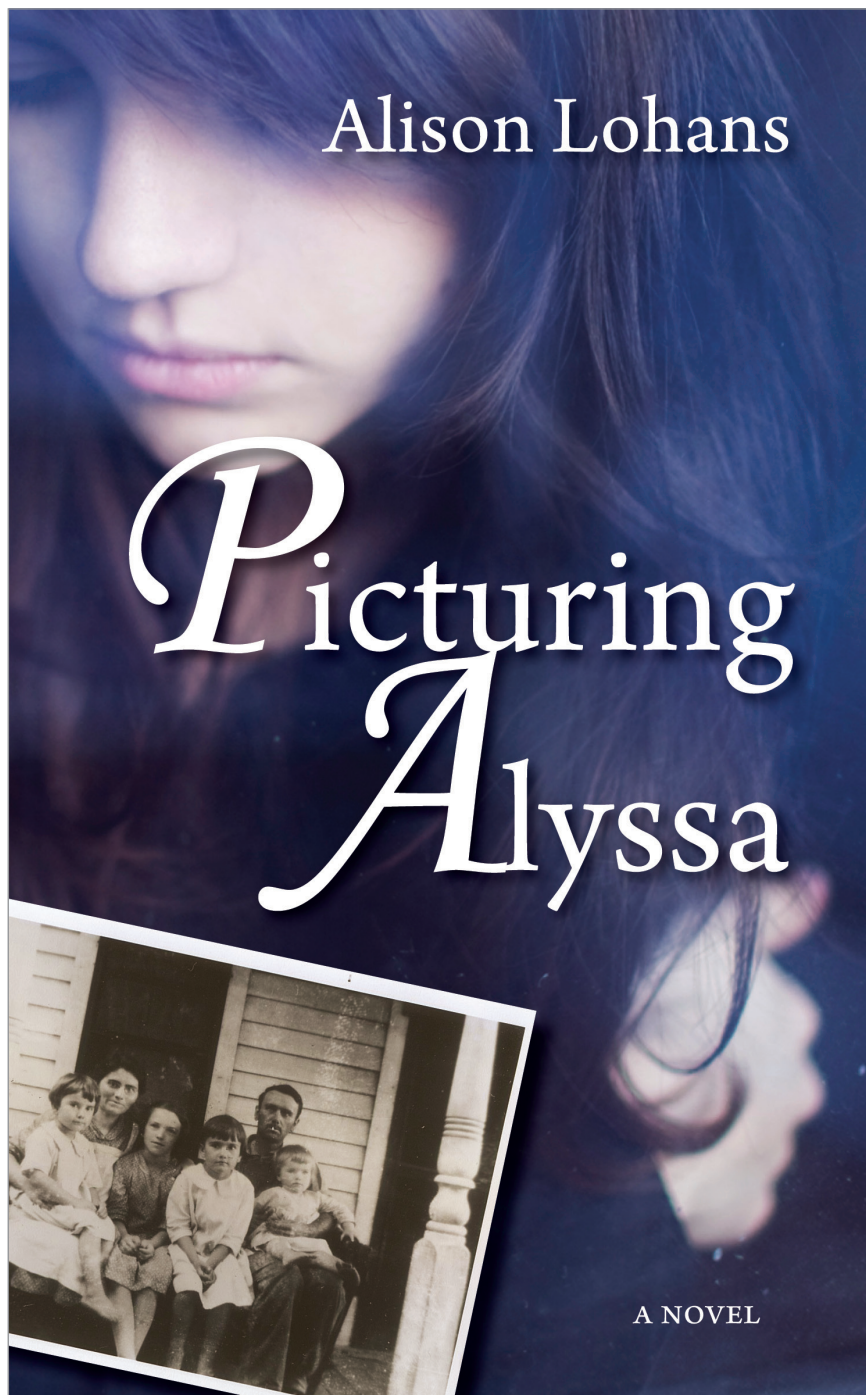


TEACHER'S GUIDE

Guided Reading Level: W, Grades 7 & 8



DUNDURN
www.dundurn.com

Teacher Resource Guide developed by
Kate Kostandoff, B.Ed, YRDSB
ISBN 9781459708969

Books are available from your favourite bookseller, wholesaler and UTP Distribution (t: 1 800 565-9523)
Sign up for new TRG updates www.dundurn.com/newsletter



DUNDURN
www.dundurn.com



teacher resources
www.dundurn.com/teachers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	BOOK SUMMARY	4
II	PRE-READING ACTIVITIES	5
	• TEACHER LED	
III	DURING READING	6
	• QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS	
IV	EXTENSION ACTIVITIES	13

I BOOK SUMMARY

Alyssa Dixon has a lot going on in her life: her mother is grieving the loss of a stillborn baby, she's being bullied at school, her teacher doesn't seem to like her and worse, Alyssa doesn't seem to like herself. And then there's this little thing about time travel: Alyssa seems to be able to travel back in time to a farm in rural Iowa inhabited by a family who might just be her relatives. Can life get any more complicated?

The novel explores themes of genealogy, bullying, pacifism, Quakerism, religious and political freedom of expression and personal development. The novel would be most appropriate for students at the grade 7 and 8 level.

"In the hands of experienced writers Buffie [author of Winter Shadows] and Lohans, the shifts between past and present are easily navigated by readers. The brooch in Winter Shadows and the photograph in Picturing Alyssa both operate smoothly to convey characters through time and space. At first stricken with confusion, and then with growing understanding and control, these two protagonists are strikingly convincing within the suspension of disbelief conjured by good fantasy. Both books are highly recommended for ages 11 and up."

—Star Phoenix

About the Author

Alison Lohans has published 22 books, many of which have been finalists for awards such as the CLA Young Adult Book Award and the Manitoba Young Readers' Choice Award. *This Land We Call Home* won the 2008 Saskatchewan Book Award for YA Literature. Her recent novels for young people include *River Rat* and *Collapse of the Veil*. She lives in Regina, Saskatchewan

II PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Teacher Led

1. The possibility of time travel is something that has always fascinated us. Play a snowball activity to generate ideas around time travel.
 - a) Hand out scrap paper and have students write the name of a time and place they would like to visit and why. The “why” might be a simple idea, like: “I want to see what it would have been like to travel with Columbus on a sailing ship.” The paper could say “sailing ship in 1432” and “What would it have been like to travel on board a sailing ship?” “I’d like to find out what dresses from the French Court of Versailles felt like to wear”; “I wonder if I could survive the mosquitoes as a courier du bois?”; “What would it be like to work in a factory as a twelve year old in Victorian England?”; etc.
 - b) Ask students to crumple up their answers in a ball. Then have them form a circle. Toss all the “snowballs” into the centre and ask each student to grab one that is NOT their own.
 - c) Share the answers by opening them up one by one and reading them out loud.
2. Ask students to bring in an old family photo (or a copy of one). Have students put their photo in a large manila envelope. Collect the envelopes and shuffle them.
 - a) Hand out envelopes to the students (or to pairs or groups if you don’t have one for each student).
 - b) Have students imagine a short history for the people in the photo based on what information they can gather through observation. For example, what does the quality of the photo reveal? What do the clothes or the location reveal? How many people are in the photo? What else can they come up with?
 - c) When the students share their hypotheses, the owner of the photo can then add in information with as much detail as he or she feels comfortable.
3. Examine the cover of the novel and its title *Picturing Alyssa*. What scenarios does the cover suggest might unfold in the course of the novel? Who is Alyssa? Is she in the old photo or the modern one? Why?
4. Read the blurb on the back of the novel. List the issues that the novel seems to cover.

III DURING READING

Questions for Students

Chapter One

This chapter establishes many of the issues in the novel.

1. What is revealed about Alyssa's family? Who makes up the family?
2. How old is Alyssa?
3. Why do you think Alyssa and her friend Rachel are involved in making posters for a peace rally?
4. What tragedy has Alyssa's family recently experienced? Be specific.
5. List two descriptive words that are used to tell us about Alyssa's mom before the death of the baby and two from the time afterwards.
6. What can you tell about Brooklynne and her relationship to Alyssa?

Chapter Two

1. What causes people to protest on behalf of peace?
2. Why might some people NOT appreciate peace protestors?
3. When the girls try to get the attention of their teacher, Mrs. Fraser, during the peace march, what does she do?
4. Alyssa remarks that most of her family is Quaker. What do you know about the Quakers?
5. What does Alyssa reveal about Quakers?
6. In what country is the novel set?
7. Which war do you think Alyssa might be protesting?
8. Is Canada involved in a war right now? Which one?
9. How might people protest against Canada's involvement in war where you live?
10. What ideas does Alyssa consider for her genealogy project?
11. Record the names of each family member in the picture Alyssa looks at from 1931. Is it the picture we see on the front cover? Why/why not?

Chapter Three

1. What are some of the physical signs she experiences that reveal Alyssa is about to time travel?

2. What does Alyssa believe is the conduit (connection) between 1931 and the present?
3. Why do you think her first visit is such a short one for Alyssa?

Chapter Four

1. What does the word “patriotic” mean to you?
2. Why does Alyssa feel that it might be unkind of her teacher to give her the word “patriotic” to act out for the class?
3. Do you think the word “patriotic” has the same impact in Canada as it might in the United States? Why or why not?
4. What is revealed about Mrs. Fraser’s own family and their connection to “patriotism”?
5. What does the word “pacifist” mean to you?
6. Do you think you can be a pacifist and still be patriotic towards your country?
7. Why do you think Mrs. Fraser is so unsympathetic to Alyssa?
8. Describe the atmosphere at the Quaker meeting Alyssa attends with her dad and her brother.
9. Two facts about the way Quakers worship are revealed on page 44 — what are these facts?

Chapter Five

1. In this chapter Alyssa and Rachel go to the movies. On page 47 the plot of the movie is summarized. In what ways is the plot of the movie similar to Alyssa’s life?
2. Google “Betelgeuse”; what did you learn from your quick Google search?
3. If you could be a superhero would you choose to be like Stardancer or would you want different special powers? Explain.
4. Rachel imagines her ancestors being involved in the Underground Railroad; what do you know about the Underground Railroad?
5. Why do you think Alyssa thinks she needs to lie to make a strong genealogy report?

Chapter Six

1. Alyssa finds herself in Iowa in the middle of a lightening storm. This is also a great chapter to examine the author’s use of vocabulary. Look up the following words and define them:
 - a) deluge
 - b) cower
2. Mrs. Fraser reminds her students to notice the world around them using all five senses. In this chapter the author uses vocabulary very creatively to appeal to four senses — taste doesn’t play a role in this storm scene!

Make a chart with four columns: for sight, sound, touch, and hearing. Put the following descriptive words or phrases under one of the headings:

- a) Moan
 - b) Bites pierced
 - c) Squished insect
 - d) Shiver
 - e) Thunder bowled across the sky
 - f) Alyssa's breath whooshed
 - g) Lightning forked
 - h) Squawked
 - i) Whinnied
 - j) Cold, clinging pajamas
 - k) Stinging marble-sized pellets whacked down
 - l) Flicker of sight
 - m) The light bobbed
 - n) Breezy gusts flapped
 - o) Add 3 more of your own.
3. Alyssa soon realizes that the home she is in belongs to her relatives. Find an adjective used to describe Alyssa's impression of George and one to describe Alyssa's impression of Martha.

Chapter Seven

1. When Alyssa wakes up she's in a different world from her life at home. Briefly describe the differences she encounters around the following everyday situations:
 - a) The bathroom
 - b) Cooking appliances
 - c) Washing clothing and sheets
 - d) Milk
 - e) Bathing
 - f) Clothing
2. Alyssa finds that the crazy rooster and the bully Brooklynne have a lot in common. How does her memory of the situation with Brooklynne enable her to deal with the wild rooster?

Chapter Eight

1. In this chapter Alyssa reveals to Deborah that she comes from the future. What is Deborah's reaction?
2. Who or what is Susannah?

3. What causes Alyssa to vomit?
4. When she finds herself in Rachel's room again, what evidence does she have that she really is on the farm in Iowa?
5. What do Rachel and her mother assume has happened to Alyssa?

Chapter Nine

1. Alyssa confides in Nathan; do you think he believes her?
2. There are several places in this chapter when Alyssa notices the air in the room "changing" (see pages 87 and 89). What do you think is happening here?

Chapter Ten

1. What is the connection between Alyssa's great grand-mother Newlin and the Claytons in the photo?
2. Alyssa's mom confirms her family connection to George and Mary Clayton. What is their exact relationship to Alyssa?
3. Alyssa is terribly upset by her mother's suggestion that she was molested. Find a direct quotation which describes the extent of her emotions.
4. There is an extra family member in the Clayton family photo taken in 1926. Alyssa doesn't remember meeting someone named Bertha. What do you think happened to Bertha? Why is this so significant to Alyssa?

Chapter Eleven

1. Now that you, the reader, and Alyssa are becoming more aware of the connections between the past and the present, see if you can draw a Clayton family tree including children who have died. Start with George and Martha and see if you can get all the way to Alyssa. Right now you'll have to leave some names blank to bring your family tree up to the present.
2. Look up the word genealogy and record three synonyms for the term genealogy.
3. Alyssa's family is Christian (specifically they are Quakers) and their pastor challenges them to follow "the true leadership of the spirit" so that each of their "lives will shine with love, honesty, and oneness with all others." (Page 103). While your faith might differ from Alyssa's you might see some connections to this challenge in your own beliefs. What connections can you draw between these words and your own traditions?
4. Brooklynne and her sister are bullies. What jobs do their parents hold in the community? Does this make a difference in the way they treat people? Should it make a difference?
5. Do you think Alyssa's dad might have handled the situation in the library any differently? What might he have done?
6. What would you have done in a similar situation?

Chapter Twelve

1. The bulletin board in Alyssa’s classroom has the motto “America – Home of the Brave”. Does your classroom have a motto? If not, what motto would be appropriate for your school, in your province?
2. A very tricky debate in both the U.S. and Canada centers on the issue of supporting our troops. This is made even more difficult for Alyssa whose family is pacifist. Look up the word “pacifist” and define it using your own words.
3. In Mrs Fraser’s opinion, do you think it’s possible to be a pacifist and a patriotic American at the same time? Why or why not?
4. How do you believe Alyssa would answer the same question (pacifism and patriotism).
5. There are more details here on the family tree. Can you make additions to your Clayton family tree?
6. What is “cyber-bullying”?
7. How does Alyssa react to the bullying she encounters online?

Chapter Thirteen

1. You are probably aware of the three Bs of bullying — the bully, the bullied and the bystander. Find a passage in this chapter which clearly shows the impact of the bullying on the “bullied” or the victim.
2. How would you describe the relationship Alyssa has with her brother?

Chapter Fourteen

1. Alyssa remembers the phrase “speaking truth to power” from her Quaker meetings. What do you think the expression means?
2. You may have heard of the term “social justice”. What do you think it means and how might it be connected to “speaking truth to power”?
3. Read the following poem by Anthony Prete:

Shalom is the flower
that booms only on
the tree of justice,
planted near the
waters of abundance,
warmed by the light
of truth
and
faithfulness.

Shalom is the Hebrew word for peace. How do you think this poem connects to Alyssa’s desire to march for peace and her brother’s desire to stand up to the powerful mayor?

4. Once again when Alyssa travels through time she feels strange. She feels “intense, paralytic tingling” (page 136). Look up the word paralytic or guess its meaning to explain what she feels.

Chapter Fifteen

1. Alyssa tells Deborah that she is actually her grandmother! Deborah’s reaction is to say how “peculiar” that is. Using today’s words, how might Deborah have responded to such news using modern expressions?
2. What is polio? When was the polio vaccine invented and by whom? You’ll have to look this one up on google or ask your parents if they remember!
3. Deborah sings a special song for Alyssa. Explain how a song connects Alyssa in the present to her ancestors in the past.

Chapter Sixteen

1. Find three examples that demonstrate Alyssa’s growing comfort with life in 1931.

Chapter Seventeen

1. At the meetinghouse, Alyssa and George have a chat. What does George suggest to Alyssa?
2. How might repeated time travel not be the “responsible” thing for Alyssa to do? What is the impact of her presence on her family in 1931?

Chapter Eighteen

1. This time, when Alyssa travels through time she leaves something in the past and brings something from the past with her into the present. What are these two items?
2. Why is it significant that Alyssa’s mom recognizes “Susannah”? What does it seem to prove to the reader?
3. By this point in the novel, Alyssa seems to be able to make herself travel through time. How does she create the right conditions for time travel this time?
4. What effect does the visit to the past seem to have on Alyssa’s mom?

Chapter Nineteen

1. Alyssa’s mom finds another photo in the collection that shows the Clayton family. What detail links this particular photo from 1931 to the present?

Chapter Twenty

1. Take another look at the Clayton family tree you drew earlier. With details from this chapter, make any changes or additions you might need to make it as accurate as you can.
2. Deborah, also known as Alyssa’s great-grandmother, sends a letter to Alyssa to be opened at a very special

time. In the letter she outlines several ways in which Alyssa’s presence in the past helped her to get through a difficult time. Identify four specific ways in which Alyssa had a positive impact on Deborah and her family (according to the letter on pages 190 – 192).

3. This time, when Brooklynne taunts Alyssa, she reacts differently than she has before. Describe how Alyssa deals with the bullying this time.
4. When Brooklynne becomes violent, Alyssa stands up to her bully. What does she do?
5. During her genealogy presentation Alyssa defines simple ways in which “ordinary” people can make an impact on the lives of others. List three specific ways in which Alyssa’s ordinary ancestors had a significant impact on the lives of their community.

Chapter Twenty-One

1. There have been a number of positive changes in Alyssa’s life. Which one do you think is the most important and why?

Epilogue

1. Photographs play a very important role in this novel. Who is in the final photograph taken at the end of this novel?
2. Describe a photograph from your family that is very important to you. Explain why it holds such significance for you.

IV EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

IV EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. There is a well known song written by Shakers who were an American group that sprang from the Quakers. You might even have heard it before.

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gain'd,
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.

https://www.friendsjournal.org/special/index.html?gclid=CInlo7_1pKoCFQ7MKgodcyBhWw

Check out various versions of this song on Youtube. How do the lyrics of this song connect to the novel?

2. Students could research the Quakers and their connection to pacifism. The following is an article found via KnowledgeOntario from The New Book of Knowledge.

Quakers

The Society of Friends is a Protestant denomination, commonly known as Quakers. It began in England in the mid-1600s. The Friends were the followers of George Fox. He was a lay preacher who traveled throughout England spreading his beliefs. Today there are more than 330,000 Quakers in over 40 countries. The largest concentrations are in Africa (156,000), North America (91,000), and Central and South America (60,000).

Beliefs and Practices

Quakers do not have a formal creed. But most share several basic beliefs. Chief among them is the belief that the light of God is within every person's heart. This inner light makes it possible for each person to have a direct relationship with God. There is no need for intermediaries, such as priests and ministers. Nor do Quakers employ the sacraments and rituals found in many other churches. For Quakers, the inner experience of God is best expressed by living a life in harmony with that experience and doing God's work in the world.

If God is within everyone, then each person should be valued equally. This is true regardless of age, race, gender, or social status. For Fox and his followers, this meant that women as well as men should be allowed to preach. It also meant that everyone was to be treated the same, regardless of their social status. This practice angered many. It often landed Fox's followers in prison.

In general, Quakers are pacifists. That means they oppose violence as a means of settling disputes. They believe it is wrong to kill another human being. Quakers are opposed to war. They have established the right to be conscientious objectors. (Conscientious objectors refuse to bear arms on moral or religious grounds.) They help victims of war and work for peace and social justice.

Quakers value simplicity. They believe it is easier to experience God's truth without distractions. Worship, for example, takes place in simple meetinghouses or members' homes, rather than ornate churches.

Quakers believe that all human beings form one community. And they believe that God can speak to and through any individual. By seeing and affirming the “light within” others, Quakers believe they can build a broader world community.

Origins and History

George Fox began preaching in England about 1647. At that time, he was in his early 20s. He did not like the forms and ceremonies of the Church of England and the strict beliefs of the Puritan preachers. This was also true of thousands of others then living in England. Fox soon developed a following of people. They, too, were searching for a new and more spiritual and personal kind of religion.

Fox’s followers were severely punished for their beliefs. English judges jailed hundreds of them for refusing to attend the established church. They were also jailed for failing to pay church tithes. (A tithe is a tenth of one’s income or possessions. It is given to support the church.) And they were jailed for refusing to swear oaths when standing trial. (They believed that oaths were forbidden by the Bible. They thought that if one always told the truth, swearing to do so was unnecessary.)

In spite of cruel and unjust treatment, the early Quakers preached widely in Britain, continental Europe, and elsewhere. Many English settlers in the British West Indies and along the coast of North America became Quakers. By 1700 there were probably 50,000 Friends in Great Britain. There were almost that many in the New World. There were also small groups in Ireland, the Netherlands, and Germany.

In Rhode Island, Maryland, and North Carolina, the Quakers had considerable political power in the 1600s. By 1700 they had organized monthly meetings in almost all the colonies. The exceptions were South Carolina and Connecticut.

William Penn was a young English convert to Quakerism. He received Pennsylvania as a royal grant in 1681. There he began his “holy experiment”, governing the colony according to Quaker principles and ideals. Quakers ruled Pennsylvania until 1756, two years after the outbreak of the French and Indian War. Their belief that violence was wrong made it almost impossible for them to carry out the military policies of the colonial government. The government was at war with the French and the Indians.

However, the French and Indian War, as well as the Revolutionary War that followed, allowed the Friends to demonstrate their belief in the value of every person. They attacked slavery, capital punishment, and many other practices they considered evil. They advocated prison reforms and improved care of the insane. They worked for women’s rights and education for the poor. They also worked for peace with the Indians.

In 1827, due to disagreements over doctrine (a principle or set of principles), a series of Quaker separations began. The Society of Friends split into several branches. Some branches began to have paid ministers, meetings with regular programs, revival meetings, Sunday schools, and missionary societies. Others continued practicing the faith in its original form.

By the 1900s, the Friends began moving toward greater unity among themselves and with other Christians. In 1917, under the leadership of Rufus M. Jones, all branches joined in forming the American Friends Service Committee. This committee provided opportunities for service by Quakers and others whose religious beliefs prevented them from serving in the armed forces.

During and after World War I (1914–18), the committee did relief and rebuilding work in France and other war-torn countries of Europe. Millions of Russian and German children received “Quaker food” in times of shortages and famine. Friends set up volunteer work camps for young people to help in depressed areas at home and abroad. They expanded their relief work during and after World War II (1939–45). They also worked to promote international peace and understanding. In 1947 the American Friends Service Committee and the Friends Service Council of England together received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Quakers Today

Today there are four main branches of Friends. They are the liberal, conservative (also called Wilburites), pastoral, and evangelical. Both liberal and conservative Friends worship in silence. But members give brief testimonies when they feel moved by the spirit. Pastoral and evangelical Friends have ministers and organized services of worship. Branches also differ in their view of the Bible, with some giving it more authority than others.

Quaker membership is slowly growing worldwide. But Quakers remain a relatively small group. One reason is that the Quaker ideals — peacemaking, civil rights activism, and a simple lifestyle — do not always fit with mainstream modern culture. In addition, most groups do not actively seek more members.

Nolt, Cynthia L., and Donald B. Kraybill. "Quakers." *The New Book of Knowledge*. Grolier Online, 2011. Web. 22 June 2011.

3. Students might be interested in researching the concept of time. The following link is interesting.

http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Wikijunior:How_Things_Work/Time

4. Have students take a look at one or more of these anti-bullying sites. They have good information as well as activities.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/prevention.html>

<http://www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org/>

http://www.mypolice.ca/children_and_youth/bullying.html

5. Time travel is something that always captures our imagination.

- a) Watch a classic time travel movie like *Back To The Future* as a class.

- b) You might also encourage students to check out other time travel novels such as:

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle

The Time Quake (The Gideon Trilogy) by Linda Buckley-Archer

The Time Travellers series by Caroline B. Cooney

- c) Or, show the students this great YouTube video: <http://laughingsquid.com/kids-explaining-time-travel/>