

## A Curriculum Guide to

### ***Infinite Sky***

by C. J. Flood

#### **About the Book**

Summer is a time of change for the Dancy family. Iris and Sam's mother abandons them, leaving them to be cared for by their harsh father. When a family of travelers sets up camp in the paddock adjacent to their home, the trio responds differently to their presence. The father sees no good in them, believes they are thieves, and is determined to drive them away. Sam, angry and increasingly self-destructive, hooks up with the wrong crowd, who taunt Trick, the teenage newcomer. Iris, having broken off her friendship with her closest friend, is drawn to Trick and believes she and he understand each other. As the summer heats up, so do attitudes and tensions at home and surrounding the traveling family.

#### **Prereading Questions**

The questions below align with the following Common Core State Standards:  
(SL.9 – 12.1)

Discuss a time when a newcomer arrived in your community. What preconceived notions did you have about them? In what ways were you correct? In what ways were you wrong? What contributed to your misunderstanding?

#### **Discussion Questions**

The discussion questions below align with the following Common Core State Standards:  
(RL.9 – 12. 1, 2, 3, 6) (SL.9 – 12.1)

1. In the beginning of the summer, Iris distances herself from her friend, Matty. Why does she do so? What evidence from the story supports your response?
2. Describe Trick and his family. Why do they move into the paddock? Discuss Mr. Dancy's and Sam's attitudes toward the family. How does the author make Trick a sympathetic character? Identify words, phrases, and dialogue that support your response.
3. The author gives great detail to scenes in which Iris watches the mother of the traveling family. Why is Iris drawn to the mother? What do you learn about the mother's personality as the story progresses? Compare and contrast Trick's mother with Iris's mother.
4. Characterize Trick. Is he a good or bad influence on Iris? Why or why not? Why doesn't Sam like him? What evidence supports your perspective?

5. Analyze how Iris changes over the course of the story. What motivates her to distance herself from her best friend? Why is she drawn to Trick? Discuss her conflicting emotions toward the end of the story? Do you think she will be able to resolve her feelings? Why or why not?
6. Identify two themes and analyze how they develop over the course of the story. Discuss how these two themes build on and support each other as the story progresses.
7. Is Iris's mother a likeable character? Why does she leave home? Explain how Iris and Sam respond to her absence. Was her decision to leave the family a good one? How is Iris impacted by her mother's return? How is her father?
8. Do you think events would have turned out as they did had Iris's mother not left? Discuss to what extent we have responsibility for our own behavior.
9. The author chooses to use the first-person point of view (from Iris's perspective) to tell the story. What might we have learned about Sam and Trick if chapters had alternated among the three characters and were written from each character's perspective? What would have been gained if this technique had been used? What would have been lost?
10. Identify any two minor characters in the story. Explain the role each character plays and discuss how each advances the plot. Discuss what changes would need to be made in the story if any one character were removed from the plot.
11. Toward the end of the story, tractors arrive at Iris's house to harvest the corn. Iris says, "Dad warned me it would be here soon." Summarize what happens in this scene. In what way is the scene symbolic or metaphoric? What does it say about time?
12. All stories have characters, plot, and setting; however, the degree to which each of these elements is emphasized and/or "stands out" from other elements varies. Discuss how the setting in this story develops a strong sense of place. Use passages to support your answer.

### **Activities**

These activities align with the following Common Core State Standards:  
(SL.9 – 12.1) (W.9 – 12.3, 7)

1. Assume the role of Iris's mother and write a letter to Iris, Sam, or both in which you explain why you needed to leave. Share your letter with others in your class. Discuss how your justifications are similar and different to others in the class? What accounts for the differences?
2. Iris and her mother speak on the phone, so readers gain insight into their relationship. However, Sam and his mother do not talk. Write a scene in which Sam speaks with his

mother on the phone. Consider whether this scene will occur early in the summer or toward the end. Would the conversation be different? Or similar?

3. Imagine a scene ten years into the future in which Iris and Trick meet. What would each have to say to the other? How has time altered each character? Write a dialogue between the two. Read your dialogue to a partner. Discuss the differences between your scenes and why your characters developed as they did.

4. Research methods for growing and harvesting corn in the United Kingdom and the United States. Discuss the similarities and differences between the processes. Apart from human consumption, what other purposes for growing corn can you locate? Working with a partner or in a small group, prepare a presentation on your findings that incorporates the use of technology, and discuss the relevance to *Infinite Sky*.

5. *Infinite Sky* portrays a strong sense of place. Identify particularly compelling passages that support this statement. (Chapter 44 is an excellent example.) Identify words and phrases that create imagery—that appeal to the senses—and contribute to the sense of place. Imagine your own setting for a story. Write a paragraph or two from the first-person point of view that creates a vivid portrait of a place. Decide the mood you want to create. For example, do you want to create nostalgia? Reverence? Dislike? Fear? Use language that will create this mood.

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