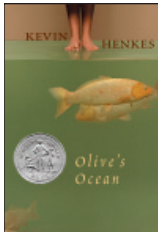
Books by Kevin Henkes A Selected Bibliography

Bird Lake Moon
Tr 978-0-06-147076-9 • $15.99 ($18.99)
Lb 978-0-06-147078-3 • $16.89 ($19.89)
Told in alternating voices, the story of two boys who spend the summer at Bird Lake,



Olive's Ocean
Tr 978-0-06-053543-8 • $15.99 ($19.99)
Lb 978-0-06-053544-5 • $16.89 ($21.89)
Pb 978-0-06-053545-2 • $6.99 ($8.99)
CD 978-0-06-074814-2 • $22.00 ($27.95)
★"[A] lovely, character-driven novel that explores . . . the changes and perplexities that haunt every child's growing-up process." —ALA *Booklist* (starred review)
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• Newbery Honor Book • ALA Notable Children's Book • ALA Best Book for Young Adults • ALA *Booklist* Editors' Choice • *Horn Book* Fanfare • *Publishers Weekly* Best Book • Virginia Young Readers Award • New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age

Sun & Spoon
Tr 978-0-688-15232-1 • $18.99 ($22.00)
Pb 978-0-06-128875-3 • $5.99 ($7.50)
★"[A] meticulously crafted, quietly engaging epiphany." —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)
★"Henkes captures young angst with respect and honesty." —*School Library Journal* (starred review)
• ALA Notable Children's Book • *School Library Journal* Best Book • *Publishers Weekly* Best Book • Notable Children's Trade Book in the Language Arts • Parents' Choice Silver Honor • Chicago Public Library's Best of the Best

Protecting Marie
Tr 978-0-688-13958-2 • $19.99 ($23.00)
Pb 978-0-06-128876-0 • $5.99 ($7.50)
★"Frustration, love, and sensitivity underscore the dynamics of family life . . . in this absorbing, well-crafted novel." —*School Library Journal* (starred review)
★"Affirms the resiliency of the creative spirit and the transcending power of love." —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)
• *School Library Journal* Best Book • *Publishers Weekly* Best Book • *Child* Magazine Children's Book Award

Laura Dronzek

About the Author

Kevin Henkes is the best-selling, award-winning author of many books for children, including the Caldecott Medal–winning *Kitten's First Full Moon* and the Caldecott Honor Book *Owen*. He also received the Newbery Honor for his novel *Olive's Ocean*. Kevin Henkes published his first book, the picture book *All Alone*, in 1981 and since then has published twenty-six additional picture books and ten novels. He lives with his family in Madison, Wisconsin.

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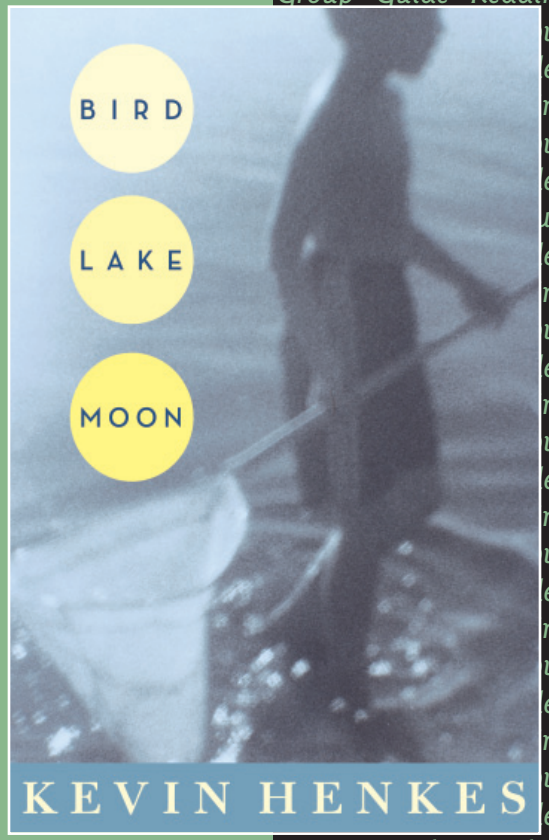
Reading Group Guide



Bird Lake Moon

By Kevin Henkes

About the Book

During a summer at Bird Lake, Mitch Sinclair and Spencer Stone both seek healing from tragedy in their lives. Mitch's father has left his mother for another woman, while Spencer must come to grips with the death of his brother, Matty. Before the Stone family arrives at Bird Lake, Mitch had claimed the empty summer house next door for his own. When Spencer and his family move in, Mitch resents their intrusion and tries to convince them that the house is haunted. Spencer interprets Mitch's tricks as signs—somehow—from Matty. After the boys meet face-to-face and become friends, Mitch confesses his deception, but he still holds onto one secret. Mitch once again is left to deal with loss and change when the Stone family leaves Bird Lake unexpectedly. By the end of the summer, the boys are reconciled, but each has grown in important ways.

Discussion Questions

1. When Mitch and his mother arrive at Bird Lake, Mitch realizes how much he misses his father and also how much he despises him for leaving. How is it possible for Mitch to feel both ways at the same time? How does Mitch come to terms with his confused feelings about his father?

2. After Mitch's father leaves, he feels like he is "nobody's child" (pages 5 and 8). Why does Mitch feel like his parents are no longer his parents? How does he finally come to terms with his parents' separation?

3. On page 11, Mitch asks himself, "Didn't it make sense that after something horrible happens, something better should follow?" Even though Mitch and his mother don't get the house next door to his grandparents' house, how do the events in the story substantiate Mitch's reasoning? What "something better" follows Mitch's "something horrible"?

4. Mitch finds his grandparents' attitudes toward him confusing; his grandmother speaks curtly to him, while his grandfather sometimes ignores him. Mitch wonders, "How come it's so hard to love all the people I'm supposed to love?" (page 14). How does Mitch answer this question for himself?

5. Both Mitch's and Spencer's families need healing when they come to Bird Lake. How do the two boys help one another? How do their parents' healing processes also help the boys?

6. Spencer seems to sense that his mother is emotionally fragile when they return to Bird Lake. How does he show concern for her? What does this say about Spencer's character?

7. Spencer doesn't remember his brother; he was only two when Matty died. How do the tricks Mitch plays force Spencer to think about his brother? How has Matty's death affected Spencer?

8. Mitch is fearful that, because his parents are getting a divorce, he will start behaving badly like Ross, the school bully (page 53). What happens that leads Mitch to believe he is headed down that path? Based on the outcome of the story, do you think Mitch will misbehave at school? Why or why not?

9. Spencer and Mitch become friends almost immediately. Why does their friendship develop so quickly? What role does Lolly play in their relationship?

10. Why is it so difficult for Mitch to admit that he let Jasper go? How does the guilt affect Mitch and Spencer's relationship? Why does Mitch finally tell Spencer? How does telling the truth help Mitch?

11. When Spencer leaves Bird Lake, both boys are upset. Why is their separation so hard for them to accept? Why don't they see each other in Madison?

12. Mitch finally realizes that the Stones are not the intruders; rather, he has been the intruder (page 173). Why does Mitch think that he has been an intruder? Would Spencer agree with Mitch? Why or why not?

Extension Activities

1. Using the Writer's Tool Kit

Kevin Henkes writes so that his readers can see and feel the events that happen in his story. He aptly uses the writer's tools of personification: "Mitch's sadness grew; it became a rock inside him, pulling him down" (page 6); metaphor: Mitch's "mind was an aquarium" (page 40); and simile: "Papa Carl and Cherry took them in like mother bears welcoming home their long-lost cubs" (page 8). Discuss the definitions of these tools of expression and find additional examples of them in *Bird Lake Moon.* Discuss how the author's style adds dimension to the story.

2. Description by Alliteration

Mitch uses the adjective "mad" to express how he feels and the noun "morass" to describe his situation. Make a list of other words beginning with the letter *M* that describe Mitch. Then make a list of *S* words that apply to Spencer. Extend this activity to other characters in the novel—or even to yourself—by brainstorming additional lists of words.

3. I Take It Back

Bird Lake Moon is full of broken and taxed relationships. Mitch's mother feels betrayed by her husband. Spencer has been duped by Mitch. Mitch feels ignored and rejected by his grandparents. Spencer and Lolly have been neglected while their mother deals with Matty's death. Write a letter of apology and explanation from one character to another, asking for forgiveness and healing.

4. A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

Bird Lake Moon contains no illustrations, but the author has painted pictures with words. Find a passage that describes the lake, the area around the lake, one of the two houses, or a character. Illustrate your selection using pen, pencil, pastels, crayons, watercolors, or collage.

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