



FORWARD ME BACK TO YOU

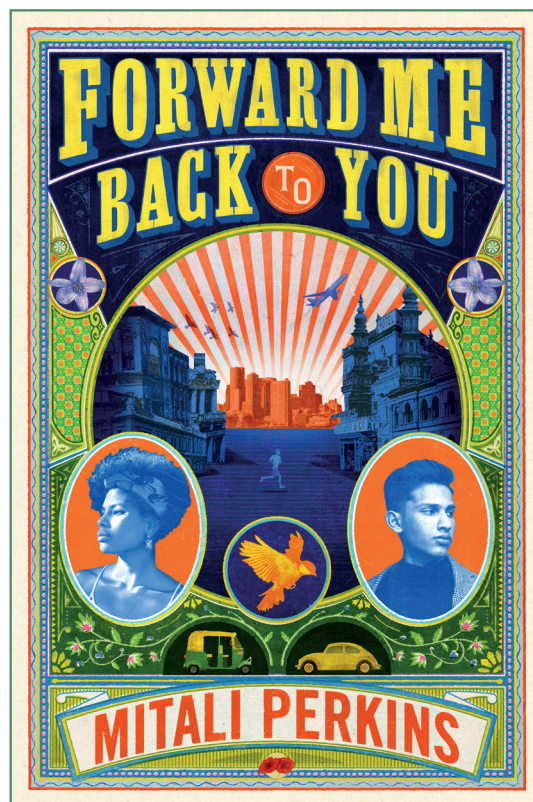
ABOUT THE BOOK

Katina King is the reigning teen jiu-jitsu champion of Northern California, but she's having trouble fighting off the secrets in her past.

Robin Thornton was adopted from an orphanage in India and is reluctant to take on his future. If he can't find his roots, how can he possibly plan ahead?

Robin and Kat meet in the most unlikely of places—a summer service trip to Kolkata to work with survivors of human trafficking. As bonds build between the travel mates, Robin and Kat discover that justice and healing are tangled, like the pain of their pasts and the hope for their futures. You can't rewind life; sometimes you just have to push *play*.

In turns heart wrenching, beautiful, and buoyant, Mitali Perkins's new novel focuses on the ripple effects of violence—across borders and generations—and how small acts of heroism can break the cycle.



978-0-374-30492-8 • Ages 14 Up

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



MITALI PERKINS has written many award-winning books for young readers. Her most recent novel, *You Bring the Distant Near*, was a Walter Honor Book and a National Book Award nominee, won the South Asia Book Award, and received six starred reviews, in addition to other accolades. Mitali was born in Kolkata, India, and has lived in Bangladesh, England, Thailand, Mexico, Cameroon, and Ghana. She currently resides in Northern California. You can visit her online at mitaliperkins.com.

This guide is aligned with Common Core State Standards for grade eight but can be applied to grades eight through twelve. 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 class's needs. You know your students best!

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- ♦ What is your understanding of the Golden Rule? How could a person apply it in their life? Why might someone consider it important enough to follow? Do you think it's a valuable concept?
- ♦ What are ways for a person to recover from a traumatic event such as being attacked? What would be helpful to that person? What might make things worse?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe Kat's personality. What are her home and school life like at the beginning of the novel? What problems does she face? How does she change in the course of the novel, and what factors bring about the changes?
2. What is Robin's background and what is his life like when the book begins? What are some of the good aspects of his life? What is hard for him? Discuss his goals in going to India and how they turn out. How does his time there change him?
3. How does the relationship between Kat and Robin start and how does it change? Why do you think the author chose to alternate chapters between Kat and Robin? What is the effect on the reader switching back and forth? When does the author use the structure to create suspense? How would it have been different if the author had used first-person narratives?
4. Discuss the part that Gracie plays in Robin's and Kat's lives. How do both relationships change? What is Gracie like, and how does she change while in India?
5. Talk about ways that film matters in this novel. What kind of bonds do films create among characters? Why do you think the author had Robin resemble a famous movie star? How does that resemblance affect him and the plot? Find references to heroes and sidekicks in the narrative, and discuss how they are used.
6. Discuss the references to comics and graphic novels, which are the sources of some of the films mentioned. Who cares about them? What is their importance to those characters?
7. Religion plays a large role in this novel. Identify different ways religion arises in the plot. Talk specifically about the religious views and attitudes of Robin, Kat, and Gracie.
8. Find examples of when Kat equates people with animals. Why do you think she does so? Discuss some of her choices and whether you think they suit the character. When does she change her choices for certain people, and why?
9. Parents are central to this story. Describe some of the parent-child relationships and how they matter, including Kavita's with her child. Discuss Robin's search for his "first" mother. Why does the search matter so much to him? How do his parents react? How does his search tie in to the young women at Asha House?
10. Adults outside of their parents are also important to the teenagers. Describe Miss Vee and the part she plays in Kat's and Robin's lives. How is PG important to Robin and Gracie and, to a lesser extent, Kat? Talk about the influence of other adults such as Miss Shireen and Sergeant Shen.
11. Before they go to India, PG explains that, "We're going to learn and serve, not to 'fix' or 'save.'" (p. 90) How do the three teenagers serve during their time in Kolkata? What does each of them learn from their volunteer work? Are there times when they try to fix or save? If so, when? How does that work out?
12. Kat cares a lot about her participation in Brazilian jiu-jitsu (BJJ). Discuss when it comes up in the story and the ways it matters to her. Kat also uses BJJ as a metaphor throughout the novel. For instance, when Robin is leaving for the orphanage, he reminds her of "a novice, stepping onto the mat for the first time." (p. 182) Find other examples of BJJ as a metaphor and analyze their effects on the reader.

COMMON CORE ACTIVITIES

1. Bontu's tours make it clear that Kolkata is a bustling, varied city. As a class, compile a list of buildings and other notable places in Kolkata mentioned in the novel. Have pairs of students each choose a different place to research with the goal of creating a multimedia presentation for the rest of the class.

CCSS.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

CCSS.W.8.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

2. Sergeant Shen emphasizes the importance of the Bengali values of “duty, loyalty, obedience.” (p. 204) Ask students to write an essay on this topic as it applies to Robin and his actions in the novel. The essay should also address the student's opinion of these values and examples from their own experiences that pertain to them.

CCSS.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.W.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

3. Although the three teens go to India to try to help those harmed by sex trafficking, they know that it's also a problem in the U.S. Have students research this topic and bring their findings to a group discussion. The research can include facts, stories about individuals, possible ways for students to work against trafficking, and information about anti-trafficking organizations.

CCSS.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.W.8.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

4. Comic books and superheroes pervade this novel. Invite students to find an exciting scene in the novel and turn it into a comic strip, either with an online comic creator, software, or freehand drawing. Post the comic strip panels in the classroom to share.

CCSS.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.W.8.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

5. Have each student choose a scene that's pivotal for one of the characters and write a long email about that experience to another character. It should address the character's feelings and why the events or realizations of that scene are so important to them. Students should exchange their email with another student and respond in writing to each other.

CCSS.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

CCSS.W.8.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Kathleen Odean was a school librarian for seventeen 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.
