

EVERY SOUL A STAR



Thematic connections

- ❖ Family
- ❖ New Friends
- ❖ Astronomy

Ages 8 – 12

A compelling and humorous novel about three very different kids and one life-changing experience...

By Wendy Mass

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- At the beginning of the book, Ally, Bree, and Jack are introduced in separate, short chapters. The alternating point of view chapters continue through the entire book. How does this format help compare and contrast the characters? What does each character want at the beginning of the story? Does this change as the story progresses?
- What are the Unusuals and why are they important to the Moon Shadow Campground? Why does Bree resist walking the labyrinth for so long? What makes her finally walk it? If you were to visit Ally's labyrinth, what question would you ponder and what answer would you hope to receive?
- Using three words, describe Bree's personality at the beginning of the book. Does Bree change during the story? What three words would you use to describe her personality at the end of the book?
- What does Jack mean when he says he can fly? Why does he like "flying" so much? Where does he go when he "flies"?
- Bree and Ally both have to move. What concerns do Ally and Bree have about moving? How does Ally's reaction to moving differ from Bree's? How are their reactions the same? Have you ever moved? If you were going to move, what do you think you would miss most about your hometown?
- Bree and Ally come up with a plan to change their parents' minds about moving. Do you think it's a good plan? What plan would you imagine if you were in their position?
- In regards to her friendship with Ryan, Ally thinks, "It's almost like nothing's changed. Except, of course, everything has." (p. 213) What does this mean? How has Ally's friendship with Ryan changed? Have you had a friendship that has changed as you and your friend got older? What happened to that friendship?
- Why does Bree decide to join the others in the shed during the storm?
- Several times Jack says he doesn't want to leave Moon Shadow Campground. Why do you think he feels that way?
- Melanie and Bree have very different advice for Kenny and Ally about how to survive in a new school. Jack also offers his own take on fitting in at school. Which character's advice and experience at school do you identify with more — Melanie, Bree, or Jack — and why? Which character would you want for your friend in a new school?
- Bree has a strong reaction when she looks at the moon through the telescope. What does Bree realize about herself and her life?
- What makes a total solar eclipse so special and rare? Would you ever travel the world to see one?
- For a total eclipse to take place, the earth, the sun, and the moon must all line up perfectly. In a metaphorical sense, how does this also apply to the lives of the characters, Ally, Bree, and Jack?
- How does the eclipse affect Ally, Bree, and Jack? How does it change their outlook and attitude for the future?
- The author titled her book *Every Soul a Star*. She also includes a passage by Plato in the epigraph. The passage contains a phrase similar to the title. Why do you think the author titled the book the way she did?

ACTIVITIES

Pre-Reading Activity

Show students the highlights of the total eclipse of the sun from this web site: <http://www.exploratorium.edu/eclipse/2008/index.html>

As a class, brainstorm a list of questions students have about the eclipse, and then show them the video from the website below to answer their questions. <http://sunearthday.gsfc.nasa.gov/2008eclipse/mechanics.php>

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

English/Language Arts

Bree and Ally have opposite perspectives on life based on their surroundings and values. Initially, what the two girls want from life and the people in their lives differs in dramatic ways; later, as they become better acquainted and share experiences, Bree and Ally find they indeed share common ground. With a partner, ask students to write a poem in the two voices of Bree and Ally, capturing the heart and emotions of the two girls as they undergo their transformation.

Jack learns a great deal about himself while spending time at the Moon Shadow Campground. It seems every character with whom he makes friends has something to teach him – from the oldest, Stella, to the youngest, Melanie. Ask students to make a web of Jack, his name surrounded by the names of each of his friends in a circle. In each friend's circle ask students to list, (1) what Jack learned from that character and (2) what he taught them. Then ask students to choose one character and to write in depth how they influenced each other to become better individuals. Encourage students to include quotations from the book to support their ideas.

Science

The Sun Garden is filled with a variety of sundials, handcrafted and donated by visitors from around the world. In groups of three, ask students to research sundials: their

place in history, the materials used to make them, the way they work, and the quotes written on them. Then ask each group to make their own sundial. Display the sundials throughout the school grounds.

Ally's passion for the stars, planets, and all things celestial brings joy to her life. To this end, she has star maps in her room to help her learn, to remember all she knows, and to remind her of what she wants to learn. Discuss with students the time of year and the longitude and latitude of the city in which they live and their connection to the night sky. Then ask students to search online for a map of star constellations for beginners. Each night for a period of one week, ask students to search the skies for the star constellations on their maps. Each day have students share what stars they find and discuss how they find them. Make a list of the stars students find and mark them on a class star map. As the seasons change, change the star maps accordingly to make this a year-long project.

Ally and Kenny know so much about space and stars that sometimes their vocabulary can be confusing to people who don't know anything like Jack.

As students read, ask them to make a list of unfamiliar space-related words. Then ask students to work in small groups or with a partner to research the words and as a class make an informational bulletin board with all the terms. Students can provide the term, definition, facts pertaining to the term, and an illustration. Here are a few terms to begin with:

Comet

Messier Objects

Exoplanet

Asteroid

Meteorite

Geography

The next eclipse to occur in the continental United States will be on August 21, 2017. Show students the interactive map at the website below:

http://xjubier.free.fr/en/site_pages/solar_eclipses/TSE_2017_GoogleMapFull.html

Then ask them to make plans to be at the city of total eclipse in 2017. Students should map and plan the trip as if they are actually going to attend and to make travel and accommodation arrangements for their family.

Social Studies

The characters in the novel are employed in a variety of careers. Mr. Silver is a science teacher; Ally and Bree's parents are scientists; many of the eclipse chasers are amateur astronomers, professors, and teachers. Bree definitely wants to be a fashion model, and Ally wants to be a comet finder, Melanie and Kenny are interested in the field of technology and computers. Have students work with a partner to research one of these careers and to prepare a job description for that profession. Have students include job responsibilities, prerequisite training, experience, interpersonal or other skills required, salary parameters, and chances for advancements. Post job descriptions on a career fields board.

Moving to a new home can be a traumatic experience for anyone, but making such a radical move as Kenny and Ally can prove to be disastrous. Ask students to form small groups and to find out what programs their school

offers for new students to help them adjust to their new environment. Then ask each group to work with the school officials to help broaden the scope of the program or to put one in place if there is not one available. Students can look at options such as school ambassadors programs; tours of the school; clubs and activities opportunities to observe or participate in; school website; introductions to principals, counselors, librarians, and custodial staff; enrollment in second language programs; and others. Outside of school, new students may want to know about local shopping areas, entertainment options, churches or places of worship, youth organizations, and local teen hang outs. Groups can create brochures to post around the school and in the community to have available when new students register.

Art

One of the Unusuals is the Art House where visitors to the Moon Shadow Campground can paint a picture in a 12x12 inch square. Using a variety of mediums, ask students to paint or draw a picture of a scene in the book and title their picture. Then display the pictures on one wall of the classroom similar to the display in the Art House.



about the book



Ally, Bree, and Jack are strangers brought together to the isolated Moon Shadow Campground, where thousands have gathered to catch a glimpse of a rare and extraordinary total solar eclipse. Not only does the singular experience of seeing the eclipse shake up their perspectives on life, but their unlikely friendship will also change their lives forever.

Every Soul a Star
By Wendy Mass

978-0-316-00256-1 HC • 978-0-316-00257-8 PB
AR 4.7 • F&P U

praise for *Every Soul a Star*

★ A “compelling and thought-provoking story.”

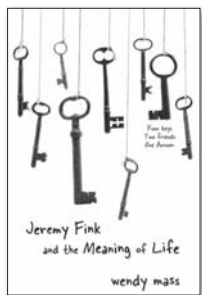
—*School Library Journal* (starred review)

“Confirming her mastery of the middle-grade novel, Mass combines astronomy and storytelling for a well-balanced look at friendships and the role they play in shaping identity.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

2009 – 2010 Kentucky Blue Grass Award Master List

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about the author



Wendy Mass is the author of the ALA Schneider Family Award-winner *A Mango Shaped Space* and other books for young readers. She lives in Sparta, NJ, with her husband and children. You can visit her online at www.wendymass.com.

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