

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

DISCUSSION GUIDE

HOW TO STEAL A DOG

by Barbara O'Connor

Reading Level

Grades 3–7

About the Novel

Georgina Hayes is desperate. Ever since her father left and they were evicted from their apartment, her family have been living in their car. With her mama juggling two jobs and trying to make enough money to find a place to live, Georgina is stuck looking after her younger brother, Toby. And she has her heart set on improving their situation. When Georgina spots a missing-dog poster with a reward of five hundred dollars, the solution to all her problems suddenly seems within reach. All she has to do is “borrow” the right dog and its owners are sure to offer a reward. What happens next is the last thing she expected.



With unmistakable sympathy, Barbara O'Connor tells the story of a young girl struggling to see what's right when everything else seems wrong.

Discussion Questions

1. Define *homelessness*. Is Georgina's homelessness similar to or different from what you've thought homelessness was? How is it similar/different?
2. Georgina knows that stealing the dog is wrong, but she does it anyway. Have you ever done something that you knew was wrong because you felt you had no other choice? How did you feel after doing it?
3. Why do you think Georgina doesn't tell her teacher or her best friend, Luanne, about her situation?
4. How does Luanne react to Georgina and her changed appearance and personality? If you were Luanne and knew there was something wrong with your friend, what do you think you would do?
5. What role does Mookie play in the story? Compare and contrast Mookie's homelessness with Georgina's situation.
6. Mookie says to Georgina, "Sometimes, the more you stir it, the worse it stinks" (p. 134). What do you think this means?
7. At the end of the story, things get better for Georgina. Her family is living in a house again, Willie is back home with his owner, and Carmella forgives Georgina for stealing her dog. Finally, Georgina determines that stealing a dog is not a good idea. Do you think Georgina learned a lesson from her experience? If so, what is the lesson that she learned?

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Barbara O'Connor
photo credit: Bill O'Connor

About the Author

Barbara O'Connor is the author of several notable books for children, including *Fame and Glory in Freedom*, *Georgia* and *Me and Rupert Goody*, an ALA Notable Book. She was born and raised in Greenville, South Carolina, and now lives in Duxbury, Massachusetts.

For more information on Barbara O'Connor:

Web site:

www.fsgkidsbooks.com

Includes a biography of the author and additional information about her novels.

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19 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003

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