

# CRASHING in *Love*

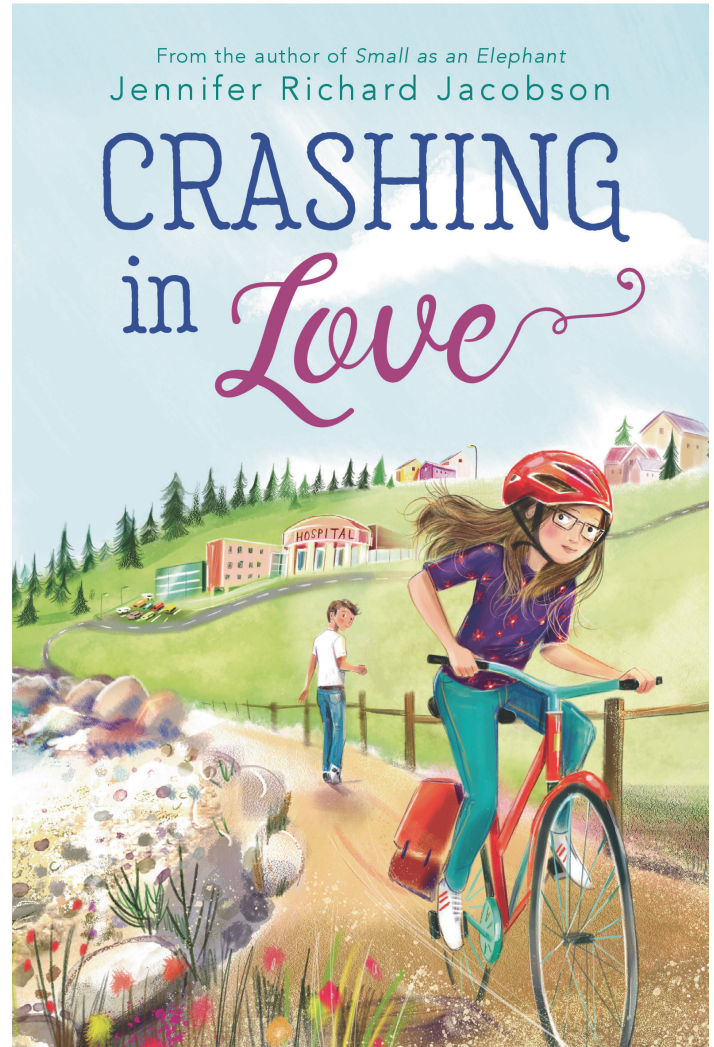
JENNIFER RICHARD JACOBSON

## About The Book

Ever since her parents got divorced, twelve-year-old Peyton has worked hard to eliminate her flaws and become as perfect as possible. Guided by her collection of inspirational quotes, Peyton is convinced that this summer will be the perfect summer, complete with the perfect boyfriend! But when she discovers a boy lying unconscious in the middle of the road, the victim of a hit-and-run, her perfect summer takes a dramatic detour. Determined to find the driver responsible, Peyton divides her time between searching her small town for clues and visiting the boy, who's in a coma and hospitalized nearby. When he wakes up, will he prove to be the boy of her dreams? Or does life have a few more surprises in store? With warmth and gentle humor, this novel is about searching for perfect answers—and finding that reality is messier and far more intriguing than anything you can dream up.

### Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.



HC: 978-1-5362-1153-5  
Also available as an e-book

## About the Author

Jennifer Richard Jacobson is the author of the middle-grade novels *Small as an Elephant*, *Paper Things*, and *The Dollar Kids*, which is illustrated by Ryan Andrews. She is also the author of the Andy Shane chapter book series, illustrated by Abby Carter. Jennifer Richard Jacobson lives in Maine.



CANDLEWICK PRESS  
www.candlewick.com

## Discussion Questions

1. What do you learn about Peyton in the first four pages before she comes across Gray on the road? What has she been looking forward to doing in the summer? How has that changed now that Mari is going to Gloucester? How is Peyton dealing with the change?
2. Explain how Peyton reacts when she finds Gray on the road. Who helps her? How does Peyton get to know Mrs. Olsen? Why does she become involved in helping Gray at the hospital? What does she do to help? Why do her parents want her to spend less time at the hospital?
3. Her parents' divorce is an important aspect of Peyton's life and the lives of her sisters. How does it affect their schedule? How does Peyton feel about her parents' divorce? Why does she think they made that choice? How does her view of the divorce change?
4. Peyton puts a lot of energy into being perfect. In describing when her parents announced their divorce, she explains, "That's when I vowed to put all my effort into being the best person I could be" (page 66). Why do you think that was her reaction? How does she carry out the resolution? When does it seem to be a useful goal? When does it backfire?
5. What is Peyton's mother like? Why does Peyton worry about being like her mother? How is her mother's work as a journalist important in the novel? When does Peyton have negative feelings about her mother's job? When is she proud of her mother's work and choices as a journalist, and why does she feel that way?
6. What does Peyton's father do for work and what is he like? In discussing their parents' divorce with her sisters, Peyton wonders what finally convinced her mother to divorce her father, calling it "Mom's last straw" (page 176). Bronwyn thinks it was the fact that Dad didn't go to the funeral of Mom's father. What does that choice tell you about Peyton's father? Why would it have hurt Peyton's mother?
7. Describe Grana and her role in Peyton's life. What parts of their relationship does Peyton enjoy? In what ways is dealing with her grandmother difficult? Discuss why Peyton observes at one point, "Sometimes I think it was Grana Mom divorced" (page 133). Discuss the scene where Dad says to Grana, "You're bullying. Let Peyton have a voice" (page 213).
8. What happens between Peyton and her friend Mari during the story? Why has Mari gone to Gloucester? How does Peyton feel about Mari's boyfriend and other new friends? What does Peyton learn about Mari from Lilliam and Jamie, and how does she react? What do the changes in her friendship with Mari show Peyton about herself, and how does she try to repair the rift?
9. Why does Peyton care so much about solving the mystery of who injured Gray? Go through the people that she suspects and her reasoning. Explain how she is wrong in most instances. How does her investigating get Peyton in trouble with her mother and other adults? What is the truth about who ran into Gray, and why didn't the driver confess to the police?
10. Talk about Peyton's boyfriend list and what its requirements show about her. At times, she decides that Gray fits a requirement from the list, such as being kind. How does she rationalize each belief? Why is it important to her that he fits the requirements? Which, if any, of the requirements on the boyfriend list do you think are important in a romantic partner, and why do you think so?

11. One example of a boyfriend that Peyton has in her life is Bronwyn’s former boyfriend Finn. How had Finn treated Bronwyn? How did Bronwyn react to Finn ending their relationship? What does she hope will happen when she takes Peyton to the fair? What happens instead? What’s the significance of Peyton keeping her boyfriend list inside the program for *Romeo and Juliet*?
12. Identify hints in the narrative before Gray wakes up that show his personality. What is Gray actually like when he comes out of the coma? How does Peyton react when she first sees he is different than she assumed? Why does she feel “immediate relief” near the end when she admits that Gray is not her first boyfriend (page 240)? What are similarities between her crush on Gray and Bronwyn’s experience with Finn?
13. Describe how Peyton first meets Jax and the other encounters she has with him. What assumptions does she make about him without good evidence? What is his living situation for the summer and how is it difficult? How is he different from Gray? How does she feel about Jax when the book ends, and why does she feel that way?
14. Discuss Peyton’s new understanding near the end of the book—“If I’ve learned anything this summer, it’s that the more I insist on things being the way they’re supposed to be, the more I’m prevented from seeing (and accepting) things the way they really are” (page 240)—and what led her to it.
15. Peyton mentions inspirational sayings and quotes throughout the novel. Consider some of them that give advice and analyze whether you agree or not. Why does she take down the quotes and sayings on her bedroom wall?
16. Describe the novel’s setting in terms of place and time. What kind of town does Peyton live in? How important is setting to the story? Could the same story take place in a large city? Which parts could be the same? What would be different? If the story were set two hundred years ago in a small Maine town, which parts could be the same?



These questions were prepared by Kathleen Odean, a school librarian for more than fifteen years who now gives professional development workshops for educators about new books for children and teens. She chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and served on earlier Caldecott and Newbery Award Committees.



CANDLEWICK PRESS  
www.candlewick.com