



The Prince of Steel Pier

by Stacy Nockowitz

9781728430331 - \$17.99 HC

9781728430348 - \$9.99 PB

eBooks are also available

Reading age: 8 - 13

Kar-Ben Publishing:

www.karben.com

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Joey Goodman is spending the summer at his grandparents' struggling hotel in Atlantic City, a tourist destination on the decline. Nobody in Joey's big Jewish family takes him seriously, so when Joey's Skee-Ball skills land him an unusual job offer from a local mobster, he's thrilled to be treated like "one of the guys," and develops a major crush on an older girl in the process. Eventually disillusioned by the mob's bravado, and ashamed of his own dishonesty, he recalls words of wisdom from his grandfather that finally resonate. Joey realizes where he really belongs: with his family, who drive him crazy, but where no one fights a battle alone. All it takes to get by is one's wits...and a little help from one's brothers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stacy Nockowitz is a middle school librarian and former language arts teacher with more than 30 years of experience in middle school education. Stacy received her Bachelor's Degree from Brandeis University and holds Master's Degrees from Columbia University Teachers College and Kent State University. She is also an MFA candidate in Writing for Children and Young Adults at Vermont College of Fine Arts. Stacy's debut middle grade novel, *THE PRINCE OF STEEL PIER*, won a 2022 National Jewish Book Award and was named a Sydney Taylor Notable Book for 2023. Find her on Twitter @snockowitz or at www.stacynockowitz.com.

This guide was created by Stacy Nockowitz and Bryan Miller.

THE PRINCE OF STEEL PIER - Educator Guide

Pre-reading discussion/activity:

Tell students to line up behind a piece of masking tape stretched across the classroom floor. In this “cross the line” activity, ask students whether they agree or disagree with the following statements. Students who agree with a statement should step across the line of tape. After students have crossed the line, discuss. These statements can also be used as writing prompts and partner share prompts.

Statement #1: I sometimes feel alone. Even when I’m with my whole family.

Statement #2: I have a lot of faith in myself.

Statement #3: I’ve been “othered” by people (made to feel that some aspect of your identity is not the norm).

Statement #4: I think it’s okay to lie or omit the truth to a family member if I have a good reason for lying.

Statement #5: The strongest/most forceful people are always the ones with power.

Statement #6: I have a place where I feel like I really belong.

Character chart:

As you read, use context clues and textual evidence to complete this chart. Add other characters as needed:

Character	Characteristics/Personality	Evidence from text
Joey		
Reuben		
Simon		
Artie		
Ralphie		
Melanie		
Zeyde		
Joey's mother		

THE PRINCE OF STEEL PIER - Educator Guide

Comprehension/Inference questions:

Ch. 1-4:

1. How does Joey see himself at the beginning of the book? How does he think his family views him? What details suggest this?
2. Why does Joey leave the soda on the counter at the sundry store?
3. At the luncheonette, how does Joey begin to show bravery?
4. Who might the man in the suit talking with Uncle Sol be?
5. Why can't anyone know about the money Joey made playing Skee- Ball?
6. What does Joey notice when he goes to get a room key from the front desk?
7. Ralphie calls Artie the king of Steel Pier- what do you think this means?

Ch. 5-8:

1. Why is Joey conflicted about what he should do when Ben finds his money?
2. What does Joey witness in back of Pinky's? Why would Artie have wanted him to see that?
3. What inferences can we make from the phone call Joey overhears on p.101?
4. How does what we find out about Artie's past change/influence how you feel about him as a reader?
5. Why does Joey say he wants to take a picture of the moment he's playing Monopoly with Mom and Simon? Why does he want to hold onto this moment?
6. How do you know how Melanie feels toward Reuben when she meets him? How do you know Joey is jealous?
7. Why is Ralphie creeping down Joey's street in the Cadillac? Why is he moving slowly with the music so loud?
8. What happens at Joey's grandparents' house that causes Joey to run out?
9. How does being at the synagogue affect Joey?

Ch. 9-14:

1. Why does Joey decide to go to the ape woman show with Melanie? What has changed?
2. Why does Joey take the Corvette from the Hot Wheels case?
3. What does Joey mean when he says "that Joey" might be long gone?
4. Why is Joey upset about the way he reacted to the incident with the rolling chair drivers?
5. Why does Joey let the money Melanie gives him slip off his hand in the breeze?
6. At the end of Chapter 11, what does Joey mean when he says the frog is ugly?
7. Who might have taken the package if it wasn't Simon? What clues do you have?
8. How was Artie wrong in his interpretation of *The Once and Future King*?
9. What do Reuben and Joey need the dime for? Who might they be calling?
10. In the hospital, how is Simon's interaction with his mom different now than earlier in the book?
11. How have Joey's attitudes toward God and prayer and faith changed by the book's end?

THE PRINCE OF STEEL PIER - Educator Guide

Themes:

Choose one of the following themes and study how that theme is developed in the story. Find passages from the book that illustrate that theme. How do these passages help to develop that theme? Discuss the theme's connection to the characters, the setting, and the plot. What message does the author want to convey about this theme to the book's readers?

- Identity
- Memory
- Strength
- Belonging
- Family
- Faith

Journaling prompts (text-to-self connections):

1. Society has many rites of passage from childhood to adulthood. What are some of these markers? Which are you looking forward to? Which are you anxious about?
2. Think of a place that you visited when you were young and then went back to when you were a little older. Did you perceive it differently when you went back? How? What shapes your memories of a place?
3. Do you think Artie's behavior is honorable for beating up the guy who said something about his wife? Was he doing the right thing? Do we still love family in spite of who they are and what they've done? Why?
4. Joey describes himself as "putting on a mask" on page 75. What other characters seem to be wearing different masks? Do we all wear masks depending on who we're with or speaking to?
5. What's the difference between a secret and a lie? What are some things you might hide from your family and why? Under what circumstances should you not tell your parents a secret that someone told you not to tell?
6. On page 126, Reuben says to Joey, "You're not one of them." What does he mean by this? Who gets to define who you are? Are there groups that you identify with?
7. Why do we take photographs? What are we trying to capture? Do you still keep family albums? What have we lost to phone pictures? What have we gained?
8. Throughout the book, Joey faces incidents of subtle and blatant antisemitism. Have you ever faced or been witness to incidents such as these? Why do you think that stereotypes, bias, and racism exist?

THE PRINCE OF STEEL PIER - Educator Guide

Figurative language:

1. Joey uses a lot of figurative language, especially similes and metaphors, in his narration. As you read, write down some of the similes and metaphors (or other kinds of figurative language) that you think are particularly effective and tell how they reflect the tone of the story (Joey's attitude/feelings toward other characters and situations) at that moment.
2. Come up with similes or metaphors for 5 people you know, comparing them to something that suggests their features or personality. Explain your choices.

Extension Activities:

1. Memory collage: Simon makes a memory collage for Farrah of all of the things they did together over the summer. He uses ticket stubs, photos, and other ephemeral items. Create a memory collage for someone you love of a certain time and place.
2. Make a postcard: In the book, Joey and his grandfather look at a St. Bonaventure Hotel postcard, which is divided into five small sections. Each section shows a different, important part of the hotel and some of Joey's family members. Create a postcard of a place where you've been and that has great meaning to you.
3. The power of stories: The novel ends with one generation passing on a family story to a younger generation. Interview a relative. Ask them to tell you a family story from long ago that you may not know. Record the interview, and insert your own commentary throughout.

Jewish terminology:

- Shabbat- the Jewish Sabbath, celebrated from Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown each week
- Gefilte fish- chopped whitefish
- Bubbe and Zeyde- grandmother and grandfather (Yiddish)
- Yiddish- a language of central and eastern European Jews that combines Hebrew, Aramaic, German, and other languages
- Kippah- Jewish head covering
- Shtick- routine
- Bar mitzvah- rite of passage ceremony for 13-year-old Jewish boys
- Tzedakah- charity
- Seder- ritual meal celebrated the first two nights of Passover
- Chanukah- Festival of Lights; holiday celebrating the rededication of the ancient Temple
- Orthodox- the most observant of the three main branches of Judaism
- Hadassah- a Jewish women's organization that raises money for the state of Israel
- Tree of Life- one of the trees that God put in the Garden of Eden; also used as a metaphor for the Torah, as seen in the Book of Proverbs