



BETH KEPHART

ONE THING STOLEN

ABOUT THE BOOK

Something is not right with Nadia Cara. She's become a thief. She has secrets she can't tell. And when she tries to speak, the words seem far away. In Florence, Italy, Nadia finds herself trapped by her own obsessions and following the trail of an elusive Italian boy whom no one but herself has seen.

Set against the backdrop of a glimmering city, *One Thing Stolen* is an exploration of obsession, art, and a rare neurological disorder. It is about language and beauty, imagining and knowing, and the deep salvation of love.

978-1-4521-2831-3+ \$17.99 HC

AGES 14 AND UP * F&P TEXT LEVEL GRADIENT: Z+

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This teacher guide contains discussion questions and activities aligned with the Common Core State Standards. See inside for reference to the Reading and Writing strands and grade-specific standards.



PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Examine the cover art of *One Thing Stolen*. What can you infer about the book based on this illustration?

Describe the most valuable thing that you've ever lost. This can be a tangible item, or something more abstract. Take ten minutes to visualize that thing. Describe it fully, using as tactile of a description as you can – attempt to use all five senses and capture all of the detail you remember. Then, recall how you felt when you discovered it was gone. Did you ever find it again? Were you ever able to replace it? Explain.

Correlates to Common Core Writing Standards: Text Types and Purposes, 9-10.3, 11-12.3

In a flash research activity, find out what you can about the following topics. Choose the most significant image you can find on your topic to produce a small classroom exhibit. Present your findings to your peers. Use these images as reference while reading and discussing the novel.

- FLORENCE, ITALY
- MUD ANGELS
- 1966 FLOOD OF THE ARNO RIVER
- FRONTOTEMPORAL DISORDER

Correlates to Common Core Writing Standards: Research to Build and Present Knowledge, 9-10.7, 11-12.7



WHILE READING: TEXT-BASED QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Trace the nest and birds motif throughout the novel. Discuss what they symbolize, and what Kephart is able to accomplish through the usage of these symbol.

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.1, 11-12.1, 9-10.2, 11-12.2

2. Keep a list of the items that Nadia steals. What, if anything, is the connection between these items? What compels Nadia to steal them? Have you ever stolen anything, and if so, what and why? Do you believe that all things stolen should be returned to their original owners? Why or why not? What is your opinion in Nadia's case?

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.1, 11-12.1, 9-10.2, 11-12.2

3. Think about the purpose of the secondary characters in the novel: Mrs. C, Jack, "the prof", Perdita, Katherine, and Maggie. What roles do they play in the narrative? Do you think they assist or hinder Nadia's growth and repair? Explain.

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.3, 11-12.3

4. Kephart uses flashbacks to powerful effect in the first half of the novel. What does each flashback contribute to the story? What do we learn about Nadia and her past? How is this memory significant in her present day life?

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Craft and Structure, 9-10.5, 11-12.5

5. Discuss the role of perspective and point-of-view in this novel. How would the usage of third person point-of-view change the story? What did the change to Maggie's point-of-view midway through the novel contribute to the narrative? How would the novel have been different if it had been narrated by Nadia to its conclusion?

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 11-12.3, Craft and Structure, 9-10.5, 11-12.5



6. Examine the stylistic differences between our two narrators' voices. What do these reveal about the characters of Nadia and Maggie?

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Craft and Structure, 9-10.4, 11-12.4, 11-12.6

7. Kephart tells several stories-within-the-story throughout the novel, such as the following:

· CIMABUE'S CHRIST (162-164) · NADIA'S DREAM (166-169)

What role does each of these stories play in the larger narrative? Discuss the central theme of storytelling in *One Thing Stolen*.

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.2, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, Craft and Structure, 9-10.5, 11-12.5

8. Who—or what—is Benedetto?

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.3, 11-12.3

9. "Their one thing lost, their other thing gained" (192). This applies to Nadia's experience with frontotemporal disorder. Explain how else this quotation might be applied to the story.

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.2, 11-12.2

10. How do people survive even the most terrible of losses? What do you think? What answers does Kephart offer in this story?

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.2, 11-12.2

11. Nadia's mind functions like that of a teenager, but she is increasingly unable to express herself in spoken language. Challenge yourself to silence for a few hours, or even a day. Write about your experience. When did you feel most compelled to speak, but could not? How did you feel? What greater understanding do you now have of Nadia?

Correlates to Common Core Writing Standards: Text Types and Purposes, 9-10.3, 11-12.3

12. Beth Kephart begins her novel with the epigraph, "There are 400 billion birds in this world. Every one of them came from an egg." After finishing the novel, discuss the meaning of this epigraph in the context of the story.

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.2, 11-12.2

AFTER READING: CROSS-CURRICULAR, CREATIVE, AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

1. Research Typhoon Haiyan, the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Sandy, or another natural disaster. Locate and read a minimum of two survivors' tales. What parallels do you make with the descriptions of the Arno flood in *One Thing Stolen*?

Correlates to Common Core Writing Standards: Research to Build and Present Knowledge, 9-10.7, 11-12.7, 9-10.8, 11-12.8

2. The villanelle "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop closely parallels the themes of *One Thing Stolen*. Read the poem carefully and discuss the connections to the novel. Write your own villanelle inspired by Nadia's tale.

3. Create your own nest inspired by images, themes, and ideas in this novel. Like Nadia, you might choose to use physical objects; you might also create a nest of words as poetry, or images as a painting, or other visual.

- To review the novel, choose a section of the narrative. Create a found poem of a limited length—perhaps 20-25 words – that captures the essence of this passage. Share with your peers.

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.2, 11-12.2; Craft and Structure, 9-10.4, 11-12.4

- Choose one of the secondary characters in the novel who interests you, and locate a compelling scene between that character and Nadia. Rewrite the scene from your chosen character’s point-of-view. Afterwards, reflect on what you now understand about Nadia and her relationship with your character.

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.3, 11-12.3; Common Core Writing Standards: Text Types and Purposes, 9-10.3, 11-12.3

- Read the New York Times article that inspired Kephart’s novel: “A Disease That Allowed Torrents of Creativity” by Sandra Blakeslee (April 8, 2008). Discuss how this supplements your understanding of Nadia’s experience. As a follow-up, research Barbara Arrowsmith-Young, mentioned in the narrative, and her struggle to rebuild her mind.

Correlates to Common Core Reading Standards for Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details, 9-10.3, 11-12.3, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, 9-10.7, 11-12.7

ALSO BY BETH KEPHART



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It is February 1983, and Berlin is a divided city with a miles-long barricade separating east from west. But the city isn't the only thing that is divided. Ada lives among the rebels, punks, and immigrants of Kreuzberg in West Berlin. Stefan lives in East Berlin, in a faceless apartment bunker of Friedrichshain. Bound by love and separated by circumstance, their only chance for a life together lies in a high-risk escape. But will Stefan find the courage to leap? Or will forces beyond his control stand in his way? National Book Award finalist Beth Kephart presents a story of daring and sacrifice, and love that will not wait.

★ — *School Library Journal*, starred review

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Beth Kephart is the author of more than a dozen books, including the National Book Award finalist *A Slant of Sun*, as well as many critically acclaimed novels for young adults including *House of Dance*, *Nothing but Ghosts*, *The Heart Is Not a Size*, *You Are My Only*, *Small Damages*, and *Going Over*. In addition to being a National Book Award finalist, Kephart is a winner of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts fiction grant, a National Endowment for the Arts grant, a Leeway grant, a Pew Fellowships in the Arts grant, and the Speakeasy Poetry Prize, among other honors. She teaches advanced creative nonfiction at the University of Pennsylvania.

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