

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX
DISCUSSION GUIDE

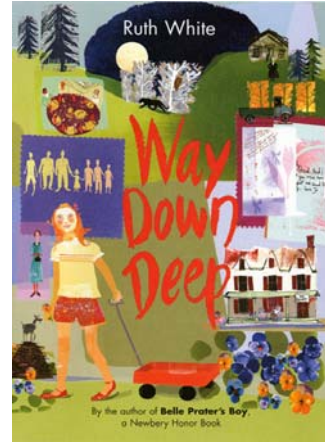
WAY DOWN DEEP

by Ruth White

Reading Level
Grades 5 up

About the Novel

Although Ruby seemed to just appear out of thin air on the steps of the courthouse on the first day of summer in 1944, no one in Way Down Deep, West Virginia, ever worried too much about where the toddler came from. They figured that if Ruby's people were dumb enough to lose something as valuable as a child, then that was their problem. So even though Ruby can't help but wonder where she came from, she has led a joyful and carefree life in Way Down Deep, loved and watched over by Miss Arbutus Ward—proprietor of The Roost, the local boardinghouse—the residents of The Roost, and the rest of the town. But when Ruby is twelve, a new family moves to Way Down Deep, and inadvertently provides enough clues about Ruby's past that she is able to find her own people. Ruby travels from Way Down Deep to the top of Yonder Mountain to learn who she really is—only to find that she is bound to Way Down Deep by something even stronger than family ties: love.



Discussion Questions

1. Describe the town of Way Down Deep. Compare and contrast it with your own neighborhood or town.
2. How did the townspeople react when Bob Reeder tried to rob the bank? Would you have responded the same way? Explain.
3. Peter Reeder says on page 59, "Mama used to say that nobody comes into our lives by accident. We have something to learn from everybody we meet." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
4. Why does Cedar Reeder have cussitis? How would you define *cussitis*? How is it cured?
5. Ruby learns about her parents from reading her mama's writing on the wallpaper at her grandmother's house. What does she learn about her mother and father? About her grandmother?
6. Describe Miss Arbutus and her relationship with Ruby. What do the townspeople think of Miss Arbutus? Do their opinions change when she tells the story of how Ruby arrived in Way Down Deep? If so, how do they change?
7. How does Grandma Combs change from the time Ruby arrives at Grandma's house to her move to The Roost? What were the reasons for this change?

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8. Who is your favorite resident of Way Down Deep? Describe the character and explain why you like him or her.
9. Were you surprised that Miss Arbutus allowed Grandma Combs to move to The Roost? Do you think this will change Ruby's relationship with Miss Arbutus?
10. *Way Down Deep* is a story about family, friends, the love that binds people together, and what it takes to make a place truly home. What do you learn about family from reading this story? How do you define *home*?



About the Author

Ruth White is the author of many award-winning books for children and young adults, including the Newbery Honor Book *Belle Prater's Boy* and its sequel, *The Search for Belle Prater*. A former teacher and school librarian, she now writes full-time at her home in Hummelstown, Pennsylvania.

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Includes a biography of the author and additional information about her novels.

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ISBN-10: 0-374-38251-4 · ISBN-13: 978-0-374-38251-3

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