



CARRY ME HOME

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers

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Reading age: 8 - 12 years

Grade level: 3 - 7

About the book:

Two sisters struggle to keep their father's disappearance a secret in this tender middle grade novel. Twelve-year-old Lulu and her younger sister, Serena, have a secret. As Daddy always says, "it's best if we keep it to ourselves," and so they have. But hiding your past is one thing. Hiding where you live—and that your Daddy has gone missing—is harder. Lulu knows that all it takes is one slip-up for their secret to come spilling out, for Lulu and Serena to be separated, and for all the good things that have been happening in school to be lost. But family is all around us, and Lulu must learn to trust her new friends and community to save those she loves and to finally find her true home.

About the author – Janet Fox:

Janet Fox writes award-winning fiction and non-fiction for children of all ages. Janet is a 2010 graduate of the MFA/Writing for Children and Young Adults program at Vermont College of Fine Arts, is a former high school teacher, and she has a MS in Marine Geology. She lives in Bozeman, Montana with her husband and their rambunctious yellow lab. She's represented by Erin Murphy, Erin Murphy Literary Agency, and you can also find her at www.janetsfox.com.



Pre-reading Discussion:

- Examine the illustration of the two girls depicted on the cover of the book. Determine how the girls are related. Give reasons for your prediction.
- Note that the girls are walking together. Where are they going? Identify clues from the cover art that suggest where their destination might be.
- The colorful birds surrounding the girls are replicas of origami paper cranes. In the Japanese culture, paper cranes are symbols of hope, love, peace, and encouragement during troublesome times. Make a connection between the symbolism of the brightly colored origami paper cranes surrounding the girls, who are represented by lightly penned line drawings, and the title of the book. What is the story being told in the cover art?
- Predict what CARRY ME HOME is going to be about.

Post-reading Discussion:

There was an old Japanese belief that anyone who made a thousand paper cranes by folding them in the origami way could make a wish and that wish would come true, so the girl began making paper cranes, wishing to get well (pg. 14).

- A *wish* is defined as a desire, a longing, and hope. Determine why the story of making wishes with paper cranes intrigues Lulu. Examine her desires at this point in the story. What does she long for? Identify her hopes and wishes.
- On page 12, Lulu describes making a wish while listening to beeps, breathing, and the whisper of grown ups outside of a hospital room. How is the wish she is referencing in this scene different or similar to one made on an origami paper crane?



Post-reading Discussion continued:

And she knew it by heart. She'd hummed it in her mother's hospital room. She'd sung it endlessly after her mother . . . Over and over, as if it could've saved her from something dark. Over and over and over. And ever since (pg. 64).

"This cannot go on," Laurie said, her voice dark. "If you're late again, if your dad doesn't show up, there will be consequences." Laurie turned on her heel and headed up the street, going home (pg. 128).

Those wide brown eyes and those words made it kind of hard to go on. Lulu hadn't gone on with any other grown-ups. She hadn't trusted them enough to go on (pg. 172).

- Consider the lyrics of the song Lulu sang for Jack. Tell how the phrase "...the place just right" symbolizes Lulu's deepest desire.
- Explain how repeating a song such as this could save her from darkness. What kind of darkness is she referencing?
- The title of Lulu's song is *Simple Gifts*. It was composed in the mid-1800's by the Shakers community. The Shakers expressed their spiritual devotion through song and dance. Make a connection Jack's response to the song and its Shakers history.
- Consider Laurie's words "This cannot go on." Was she threatening Lulu or simply stating a fact? Explain your answer. Lulu rushed from rehearsal to pick up Serena late from school.
- Prior to the scene at the school, Lulu had lost herself in the joy of assuming the leading role at play practice. Is it understandable for her to want to enjoy rehearsal at the cost of shirking her responsibilities to care for her sister? How so?
- Note the significance of Laurie turning on her heel to "go home." Why did the author feel the need to add the word "home" to the text?
- The word *trust* means believe, have confidence in, and to have faith in. Explain why Lulu had been unwilling to trust other grown-ups. What was at stake if she risked having confidence in them?
- Consider the number of people who were concerned for Lulu and Serena's well-being – Jack, Mrs. Baker, Laurie, Ms. M, her father's boss Hank, and ultimately Deana to name a few. What kept Lulu from asking for help?
- In this scene, at Ms. M's encouragement to "go on", Lulu risked everything to reveal the truth regarding her father's absence and suspected whereabouts. How did trusting Ms. M in this way change Lulu's faith in others?

Simple Gifts

'Tis the gift to be simple,
'tis the gift to be free

'Tis the gift to come down to
where we ought to be,

And when we find ourselves in the
place just right.

'Twill be the valley of
love and delight (pg. 65).

Application: The Blessing Bag Campaign

Facilitate a public service project offering hope, kindness and encouragement to those who are experiencing the heartache of homelessness by following the directives listed on the following page. Make a difference in the life of someone in need by offering them the simple gift of a Blessing Bag made possible by your organizational efforts.

So many people cared.
So many people wanted to help (pg. 178).



THE BLESSINGS BAG CAMPAIGN

But today he'd started the day without waking them, without the usual rituals of a wet cloth to wipe their faces, the bottle of water and toothbrush to clean their teeth, because Daddy had said, "No matter, girls, we will practice good hygiene. Cleanliness is next to godliness" (pgs. 1-2).

Objective: To establish a plan to implement a public service project designed to support the homeless, both physically and emotionally.

Materials Needed:

- Notebook and pencil
- Donated Items such as Ziplock Bags, small bottles of water, toothbrushes, disposable wipes, cereal bars, etc.
- Posterboard & markers
- The Simple Gifts Lyrics Card (accessed on janetsfox.com)
- The Origami Crane Craft Card (accessed on janetsfox.com)
- Blessings Cards (accessed on janetsfox.com)
- Scissors

Procedure:

- **RECORD:** Use notebook as a journal to record your campaign procedures, to record key details such as locations or contact information, and to journal about your experiences throughout the campaign.
- **PLAN:** Decide upon a desired organization and/or public facility to serve as your Blessings Bag Campaign recipient. Some suggestions might be the library, your school nurse, the fire or police department, or a place of worship. Reach out to the organization and request their support in your endeavor. Identify a Contact Person to serve as your liaison throughout the campaign.
- **PROMOTE:** Design and distribute posters and flyers describing the objectives of your campaign, the date and times the event will take place, identifying the Blessing Bag recipients, listing donation requests, and an explanation of how you intend to gather the donated goods.
- **EXECUTE:** Carry out the donation-gathering facet of your campaign. This can be done by canvassing your neighbors, working in concert with a larger organization, hosting a table at a shopping center, place of worship, or a community center.
- **CONSTRUCT:** Establish a time and place to construct the Blessing Bags. Access janetsfox.com to download the **Simple Gifts Lyrics Card**, **Origami Crane Craft Card**, and **Blessings Cards**. Use scissors to trim around the borders of these cards. Add one of each to the Blessing Bags.
- **DELIVER:** Place Blessing Bags in a box or basket. Transport the Blessing Bags to the organization's Contact Person.
- **REFLECT:** Use your journal as a reference to write an essay or an article summarizing the experience of executing a public service campaign. Share the essay or article with the class or with Janet Fox, the author of CARRY ME HOME.

