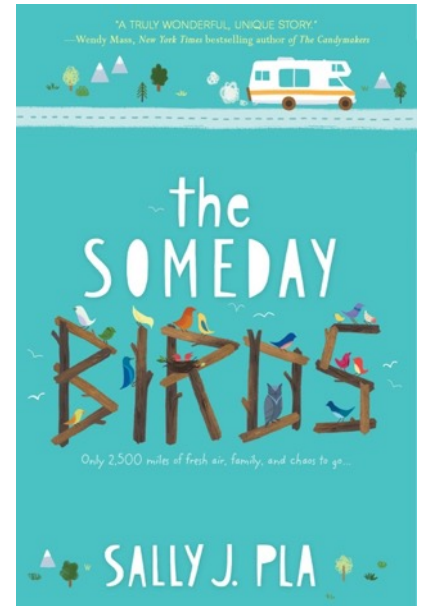


A Curriculum Guide for Educators & Readers

Aligned to the Common Core Grades 4-8

Discussion points, activities, and writing prompts to enhance the use of *The Someday Birds* in the classroom.

Great for book clubs, too!



About the Author

Sally Pla has traveled on family road trips to most everywhere in this story. She has English degrees from Colgate and Penn State and has worked as a business journalist and in public education. She has three sons, a husband, and an enormous, fluffy dog and lives near lots of lemon trees in Southern California. Her middle-grade novels include *The Someday Birds* (January 2017) and *Stanley Will Probably Be Fine* (Feb 2018). You can visit her online at www.sallyjpla.com.

This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a bachelor's in English Education from Oswego State University and masters in Educational Theater from New York University. Marcie can often be found writing her own books at home in San Diego, California. Visit her at www.thisismarciecolleen.com.

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About the Book

Charlie's perfectly ordinary life has been unraveling ever since his war journalist father was injured in Afghanistan. When his father heads from California to Virginia for medical treatment, Charlie reluctantly travels cross-country with his boy-crazy sister, unruly brothers, and a mysterious new family friend. He decides that if, along the way, he can spot all the birds that he and his father were hoping to see someday, then everything might just turn out okay.

The Someday Birds is a Junior Library Guild Selection for 2017, with starred reviews from Publishers Weekly and others. It received a 5-star rating from CommonSense Media.

Common Core Aligned for Grades 4-8

4th grade: ELA. RL.4.1,2,3,4,6,7; W.4.1,2,3; SL.4.1,2,4; L.4.4,5

5th grade: ELA. RL.5.1,2,3,4,6,7; W.5.1,2,3; SL.5.1,2,4,5; L.5.4,5

6th grade: ELA. RL.6.1,2,3,4,5,6; W.6.1,2,3,4,7,8; SL.6.1a,3,4,5; L.6.1,2,3,4,5

7th grade: ELA. RL.7.1,2,3,4,5,6; W.7.1,2,3,4,7,8; SL.7.4,5; L.7.1,2,3,4,5

8th grade: ELA. RL.8.1,2,3,4,5,6; W.8.1,2,3,4,7,8; SL.8.4,5; L.8.1,2,3,4,5

Before You Read...

1. Take a look at the cover of *The Someday Birds*.
 - a. Where do you think this story will take place?
 - b. Can you predict what this story might be about?
2. Read the text on the jacket flap and back cover. Is there anything there that interests you?
3. Who do you think is the ideal audience for this book? (Age, personality, etc.)
4. Do you think you will like reading this book? What might be fun about it? Write down some thoughts, and share them with the class.

Chapters 1-12

1. In the opening scene, Charlie is washing his hands twelve times (*soap-rinse-one-soap-rinse-two-soap-rinse-three-soap-rinse-four*). What are some other indications in the first chapter that Charlie appreciates cleanliness?
2. Charlie is on his way to visit his father. Where is his father? Why?
 - a. Why does Charlie say his father isn't waiting?
3. How is Charlie treated by Davis, the twins, and Gram?
4. Why does Charlie like to stop in the hospital gift shop?
5. What do you think Charlie means when he says the following:

"Seeing the birds makes me feel quiet and orderly. The birds are beautiful. The basic facts about them don't change. Bird behavior is consistent. You can write it down, know it, understand it. No matter how hard you try, you can't do that with people."

6. Describe Ludmila in your own words.
 - a. Ellie, the clerk in the gift shop, describes Ludmila as a vulture. Gram describes her as a hawk. Explain both descriptions in your own words.
 - b. Davis calls Ludmila 'the Intruder Gorilla.' Why do you think she calls her that?
 - c. Who do you think Ludmila is? Why might she be taking care of Charlie's father?
7. Charlie's dad once asked him if he is a "flocker or a loner."
What do you think he meant by that?
 - a. Which do you think Charlie is?
 - b. Do you consider yourself a flocker or a loner? Why?

Who is Charlie?

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Charlie, on a large piece of paper.

Using Chapters 1-12 as evidence, write any known details about Charlie inside the outline.

Outside the outline, document any questions about Charlie that you might have.



8. Explain the Someday Birds list.
 - a. Why does Charlie's father insist on including exotic and extinct birds on the list?
9. Why are the doctors recommending sending Charlie's father to Virginia?
10. While Gram goes to Virginia with Charlie's father, things get out of hand at home.
 - a. Draw a picture of the state of the house, with no babysitter.
 - b. Why is Mrs. Bertolo unable to come help them? Who comes, instead?
 - c. How do each of them feel about their new sitter?
11. Davis wakes Charlie in the middle of the night with a wild plan.
 - a. At first, Charlie doesn't want to sneak off in the middle of the night on their cross-country trip. What finally convinces him to go along with Davis?
 - b. What does Charlie pack?
 - c. If you were Charlie would you have gotten in Jonathan's car? Or would you have stayed with Ludmila at home? Explain your answer.
12. Imagine that you are Ludmila and you awaken to find the kids have left. Write a diary entry explaining how you feel.
13. Describe the chain of events that lead to the car crash in Las Vegas.

Activities to Develop Your Own Visual Cue Skills

Charades

Play a game of charades, acting out feelings or emotions. For younger students, keep it simple: act out feeling happy, sad, mad or scared. Older students can use more complex feelings such as guilty, anxious, embarrassed, proud, etc.

Picture This!

Focus on reading facial expressions. Using an empty picture frame, allow each student to *be* the picture. Choose an emotion and then one by one kids can hold up the picture frame and show their best interpretation of the emotion.

Discuss what it's like for Charlie, struggling to read these Visual Cues.

Pictionary

Draw the feelings, instead of acting them out.

Variations include:

- Provide a circle on which students will have to draw a certain emotion. Other students will have to guess what emotion is drawn.
- Provide an outline of Tiberius the dog's face, on which students will have to draw a certain emotion. This is a difficult challenge and leads into a deeper discussion of the art of illustration.

14. What do you think Charlie means when he says, "I wish flocks of people would look out for each other" the way crows look out for each other?
 - a. If Davis, the twins, and Charlie were like crows, how would they act now that Jonathan is hurt?
15. What does Charlie find in the old junk store?
16. What do the twins find in an overgrown lot?
17. How does Ludmila know where to find the kids?
 - a. Where does Charlie want to go?
 - b. How would you feel, in a car with a strange babysitter, heading to a strange place?

Making Connections:

Be like Charlie and his dad and create your own Someday List.

Your Someday List can include: places you want to go, things you want to try, animals or birds you want to see, or people you want to see.

Be sure to include a few a few challenges or wild cards on your list to remind yourself that "anything could happen."



Chapters 13-20

1. Charlie creates a list of "Why We Should Turn Around and Go Home." Using evidence from the text, as well as your own opinion, agree or disagree with each item on the list.

- a. Create a second list of "Why We Should Keep Going." List at least six reasons and support them with evidence from the text, as well as your own opinion.
- b. Compare the two lists. If you were Charlie and needed to choose, what would you do? Go home or keep going? Use your lists to support your decision.

2. What is a GHO?

- a. Seeing a GHO gives Charlie an idea of a gift to get his father. What is the gift?

3. Create a brochure for the Wyoming Infrared Observatory, using the information gathered from the text, as well as information found on the Internet.

4. Charlie says that "overwhelming cooking smells are just another of my tragic burdens." What do you think he means by this?

- a. What else do you think Charlie includes in the list of "tragic burdens"?
- b. List the many tragic burdens that Charlie has with Old Bessie.

5. Conduct Internet research for images of a Great Horned Owl and draw one.

- a. Do additional research and find FIVE facts about the Great Horned Owl to include on your drawing. EXTRA CREDIT: Draw and research whatever birds you want!

A Language of Sight and Sound

Charlie describes the three-diagonal pinprick pattern in the beige fabric top of Ludmila's car as *pingpingping*.

Ludmila's brother liked to call windshield washer fluid *pssssht pssssht*.

Make up some of your own words like Charlie and Amar, based on what the item looks like or sounds like.

Look up the word: *onomatopoeia*. What does it mean?

Try making up words for the following:

A rocking chair is a _____.

Lightning is a _____.

Polka dots are _____.

6. Dr. Joan calls Charlie's information "secondhand." What do you think she means by this?
- What would "firsthand information" be?
7. Gram tells Ludmila to take the kids some place to have some fun. Why?
- Where do they decide to go?
 - If you were in Wyoming and suddenly told you could go anywhere, where would you go? Look at a map for ideas.
8. Visit Yellowstone National Park online. If you were with the group, what would you want to see while at Yellowstone?
9. Davis tells the boys to stay at least twenty-five feet away from the bison. But the brochure really says twenty-five yards. How many more feet is twenty-five yards?
- How does the bison change his behavior in a way that alerts Charlie?
 - Do you think it was Charlie or Tony who saved the day?
10. What does Charlie decide to call Dog? Why?

Making Connections:

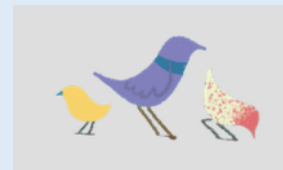
Charlie is stuck in the middle of the family birth order.

What about you? Are you oldest, middle, youngest, or only?

What's kind of annoying about your place in the family?

What's a good thing about your place in the family?

Who is your flock? Who do you move through life with?



Chapters 21-27

- Charlie explains that an archaeopteryx was the first bird that evolved from dinosaurs. Conduct Internet research on the archaeopteryx to see if Charlie's right. Try to find at least two additional facts about the archaeopteryx.

- a. Davis says it would be cool if people could evolve to be more peaceful or smarter. If you could evolve, how would you like to change? Would you like to fly, or live under water? Would you like to evolve to be able to read super-fast, or do math lightning-fast, or move things with your thoughts, or read minds?? How would you evolve? Explain your choice.
2. Several of the characters seem to have different opinions or feelings about the Battle of Little Bighorn Reenactment. Explain how the following characters feel about it and why.
 - a. Davis
 - b. Ludmila
 - c. Jake and Joel
 - d. Beer Belly Man and his family
 - e. How do you feel about battle reenactments? Are they a celebration, or do you feel as Ludmila does, that they are disrespectful? Explain your opinion.
3. Locate Sarajevo, Bosnia on a map.
 - a. When was the war? Find some images of Sarajevo before and after the war.
 - b. Charlie's father says, "it's important to tell the stories of the people that get caught up in war and violence. We can't pretend it isn't happening." In your own words, tell Ludmila's story. Use the Internet to find out more information about the Sarajevo Siege.
 - c. Create an illustrated poster about Sarajevo. Include some of the images you have found and Ludmila's story. Feel free to use quotes from the text.
4. While trying to sketch Mount Rushmore, Charlie says, "I'm way better at birds than people." How is this statement true, other than in drawing? Use evidence in the text to support your answer.
5. List at least three reasons why the scene at Wall Drug with the parrots was unusual, in a good way, for Charlie.
6. Looking at a map, find Sioux Falls and Washington, DC.

- a. Trace a line down I-90 East, to I-76 around Ohio moving through Pennsylvania, to I-95 South.
- b. Locate the bald eagle breeding grounds around the Mississippi River.
- c. Locate Chicago and the Field Museum.
- d. Find someplace along the route that you would like to stop and visit. Explain why.

Making Connections:

A major theme in *The Someday Birds* is the need to survive, like the Prairie Chicken, or firebird.

Choose how the need to survive fuels the actions of the following characters from the novel.

- a. Charlie
- b. Charlie's dad
- c. Ludmila
- d. Tiberius, the dog

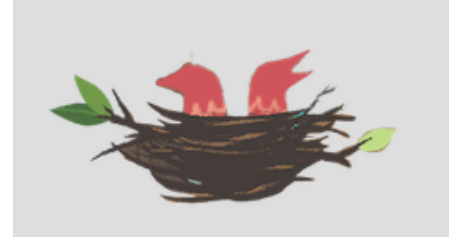


Chapters 28-35

1. How does seeing the bald eagle play into Charlie's decision to go on the waterpark ride?
 - a. Do you think Charlie regretted his decision?
 - b. List three positives and three negatives about Charlie's experience.
 - c. What do you think Charlie means when he says, "If I had to say what the very worst part of that ride was, I'd say it was the few seconds *before* I got pushed down the hole"?
 - d. Have you ever been really scared to do something, but then when you did it wasn't so bad? Describe that experience.
2. What do the kids learn is the connection between Ludmila's brother, Amar, and their father?
3. Go to YouTube and watch some videos of starling murmurations. Describe what you see.
 - a. If you were a starling, who would your seven touching-distance birds be? Why?
4. Visit www.fieldmuseum.org. Imagine that you are with Charlie's family at the museum. Browse the many exhibits and choose two that you really want to see. Then, write a scene in which you and the characters of *The Someday Birds* go to that exhibit. What do you see? What do you do? How does each person react to your exhibit choices?
5. Imagine that you are Robert, Charlie's dad, and write an email to Ludmila explaining who you are and what Amar has told you.
6. Describe in a paragraph or two the scene when Ludmila and Amar, as children, meet the Liebowitzes. Be sure to show the truth to Amar's statement that there is "good everywhere."
7. How would you describe the Amish country and its people?
 - a. In what ways is this different from Anna's party?

8. Describe in your own words the chain of events that lead to Charlie spotting vultures.

Chapters 36-44



1. Describe in your own words the scene between McGinty, the landlady, and Charlie in the tavern at Colonial Williamsburg.
 - a. The landlady calls McGinty a “strange bird.” Imagine that you are Charlie and defend McGinty.
 - b. Why do you think Charlie suddenly wants to defend McGinty? How are Charlie and McGinty similar?
 - c. Do you think Davis, the twins, and Ludmila look at Charlie the way the landlady looks at McGinty? Explain your answer.
2. Why does Gram suggest the kids come to the hospital first thing in the morning?
 - a. Choose one of the characters, not Charlie, and write a diary entry from their point-of-view about the surgery.
3. What are “rumble feet”?
4. What is Charlie’s big question for Tiberius Shaw?
 - a. Why do you think this answer is so important to Charlie?
5. Do you really think Charlie saw a Carolina parakeet, or was it in his head?
 - a. The story mentions genetic research, and how some scientists are discussing the revival of extinct species of birds and mammals. Conduct an Internet investigation to find out more about this amazing topic.
 - b. Do you think reviving extinct species is a good or bad idea?
6. Imagine that you are Charlie and write the letter to Tiberius Shaw he leaves in the mailbox.
7. List at least five things that Charlie does at the sanctuary that are out of his normal character.
8. Emily Dickinson wrote that “hope is the thing with feathers.” What do you think she meant by this? How does this relate to Charlie?

9. Charlie has met a lot of people on this trip. Choose one of the people he's met and imagine that you are Charlie and you are back home. Write a letter to them, describing the rest of the trip and what meeting them meant to you.
10. Imagine that you are an author, and write your own version of the scene in which Ludmila and Charlie's dad meet for the first time.
11. Charlie says, "I worried all across the country that I had to find every bird on that list. But in the end, it didn't really matter. The feeling of calm came anyway." What do you think he means by this?
 - a. What brought the feeling of calm on?

Making Connections:

1. What is the significance of the last line of the novel: "Whatever this thing turns out to be, I'm going to take a bite"?
 - a. How does this show Charlie has grown?
 - b. What are some brave bites Charlie has taken throughout the novel?



After You Read...

Below are a few final project ideas for the conclusion of *The Someday Birds*.

1. Read the quotes from award-winning authors on the back cover. Choose one and write a 500-word essay supporting what they said about *The Someday Birds* using textual evidence as support.
2. Two themes that run through *The Someday Birds* are survival and understanding the world. Choose one of these themes to write a 500-word essay about it.
 - a. How is this theme evident in the characters and events of the novel?
 - b. What can readers take away from *The Someday Birds* in relation to this theme?
3. How would the story be different if it was narrated from another character's point of view?
4. Watch the book trailer for *The Someday Birds* at <http://mrschureads.blogspot.com/2017/01/book-trailer-premiere-someday-birds-by.html>. Write a 500-word essay on how the choice of music, casting of characters, visuals, and language create an overall feel for the book. Feel free to include any suggestions on how you would change or edit the trailer. Or...
5. MAKE YOUR OWN BOOK TRAILER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!😊
6. Charlie has some autistic and OCD disabilities, but this is never mentioned outright in the story. Why do you think the author chose not to openly label Charlie? Write a 500-word essay to support your answer.
7. How would this story differ if Davis were narrating it, not Charlie? What would the tone of her voice sound like? Rewrite one chapter from Davis's point of view.
8. Create a road trip playlist of songs that you would choose for key, emotional parts of the novel. Explain why you chose to include each song.
9. Both Tiberius Shaw, PhD., and Charlie keep bird journals. As a project, keep a bird journal of your own for a week. Go outside, try to sketch the birds you see. Write anything you wish.
10. Create a scrapbook of the family's road trip. Include a map of the route, as well as information of places they stopped and images.

11. Although Tiberius Shaw is a fictional character, Sally J. Pla included quotes from him at the top of many of the chapters. Choose one of these quotes and write an essay on how this quote is relevant to you.

Or... Write down your reflections about how you think the following quote relates to Charlie's story:

"The bird dares to break the shell, then the shell breaks open and the bird can fly openly. This is the simplest principle of success. You dream, you dare, and then you fly."
— [Israelmore Ayivor](#)

12. In a library or online, find John James Audubon's *Birds of America* and flip through the beautiful illustrations. Do some research about Audubon, the man. When did he live? What interests you about his life's adventures and accomplishments?
13. Research ways you can help refugees, like Ludmila, from war-torn countries. Create an action list of steps you can take, such as giving money to organizations, to collecting items for care packages, to holding awareness events.
14. Do you have any friends, relatives, or schoolmates who are autistic? If you are interested in learning more about autism, there are lots of resources online to help you, such as <http://autisticadvocacy.org/>, and <http://www.autismacceptancemonth.com/resources/101-3/autism-acceptance/neurodiversity/>, and this "Intro to Autism" video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fy7qUIp8Ms>.

Further Reading: Beyond *The Someday Birds*

(Note: some of these books may be of interest to students, at teacher discretion)

About Birds / Science / Nature

Sibley's Guide to Birds, 2nd ed., by David Allen Sibley

Burgess Bird Book for Children by Thornton Burgess

What the Robin Knows by Jon Young

The Thing with Feathers by Noah Strycker

Audubon's Birds of America: The Audubon Society Baby Elephant Folio

The Genius of Birds by Jennifer Ackerman

The Race to Save the Lord God Bird, by Philip Hoose

Resurrection Science by M.R. O'Connor

The Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv

About War

Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo by Zlata Filipovic

The Fall of Yugoslavia by Misha Glenny

The Cellist of Sarajevo by Steven Galloway

War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning by Chris Hedges

About Autism

Look Me in the Eye by John Robison

The Reason I Jump by Naoki Higashida and KA Yoshida

Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity by Steven Silberman (I cannot recommend this book enough.)

<http://disabilityinkidlit.com/?s=autism> -- Interesting perspectives on how autism is represented – and, too often, misrepresented -- in children's literature.

Other Notable Middle-Grade Novels with Autistic Main Characters:

Chester and Gus by Cammie McGovern

A Boy Called Bat by Elana K. Arnold

Marcelo in the Real World by Francisco X. Stork

The Real Boy by Anne Ursu

