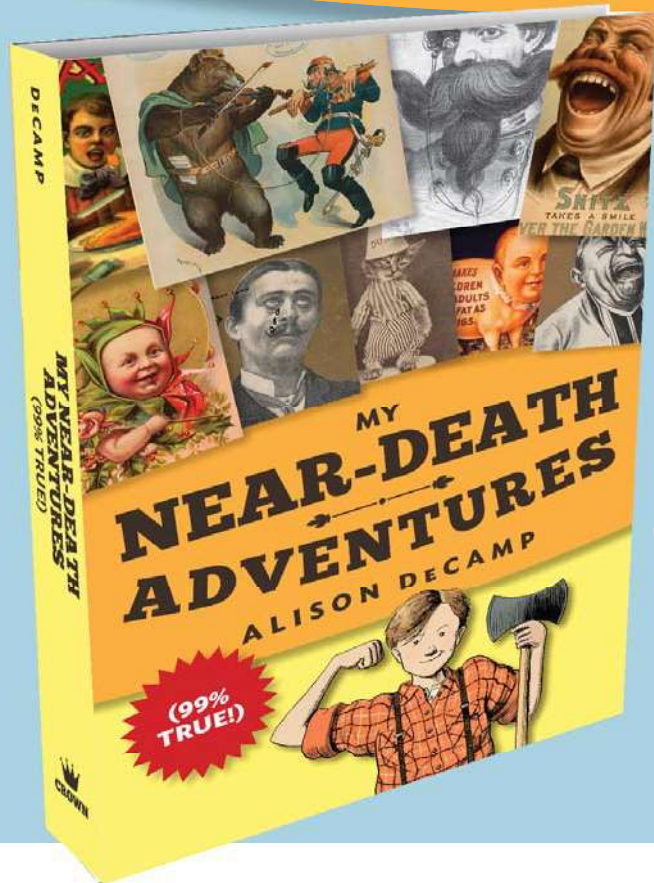


MY NEAR-DEATH ADVENTURES

ALISON DECAMP

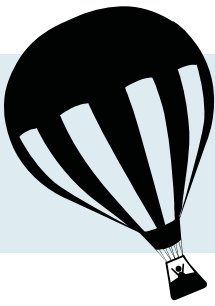


DISCUSSION GUIDE

FOR CLASSROOMS
AND BOOK GROUPS

Aligns with
Common Core
State Standards
for English
Language
Arts-Literacy!





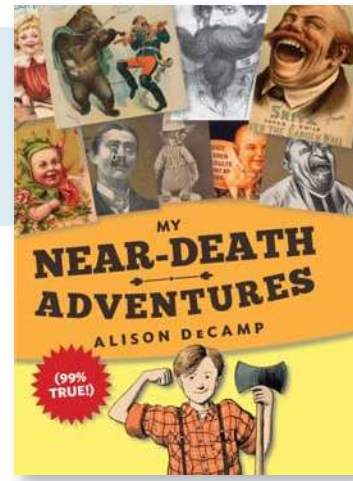
ABOUT THE BOOK

It is 1895. Stan is on a mission to find his long-lost father in the logging camps of Michigan. And he's embellishing all of it in his stupendous scrapbook.

There are many things that 11-year-old Stanley Slater would like to have in life, most of all, a father. But what if Stan's missing dad isn't "dearly departed" after all? Who better to find this absent hero/cowboy/outlaw than manly Stan himself? Unfortunately, Stan's fending off his impossible cousin Geri, evil Granny, and Mama's suitors like Cold-Blooded Killer Stinky Pete. If only he could join the River Drive, the most perilous adventure of all, where even a fellow's peavey is at risk.

It's a wild ride for Stan as he finds out about true manliness. But at least Stan has his scrapbook, full of 200 black-and-white 19th-century advertisements and photos, "augmented" with his commentary and doodles.

Stan's tale will leave readers in stitches, but not the kind that require medical attention.



Grades 3-7

HC: 978-0-385-39044-6

EL: 978-0-385-39046-0

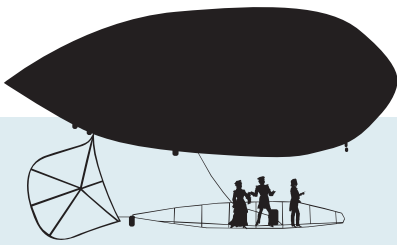
PRAISE FOR MY NEAR-DEATH ADVENTURES

"A knee-slapper of a debut featuring a narrator who is rather less than 99 percent reliable but 100 percent engaging." —Kirkus Reviews

An "exuberant first novel" that readers will "easily become invested in." —Publishers Weekly

A "lively and folksy debut." —School Library Journal

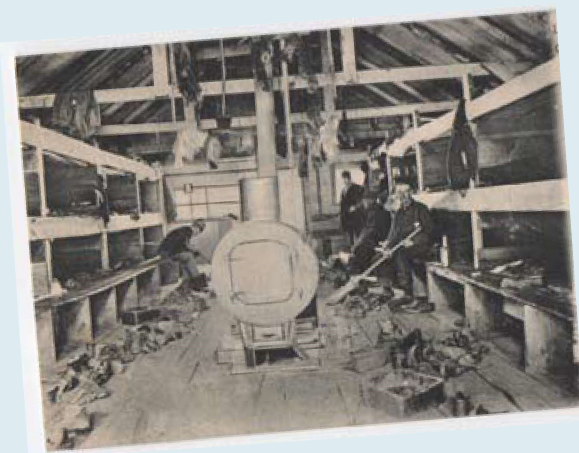
"Hilarious, earnest, and oh-so-manly. Stan stole my heart." —Caroline Starr Rose, author of *May B.* and *Blue Birds*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- Compare and contrast Lydia Mae and Geri. How are they the same? How are they different?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1, RL.3-6.3
- Describe Stan's granny. What type of person is she? How does Stan view her?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1, RL.3-6.3
- Look at the letters that Stan's dad "sends" him. Why do you think Stan pretends to write these letters?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1
- Often throughout the book, Stan is giving Granny a rating for how evil she is. Discuss things that she does that makes her appear evil to him. What does she do that doesn't make sure appear evil? Evaluate the two and share your view...is she evil or not? Why?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1, RL.3-6.3
- Stan has a very active imagination. When do we see examples of his imagination running wild? When has his imagination gotten him in trouble?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1
- Throughout the book, Stan tries to be a man, but he says, "Even when I try my hardest, I fail at being a man." (Chapter 24) Where do we see examples of him trying and failing? Why do you think it's so important for him to be a man? Do you believe he has failed at being a man? Why or why not?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1
- When Stan is talking to Stinky Pete about his Granny, Stinky Pete says, "Well, I have to think she probably has your best interests in mind...and she's not nearly as bad as you think, so I'd say honor your granny as well." (Chapter 26) Do you believe that she does have his best interests in mind? Why or why not?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1, RL.3-6.3



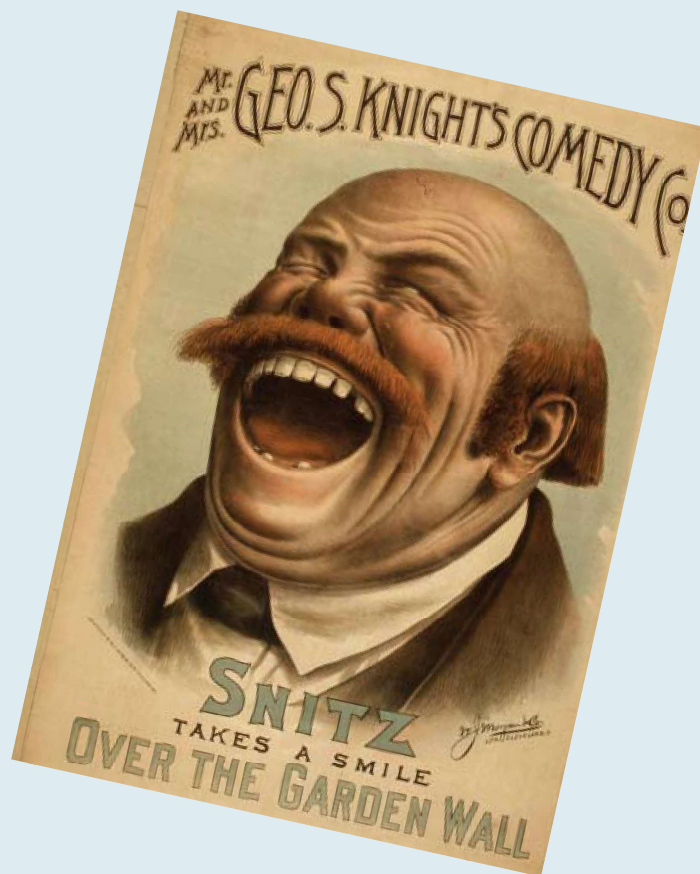
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

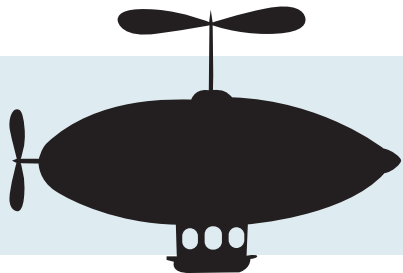
- How are Stan's expectations of the camp different than what he found?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1
- Why do you think Stan's mom decided to take him to the logging camp? Do you think it was a good idea for Stan's mom to take him to the lumberjack camp? Why or why not? What are some benefits to being there? What are some downfalls?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1, RL. 3-6.3
- Stan imagines the worse in a lot of situations. Where do we see this happen? Find two examples from the text and list his imagined response and the actual one.
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1
- How does Stan's perspective of Stinky Pete change throughout the book? Examine how he views him at the start and at the end. What changes his view?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1, RL 3-6.3
- Stinky Pete and Mr. Crutchley are both prominent people in Stan's life at the logging camp. Compare and contrast the two of them. How are they the same? How are they different?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1, RL.3-6.3
- In what ways does Stan learn to become a man?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.1
- How does the use of the primary sources, the pictures in Stan's scrapbook and songs, help contribute to the book? What do they add to it?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RI.3-6.7, SL.3-6.2
- Select five pictures in Stan's scrapbook and analyze each in detail. What does it add to the book? What does it tell us in addition to Stan's words?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RI.3-6.7, SL.3-6.2
- Select one of the songs used in the book and analyze it in detail. What does it add to the book? What does it tell us in addition to Stan's words?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RI.4-6.7, RL.5-6.1, SL.3-6.2



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

- What are the major conflicts in the book? Define these conflicts and discuss how they shape the book and how each was or wasn't resolved.
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.4.9, RL.5.5
- Why do you think Alison DeCamp decided to write the book in the POV of Stan? How would the story have changed if it were written in the POV of another character? Select a different character and evaluate how his/her POV would change the novel.
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.6
- How is setting important to this novel? Describe the setting and explain its significance using specific examples as to how it contributes to the overall theme/message of the novel.
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-4.3
- How does Stan change throughout the course of the novel? Trace his progression from the start to the end.
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3.3 RL.4.3, RL.6.3
- Identify some major themes or the central idea in the book. Where do we see examples of it? How does this theme develop throughout the book and how does it affect the outcome?
Correlates to Common Core State Standard RL.3-6.2





ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY #1: ACTUALLY LISTEN TO AN ADULT (AND THEN TOTALLY MAKE STUFF UP)

Find an old family photo and ask the story behind it. Then rewrite the story and use your imagination to make it better. Aunt Trudy used to pick her nose? What if those were magic boogers? Ew, right? But you get the idea. That would make a much better story!

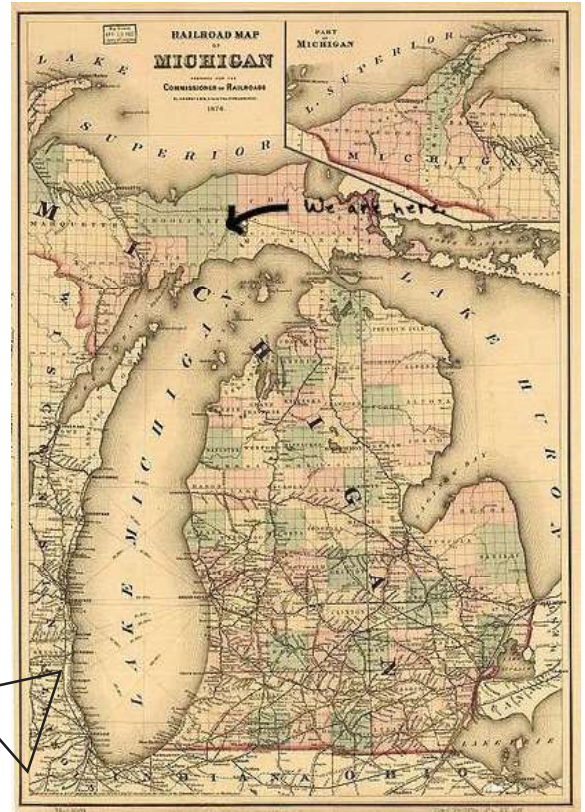
This really and truly is my great grandmother. I have heard lots of stories about her from my mother, and she was the inspiration for Granny in MY NEAR-DEATH ADVENTURES (99% True!), except I made a lot of it up. And by "a lot of it," I mean all of it.



ACTIVITY #2: MAP IT OUT!

I love maps! Make a list of all the buildings Geri points out to Stan and draw a map of the lumber camp. Or draw a larger map and include the camp, Manistique, the river, the route the logs would take on the river drive, and even Chicago, where Granny and Geri come from.

This is an actual map of Michigan from around 1876. There's a small arrow pointing to Stan's whereabouts.



And this is an old picture of a lumber camp near Grand Marais, Michigan (go visit if you get a chance!).



ACTIVITY #3: HOW BAD CAN IT REALLY BE?

Stan is certainly not a fan of Mrs. Cavanaugh's vinegar pie, but what does he know? Make some vinegar pie and then write a review of it. Feel free to tweak the recipe as needed (more sugar? less vinegar?) and then torture, um, I mean TREAT your family to this delicious dessert!

I found this authentic recipe, wrote it out and then made it look old by crumpling it up and dabbing it with a tea bag.

Mrs. Cavanaugh's
Vinegar Pie Avoid at all costs!
2 tablespoons butter
½ cup sugar
3 tablespoons flour
2 teaspoons cinnamon
½ teaspoon allspice
1 egg, lightly beaten
2 tablespoons cider vinegar
1 cup water
1-9" pie crust, briefly baked

Preheat oven. Cream butter and sugar. Sift together flour and spices then add to butter mixture, mix well. Beat in egg, vinegar and water. Pour into a double boiler and cook over boiling water until thick. Pour into pie shell and bake until knife comes out clean.

For **EVEN MORE**, visit www.alisondecamp.com