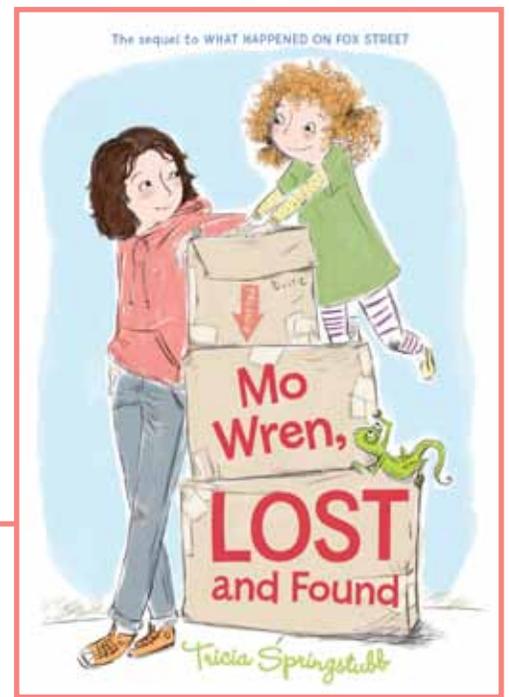


Mo Wren, LOST and FOUND

By Tricia Springstubb

DISCUSSION GUIDE



About the Book

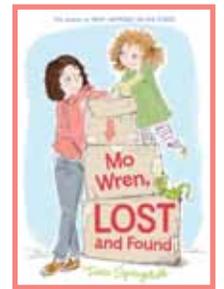
Mo Wren, her father, and her little sister, Dottie, leave Fox Street and move across town, where her father plans to fulfill his dream of opening a restaurant. Mo fears change and leaving behind people and things she loves, especially the memory of her mother. To Mo's surprise, her little sister adapts first and shows Mo the way. With help from Dottie's pet gecko, new friends at the Soap Opera Laundromat, and at school, Mo creates a life for herself filled with laughter, challenges, and new possibilities. She learns that everything we do, both good and bad, comes back to us in some way; and she discovers that home is truly where the heart is.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do the Wrens move to East 213th Street? What are Mo's reasons for not wanting to leave Fox Street? What happens when Mo returns to Fox Street for a visit, and why does she feel lonesome on her old street? Have you ever had to move? Share your experiences and feelings with your classmates.
2. Mr. Wren sold the house on Fox Street to a family who couldn't afford his asking price, despite a better offer. Why did he do this? Was this a wise decision when Mr. Wren himself needed money? How does his decision affect his family?
3. Why didn't Dottie and Mo like school? Do their attitudes change? Why? Do you like school? What is difficult for you in school and what is easy?
4. Think about the characteristics of Pi and Shawn, Mo's friends from Fox Street and East 213th Street. How are they alike, and how are they different? Do you think Mo is lucky to have Shawn for a new friend?
5. What is a soap opera? Why is it called that? Why do you think Carmella named her laundromat the Soap Opera? Talk about who Mo and Dottie meet there and what they learn.
6. The relationship between sisters is important in *Mo Wren, Lost and Found*. Think about the differences and similarities between Dottie and Mo and Carmella and Contessa. What does Dottie teach Mo about being sisters? What does Mo teach Carmella?
7. After Mo's mother dies, Mo thinks of herself and her father as "partners" (page 85). In what ways are they partners? Does Mo feel that this relationship has changed with their move? What challenges do father and daughter face in their new home?
8. What is a curse? What are the curses in the story and how are they overcome? Do you believe in curses or have you ever felt cursed?

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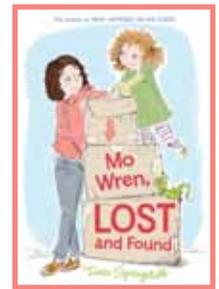
Discussion Questions (continued)

9. What is a symbol (page 215)? What do the following symbols mean in the story: plum tree and plum pit, bus shelter, the moon and stars, yellow sweater and red and blue sweatshirts? Why did the author change the color of the buttons on the yellow sweater worn by the stranger on the bus? What is the lesson of the big green chair?
10. Fox Street was a “dead end.” How does Mo characterize East 213th Street? What does each street symbolize in the story?
11. As you read the story, make a chart of all the things that are lost and who found them. How do the found objects change the lives of the people who found them? Carmella says nothing is ever lost, “it all just goes around” (page 82). Do you agree with Carmella?
12. “Probably the most important thing wasn’t to think about what you’d lost but what you’d found” (page 247). Discuss this idea with your friends.
13. The opening of Wren House, the family’s restaurant, would not have been possible without friends and teamwork. Discuss who did what to make the opening happen. How are friends and teamwork important in your class and valuable for learning?
14. Think about the different characters in the story and the changes they experience. What changes have you experienced in your life? Have your experiences been similar to those of any of the characters in the book?
15. What does Three-C mean when he says, “Life’s all about risk” (page 143)? Do you agree with his statement? What risks have you taken? What risks do you think you might take in the future?
16. When Mo imagines the tree saying, “We do our best, wherever we’re planted” (page 149), what does this mean to her? What does this mean to you?



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Extension Activities

- 1. Words, Words, Words.** Below are two projects involving words. Assign each student one of these options or ask students to choose, and then have everyone share their results with the class.
 - Dottie learns in first grade to “talk with initials.” Have students compile a list of popularly used initials and then write a coherent paragraph using as many initials as possible.
 - The author uses many similes and metaphors in her writing. Discuss these two figures of speech and help students identify and write down as many examples as they can find in the story. Then ask each student to write a descriptive paragraph using similes and metaphors of their own creation.
- 2. Geckos Are Handsome.** Have each student select and research a different animal that could be a pet. In choosing their pets, students should become aware of the animal’s history, size, weight, food requirements, personalities, habitats, and other needs. Find out whether your community has restrictions governing what kind and how many pets an owner can have. Then ask each student to name his/her pet and either draw a picture of the animal he/she selected or draw a picture to decorate the pet’s home.
- 3. Teamwork.** As a whole-class project, research and plan to open a restaurant! Choose a name and location; decide what type of restaurant; determine the menu, prices, and space requirements; identify and assign jobs; think about qualifications for hiring people; develop a public relations plan; learn about nutritional and health issues, licenses and permits, business loans, where to purchase food and supplies, etc. Then celebrate your own “grand opening” by setting up the restaurant in the classroom, decorating, writing menus, bringing in food, and inviting customers.
- 4. Pearls of Wisdom to Ponder.** As your students read *Mo Wren, Lost and Found*, help them keep a list of the wise sayings from Da, Ms. Thomas, and Carmella. Then divide the students into small groups and have each group choose one of the wise sayings. Have the groups discuss the meanings of their sayings with references to real-life experiences, and then have them present their insights to the class for discussion.
- 5. Lost and Found = Recycling.** Does your classroom or school have a lost and found? If not, is it possible to start one? Then organize the items and keep a record as to how long they are “lost.” Let students know that, after a certain period of time, new homes will be found for the unclaimed items, perhaps a charitable institution in your community or a giveaway at school. Many items can be treasures and bring delight to new owners.

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Tricia Springstubb has been a teacher and a children’s librarian. Like Mo, she has a red-haired sister, lives on a really cool street, and gets nervous when things change. She has never owned a gecko but loves cats. Tricia is the mother of three daughters and lives with her husband in Cleveland, Ohio. You can visit her online at www.triciaspringstubb.com.

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