

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Natalie Savage Carlson. THE FAMILY UNDER THE BRIDGE. HarperTrophy, 1989. A modern classic story, about a grumpy homeless man in Paris who helps three children and their distraught mother to find a place to live, this was named a Newbery Honor Book when it was first published.

Jim Hubbard. LIVES TURNED UPSIDE DOWN: HOMELESS CHILDREN IN THEIR OWN WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS. Aladdin, 2007. This photo-essay of the lives of four homeless children gives a difficult social issue a human face.

Cathryn Berger Kaye. A KIDS' GUIDE TO HUNGER & HOMELESSNESS: HOW TO TAKE ACTION! (Service Learning for Kids). Free Spirit Publishing, 2007. This excellent resource teaches children how to make a difference in their own communities and how to help those who are less fortunate.

Harper Lee. TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2002. Told from the point of view of six-year-old Scout and her brother Jem, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel has been a favorite of readers since it was first published in 1960.

Charles J. Shields. I Am Scout: The biography of Harper Lee. Henry Holt, 2008. This story of the author Harper Lee includes her Southern upbringing and her inspiration for writing *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*.

WEBSITES*:

www.self-sufficiency.org/

Learn about how one organization in California is helping homeless families improve their lives.

www.littleredwagonfoundation.com

Meet Zach, a fifth grader who is making a difference by helping homeless children in many parts of the country.

www.social-anxiety.com/area-selective-mutism.html

This Website has information about selective mutism, the disorder that keeps Lorraine from speaking.

inventors.about.com/library/weekly/aa980121.htm

Learn about the man who invented the drive-in movie theater.

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Ages 10 and up

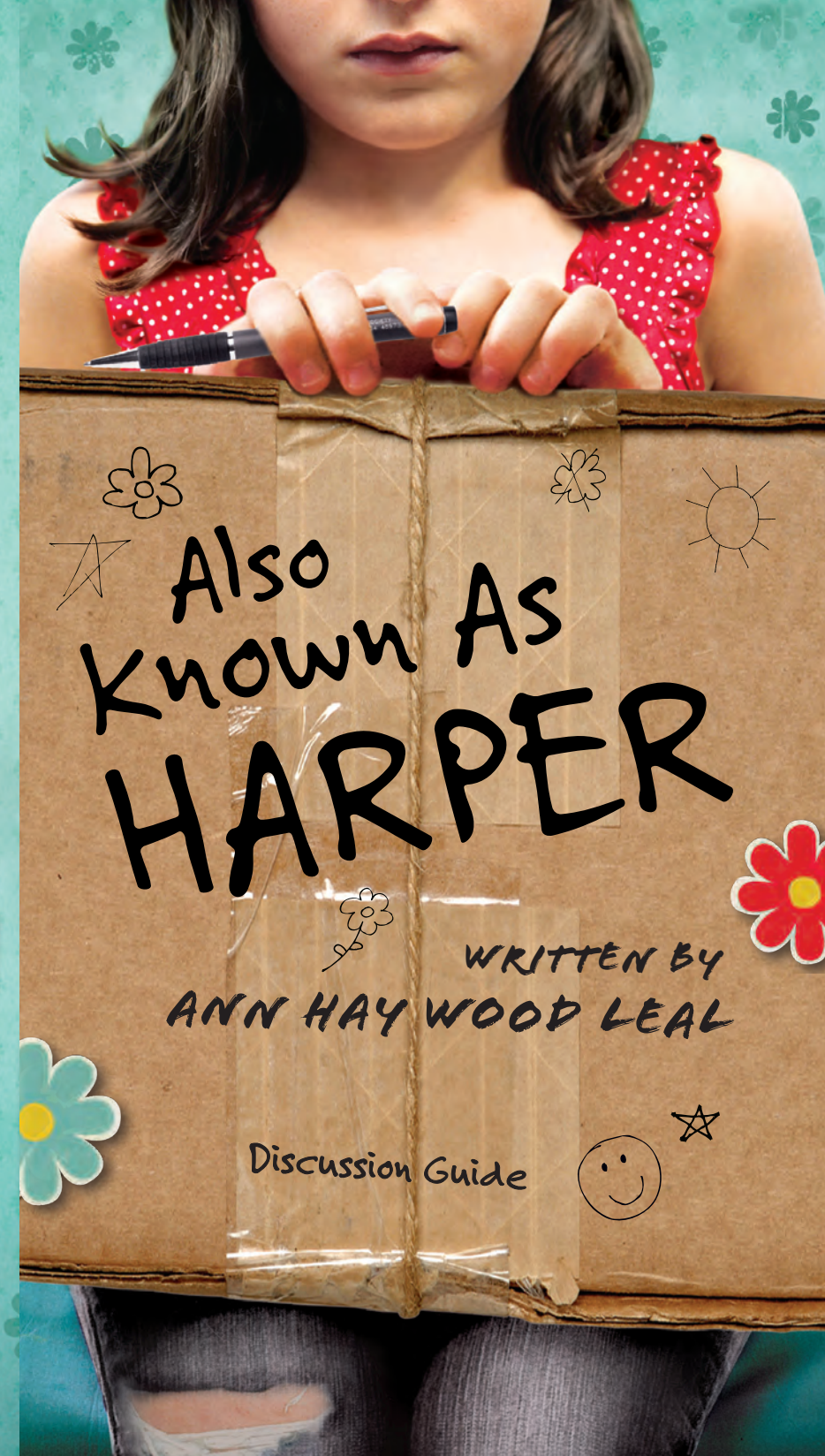
Praise for
ALSO KNOWN AS HARPER
"Ann Haywood Leal is a wonderful writer with an enormous heart, and a voice that is distinctive and wrenching and wise. I loved this book, and the feisty young girl known as Harper. I believe you will, too."

—Patricia Reilly Giff

ANN HAYWOOD LEAL volunteers at her local soup kitchen, and this novel grew out of her concern for the very real issue of homelessness in our own backyards. Ann is an elementary school teacher in Waterford, Connecticut.



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Life is spiraling out of control for Harper Lee Morgan. She wants nothing more than to take part in her school's poetry contest, but since her Daddy left, her Mama has had trouble earning enough to pay the rent.

Then one day the landlord moves their furniture out of the house, and Harper has to stay away from school to take care of her younger brother while their mother looks for more work. Their temporary housing at a local motel creates some interesting adventures and friendships, and finally, a way for Harper to share her writing skills.



PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Although the United States is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty states that approximately 3.5 million people, 1.35 million of them children, are likely to experience homelessness in a given year, and that these statistics have been rising drastically in recent decades. Discuss the concept of homelessness, what it means to families that experience it, and what images come to your mind when you think of homeless people.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why does Harper's mother name her children after famous authors? What do you know about Harper Lee and Ernest Hemingway? Who was Flannery named after?
- 2 Why does Hemingway like to pretend he has broken bones? Why does he wait every day for their father to come home?



- 3 Harper loves to be at school and generally feels comfortable there. What does she find at school that she does not find at home?
- 4 Why is Harper so excited about the poetry contest? What happened in the previous year when she wanted to enter?
- 5 Why doesn't Sarah Lynn's mother allow her to play with Harper or visit her home? Does this affect the way Harper feels about Sarah Lynn? What would you do if you were Sarah Lynn?



- 6 How does Harper feel when she returns from school to find all the family's belongings in the yard? How would you feel? Why does Winnie Rae taunt Harper from next door?

- 7 How does Harper's mother deal with the situation of being evicted? What are the important belongings that they make sure to pack in the car, and why is each one important? What would you take with you?



- 8 What kept Harper's mother from finishing school and getting a better job? Why did she stop doing her own writing? Why does she ask Harper to stay home from school when they move to the motel?

- 9 Describe Harper's first sight of Dorothy. What would you think if you saw someone looking the way Harper describes her? Why does the encounter with Dorothy make Harper feel like writing? She says that Dorothy's eyes "looked like they knew things. Things about people. Maybe things that people didn't know about their own selves." What does she mean?



- 10 Describe Harper and Hem's first meeting with Randall and Lorraine. Why do they let them into their room? Why does Harper feel that Lorraine could be her friend?

- 11 What do the swimming pool and the drive-in theater mean to each of the children? Could the drive-in really be fixed up, as Lorraine wants to do?

- 12 How does Harper feel when she sees her favorite piece of furniture in Lorraine's tent? How would you feel if you had no control over what happens to your own belongings?

- 13 Why does Harper write a poem to Flannery when she sees all their belongings being sold in a yard sale? How does Harper's writing help her to cope with each new crisis?

- 14 Harper says that it is easier to deal with Winnie Rae when she is being nasty than when she is being nice. Why is Harper so confused when Winnie Rae saves some of the decals from her dresser for her? What else does she learn about the Early family that surprises her?



- 15 Discuss Dorothy's statement: "If folks don't like the way you look, they almost never take the time to find anything out about you. They just make up their own stories." Why does Harper feel so good when Dorothy praises her writing?

- 16 Some of the most influential characters in the story are ones that are already gone – Harper's daddy, Dorothy's husband and daughter, Lorraine's father. What do you know about each of them and what effect did they have on the people in the story?

- 17 What does Harper mean when she writes: "Words are just one way/To get people to listen to you"? What makes her feel she can share all of her troubles with Lorraine, even more than she puts into her writing?

- 18 Why does Harper feel that the Knotty Pine Poetry Reading is better than reading her poems at school? Why is the first poem she reads in the rehearsal so important to her?

- 19 The book ends with two deaths and yet there is hope for Harper's family. How does Dorothy's death affect Lorraine and Randall? How does it affect Harper and her family?

- 20 What does Harper's mother mean when she says, "I feel as if I have been away on a long trip"? Why does it always make her feel better when she starts reading her favorite book? Why does she pick up Dorothy's copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird* instead of her own copy?

- 21 Looking back over the story, which of Harper's poems means the most to you? Try reading her poems out loud. Does that change the way you experience them? Discuss the difference between writing in private and reading aloud.

- 22 Recalling your pre-reading discussion of homelessness, do you have a different concept of what it means to be homeless now? How has this book changed your concept of homeless people and the impact of homelessness on the children who experience it?



Discussion Guide prepared by Connie Rockman, children's literature consultant, adjunct professor of children's and young adult literature, and editor of the H. W. Wilson Junior Book of Authors and Illustrators series.

