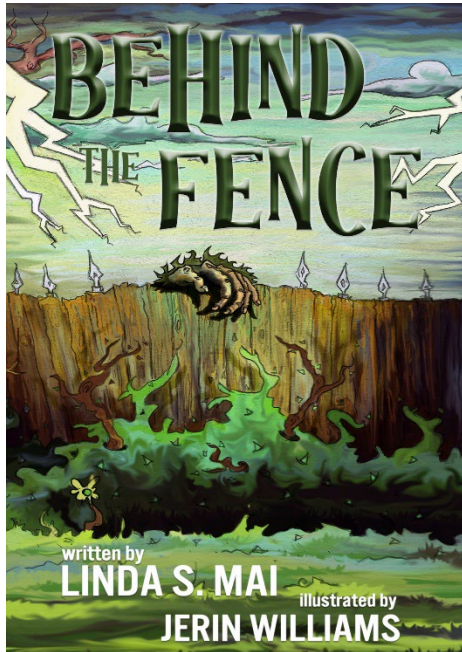




Behind the Fence

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Resource Guide

Overview

This guide supports educators in leading students through the first five chapters of *Behind the Fence*. The story follows Stoney, a boy who moves from New York to Oklahoma after his father's death, exploring themes of grief, adaptation, community, and mystery.

Chapter Summaries

- **Chapter 1:** Stoney and his mom arrive in a small Oklahoma town, dealing with mixed emotions about the move and memories of his late father.
- **Chapter 2:** Stoney meets his new neighbor, Ollie, and learns about the mysterious fence and the odd Tackett family next door.
- **Chapter 3:** Stoney experiences unsettling events during a thunderstorm, including a sighting of a strange creature by the fence.
- **Chapter 4:** The storm's aftermath leaves Stoney questioning whether what he saw was real or a nightmare, while he and his mom settle into their new home.
- **Chapter 5:** Stoney starts at his new school, navigating feelings of being the outsider and reconnecting with Ollie.
- **Chapter 6:** Stoney's curiosity about the Tackett family grows. He learns more unsettling rumors from Ollie and discovers that the previous occupants of his house left because of strange noises from the Tackett property. Stoney and Ollie investigate the fence but are unnerved by howling sounds.
- **Chapter 7:** Stoney's mom hears local gossip about the Tacketts but dismisses it. Stoney tries to research the howling, but nothing matches what he heard. He becomes determined to uncover the Tackett's secret.
- **Chapter 8:** Stoney's friendship with Ollie becomes strained as Ollie refuses to investigate further. Priscilla volunteers to help Stoney, and together they find a hole in the Tackett's fence. Their investigation is interrupted when something throws a ball back at them, proving something unusual is on the other side.
- **Chapter 9:** Stoney and Priscilla return to the Tackett fence and have a frightening encounter when something large shakes the fence. They narrowly escape, and Stoney's friendship with Ollie remains strained.

- **Chapter 10:** Stoney and Priscilla investigate again, using food to lure the creature. Something hairy appears, grabs the carrot, and blocks Stoney's view. Stoney pokes it, but still can't see what it is.
- **Chapter 11:** Stoney struggles with lying to his mom about his injuries and reflects on his father's bravery. He resolves to keep investigating to protect his mom and promises to tell her everything soon.
- **Chapter 12:** During a storm, Stoney and Priscilla see evidence that the creature tried to escape: hairy hands, blood, and black fur on the fence. Priscilla becomes frightened and wants to stop investigating.
- **Chapter 13:** Stoney investigates alone and loses his science test to the creature. He confesses to Ms. Kelly, who is disappointed but allows him to retake the test. Stoney feels the weight of secrets and responsibility.
- **Chapter 14:** Stoney breaks his promise to Priscilla and admits to Ms. Kelly that he mentioned a monster, resulting in Priscilla ending their friendship out of fear of getting in trouble. Stoney is left feeling isolated.
- **Chapter 15:** Ms. Kelly sends Stoney to the school counselor, Mr. Wattles, who encourages him to share his story. Stoney confides in him about the Tackett mystery, and Mr. Wattles arranges for Stoney and his mom to visit the Tackett's backyard.
- **Chapter 16:** Stoney and his mom visit the Tacketts. The backyard seems normal, with goats and a locked shed, but Stoney remains convinced the Tacketts are hiding something.
- **Chapter 17:** Stoney returns alone to retrieve his lost cap and secretly witnesses the Tacketts releasing a monstrous creature from the shed. He sees the monster eat a goat, leaving him traumatized and unable to share the truth with anyone.
- **Chapter 18:** Stoney tries to process what he saw and leaves an anonymous note for the Tacketts. Priscilla invites Stoney to the park, where they reconnect, and Stoney chooses not to reveal the full truth, realizing the importance of caution and friendship.
- **Chapter 19:** Stoney's note to the Tacketts leads to a conversation with Mr. Tackett, who reveals the truth about Frank, the gentle, overgrown howler monkey. Stoney learns about Frank's origins and the Tacketts' efforts to keep him safe.
- **Chapter 20:** Stoney meets Frank, overcomes his fears, and promises to keep the Tacketts' secret. He realizes Frank isn't a monster, but a misunderstood and unique animal.
- **Chapter 21:** After Stoney's late return home, his mom calls the police out of worry. Stoney can't reveal the full truth, but reassures her and accepts the consequences of his actions.
- **Chapter 22:** A gossip column exposes rumors about a monster in town, leading to panic and a mob gathering at the Tacketts'. Stoney tries to defend the Tacketts and Frank.
- **Chapter 23:** The crowd's fear escalates until Frank appears, causing chaos. Stoney and the Tacketts calm Frank, but an accident occurs as Stoney saves Frank from a truck.
- **Chapter 24:** Stoney recovers from his injury, learns about the town's response, and discovers that Ollie has started a campaign to build a sanctuary for Frank.
- **Chapter 25:** The town unites to help Frank, relationships heal, and Stoney reflects on his father's lessons about doing the right thing. The story ends with hope, healing, and friendship.

Learning Objectives

- Analyze how setting influences character emotions and actions.
- Discuss and identify themes of grief, adaptation, and friendship.
- Practice making inferences and predictions based on text evidence.
- Develop empathy for characters experiencing change and loss.
- Analyze how rumors and gossip influence perceptions and actions.
- Discuss the importance of bravery, curiosity, and teamwork in problem-solving.
- Examine character development and changing relationships.
- Make predictions and inferences based on clues in the text.
- Identify how suspense is built through action, dialogue, and character choices.
- Discuss the effects of secrets and honesty on relationships.
- Analyze how Stoney's feelings about responsibility and bravery evolve.
- Explore how loss and grief influence decisions and motivation.
- Discuss the impact of trust and broken promises in friendships.
- Analyze how facing fears and seeking truth can lead to unexpected consequences.
- Explore healthy ways to process trauma and overwhelming experiences.
- Reflect on the importance of empathy, honesty, and discretion.
- Discuss how rumors and fear can lead to misunderstanding and conflict.
- Analyze the importance of empathy and seeing things from others' perspectives.
- Reflect on the value of courage, honesty, and community support.
- Explore how characters grow and change by the end of the story.

Discussion Questions Chapter 1-5

- How does Stoney feel about moving to Oklahoma? What clues from the text show his emotions?
- Why do you think the author includes the mysterious fence and the storm? How do these elements affect the mood?
- What strategies does Stoney use to cope with his father's death and the move?
- How do Stoney and Ollie's backgrounds influence their perspectives?
- What do you predict will happen next with the mysterious neighbor and the creature?
- Analyze how rumors and gossip influence perceptions and actions.
- Discuss the importance of bravery, curiosity, and teamwork in problem-solving.
- Examine character development and changing relationships.
- Make predictions and inferences based on clues in the text.

Discussion Questions Chapters 6-8

- How do rumors about the Tackett family affect Stoney's feelings and actions?
- Why do you think Ollie refuses to help Stoney investigate further? What does this say about his character?
- What motivates Priscilla to get involved in the mystery? How does her personality differ from Ollie's?
- What evidence do Stoney and Priscilla find that something unusual is behind the fence? How does this build suspense?
- What role does bravery play in these chapters? Who shows bravery and how?

Discussion Questions Chapters 9-13

- How does Stoney's sense of responsibility for his mom affect his choices?
- What are the risks and consequences of keeping secrets? When is it important to tell the truth?
- How do Stoney's feelings about the creature shift throughout these chapters?
- Why does Priscilla want to stop investigating, and do you agree with her?
- What techniques does the author use to create suspense and tension?

Discussion Questions Chapters 14-18

- Why does Priscilla end her friendship with Stoney? How does this affect him?
- How does Stoney's meeting with Mr. Wattles change the course of the story?
- What does Stoney's experience in the Tackett's backyard reveal about the limits of adult understanding and belief?
- Why does Stoney choose not to tell Priscilla everything after seeing the monster? Do you think this is the right decision?
- How do these chapters address the theme of courage—both its value and its risks?

Discussion Questions Chapters 19-25

- How does Stoney's understanding of Frank and the Tacketts change throughout these chapters?
- What role does Ollie play in both causing and resolving the town's conflict?
- How do Stoney and the Tacketts show courage and empathy?
- What lessons does Stoney learn about truth, responsibility, and friendship?
- How does the community come together to help Frank, and what does this say about forgiveness and unity?

Classroom Activities

- **Character Journals:** Have students write journal entries from Stoney's perspective at the end of each chapter.
- **Setting Map:** Create a map of Stoney's new neighborhood. Mark important locations (house, fence, Ollie's house, school).
- **Feelings Chart:** Track Stoney's emotions throughout the chapters. Discuss what causes his feelings to change.
- **Creative Writing:** Ask students to write a short story about moving to a new place or encountering something mysterious.
- **Rumor vs. Fact Chart:** Create a two-column chart listing the rumors about the Tacketts and the actual facts discovered by Stoney and his friends.
- **Role Play:** Have students act out a scene where Stoney tries to convince Ollie or Priscilla to join his investigation.
- **Creative Writing:** Ask students to write a journal entry from Priscilla's perspective about the adventure behind the fence.
- **Prediction Exercise:** Encourage students to predict what might happen next, using evidence from the chapters.
- **Suspense Mapping:** Chart the sequence of suspenseful events and how they build tension for the reader.

- **Letter Writing:** Have students write a letter from Stoney to his dad, explaining what's happening and how he feels.
- **Debate:** Should Stoney keep investigating the Tackett's yard, or is it time to stop? Have students take sides and support their arguments.
- **Creative Problem Solving:** Brainstorm safe and ethical ways Stoney could solve the mystery without breaking rules or risking harm.
- **Trust Timeline:** Create a timeline tracking moments of trust and betrayal between characters. Discuss how these moments shape the story.
- **Perspective Writing:** Write a journal entry from Priscilla's or Mr. Wattles's perspective about the events of these chapters.
- **Ethics Debate:** Should Stoney have spied on the Tacketts or respected their privacy? Debate both sides in class.
- **Coping Strategies:** Brainstorm and discuss healthy ways to process fear, disappointment, and trauma.
- **Rumor Chain:** Simulate how rumors spread and change by playing a classroom telephone game. Discuss the consequences.
- **Character Growth Chart:** Track how Stoney, Ollie, and Priscilla change from the beginning to the end of the story.
- **Sanctuary Design Project:** Have students design their own sanctuary for Frank, considering his needs and comfort.
- **Letter to the Community:** Write a letter from Stoney or Frank to the townspeople about the importance of understanding and acceptance.

Vocabulary

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| • Population | • Curiosity | • Trauma |
| • Manure | • Suspense | • Empathy |
| • Barbed wire | • Responsibility | • Courage |
| • Nightmare | • Suspense | • Empathy |
| • Perspective | • Honesty | • Sanctuary |
| • Adaptation | • Consequence | • Reconciliation |
| • Empathy | • Bravery | • Rumor |
| • Rumor | • Curiosity | • Perspective |
| • Recluse | • Trust | • Unity |
| • Gossip | • Betrayal | • Forgiveness |
| • Investigation | • Confide | |
| • Bravery | • Discretion | |

Extension Ideas

- Research Oklahoma weather and compare it to New York’s climate.
- Interview a family member about a time they moved and how they felt.
- Explore books with similar themes, such as *Bridge to Terabithia* or *Because of Winn-Dixie*.
- Research the concept of urban legends or local mysteries in students’ own communities.
- Compare and contrast Stoney’s approach to solving the mystery with classic literary detectives.
- Discuss the ethics of privacy versus curiosity—when is it okay to investigate someone else’s business?
- Research stories of real-life animal mysteries or cryptids (e.g., Bigfoot, Chupacabra).
- Discuss the importance of communication and trust in families during difficult times.
- Compare Stoney’s approach to mystery-solving with detectives from other books or media.
- Research real-life cases of misunderstood animals or neighborhood mysteries.
- Discuss the importance of seeking adult help and how to communicate hard truths.
- Compare Stoney’s actions to heroes in other books who face disbelief or isolation.
- Research real-life animal sanctuaries and their role in communities.
- Explore news stories about misunderstood animals or community activism.

Social-Emotional Learning Focus

- Discuss healthy ways to manage big changes and loss.
- Reflect on healthy ways to cope with fear, anxiety, and grief.
- Practice empathy by considering how each character feels about the situation and why.
- Role-play conversations between Stoney and his mom to build empathy and understanding.
- Explore the impact of peer pressure and standing up for your own beliefs.
- Discuss how to be a supportive friend, even when you disagree.
- Reflect on repairing friendships after conflict and the value of forgiveness.
- Practice strategies for self-care and seeking support after witnessing something traumatic.
- Practice strategies for resolving conflict and making amends after mistakes.
- Reflect on the power of kindness and standing up for what’s right.

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