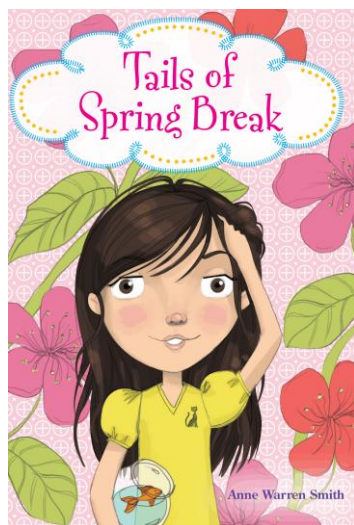


# TAILS OF SPRING BREAK

## TEACHER'S GUIDE



Everyone except Katie is going somewhere interesting for spring break. To keep from dying of boredom in rainy Oregon, she comes up with a plan to take care of the lonely pets that have been left behind. It's a great idea until the animals (a cat, a dog, and some fish) go a little crazy. Things get worse when awful Claire Plummer from across the street moves into Katie's house for the week, AND becomes her business partner.

For ages 8-12  
Albert Whitman & Co.  
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paperback, 128 pages, \$5.99

Praise for the hardcover edition:

“Recommended. In this accessible companion to *Turkey Monster Thanksgiving*, the two girls cope with hilarious pet-sitting misadventures as they learn to appreciate each other.” – *The Horn Book Guide*.

“Katie and Claire first clashed in *Turkey Monster Thanksgiving*. That was a great read and this one is even better.” – *childrenslit.com*

“This quick and light story is fun to read. The short chapters keep the narrative moving and the action never lags.” – *School Library Journal*

“Comfortable fare.” – *Booklist*

“Light-hearted, well-paced story has plenty of funny predicaments.” – *Bayviews*

“Fun and funny as it is, it also says important things about friendship and loss. A delightful story.” – *Ellen Howard, author of Gate in the Wall, Edith Herself, and Circle of Giving.*

## AUTHOR BIO



Anne Warren Smith is the author of the Katie Jordan series for third and fourth graders: *Turkey Monster Thanksgiving*, *Tails of Spring Break*, and the soon-to-be-released *Bittersweet Summer*, all from Albert Whitman & Co.

She teaches classes in writing fiction and memoir in Corvallis, Oregon, and has led workshops throughout the Pacific Northwest. She lives in Tucson during the winter months.

She grew up in Ticonderoga, a small town in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York. She plays with several grandchildren and has a dog named Lucy who will be the star of a future Katie Jordan book. When not writing, she swims laps at the pool, makes jewelry with tiny beads, knits sweaters, and walks the Oregon beaches or the trails of the Arizona desert.

She is available for virtual classroom visits on SKYPE. Learn more about her at [www.annewarrensmith.com](http://www.annewarrensmith.com).

# **TAILS OF SPRING BREAK**

## **TEACHER'S GUIDE**

### **SETTING**

Knowledge: In Chapter 1, we find out that most of the kids in the fourth grade class are going somewhere for spring break.

Who is going to Hawaii?

Who is going to Washington, DC?

Who is going to stay in rainy Oregon?

Have the students research typical spring break weather in the three destinations.

Can the students locate these destinations on the globe? How many miles away from Oregon will they be? How must Claire and Sierra travel to get to their destinations? What kinds of clothes will they pack in their suitcases?

Discussion: Which girl will enjoy the warmest weather? Which girl will probably play on the beach, swim in the ocean? Who will need to keep a raincoat handy?

### **CHARACTER**

Knowledge: In Chapter 1, Sierra says, "No wonder nobody likes Claire Plummer." What makes Sierra say that?

Knowledge: Katie and Claire live across the street from each other. What else do they have in common?

### **PLOT**

Knowledge: In Chapter 1, what is Katie's grand idea? How does it start? How does it get bigger?

Does Sierra think Katie will do a good job taking care of China Cat? Why not?

Discussion: Should we be worried about China Cat?

Discussion: When people travel, they can't always take their pets. Yet the pets can't be

left alone without care. What can people do to make sure their animals will be all right while they're gone? What resources are available? (For example, kennels, pet boarding houses, pet-sitters, giving a pet to a friend to care for.)

## **PLOT**

Knowledge: In Chapter 2, the Sierra's family brings China Cat to Katie's house. When does China get worried? What does she do? What do Katie and Sierra do?

Discussion: Ask the students if they have ever had a frightened pet? How did their pet show that it was frightened?

Knowledge: After Sierra's family leaves, what does Katie's family do to try to make China feel better?

Discussion: Did they do the right things? What additional things could they have done?

Knowledge: At the end of the chapter, Katie is worried that Sierra might stop being her friend. Why?

## **PLOT**

Knowledge: In Chapter 3, what has happened to change Claire's plans to go to Washington, DC? When Katie finds out Claire will be staying at her house, what does she do?

Discussion: Do the students understand how Katie feels and why? Talk about why Katie hides her poster of Mom.

Discussion: When the author was in fourth grade she had to share her pink-and-white bedroom with a great aunt who seemed to be at least a hundred years old. How do you think she felt about that? (She carried her favorite things up to the attic and made a new sleeping place for herself. Her mother made her move back into the bedroom – made her share the room.)

Ask the students how many of them have a bedroom all to themselves. How many share the room? What is good about sharing a room (e.g., the companionship, sharing secrets, keeping warm)? What is bad (not enough privacy, difficulty of keeping possessions separate)?

Based on what we know about the two girls at this point, how many students think Katie and Claire might end up sharing secrets?

## **CHARACTER**

Knowledge: In Chapter 4, Claire moves into Katie's bedroom. What does she unpack?

Discussion: What do her possessions and her clothes tell us about Claire? What kind of person is she?

Knowledge: Katie's room, especially before she cleans it up, tells us about her. What do we know about Katie?

Discussion: Are the girls very different? Think of adjectives that will describe each girl (organized, tidy, messy, time-conscious, etc.) For example, Claire is surprised that Katie has a business. Why does she think Katie is a disorganized person?

Knowledge: In Chapter 5, Katie writes instructions about Muffin in her notebook. What are the instructions?

Discussion: Why is it important for Katie to write things down? Talk about different pets and what special care they might need. What would you want to be sure a pet-sitter did for your pet (e.g., food, water, exercise, warm and dry, safe)?

## **CHARACTER**

Knowledge: In Chapter 6, Katie's mom phones. What does Katie notice about her mother's voice? What does Claire do after the phone call? How does Dad explain Claire's behavior?

Discussion: How does this make us feel about Claire?

Discussion: When Tyler tells Dad they are lucky Mom can call, Dad agrees but he gets a tear in his eye. Does he really feel lucky? Do the students understand that he also misses Mom?

Knowledge: What does Dad suggest Katie should do to make Claire feel at home? How does Katie feel about that?

## **PLOT**

Knowledge: In Chapter 7, the girls have whispered conversations with their mothers.

What questions does Katie ask? What does her mother say?

Discussion: Does Katie's mom really answer her? Do the students think it is okay that she imagines what her mother might say? Talk about what is real and what is imaginary? Do the girls find comfort in "talking" with their moms?

## **CHARACTER**

In Chapter 10, Katie plays games with Muffin. What does she play? When Claire asks her where she learned how to play with a dog, what does Katie tell her? How does Claire feel about the value of having a little brother? Katie loves Tyler, but what drawbacks does she think of?

## **CHARACTER/SETTING**

Knowledge: In Chapter 11, we meet Ruby. What is she wearing? What does she have in her house? How does she speak to the girls?

Discussion: What kind of person is Ruby? Is she a kind person? Do the students like her?

## **SETTING**

Knowledge: In Chapter 13, China's voice is heard all through the house. How does Dad explain this? (Her voice comes through the heat ducts that carry heat under the house from the furnace to each room. She cannot get inside the ducts, but she must be close enough to one of them to make it carry her voice.)

## **PLOT**

In chapters 14 and 15, Katie tells Claire not to look for Ruby's crystal ball and also not to move Mrs. Anderson's begonia to the floor. She says Dad has told her not to look around in people's houses. Why did Dad tell Katie this? Are there rules about what you can do or not do in someone else's home?

Discussion: What does it mean when we talk about respecting property. What are some of the rules the students observe when they visit someone? If they aren't sure about the rules, what can they do to find them out?

Knowledge: In Chapter 16 Muffin is sick. Why?

Discussion and activity: Dogs are allergic to certain items, such as almonds, chocolate, and some plants. Have the students do research to find common items that are poisonous for dogs. Perhaps they could make a chart with pictures of dogs and paste pictures of items into columns that are “Good for Dogs” and “Bad for Dogs.”

Knowledge: In Chapter 18, Katie and Claire put the dead Harry Truman on a plate and arrange berries and leaves around him. What did they do after that?

Discussion: Have any of the students ever lost a pet? Do any families have a ritual about dead pets? What kinds of rituals or activities can make a person stop feeling so sad?

Activity: Write about (or tell the class about) a ceremony you held for a dead pet. (Or make up a story about this.) Use details of setting and tell us what happened first, second, and third. Be sure to include why you thought this was a good ceremony or a bad one.

## **CHARACTER**

Knowledge: In Chapter 18, Claire tells Katie she will never have pets. Why does she make this decision? In Chapter 21, Ruby gives Claire advice about this. What does she tell Claire?

Discussion: Do we know Claire better now? Do the students like her more now than they did in Chapter 1? What specific things have happened that make us begin to like her?

## **PLOT**

Discussion: Sierra says at the beginning of the book that Katie’s big ideas often get her into trouble. Remember how she planned Thanksgiving dinner in “Turkey Monster Thanksgiving”? What do the students think now about Katie’s idea to take care of pets? Did things turn out okay for her at the end?

Mothers play an important part in the books about Katie Jordan. In this book, Katie begins to explore the loss of her mother by talking about it with Claire. In Chapter 22, she tells Claire something she has never shared before. What is it? In the next book, “Bittersweet Summer,” Katie will again move forward in this struggle.

Consider the word “tails” in the title. Is it a play on words? Talk about homonyms and ways that we can play with them. (Tales about tails. A pair of pears. He stares at the stairs.)