

## **Librarian/Teacher/Book Club Guide for *That Smudge of Smoke*** By Edith M. Hemingway

### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

1. Who was your favorite character in the book and why? What did that character want more than anything else? How did that character change over the course of the story? Is there a character you didn't like? Why? Do you think of Dorie as a character?
2. What characteristics and circumstances did Piper and Garrett have in common? Did you identify with any of the emotions or situations they found themselves in? If they had met when they were the same age, do you think they would have been friends?
3. Think about the timeframes and the settings. In Piper's part of the book, what specific details (other than the dates on the diary entries) let you know this was not taking place in the present day? Did you notice differences in the words she used or the way she spoke? Did you have to look up some of the words in the glossary at the back of the book?
4. What do you think was most interesting about living aboard a steamboat in 1929? Would you have wanted to live aboard a steamboat, especially if your father was the captain?
5. Why were steamboats so important to life in the Chesapeake Bay area and all its tributaries during the early 1900s?
6. What kinds of things brought hope to Piper, Dorie, and Garrett? How were they different for each character? What brings hope to you?
7. Did you notice the repetition of the phrase "that smudge of smoke" throughout the book? What importance or significance did it have, and do you think it was a good choice for the title?
8. Authors often use emotion to help readers connect with their characters. Look for scenes in the book where Piper or Garrett felt grief, fear, anger, joy, freedom, satisfaction, nervousness, or pride. List some specific sensory details that helped you understand what Piper or Garrett was feeling in those scenes.
9. Do you have a favorite scene or quote from the book that has special meaning for you? Perhaps it reminds you of something or someone from your own life. Please share.
10. Do you understand why music was so important to Garrett? What do you think of the idea that music floats on the air, and every time we breathe, we inhale music? To some people music really is as important as oxygen. How important is music in Garrett's dad's recovery?
11. Do you think Smudge and Windy played important roles in the story? How did they help Piper and Garrett through tough times? Do you have a pet you are very close to?

## Cross-Curriculum Tie-ins and Projects

1. Language Arts—
  - a. Reading: Look at Piper’s list of books and make a list of your favorite books.
  - b. Journal or diary writing: Keep a journal over the summer or while you’re on vacation. Record as many specific details as you can.
  - c. Creative writing: Write a poem or a short story that uses an inanimate object as a character.
  - d. What do Miss Oliver and Piper have to say about reading as a writer?
  - e. Discuss Emily Dickinson’s poem, “Hope is the Thing with Feathers.”
2. Social Studies—
  - a. Current events leading up to October 1929.
  - b. The crash of the stock market, and the start of the Great Depression.
  - c. Social issues and justice at the time: How are they different from today?
  - d. Women’s issues: for example, Miss Oliver was expected to stop teaching once she got married.
3. Health—
  - a. The grieving process and coping techniques
  - b. Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and the long recovery
  - c. Music as a therapy or treatment.
4. Music—
  - a. Clarinet music ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dm03Zx470\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dm03Zx470_s))  
“Meditation from Thais” played by clarinet and piano.
  - b. Music of the 1920s (“Clarinet Marmalade” from an actual 1920s recording <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMk4DC6BV8k> )
  - c. Popular dances of the 1920s.  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psch9N4Pm04> )
  - d. Discussion of how music can affect your moods (Link to Star Wars theme music “A New Hope” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54hoKbTWon4> )
5. Art—
  - a. Discuss sketches Curtis Anderson sent to Piper
  - b. Make a sketch of something you particularly like, such as a bird, a pet, a tree, your home, or something from the story.
  - c. Discuss the cover art of the book and the design process: Interview with artist Susan Detwiler (<https://ediehemingway.com/cover-art-design-process-an-interview-with-susan-detwiler/> ).
6. Science—
  - a. Phases of the moon.
  - b. How the north star and constellations help with navigation.
  - c. What captains needed to know about the bay and how to navigate their ships.
  - d. Discussion of how the steam engine worked on the ship.
  - e. Discussion of environmental issues: For example, how did all the coal ash dumped into the Chesapeake Bay from the steamboats affect the water and the sea life? How has it changed and improved today?
  - f. Waterfowl and other birds of the area: Make your own list.

## Recipe

### Gingerbread with Lemon Sauce

(Piper's favorite dessert)

#### You will need:

½ cup shortening	¾ teaspoon salt
½ cup sugar	¾ teaspoon soda
1 egg	½ teaspoon ground ginger
½ cup molasses	½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 ½ cups all-purpose flour	½ cup boiling water

Cream sugar and shortening until light. Add egg and molasses; beat thoroughly. Sift together dry ingredients. Add to creamed mixture alternately with water, beating after each addition. Bake in greased and lightly floured 8x8x2-inch pan at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes or until done. Serve warm with lemon sauce.

### Lemon Sauce

#### You will need:

2/3 cup sugar	1 ¼ cup water
2 tablespoons cornstarch	¼ cup lemon juice (freshly squeezed is best)
1/8 teaspoon salt	2 tablespoons butter

In small saucepan, combine sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Stir in the water. Bring to boil, stirring constantly. Simmer 2 minutes once it boils, still stirring. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice and butter. Serve warm over gingerbread.

Enjoy!

Thank you to all my readers. I hope you enjoyed reading Piper's, Garrett's, and Dorie's story as much as I enjoyed writing it. To this day, I search for that smudge of smoke against the sky whenever I look out on the Chesapeake Bay.