

Abduction! **by Peg Kehret**

About the book:

Matt Sholter is missing from school. He knows better than to leave with anyone and yet the clues all say that's exactly what happened. Who has him? And where is the family pet, Pookie, too? Was he used as bait to get Matt? Bonnie, Matt's sister, does everything she can to help get her brother back but she makes a huge mistake. Action packed, suspenseful, and set in Seattle this novel will keep even reluctant readers turning pages.

About the guide:

This guide includes discussion questions and projects appropriate for children's book clubs, literature circles, and classroom discussions. It is intended to provoke thought and insight into the themes of this book which include fear, family relationships, criminal behavior, and truth.

Author Interview:

1. What inspired the novel?

One of my neighbors is a police officer. Before the Amber Alert system went into effect, I talked to him about it and he mentioned that many abducted children have been correctly taught what to do or not to do, but they get tricked into doing the wrong thing. I decided to write about this in the hope that kids would think twice when approached by someone they weren't expecting and asked to go somewhere with that person.

2. What interesting facts did you learn while writing this book?

I was chagrined to learn how many missing children there are and surprised to find out what a high percentage of abducted children are taken by a relative. Soon after I finished the book, the Amber Alert system was adopted, which made me very happy.

As part of my research, I rode a Washington State ferry from Seattle to Bremerton. I pretended to be Bonnie. My husband took pictures of me standing next to the rope that Bonnie steps over.

3. Was it difficult to write about such a bad person?

I seem to be good at creating bad guys! Sometimes I scare myself when I'm writing.

In my first draft, the abductor's name was Perry, but while I was revising the book I made a new friend – a librarian named Perry – so I changed my villain's name to Denny.

4. What other children's authors have influenced your work?

While I was writing my first novel, Deadly Stranger, I read one of Willo Davis Roberts' books, The View From the Cherry Tree, several times because I admired the way she built suspense and I hoped to achieve that suspense with my book. Later Willo and I became friends.

I read all of the current books for middle grade readers and have several favorite authors but I don't think any one in particular has influenced my own work. When I write, I have a sense of what I hope to accomplish and I just do it my own way.

Discussion Guide:

1. How does Denny Thurman lure Matt away from the school? What other lies do kidnapers often tell kids to get them into cars?
2. Do you think you could ever be fooled? Do you know any younger siblings or neighbor kids who might be tricked? How can you help them stay safe?
3. Why does Denny want to take Matt? Does he really want to be a parent? Why or why not? What do real parents do? How do you know if someone is telling the truth or not?
4. How does Denny have money? Why can this be dangerous too? Why does he often have to move?
5. What are some interesting facts you learned while reading this book? What would you do if a kid went missing in your neighborhood?
6. What does Bonnie do to try to help? What clues does she find? How would you feel if you were in her situation?
7. Describe what happens at Safeco field. Do you think Bonnie made the right decision? What might have happened had she chosen the other option?
8. Several strangers had the opportunity to help the kids but they didn't. Why do people sometimes ignore the pleas of others? Would you have reacted differently? Will this book change your actions in the future? How?
9. Create a timeline of what happens on the ferry. How does Bonnie's quick thinking save her? What is a zinger?
10. Predict what Matt would do if someone tried to take him again. How do you think he's been changed by this experience? Do you think Bonnie will continue to appreciate regular days with her brother too?
11. What was your favorite scene in the book? Why? What do you like best about the author's style of writing? Would you recommend her books to a friend?
12. What is an Amber Alert? Do you know who it was named for? Do you think it is effective? Why?

13. Do you know what to do if a kid is missing? (Here's a link to an action plan from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children)
http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PageServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=244
Compare the actions of Matt's mom with this list. Did they do it correctly? What might have been done better?
14. Most abduction cases are within family relationships. Why? How can they be prevented? Do you study the faces of missing kids? Why or why not?
15. Which character is your favorite in the book? Why? How do readers get to know characters? How do authors build believable characters?

Projects:

Language Arts:

Discuss safety with your parents. Make a code word and emergency action plans in case they're ever needed. Create identity cards and have emergency numbers for parents, grandparents and neighbors kept in backpacks or shoes. Talk to younger kids about how bad guys use lies to get kids to do what they want.

Art:

Draw or paint a scene from the book. On the back explain why you picked this scene to illustrate.

Music:

Teach this tune to youngsters to help keep them safe

to the tune of "Farmer in the Dell"

Don't get in a car!

Don't get in a car!

Unless your parents know where you are

Don't get in a car!

Ask before you leave!

Ask before you leave!

Remember to ask, "Mom can I please?"

Ask before you leave!

Community:

Organize a picture ID campaign at your local elementary school where parents can bring children and get a recent digital picture taken and put all important information in one place in case of an emergency. Photos greatly increase the likelihood that a child will be found!

Internet Resources: (use with caution, safety not guaranteed)

<http://www.missingkids.com/>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

<http://www.theyaremissd.org/ncma/gallery/ncmalistview.php?wstr=Child&alpha=%>

Gallery of missing children

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and author of the poetry collection *Sketches from a Spy Tree*. Visit her website and find dozens of other guides to children's literature.