10. How do you react to Zinny's behavior in the shocking and powerful scene in which she places a pillow over Uncle Nate's head? Reread p.197 as you discuss.

11. Sharon Creech spends a good deal of time describing the different portions of the Bybanks-Chocton trail. Discuss the interesting names of these trails—Maiden's Walk, Baby Toe Ridge, Shady Death Ridge, and Surrender Bridge. Consider what these names mean with reference to Zinny's story.

12. Uncle Nate often calls Aunt Jessie his "Redbird." What does the term Redbird symbolize in the novel?

CRITICAL ACCLAIM:

"The journey for Zinny and readers is intriguing, delightful, and touching." (Starred review) —School Library Journal

"This sturdy but sensitive tale is Creech's best yet." (Starred review) —Publishers Weekly

"Sharon Creech has written a striking novel, notable for its emotional honesty." — The Horn Book



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Sharon Creech is the author of *Walk Two Moons*, which received the 1995 Newbery Medal, was an ALA Notable Children's Book, and was listed as an NCTE Notable Trade Book, among other prestigious awards. Her other books include *Absolutely Normal Chaos* and *Pleasing the Ghost*. Sharon Creech lives in Surrey, England, for nine months of the year. During the summer months she returns to Lake Chautauqua in western New York State to spend time with her grown children.

> Also from Sharon Creech: Walk Two Moons Absolutely Normal Chaos Pleasing the Ghost

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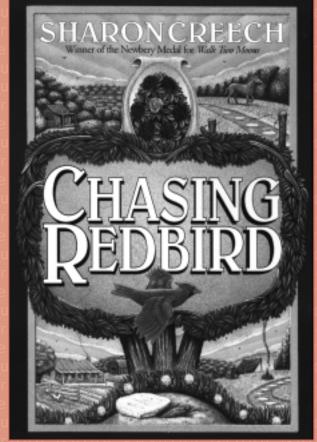
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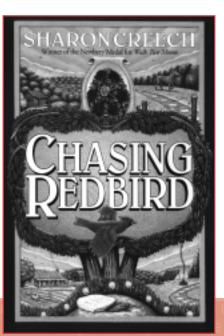
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ABOUT THIS GUIDE:

Chasing Redbird is a complex and exciting work of fiction, that explores real issues teenagers are dealing with, including death, identity, and relationships. This guide is intended to spark discussion on this thought-provoking and fascinating new novel from Sharon Creech.

ABOUT THIS BOOK:

Thirteen-year-old Zinny Taylor lives in Bybanks, Kentucky, with too many brothers and sisters a mess of "tadpoles" and "pumpkins" is what her uncle Nate calls them. When Zinny discovers a mysterious overgrown trail that begins on her family farm, she thinks she's finally found a place of her own, a place she can go, away from her family, to hear herself think. But what Zinny comes to realize is that the mysteries of the trail are intertwined with her own unanswered questions and family secrets, and that the trail and her passion to uncover it—is leading her on a journey home.



Interweaving the story with places and characters from her Newbery Award-winning novel *Walk Two Moons*, Sharon Creech tells a beautifully crafted story about a young girl discovering that life is a tangle of mysteries, surprises, and everyday occurrences—a journey that often needs unraveling and that sometimes must be traveled alone.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Throughout *Chasing Redbird* Zinny experiences conflicting and confusing feelings about the people who are special to her—Uncle Nate, Jake, even her parents. Give some examples of Zinny's confusion about these characters and explain why she feels so conflicted.

2. How does the natural world of the woods play a part in Zinny's story? Do the other members of Zinny's family share her enthusiasm for nature?

3. Throughout the novel Zinny continually explains her life as a "bowl of spaghetti" (p.1). Discuss this metaphor and how it works within the story.

4. Why do you think Jake steals the dog, the ring, and the car? Is it all because he's "sweet on" (p.100) Zinny, or are there other reasons for his stealing? From the clues that Sharon Creech gives you about Jake's life, what kind of relationship do you think Jake has with his parents? Does he share the kind of closeness Zinny has with her parents?

5. There are many supernatural events in *Chasing Redbird.* Does the ghost of Aunt Jessie actually wander through the woods? What kinds of emotions does Zinny feel every time she senses Aunt Jessie's ghost?

6. Zinny gets upset when her father refers to her mission to clear the trail as "the trail thing" (p.119). Have you ever had the experience of someone's underestimating or belittling a project about which you felt very strongly? How did you feel when this happened?

7. Constantly being referred to as an anonymous "pumpkin," a "tadpole," or worst of all, the "strangest and stingiest dirt-daubing doodlebug" (p. 52), Zinny strikes out to clear the trail. By the end of the novel, do you think Zinny has successfully set herself apart from her brothers and sisters by creating the trail? Has her identity changed in the eyes of her family, the public, Jake? Does Zinny think she has changed herself by the end of the story? How can you tell?

8. Zinny often talks about missing her friend Sal, who is the main character in *Walk Two Moons*. For those who have read *Walk Two Moons*: How is Zinny's mission to clear the trail similar to Sal's race to retrace her mother's steps? Compare how these two main characters deal with the losses in their lives.

9. Both Zinny's cousin Rose and Aunt Jessie fall to untimely deaths, and throughout the novel Zinny feels much guilt about the loss. Consider this quote from Zinny: "Why did people get old? Why did people get sick? Why couldn't the hand of God fix whooping cough? Why couldn't it snatch a woman back from a drawer? Why couldn't it fix Uncle Nate? I couldn't stand it. I wanted answers to my questions, and I wanted them *immediately*" (p.179). How does this quote help explain Zinny's feelings about her aunt's and cousin's deaths?

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