

Educator Guide



ABOUT THE BOOK



It's 1978 and eleven-year-old Danny Wexler has a lot on his mind. The Bermuda Triangle for starters. How could so many planes and ships and people disappear in one patch of ocean? He'd rather think about that than the awkwardness of being the only Jewish boy in town. When a local child goes missing, Danny suspects it's connected to an old Bermuda Triangle theory involving UFOs. With his two best friends and a telescope, Danny heads to his backyard to investigate. But hunting for extraterrestrials is complicated, and it doesn't help that his friend Nicholas's mom doesn't want her son hanging out with a Jewish boy. As Danny attempts to unmask the aliens, he uncovers the antisemitism in his town, and finds that few people are exactly what they seem.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Pokras is a daisy lover, cat wrangler, and occasional baker. She has been writing for children for over ten years, winning several literary awards for her middle grade works. Karen has appeared numerous times as a panel speaker and workshop leader on topics related to marketing and writing for children in the Philadelphia area and is a member of the SCBWI. For more information, visit karenpokras.com.



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Exceptional Books for PreK-12

THE BACKYARD SECRETS OF DANNY WEXLER

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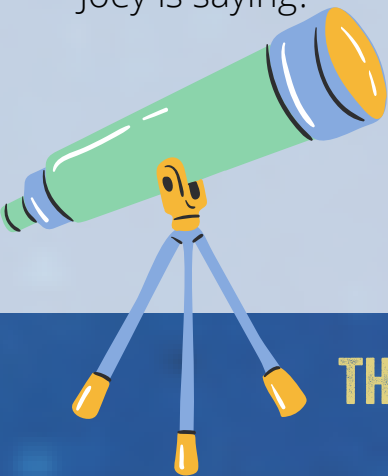
QUESTIONS

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Have you ever heard of the Bermuda Triangle? Why do you think people are interested in mysteries?
2. Do you know what an urban legend is? Have you heard any? What's your favorite?
3. Do you know what antisemitism means?

READING TOGETHER:

1. Why is it special that Scholly's Bakery makes a challah for Danny's father every week?
2. What are the theories Danny and Frank discuss about The Bermuda Triangle?
3. Why do Danny, Frank, and Nicholas think the missing child is linked to The Bermuda Triangle?
4. In what ways are people being antisemitic toward Mr. Wexler?
5. Why does Nicholas stop talking to Danny? Does he agree with the things Joey is saying?
6. How does Mrs. Albertini try to help Danny and his family? Does it work?



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QUESTIONS (CONT.)

7. Are there instances throughout the story where Danny is being judgmental towards others? If so how?

8. What does Danny learn at the end of the story?

AFTER THOUGHTS:

1. The story takes place in the 1970s. Does that mean there isn't antisemitism anymore?

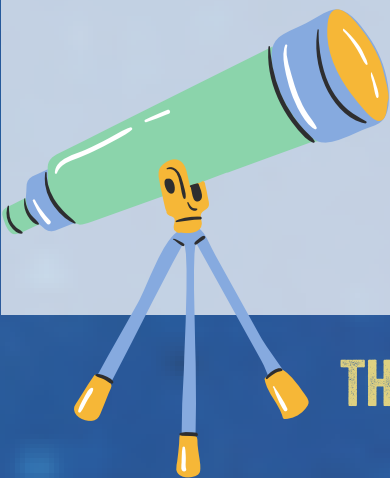
2. Why do you think some people judge others based on religion/color/culture/race?

3. Has anyone ever made judgements about you for no good reason? How did that feel?

4. Have you ever found yourself judging someone based on how they look or on their beliefs or cultures?

5. What are some ways you can help people learn to be more accepting and understanding of others?

FOR FUN:



1. What do you think explains The Bermuda Triangle?

2. Do you think aliens and UFOs exist?

3. Do you have any urban legends in your community?

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ACTIVITIES

IN THE CLASSROOM:

Mrs. Albertini shares several of her favorite recipes from her family and culture throughout the book. Does your family have any recipes that are specific to your culture? **Plan a recipe swap or tasting party!**

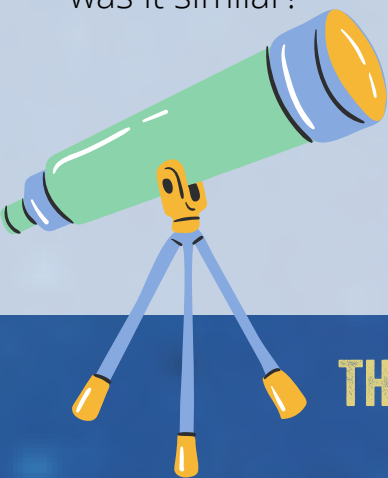
WRITING EXERCISES:

Change the character: Pick your favorite scene from the story and rewrite it from a different character's point of view.

Change the setting: In the story, Danny wonders if there's some faraway planet where the people who disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle now live. Write a story or scene that takes place on this planet.

RESEARCH PROJECT:

Explore the 1970s. Interview a family member or use the internet/library to learn about the 1970s. What was life like? Consider things like school, fashion, music, movies, tv shows, decor, and technology. How was it different? How was it similar?



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
WWW.KARENPOKRAS.COM
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