



FOR USE  
WITH COMMON  
CORE STATE  
STANDARDS

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

# THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF *Coyote Sunrise*

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Five years.

That's how long Coyote and her dad, Rodeo, have lived on the road in an old school bus, crisscrossing the nation.

It's also how long ago Coyote lost her mom and two sisters in a car crash.

Coyote hasn't been home in all that time. But when she learns that the park in her old neighborhood is being demolished—the very same park where she, her mom, and her sisters buried a treasured memory box—she devises an elaborate plan to get her dad to drive 3,600 miles back to Washington State in four days... without him realizing it.

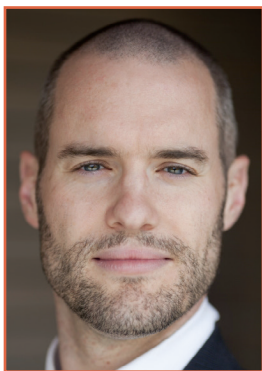
Along the way, they'll pick up a strange crew of misfit travelers. Lester has a lady love to meet. Salvador and his mom are looking to start over. Val needs a safe place to be herself. And then there's Gladys...

Over the course of thousands of miles, Coyote will learn that going home can sometimes be the hardest journey of all... but that with friends by her side, she just might be able to turn her "once upon a time" into a "happily ever after."



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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This guide is aligned with Common Core State Standards for grade five but can be applied to grades three through seven. To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for your classroom and students, you are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to your classes' needs. You know your students best!

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- What are some of the benefits of having a good friend? What are some of the qualities that make someone a good friend?
- Imagine that you've just met someone new. What questions could you ask that would help you decide if you wanted to know the person better?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the first chapter, Coyote buys a slushy for the boy who later offers her a kitten. What does the incident with the slushy show about Coyote? How did it make you feel about her as a character? Discuss why the author introduced her personality to the reader with this incident.
2. Describe Rodeo's appearance, his personality, and his strengths. How do outsiders view him? Why does Coyote love him? What are some of the problems for her in having him as a father? What are some times that he comes through for her even when it's hard for him to do so?
3. How do Rodeo and Coyote meet Lester? What kind of person do they decide he is? Why does Coyote want to persuade Lester to come with them? How does he help her, and how does she help him?
4. What role has friendship played in Coyote's life in the last five years? Why is Coyote's friendship with Salvador so important to her? What do the two of them have in common? What makes them become such good friends in a short time?
5. Summarize the scene when Coyote and Salvador are on the roof of the bus. What is the point of shouting up there? What do the two learn about each other? Why do you think Salvador thanks Coyote at the end of that scene?
6. Describe Salvador's relationship with his mother and why he feels the need to protect her. What has gone wrong in their lives, and how does he feel about it? Why is leaving home hard for him? Why do Coyote and the others arrange to have Salvador play the violin for his mother in the theater?
7. Coyote says of Salvador and his mother, "They were pilgrims on a quest, just like me and Rodeo" (p. 117). What quest are Salvador and his mother on, and why are they on it? How about Rodeo and Coyote? Are Lester and Val on quests, and if so, what are they?
8. What motivates Coyote to invite Val to join them, and why does Val want to? What are Rodeo's concerns about taking Val aboard? Why does Rodeo go along with it? Describe ways in which Val is a positive force on the trip. How does her presence prove to be a problem? Explain why she lied to Rodeo when they first met.
9. Describe Coyote's conversation with Lester's friend, Tammy. Why does Lester want Coyote to make the call? Why does Tammy say, "You gotta look out for your own happiness, you know" (p. 229)? What does she mean? Why do you think she adds, "There's nothing wrong with that"? How does Tammy's advice relate to the decision she and Lester made?
10. Coyote says that she's terrified twice within four pages but for different reasons. She says it after talking to Lester's friend Tammy (p. 230), and in the next chapter, she says, "I was freaking terrified" (p. 234). Describe why she is terrified in both instances, and explain the differences between the feelings in each situation. What are some of the words, phrases, and sentences in the second scene that make it exciting and suspenseful?
11. Coyote is trying to balance her own needs with her feeling that she should take care of her father. In the scene when she finds him on a sandbar, she reflects, "My job wasn't to take care of him. Not anymore. My job was to take care of me" (p. 264). Explain those statements. How has she been "taking care" of him throughout the book? Talk about how and why she changes her approach.
12. When the story opens, Rodeo and Coyote never talk about her mother and sisters. Why does Rodeo think that's the best way to deal with the past? How does Coyote feel about that approach? Explain why she comes to believe that "remembering them and being sad about it is way better than forgetting about them" (p. 254). Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

13. Discuss Coyote’s statements on the last page: “There is so much happiness in the world. There is so much sadness in the world. There is just so *much* in the world” (p. 341). Which of those statements has she made earlier as well? What does she mean by them? What has made her and other characters sad, and what has made them happy?
14. After you have finished the book, go back and analyze the first two paragraphs. How does the first paragraph foreshadow the story and reflect Coyote’s past? Explain why she says “It all started with Ivan.” Why did she start the story with him rather than explaining what had happened to her mother and sisters?

## READING ACTIVITIES

1. Rodeo and Coyote ask strangers three questions before inviting them on the bus. Have students find the answers that each new character gives in the book. Ask students to answer the questions themselves in writing. Each student should then ask two people not in the class the questions and record their answers. Compile the responses and hold a class discussion about the answers, comparing them and having students discuss if they think the questions are useful for evaluating character.

CCSS.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.SL.5.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

2. Ask students to consider what they would miss the most if they left home and traveled around in a bus like Coyote did. What would they enjoy the most about it? Then divide students into pairs and have them interview each other about these topics. The person interviewed should refer to specifics in Coyote’s life. The interviewer should ask follow-up questions to the initial answers like a television interviewer would.

CCSS.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.SL.5.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

3. The book ends with Coyote, or Ella, starting a story: “Once upon a time, there was a girl and her dad” (p. 341). Ask students to write one more chapter, starting with those words and setting the chapter in the small town Coyote has just described. The chapter should include at least two new people she meets there as well as her feelings about the new place.

CCSS.RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

CCSS.W.5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

4. Rodeo uses endearments like “pretty bird” (p. 60) for Coyote. Divide students into groups of four and give them ten minutes to find as many examples of endearments as possible. Together they should analyze the phrases to see what they have in common such as imagery drawn from food or nature. The group should then come up with five phrases of their own, similar to Rodeo’s, to share with the class.

CCSS.R.5.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.W.5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

5. Coyote and her mother and sisters created a memory box to open in ten years. Ask your students to think of ideas for a box that would represent their shared activities and experiences as a class. Make a decision as a class about what to include and create the box together, including a letter about the choices and a self-portrait in writing or art of each student and teacher.

CCSS.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.W.5.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

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Kathleen Odean was a school librarian for 17 years and now gives workshops for educators on new young adult books. She chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and served on earlier Newbery and Caldecott committees.