explorer Magellan is mentioned throughout the novel. What does he symbolize, especially to Gracie's father?

21. Compare the Earth that Gracie lives on to the Extraordinary World in terms of geography and inhabitants. Why does the Extraordinary World sound so appealing to Gracie's family?

22. Gracie decides partway through her diary to add a quote from Hamlet as an epigraph. How does the epigraph tie in to the story? Discuss whether you think it's an appropriate choice.

## **Activities**

### **A Magical Menagerie**

Many different magical creatures appear in this story. Choose one to research, using print and Internet sources. Then create a poster of the creature including a drawing or painting, and a substantial description of what you learned in your research.

### **Map It!**

Print out a blank map of the Western hemisphere such as the one at World Atlas ([worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/printpage/americas.htm](http://worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/printpage/americas.htm)). On the map, trace a line of the journey that Gracie's family takes from Maine to the tip of South America. Label the places they stop on the way and label cities mentioned in the text like Chicago and New York. Use the margins of the map to write short descriptions of the places that you labeled, using information from the novel.

### **Duo Diaries**

Imagine that Oliver is also keeping a diary. Choose several days that Gracie writes about and write diary entries from Oliver's point of view. Show how he sees things in some ways differently and in some ways the same as Gracie does.

*Guide written by Kathleen Odean, a former school librarian and Chair of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee. She gives professional development workshops on books for young people and is the author of Great Books for Girls and Great Books about Things Kids Love.*

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