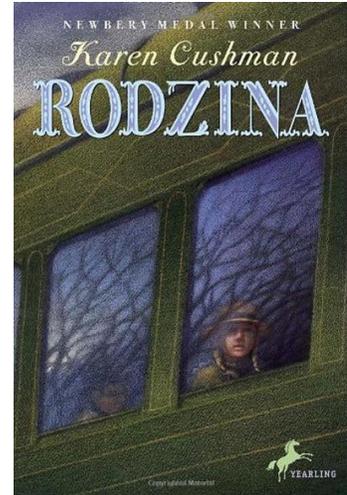


A Discussion Guide

Rodzina

by Karen Cushman



General themes: *Prejudice, Family*

Questions for Discussion

- What are some examples of prejudice in the story? Why do you think the author chooses to include them?
- The adults in the story claim that they have the orphans' best interests in mind. When is this true? When is it not true?
- How is Rodzina's ethnicity important to her? How does she let other people know this?
- What emotions does Rodzina keep to herself? Why?
- Rodzina doesn't always follow the rules. Do you think she is justified in doing this? In what instances does this behavior help her to survive?
- Why do you think people say Lacey is "slow"? Do you agree? What examples support your opinion?
- Despite their differences, how are Rodzina and Miss Doctor alike? Do you think they will be able to get along in the future?

Discussion across the Texts

- Catherine, Alyce, and Matilda all come from medieval England, but their social circumstances are vastly different. What parts of their experiences are the same? How do they differ? What might they think of one another? What could they learn from one another?
- Lucy and Rodzina both journey across the United States. Are there places where Rodzina follows in Lucy's footsteps? How do the girls feel about their journeys? What do they learn about others? About themselves?
- How is each girl's name important to her sense of self? In what ways is "Birdy" an appropriate nickname for Catherine? Why is it important to Rodzina that people

pronounce her Polish name correctly? Why do Lucy and Alyce rename themselves? What must Matilda discover before she can accept the name Matilda Bone?

- What are society's expectations for each young woman? What challenges does she face? What character traits help her to face these challenges?

Questions for Adults and Young People to Share

- How do adults and young people in the books learn to appreciate and accept one another's strengths and weaknesses?
- What kinds of mothers and mother figures appear in the books? How do they help to shape the young characters' experiences? What can modern readers learn from the mother-daughter relationships in the books?
- In what ways might adult readers and young readers react differently to the characters and themes in the books? What are the reasons for this?

Author's Craft

- Why do you think the author chooses to tell each story from the perspective of only one character? How does she let her readers know what the other characters in the story are thinking and feeling?
- Do you think the author always agrees with her characters' opinions and actions? How do you know?
- How does the author's inclusion of journals and letters in her books help you to understand the characters?
- What role does the author's use of humor play in her books? How does she use characters' misunderstandings to create humorous situations? How would her books be different without humor?