

Teaching *The Perfect Trip*



The Perfect Trip is the story of a girl who is facing the challenges of friendship and family relationships as she travels across America on a camping trip. As students read this book they should think about honesty, perseverance,

and acceptance as they learn about places in the United States.

About the Author

Stacy Barnett Mozer is a middle grade author and an elementary teacher. During her teacher training at NYU she was introduced to the writer's workshop style of teaching writing and started her first writer's notebook. She never expected that would lead her to write "actual books," but every time she gave an assignment to her students, she would do it first. She used her own writing pieces as models in the classroom, enjoying writing in a way she had never remembered experiencing as a child.

When one of her third grade classes challenged the concept of revision, Stacy became a novelist. The class told her that there was no way a real author who wrote real books could possibly revise their work as much as she asked them to revise. Stacy's been writing and revising her own novels ever since.

Book Stats

Grade Level Equivalent: 3-6

Ages: 7-11

Genre: Realistic

Pages: 194

Themes: friendship, family relationships, divorce

| Common Core Standards | Reading and Literature | Writing | Speaking and Listening | Language |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|
| Grade 3 | 3.3, 3.9 | 3.1, 3.8 | 3.3 | 3.3 |
| Grade 4 | 4.3 | 4.1, 4.8 | 4.3 | 4.3 |
| Grade 5 | 5.1, 5.3 | 5.1, 5.8 | 5.3 | 5.3 |

Book Summary

Sam Barrette's life is finally going in the right direction. She's made the boys' travel baseball team, her friendship with Mike is turning into something more, and she's even connecting with her stepmother. But a cross-country family camping trip filled with secrets and surprises challenges everything she thought she knew about what the future will hold. To save her dreams, Sam must find a way to fix her perfect trip.

Before Reading

Family Relationships Sam's perfect trip is called into question when she realizes her father and stepmother are keeping an important secret.

Discussion:

- Why would your parents keep something from you?
- How would you feel if you found out your parents had lied to you?
- Do parents have the obligation to tell their children everything?

Critical Thinking:

If you found out your parents were keeping something from you, would you ask them about it?

During Reading

Character Study (RL 3.3, 4.3, 5.1) Sam's friend Mike thinks that she is selfish.

A **character trait** is a word that describes a character. A physical or **external trait** describes what the character looks like on the outside, but an **internal trait** focuses on a **character's** personality.

A good reader identifies a character's internal traits by noticing what the character does, says, and thinks. As your students read, have them keep track of how Sam demonstrated her traits throughout the book (Resource 1). They can **Prove a Trait** (Resource 2) by finding a trait that is demonstrated in more than one way by the character.

Character Change (RL 3.3, 4.3, 5.1) A character's traits change as they face life's lessons. How has Sam changed in this story? If you read *The Sweet Spot*, think about the growth Sam had in that book and compare it to what she experiences in this book. Does she continue to grow or go back to making the same old mistakes?

Compare and Contrast (RL 3.9) If you read *The Sweet Spot*, compare and contrast that story and this story. How did setting change the story? The mix of characters?

(RL 5.3) Pick two characters in *The Perfect Trip*. Analyze their different reactions to the same situation. Why do they react differently? How would you react if you were there?

After Reading

Narrative Writing (W 3.3, 4.3, 5.3) Even though the characters were changed, many situations in *The Perfect Trip* are taken from the author's real life experiences.

- She did travel across the country with her family.
- Her legs were bitten the first day of the trip and she went to the hospital.
- Her family did stay in a hotel instead of camping.
- She did visit all of the mentioned U.S. landmarks.
- Her sister was almost run over by horses.
- Her family did get stuck on a lake in Jackson Hole.

Think of a special trip you have taken with your family. Tell the story using description, dialogue, and thoughts and feelings. You can be the main character (personal narrative) or change the details and make it a different story based on your life (fictional narrative).

Take a Trip (W 3.8, 4.8, 5.8)

All of the places mentioned in *The Perfect Trip* are real places in the United States.

To experience Sam's trip for yourself you can:

- Use Google Maps to create a Book Journey
- Use Google World to explore in the real world.
- Research the locations:
 - Wisconsin Dells, WI
 - The Corn Palace, SD
 - The Bad Lands, SD
 - Mount Rushmore, SD
 - Jackson Hole, WY

Recommendation for Further Reading

For lists of books about girls who play sports, visit <http://SportyGirlBooks.blogspot.com>

Suggestions?

If you have any suggestions for activities that could be added, or if you have tried something with your class that you'd like to share, contact Spellbound River Press at education@spellboundriver.com.

Have a question about the book or a project you would like to share? Contact the author Stacy Barnett Mozer at mozerstacy@gmail.com.

Stacy is available for classroom Skype Visits and school visits. Visit her website at <http://www.stacymozzer.com/school-visits.html> for more information.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Resource 1

Record of _____'s Internal Character Traits

| Page # | What the character did/said/thought | What it means |
|--------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | This makes me think |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Name: _____

Date: _____

Resource 2

Prove A Trait

