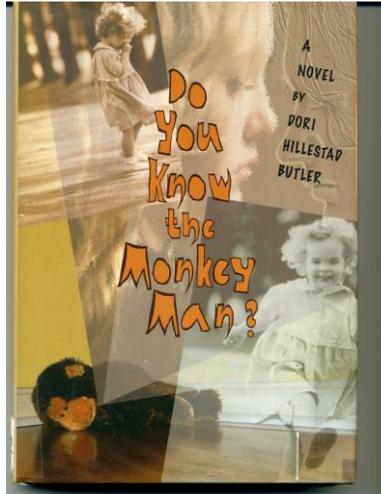


## Teacher Study Guide

# Do You Know the Monkey Man?

By Dori Hillestad Butler



Realistic Fiction (Mystery and Suspense)

6 x 8-1/2 inches; 224 pages

Middle reader fiction, ages 10-14

**\$14.95 hardcover / ISBN: 1-56145-340-4**

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Samantha Wright can remember very little about her father. He was a nice dad who sang to her a funny version of the nursery rhyme, “Do you know the muffin man?” substituting *muffin* with *monkey*. She doesn’t remember anything unpleasant about her dad and she only assumes that he must have loved her. He also gave her a stuffed monkey and wrote to her once when she was six-years-old. Sam doesn’t have any bad memories of her father, so why does her mother not tell her more about him or why doesn’t she feel she can ask her mother to help her find him? Against her best friend’s advice not to pursue such a search and her mother’s plea to put that part of their life behind them, Sam begins her search by going to a psychic.

The visit to the psychic doesn’t prove to be helpful in the search for Sam’s father. Instead, Sam has a new mystery to solve. The psychic insists that Sam has a sister. She is correct that Sam has a sister, a twin sister! However, according to her mother and newspaper articles, her sister drowned in a quarry that was filled with water. Her father and sister went canoeing where it was prohibited and her sister fell overboard and she drowned ... but her body was never recovered!

Samantha’s mother is going to get married to a wonderful man and she wants Sam to accept him adopting her with an open mind and a willing heart. Sam just can’t bring

herself to accepting a new father until she finds out what happened to her father, Joseph Wright.

Sam's determination to find her father and possibly her sister is admirable. However, Sam is also changing and every time she "bends" the rules a bit, we are left to question if indeed it was the right thing for Sam to do. As a result, the reader is continually left to question the integrity of Sam's search. The reader is constantly challenged to weigh the consequences of some decisions Sam makes throughout the novel. Most of Sam's decisions are based on her optimistic attitude and not realistic circumstances; but all her decisions are made based on the love for family. Still, it is precisely this rebellious attitude driven by a great love for a father that makes the reader want Sam to find her father and sister, if she's still living. We want to see a sweet reunion between a father, daughter and sister. Then again, could Sam's best friend, Angela, be right? What if Sam's father doesn't want to see Sam? What if her father turns out to be a horrible person? What if her search only brings her more pain?

**"Butler has a simplicity of narrative voice that makes the story easy to read while reflecting the often-complex emotions of children forced to deal with things that have long been buried. It is the way that the author conveys these emotions that provides the most lingering memories of this fast-paced suspense novel."**

*--School Library Journal*

**"Middle-graders looking for a simple mystery will be pleased, and the story may inspire them to think about the concepts of identity and family that are threaded through the story."**

*--Booklist*

### **Plot Summary Chapters 1-5**

Samantha and her best friend Angela are on their bikes in route to finding a psychic, whom Samantha expects will tell her something about her long-lost father. The psychic doesn't tell her anything about her father and plants the crazy idea that her twin sister is alive! Suspense is immediately built into the plot, thus hooking the reader and beginning a fast-pace read as we find out how a thirteen-year-old, without money or a license to drive, can find her father and her twin sister who "drowned" when she was three-years-old.

In chapter **one**, we learn that Samantha needs to find her father but no one can give her any information that will help her contact him. She succumbs to obtaining information from a psychic because it's all she can afford and in her point of desperation, she's willing to try even the supernatural. She hopes to get even a small lead to help her start her search. She gets a lead alright! She now has urgency to finding her father and possibly her sister!

In chapter **two**, Samantha is desperate to find her father because her soon-to-be step-father will adopt her after her mother's wedding. According to Samantha's mother, her father and she divorced because he was irresponsible and childish. According to her grandmother, they got married too young and after her sister's death, the marriage fell apart. We also learn that Angela, Samantha's best friend, also has divorced parents but

has learned to live with the situation. She hasn't seen her father in three years and makes her opinion known about father's who stop contacting their children. She recommends that Samantha should give up the search that will probably only bring her disappointment and more grief. Here, we learn about Samantha's unconditional love for her father. She emphasizes that no matter what she learns about her father, she still loves him simply because he is *her* father. She strongly believes her father would just understand her better than her mother.

In chapter **three**, Samantha and her mother go to Bob's mother's birthday party. Although it's a beautiful family and everyone demonstrates genuine love and acceptance, Samantha doesn't feel comfortable.

In chapter **four**, Samantha is doing some packing and comes across her mother's and father's high school yearbook. She finds her mother but her father must not have been present for picture day. Samantha also finds her mother's wedding ring, the only thing her mother kept of her father. Finally, she finds a box containing information about her sister's funeral and newspaper articles about "the accident." The accident at the buried quarry where it was impossible to recover her sister's body! Her sister's body was never found!

In chapter **five**, Samantha confronts her mother about why she never told her that her sister's body was never found. Although it is difficult for her mother to talk about this part of her past, she shares with Samantha the many reasons for giving up on the idea that her daughter somehow survived the accident. She has closed the door on this chapter of her life and wants Samantha to do the same. Samantha, of course, has other ideas.

### **Chapters 6-10**

In chapter **six**, Angela and her brother learn that their mother is *forcing* their father to see them before the summer is over. Angela, of course, is absolutely unhappy about visiting her father in one week. Samantha gives her advice about dealing with the situation with more optimism and is secretly jealous of her best friend seeing her dad even if he didn't initiate the visit.

In chapter **seven**, Sam has a very realistic dream about her twin sister pleading her to *come to her*. Samantha is awakened by her mother and the feeling of the wetness from the kiddy pool next door! The next day, Sam and Angela go to the water park where they meet up with some friends, one of whom will help Samantha hire a detective on-line!

In chapter **eight**, Sam has another dream about her sister. As a result, she begins to remember more incidents from her childhood, but all the details are blurry. She decides to go to the quarry and explore the place. Angela really cares for her best friend Sam, so, when she learns of her risky exploration, she and Sam get into a serious argument but make up.

In chapter **nine**, Samantha hears from the detective who has three Joseph Wrights on the list. One Joseph Wright is dead and the second on the list is her father. Samantha leaves a message on the answering machine with her father's voice on it.

In chapter **ten**, Samantha waits five days for her father to return her call and he doesn't. Instead, the phone she dialed is now disconnected!

### **Chapters 11-15**

In chapter **eleven**, Samantha has new hopes of finding her father. She can't reach him by phone but she thinks of the possibility of going to his address in Richland, Minnesota. After all, her best friend was going to visit her father and step-mother in just

a couple of days. Angela gets permission to bring a friend but Samantha does not get permission to go since her mother's wedding shower is that week-end. When Angela calls to confirm that she got permission to bring her, Sam lies to her and tells her to pick her up in the morning.

In chapter **twelve**, Angela and her brother pick up Sam. Sam leaves a short note stating that she went on the trip. Half way to Minnesota, Sam confesses to Angela that she didn't get permission. Although Angela is very upset, she doesn't see any reason to tell her brother about what is going on. Instead, they ride the rest of the trip in silence.

In chapter **thirteen**, Sam's mother calls and tells her that Angela's stepmother is taking her to the bus station in the morning to take a bus back home.

In chapter **fourteen**, to Samantha's surprise, Angela encourages Sam to continue searching for her father and go to Richland instead of taking a bus back home to Cedar Rapids. First, they reach the famous Mall of America and from there they take another bus to Richland. When they reach the address, no one was home. Then, a blond-haired girl comes to the address. When she turns to see who is calling her, Samantha is sure that she is her sister!

In chapter **fifteen**, Samantha and T.J., the girl she is sure is her sister exchange a lot of information but nothing fits like it should. The information about the T.J.'s past just doesn't match up to Sam's past. In fact, T.J. doesn't live with her father. According to her, Joseph Wright was her father's best friend and he adopted her after her real parents and brother, Sam, died in a fire.

### **Chapters 16-21**

In chapter **sixteen**, Sam and T.J. exchange a lot more information that is truly extraordinarily similar, but nothing can be definite until T.J.'s father gets home and confirms what they both begin to suspect. Joe arrives and his stare was the final "word."

In chapter **seventeen**, T.J. is upset even before Joe begins to explain why he did what he did and leaves the house. Joe shares his story with Sam and then goes out to find T.J. who is simply more scared that she will be taken away from him.

In chapter **eighteen**, Sam overhears her father's conversation with T.J. and finds out how much her sister doesn't want any part of this new family. Sam is so upset she decides to leave but a call on the phone from her mother stops her from going any further than the front door. Furthermore, Sam's mother calls the police.

In chapter **nineteen**, everyone meets up at the police station. Samantha learns that her father technically can't get arrested for "kidnapping" T.J. but that the situation is complicated enough to cause T.J. more grief. Bob and Sam have some time to bond as Bob explains to Sam what makes a "family." This short talk with Bob helps Sam sort things out and begins to understand how T.J. must feel.

In chapter **twenty**, Sam and her mother have a strong argument about T.J. going back to being called Sarah. Finally, Sam's mother has a change of heart because she realizes the amount of emotional stress imposed on her two daughters; and because she loves them both very much, she is willing to accept *some* changes in order to keep the channels of communication open.

In chapter **twenty one**, we are left with the impression that everything is going to be okay as Sam and her mother are preparing their new home for a visit from T.J. T.J. is not only staying with them for the week-end, and although she is not going to be in the wedding like Sam, she wants to attend.

## THEMES

Students will see several **themes**, or main ideas, developed in detail. Share with the students that **theme** is what a story reveals about people and life. It is the meaning we take away from the story. Stories usually have several themes but one stands out more than the others.

Each theme mentioned includes one excerpt from the book that the teacher can use as reference for activities in “Before You Read,” “As You Read,” and “After You Read” accordingly.

- **The Importance of Family** Samantha is thirteen years old and although her mother has a wonderful fiancé, she does not feel he will fill the shoes of her father. Samantha wants to know if her father misses her and if he loves her. When she begins looking for her father, she realizes that her twin sister might still be living, as the psychic suggests. Now, she cannot rest until she finds out exactly what happened to her as well. Against her mother’s will, Samantha feels the need to find her father and sister.

Excerpt from the book:

“I do hope the marriage works out. Really, I do. I want my mom to be happy. But ... I want to be happy, too. Is that so wrong? And the one thing that could really, truly make me happy would be finding my dad” (p.26).

- **Self-Discovery** Samantha’s life changes almost overnight! With her mother’s wedding only a few weeks away, and her mother’s expectation that she will be adopted by her step-father, Samantha wants to know why her father stopped calling and writing when she was a little girl. She wants to know if he loves her. In the search for her father she learns that her twin sister might be alive and this new knowledge brings about a stronger need to find out what ever happened after her parents divorced. It isn’t that Samantha doesn’t love her mother; her need for answers is not about her mother or her new family. Rather, she is searching for herself. Samantha learns more than she ever could have imagined!

Excerpt from the book:

I was so confused. I knew I should probably hate my dad for what he’d done. Thinking about what he did, what he had stolen from Mom and Grandma and Grandpa Sperling and me...it made me feel sick. But for some reason, I didn’t hate him. I really didn’t. I wasn’t sure what I felt for him, but it wasn’t hatred (p.161).

- **Making Tough Choices** Samantha has come to a point in her life where she needs to find some concrete answers to some forgotten issues; one of them, what ever happened to her biological father. Against her mother’s request to please forget the past, Samantha begins to search for her father and, as it turns out, her

twin sister. She constantly has to make difficult choices that would be wrong in her mother's opinion. At times, choices prove to be good ones and at other times, she makes poor choices. All the time, however, she is focused on finding her father. There really isn't anything wrong with that, or is there? This is what the reader is constantly questioning throughout the novel. Thus, there is ongoing suspense that makes the reader agree with Samantha's choices even though she is clearly disobeying her mother and doing things in secret. This constant chain of events where the consequence of one choice leads to another choice makes the reader naturally curious about what will happen as a result of Samantha's newfound independence and defiance.

Excerpt from the book:

"Why don't you know where your father is?" Coral asked. Her parents were actually still married to each other. In her world, parents didn't get divorced. And dads didn't go years and years without seeing their kids.

"He left when my parents got divorced," I said. "My mom has no idea where he is. And neither does anyone else."

"Well, people don't just disappear," Coral said. "I bet you could find him if you tried."

"She's tried," Angela said in a tired voice. "Believe me, she's tried."

...

"You have a credit card?" Melissa raised an eyebrow.

"Well, sort of. My mom got me a debit card a few months ago and told me I could use it for an emergency."

"This isn't an emergency," Angela said.

It was as far as I was concerned. Okay, maybe it wasn't the kind of emergency my mom had in mind. But if that card would help me find my dad, I was willing to use it (p.60).

- **Doing the Right Thing** The previous theme is naturally connected to this sub-theme. Ultimately, everyone has their own opinion about what is the best choice about this or that. However, there is always the "right" choice and there is always a "wrong" choice. This does not mean that with either choice, there will be a definite positive or negative outcome. Sometimes the outcome of a choice will be good and sometimes it will be bad for an individual. Still, there are some moral guidelines that our conscience is very much aware we must follow. For example, Samantha's mother only wants to protect her one and only daughter. So, she forbids Samantha to pursue a search that most likely will bring about only more hurt and sadness. Samantha, lacking maturity and having a strong will of her own, disobeys her mother more than once and she does some things in secret such as consulting a psychic, hiring a detective on-line to find her father, using her mother's checking card, etc.. The reader is left to argue why we think that it's right or wrong for Samantha to follow her heart and ignore her mother. What is the "right" choice!

Excerpt from the book:

“I’d never done anything like this before. Sure, I’d told a few little white lies now and then. Hasn’t everyone? But I’d never gone ahead and done something my mom specifically said I couldn’t do” (p.98).

- **In Search for the Truth** Samantha is searching for *truth*. We want to find out the truth just as bad as she does and we go along with her on all her discoveries. As early as chapter one, we are hooked on the possibility that Samantha may have a living twin sister who is supposedly dead! However, how reliable *is* a psychic? Some would say, very reliable and others would say, “no way!” Still, the truth in any unsolved mystery exists and is waiting to be found. All the truth needs is someone who wants to find it bad enough and is willing to search against all odds.

Excerpt from the book:

Madame Madeline frowned. “I do feel that connection. But there’s another connection, too. A deeper one. Another man has been important to your mother. And another child, too. Was your mother married before? Do you, perhaps, have a sister?”

My jaw dropped. How did she know that? “I *had* a sister,” I admitted. “She died.”

Madame Madeline looked confused. “Then there must be another one. Another child that your mother is connected to. And you, too. I feel these connections very strongly. There is something that separates this child from you, but it isn’t death. This connection is so strong that the other child must be alive (p.9).”

- **The Power of Love** Throughout the novel, the reader can see that Samantha has a loving mother. However, she also feels the need for the love of her long lost father and twin sister. So strong is her need to know if her father loves her, that she disobeys her mother! Her mother does not want her to look for her father. Is the bond of family so great that one cannot rest until love is conquered where it’s due? The power of love is stronger than words can describe. Samantha cannot explain why she needs to find her father, or sister if she is alive, she just needs to find them because she loves them.

Excerpt from the book:

This time the answering machine picked up on the second ring.

“Yo. We can’t come to the phone right now, so leave a message. We’ll get back to ya.”

“Hello? Dad?... It’s me, Sam...” My throat tightened as my eyes filled with tears. “Do you remember me? Please call me,” I said. I barely managed to get my cell phone number out before the tears started to roll down my cheeks (p.80).

- **Strength of Relationships** A very delicate theme found in many novels. Whether the relationship is between friends or family, relationships are complex and sometimes conflicting. We are all different people with different personalities. Samantha does not agree with her best friend Angela, they even

fight about their differences! Still, they remain best friends. Only a *strong* relationship between best friends would endure fights and disagreements. The same strength or weakness exists in a marriage, thus, the reason for long-lasting marriages and divorces alike. Samantha doesn't know why her parents are no longer together. She does know however, that she does not have any reason to hate her father and so she feels the strong need to find him. Samantha feels that she needs to fill that missing relationship in her life. She doesn't want Bob, her mother's fiancé to assume the relationship of her father when she hasn't even given her real father a chance to prove himself and/or explain himself. She is hopeful and wants to know the truth before she makes any conclusions about her feelings toward her dad. There is also another significant relationship to examine in the novel, that is the relationship of Samantha and her mother. Samantha does love her mother very much but there are aspects of the relationship that makes the reader wonder if their relationship could be better. For example, Samantha doesn't feel confident enough to talk to her mother openly about how she feels about finding her father or sister. In fact, Samantha does many things in secret because she feels her mother just wouldn't understand. Finally, an interesting relationship to examine is that one of siblings, more specifically, twins. First, Samantha needs to know if her sister is alive. Then, she wants to know all about her since she has missed ten years of what could have been the best relationship in her life.

Excerpt from the book:

*Tears stung my eyes. "Where are you?" I cried, pounding my fists into the dirt. "I told you, I'm right here! Hurry, Sam! Hurry! I clambered to my feet. I didn't know which way to go. "Where?" I cried desperately. "Where are you?" "Over here..."*

*The trees parted and all of a sudden I found myself at the edge of a lake. Finally I saw her: My sister. She was my age and she had on a long white nightgown exactly like mine. Her white-blond hair fanned out around her shoulders. She looked exactly like me (p. 55).*

## **CHARACTERS**

Although there are several characters in the novel, the following are the major characters and some are not major but significant to Samantha's character development.

**Samantha Wright** is the main character of the story. She is thirteen years old and is going through a difficult time accepting that she will soon have a new dad while her real dad is still living and she doesn't know what ever happened to him. She is searching for answers about what happened to her twin sister when she was three and why has her father not contacted her since she was six. Her mother is about to be married and Samantha feels that her mother is more concerned about plans for their new life and not about Sam's feelings in regards to her father and sister. So, she strongly believes her father would understand her better.

**Angela Hunter** is Samantha's best friend. She is outspoken, realistic and a very practical person. According to Samantha, she has a tendency to be more of a pessimist than an optimist. She too has divorced parents and has experienced a lot of hurt with a father who hasn't bothered to even call in three years. Still, she is a good friend willing to help Sam out in any way she can.

**Suzanne Sperling (Wright)** is Samantha's mother. She is a responsible and sensible mother to Samantha. She does not like to talk about the past and is very happy about her future with Bob, her fiancé. She is a nurse but originally in her life, she wanted to become a doctor.

**Bob** is Suzanne's fiancé. He is a policeman in Clearwater, Iowa and so are all his brothers. His father, also a policeman, died in the line of duty. He is a good man with a sense of humor.

**Joseph Wright** is Samantha's biological father. According to Suzanne, he was a good man but was too childish. He truly loved his family but dramatic circumstances drove him away and he never tried to contact Samantha or her mother since Sam was six years old.

**Sarah Wright** is Samantha's twin sister who was reported dead at the time of the accident in the quarry. However, because her body was never found, Samantha has hope that she might still be alive.

## **SETTING**

*Do you know the monkey man?* Takes place in Clearwater, Iowa, a typical suburb of any city in the United States. However, because Samantha is searching for her father, part of the story also takes place in Hill Valley, Minnesota and Richland, Minnesota.

## **POINT OF VIEW**

*Do you know the Monkey Man?* is written from a **third-person limited point of view**. As such, it holds readers' attention by keeping them somewhat "in the dark." Since readers see events through Samantha's eyes, they must discover the truth with her, step by suspenseful step, about what happened with her father and twin sister.

## **KEEPING A READING JOURNAL**

### **Format**

Use a half inch three-ring binder to insert pages and/or worksheets students complete before they read the novel, as they read the novel and after they read the novel. It can be organized by using *tabbed separators* (e.g. Before you read activities, As you read activities, and After you read activities) for the different materials used. Everything in this reading journal must pertain only to the novel they are reading so they have quick references to material as needed. When they are finished with this novel, the same three-ring binder and format can be used for the next book, and so forth. Each reading journal

can be collected in its own manila folder and can be accessible to the student and teacher if kept in a Portfolio Assessment folder that is usually kept in the classroom.

## BEFORE YOU READ

### Building on Prior Knowledge/ Media/Performance Options

1. Show the movie “*Paulie*” and have the students respond to the following prompt in a short essay. (Thematic connections: making tough choices, do the right thing, the power of love, relationships)

- Paulie overcomes several obstacles in his journey to finding Marie, the one and only who ever really loved him. As you will see, Paulie and Marie were separated against their will. **Select at least three significant events where Paulie made a difficult choice and how that choice ultimately helped him in his journey to finding Marie.** Use the following graphic organizer on a sheet of paper to help you take notes of some events, choices and outcomes as you watch the movie. These notes should help you with a short essay and class discussion after the movie.

Event	Choice(s) made	Do you think it was a good/bad choice?

- After the students have their ideas on the graphic organizer, allow students to share their opinions in small groups of three or four. Tell them to discuss, add, and/or change their ideas so they can more easily choose three of the many events that will clearly demonstrate the nature of Paulie’s choice and why it was a good one or a bad one made in his journey to finding Marie.
- Have the students get in groups to perform one event from their notes that will demonstrate a “tough” choice being made by Paulie. Then the group must explain why they think it was a good choice or a bad choice.
- Examine other relationships in the movie. For example, that of Marie’s father and mother to Marie, that of the pawn shop owner and Paulie, and others. Discuss Paulie’s attitude toward different people in his life and how each relationship influenced his personality. Then discuss how relationships in our lives ultimately impact our personality, our actions and our moral beliefs.

2. Find a recording of the nursery rhyme “Do you know the muffin man.” Play the recording of the rhyme as you introduce the book to the students. Ask students to look

closely at the cover of the book *Do you know the monkey man?* Then, ask students what they think the story might be about.

### 3. Creating Mental Images That Go Beyond Visualizing

“When we talk about visualizing, we usually talk about the pictures we see. However, all of the senses can be used when visualizing. When an author speaks of autumn, the reader might visualize a blazing fire and roasting marshmallows. Along with this visual image, the reader might smell the burning logs and taste the sweet stickiness of the marshmallows. Using all of the senses helps the reader create a more developed image of the text” (Bowman, 2005)

Before reading the book, *Do You Know the Monkey Man?* by Dori H. Butler, pass out a copy of the two newspaper articles Samantha finds by accident. Also, find a picture in a book or the internet of a **quarry** so that students who have never seen one can have an idea of what is a quarry. Then, have a couple of students stand up at the front of the classroom and read the articles as if they are real reporters. Ask the rest of the class to close their eyes and listen closely to the report. Then have the class visualize the report using all of their senses. Finally, have students volunteer their predictions of what the story might be about.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Article

CLEARWATER — An afternoon at the old Clearwater quarry turned tragic for a father and daughter last night. Joseph Wright, 21, of Clearwater, told police that he and his daughter Sarah, 3, had been canoeing at the quarry. The canoe capsized and Wright unsuccessfully searched the dark, murky water for his daughter. Jonathan Avery, 35, of Cedar Rapids and his wife Joanne, 32, told police that they were out walking at the quarry and saw someone fall into the water. A child’s life preserver was found in the canoe, but so far divers have been unable to recover the body. The water depth in some parts of the quarry can reach up to three hundred feet. “We hope Sarah somehow managed to get to shore and is out there somewhere, waiting to be found,” the missing child’s mother, Suzanne Wright, said late last night. Ms. Wright also reported that her daughter did not know how to swim. The search for Sarah Wright is expected to resume today. (p.34)

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Article

--- The search continues for three-year-old Sarah Wright of Clearwater. Sarah was last seen on Thursday afternoon at the old Clearwater quarry when the canoe she and her father were in capsized. A crew from Cedar Rapids has been dragging the quarry since Thursday, but according to Capt. Jim Morgan of the Linn County sheriff’s office, the search has been unsuccessful. “The truth is, he said, we have no idea where little Sarah’s body might be.” (p.35)

## **Building on Prior Knowledge/ Class Discussion and Reading Journal Ideas**

1. Today, there are many options to use if one wants to find someone who has lost contact with friends and/or family. Of course, if a person doesn't give away their current location, it is very possible they may not want to be found. What are some options available today to find a long, lost relative or friend?
2. There have been many studies done on the bond that exists between twins in a family. Do you know any twins? How are they alike? How are they different? Do they have a "unique bond" that siblings who are not twins may not have?
3. How is your relationship different from your mother and father? Are there things you would rather share and do with mom and other things you would rather do with dad? Parents are special in different ways. What are some favorite things you do with each one?
4. How might growing up as a twin sister or brother differ from growing up with a brother or sister who is not a twin? Are differences that different? How? Finish the following phrases that apply to you in your Reading Journal. Your answers can be as long or short as you want. If you plan on sharing any of your responses with the class, be considerate of your peers and be creative, humorous, tactful, and don't share your answers aloud if you think the responses will hurt someone's feelings. Choose accordingly.

- Growing up with an older sister ...
- Growing up with an older brother...
- Growing up with a twin sister...
- Growing up with a twin brother...
- Growing up with a younger sister...
- Growing up with a younger brother...
- Growing up with an adopted sister...
- Growing up with an adopted brother...
- Growing up with a foster sister...
- Growing up with a foster brother...
- Growing up with a step-sister...
- Growing up with a step-brother...
- Growing up as an only child...
- Growing up in a family with (# of children) ...

## **AS YOU READ**

### **For class discussion and/or Reading Journal Novel Organizers**

1. Keep track of the characters in the book in the following manner (see graphic organizer format below). Keep this organizer in your Reading Journal Binder and each time you come across a new character, write the name of the character, page

numbers where there is information about him/her and finally write a short description.

**Character \* Page #'s \* Collect pieces of information about this character as you read**

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1. Terrible things happen to good and bad people. It is how we choose to deal with problems and/or events that determine whether we will have a better life or a worse one. Sometimes we make good choices and sometimes we make bad choices. In the book, *Do you know the monkey man?* Samantha makes some difficult choices as she searches for her father. Make a list of some decisions Samantha makes, state whether you agree or disagree with her choices and justify your answer with a short explanation. Use the following format on your own paper to keep track of the many choices Samantha makes.

Choice Samantha Makes \* Consequence \* Why I think it is a good or bad choice

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2. *Do You Know the Monkey Man?* is primarily a suspense mystery novel about **conflict**. Samantha experiences **internal conflict** as she suddenly becomes extremely determined to find her father. For instance, she constantly has to explain to her best friend that she must, against all odds, find out what happened to her father ... and sister. Her best friend tries to persuade Sam to give up the search because it's all to "weird" and she might not like her dad once she finds him; if she finds him. She doesn't have any support from her mother because her mother wants to desperately move on with her life and forget the past. Samantha feels no one really understands this personal need she has to bring closure to this chapter in her life. There are several conflicts that submerge throughout the novel, but the one central and main **conflict** that motivates Samantha to keep on looking for answers is the need to find her father and to solve the mystery of her twin sister's death. Did Sarah really drown? They never found her body and the psychic told Sam, her sister must be alive? Why did her dad stop contacting her? Where has *he* been for ten years? Who can Samantha turn to for answers? With great artistic talent, the author weaves events and characters into an integrated ball of suspense, and although Samantha keeps finding a window of hope, finding *the truth* seems almost impossible.

Use the following organizer chart to note how each conflict, large and small, is resolved.

**Conflict \* Reason for Conflict \* Resolution**

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*Desire to find father    Must keep it secret from mother    Decides it's okay to look for father because she needs to know before being adopted by step-dad*

---

*Seeking help from a psychic*

---

*Attending Bob's mother's birthday*

---

*Finding newspaper articles about sister's death packed away by mother*

---

*Using mother's credit card to hire a detective*

---

*Samantha calling her father on the phone and not letting mom know*

---

*Going to Hill Valley without mother's permission*

---

*Taking the bus to mall instead of heading home*

---

## **Key Vocabulary**

1. Follow the provided model to define words you do not know in *Do You Know the Monkey Man?* by Dori H. Butler. Keep record of these words in your Reading Journal in a tabbed section of the last few pages. Title it "Glossary." Be sure to **write the word**, **the definition** and a **context where it's found in the novel** followed by the **page number**.

**Model:**            **psychic** *n* : a person apparently sensitive to nonphysical forces; *also* : medium.

"I didn't even know for sure that Madame Madeline *was* a real psychic. Let's face it, most psychics are fakes." (p.2)

## Reading Questions for Chapters 1-10

### Knowledge

1. Who is the main character? Describe her according to the information you find in the first ten chapters.
2. The following characters are mentioned in the first ten chapters. Write a brief description of their relationship to each other and Samantha.

Samantha

Angela

Madame Madeline

Suzanne

Bob

Sarah

Grandma Sperling

The Hunter family

Sherlock

Joseph Wright

Mrs. Sandvick

Coral

3. What did Sam find in the boxes when she was packing?
4. Of all the things she finds in the boxes, what causes Sam to consider the idea that her sister might be alive?
5. What happened to Sam while she was playing softball?
6. According to Sam *what* wasn't fair and made her jealous?
7. What happened to Sam during and after the dream she had about her sister?
8. What favor does Coral do for Sam?
9. Sam's mom told her to use the credit card only when?
10. What exactly happens that makes Samantha strongly believe she found her father?

### Comprehension

1. Explain why Sam goes to see a psychic.
2. List five key scenes in the first ten chapters and put them in the order that they happened.
3. Why are there no pictures of Samantha's father anywhere in the house?
4. Why does Angela say, "Real fathers are overrated?"
5. Why doesn't Sam like Bob's family if they are so nice to her?
6. Why did Bob's mom make a dress for Samantha?
7. What exactly does Sam remember about her dad?
8. Why didn't Samantha's mom tell her about what happened to her sister?
9. What kind of affect does "the dream" have on Samantha? What happens to her physically and mentally?
10. Why does Angela insist that "there is no way that Sarah could still be alive?"

## Application

1. Sam doesn't tell her mother she is looking for her father. Do you think she should have told her from the beginning? Give a brief explanation why she should have?
2. Should there be an age limit to consulting psychics? Should there be a parent consent? Why or why not?
3. Why would Suzanne and Bob want to build a new house instead of living in one of each other's houses after the wedding?
4. What do you think is so unique about the relationship between twins?
5. What clues does Sam find in the first ten chapters that make her more sure that she can find her father and possibly her sister?
6. Do you think it's a good idea that she find her father? Why or why not?
7. Do you agree with Sam's mom why she never told her about what happened with her sister in the quarry?
8. If you were Sam's friend like Coral or best friend like Angela, would you help Sam in any way she asked? Would you be so loyal? Why or why not?
9. What was your first thought when Samantha's dad didn't return the call right away?
10. Then, Sam finds out the phone has been disconnected. Why do you think it was disconnected?

## Reading Questions for Chapters 11-21

### Knowledge

1. What is Angela's advice to Samantha after Samantha finds out that the number she called has been disconnected?
2. Why does Sam need to go to 7430 Sheridan Avenue in Richland, Minnesota?
3. Why will Suzanne not allow Sam to accompany Angela to Hill Valley?
4. How does Sam finally reach Richland?
5. What instructions does Suzanne give Sam, when the phone rings the evening of the day they arrive Richland?
6. Does Sam get on the correct bus the next morning?
7. When Sam meets T.J., what is T.J.'s immediate reaction?
8. How did Joe finally arrive home?
9. What childhood gift do both Sam and T.J. own that is identical?
10. Who calls the police?

### Comprehension

1. What "new idea" took shape in Samantha's head after Angela suggests Joe could be a criminal, a dealer, or a kidnapper? Why does Sam start to believe that he could be a kidnapper?
2. When Angela wants Sam to do the right thing and tell her mother that she thinks she has found Joe, what is Sam's response? Why?

3. When Suzanne does not allow Sam to go to Hill Valley it's because *she needs her too*. Why do you think Suzanne needs Sam at her shower?
4. What does "a half-empty" kind of person mean? What does a half-full kind of person mean? Which kind is Sam? Which kind is Angela?
5. When Angela and Andrew arrived at their father's house, in what manner did they get out of the car? Why do you think?
6. What aspects of T.J.'s story seem "twisted?"
7. Why can't the girls compare childhood pictures?
8. According to the girls, how are their parents very different.
9. What finally drove Joe to tell about his story at the quarry to Sam?
10. Why might T.J. have to go live with Suzanne and Sam? Would it be fair to T.J.? Would it be fair to Joe?

### **Application**

1. If you were Samantha's best friend, what three things might you have done differently than Angela? Why?
2. Why do you think T.J. doesn't want to face the truth about her sister?
3. Do you think Joe is sincere the whole time? Why or why not?
4. If Joe's mom had not been sick, do you think Joe would have really left town? Or do you think he would have stayed put? Explain your answer.
5. Do you think it was fair that Sam's mom called the police? Would you have done the same? Explain both answers.
6. Do you think Joe should serve jail time regardless of what the law says about what he did? Why or why not.
7. Do you think Sam and T.J. will ever be best friends? Why or why not?
8. Do you think Sam will allow Bob to adopt her? What would you do?
9. Do you think T.J. should go back to using her real name, Sarah? Why would this be a good idea? Why would this be a bad idea?
10. If you were Suzanne, would you forgive Joe? Why or why not?

### **AFTER YOU READ**

#### **Multimedia and Internet Options**

1. The media is an amazing "monster." Pretend that somehow, the media got a hold of this story! What would the news say on national television? Would they make matters worse or better for the families? Ask students to raise their hand if they think the media would make Joe look like a crook and then ask students to raise their hand if they think the media would make Joe look like a martyr. Have the students sit on opposite sides of the classroom. Once there are two sides, try to even the numbers out by asking for volunteers. Then, ask the students to split each side into two groups (hopefully, there will be two groups for Joe and two groups against Joe. Each group should carry out the following assignments:

- **Notetaker** (Writes down all the notes)
  - **Reporter** (Presents the story on Video as if it was the local news)
  - **Videographer** (Videotapes the news report)
  - **Director** (Organizes the content of the script but takes suggestions from everyone in the group)
  - **Task coordinator** (Keeps everyone on task, motivates, redirects, suggests, writes the steps that must be completed in a timely fashion, and assigns extra duties in a fair fashion. For example, who brings in props, who creates introduction to report, who creates an appropriate and realistic background, etc.)
2. What are other readers saying about *Do You Know the Monkey Man*? Visit the following web sites.
- <http://www.amazon.com>.
  - <http://www.ipl.org>
  - <http://www.dorihillestadbutler.com>

**A note from the preparer:** Consider using some ideas in the “Interdisciplinary Connections” for After Reading the novel.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

### Art

1. As suggested earlier, keeping a collection of reading journal entries, worksheets, graphic organizers, etc. in a manila folder for easy reference and assessment is a good idea. The cover design for the novel is very appropriate. After getting through chapter five of the novel, each part of the cover design brings new meaning to the book. The pictures of the two little girls who look about three-years-old are Samantha and Sarah, the stuffed monkey is the one stuffed animal their father gave each girl, and the melancholy, blond teen is Samantha. Still, be sure to give the students the opportunity to explain how each part of the cover represents the story. Further, have students design another cover they deem appropriate for the novel on the manila folder they will be using to place all the written activities they will complete for this novel. Students can use any medium of their choice to depict any theme(s) that would make a good cover. Sometimes, if students want, there can be a class contest for different categories of the covers. For example, any student can enter the contest for the following categories, best overall artwork, most original design, most appropriate idea, and possibly most likely to be chosen by the author if the author would like to change her cover!  
Individual assignment.
2. Have students bring in a stuffed monkey they think Samantha’s dad gave his two little girls. The author never really gives a specific description of the monkey and only mentions it briefly in chapters four and sixteen. It would be interesting what students bring in since in chapter sixteen, Sarah (T.J.) tells Sam that her father

told her Grandma Wright made it for her. So, what does this monkey look like? Students can make it, borrow it, or buy it, but they have to bring one to class. Then, the classes reading the novel can vote on the most likely to be Sam's and T.J.'s monkey. Individual assignment.

3. Have students draw a picture or cut and paste a picture with clip art, or use models from magazines of the Wright family right before the accident. What did they look like? Suzanne, Joe, Samantha and Sarah? Once again, there can be a class vote for different categories created by the students or you can provide the categories. Some really fun categories can include, most humorous, most realistic, most appropriate (according to descriptions in the book), most creative, most artistic, and even the most unlikely picture! Individual assignment.
4. Look at the list of characters provided in this study guide. Have students draw, cut and paste from catalogues and magazines, or use clip art in the computer to create an image of each character. *Later, in the story students can use them as puppets as they dramatize some dialogues in the book.* This is particularly a good idea when one wants to revisit the novel to think about the meaning of a passage. Kids love to read aloud, but somehow it's more fun with a puppet even if they are young adults! Each student should pick to do at least the six characters listed in the study guide and then they can choose to do four more of their choice in the book.

### **Social Studies/Geography**

1. The names of the cities and interstates used in the novel are fictional. However, the author gives several "hints" in the novel for the reader to have an idea of where the cities mentioned *might* be in Iowa and Minnesota. Using all the references in the novel with regards to cities, places and routes, have students create a map showing both Minnesota and Iowa and draw in all the places and routes mentioned in the novel. It is important to mention that the larger the map, the better quality of what the students will add to the map. It would be a good idea to possibly use a whole wall covered in paper so that as the students read the novel, they can add and change places and routes. The maps might include, the trip Angela, Andrew and Samantha took when they went to visit Angela's dad, the places Joe Wright lived since his divorce with Suzanne and show where he lived first, second, third, etc.. Some more detailed parts in the maps would include places mentioned in Clearwater, and places mentioned in route to Richland. For example, where would the quarry be? The Mall of America? Etc. Have partners be responsible for different places and routes and have partners place their assigned place or route as the novel is read.
2. Describe and discuss the differences in the neighborhoods mentioned in the novel. Some neighborhoods that the students might mention would include Samantha's old and new neighborhood, the psychic's house, Angela's and Andrew's

- neighborhood, Mr. and Mrs. Hunt's neighborhood, Joe's and T.J.'s neighborhood, Bob's mother's neighborhood, etc. What might the neighborhoods mentioned say about the socioeconomic status of the families mentioned in the novel? Discuss why you inferred your conclusions; first in small groups and then share as a class. This activity would make a great journal entry; then students can look on their journal entry for class discussion.
3. A lot of people know about "The Mall of America." In fact, these huge malls are all over the United States and even Puerto Rico! Have you ever been there? Have students find out how many of these malls exist, what makes them different from a "typical" mall, and where are all these malls located in the United States. This activity can be done in pairs.
  4. Samantha doesn't make Iowa or Minnesota sound like places people would want to visit. However, she never says she doesn't like living in Iowa. With one or more classmates, design a brochure to encourage people to take a trip to Iowa or Minnesota. Be sure to use words and pictures in your brochure that will make children and adults interested in a trip to one of these states.
  5. When Samantha finally gets a chance to meet her sister in person, visit her house, and see her room. She begins to see that they probably have many things in common but they are also different in many ways. Create a Ven Diagram on one page of your journal (Two overlapping circles) and write Samantha above one circle and T.J. above the other circle. At the end of the novel, to do a character analysis, write all the individual characteristics of each character in the appropriate circle. Be sure to write all the similar characteristics only in the middle part where the two circles overlap. Then, using this graphic organizer, write a journal entry of which of the two twins you would probably make better friends with and why?

## Science

1. The incident at the quarry is a significant event in the story. Sarah was presumed dead although her body was never recovered. What does a quarry look like? Have students research what a quarry filled with water, like the one in Clearwater, might look like. How realistic is it that a three-year-old might have survived? Is there any chance at all? Students can explain why or why not using scientific they can gather from interviewing professionals such as doctors, engineers, people who work in quarries, etc. Students can do this in partners.
2. What do studies in science say about special connections, similar personalities, tastes in clothes, interest in activities, etc. twins might share? Have students research articles about twins in regards to anything that makes this biological relationship different from siblings who are not twins. Students can do this in partners.

## Health

1. Have students explain Suzanne's behavior and/or attitude about the past, present and future. What was she like as a younger person and as an older person? Why does she want to forget the past completely? Is it healthier to never again discuss the death of a loved one or is it better to talk about it? Is it healthier to lie about past events or be honest with children once they are old enough to understand? Could Samantha have had a different attitude about looking for her father if her mother just told her everything when she turned twelve? This activity can be conducted orally in small groups and/or class discussion.

## Mathematics

1. You do the math! How much time elapses from the very beginning of the novel to the very end? This is a great "novel organizer" activity. Have each student keep a timeline and have them add each day with one or more significant events of the day written by the day. Look at the Chapter summary section of this study guide to help students narrow down the events. This is a good way to help students organize the major events and characters of the novels. For those students with artistic talent, they can either draw a picture or write a summary statement of an event. As the timeline gets longer, the students can glue or tape additional pieces of paper to the timeline. This is an individual activity.

## Language Arts

1. There are many people, places and things that are interrelated in the novel. As Samantha solves her mystery, she mentions specific names, places and things that are significant to solving the mystery. On a piece of paper from your journal, create three columns and title each column with "people," "places" and "things." As the students read the novel, have them add the nouns that are important to Samantha as she learns more information that will help her find her father and sister. When the students finish the novel, they can create their own crossword puzzle or word search using only these nouns. They need to make a key as well. Then, have students pair up and exchange puzzles or searches and have a "timed" contest! Who ever finishes their activity *correctly* first, second and third, each gets a small prize (the dollar store has lots of gadgets!).
2. At the end of the novel, it *seems* everyone is happy. Pretend Samantha never tried looking for her father. What might her life be like without her biological father and her twin sister? Consider this, she now has a twin sister to grow old with and a father who loves her with all his heart. Write two papers. One should describe Samantha's life without her father and sister. The other composition should describe Samantha's life with her father and sister. This is a creative writing assignment and it is recommended to be completed after reading and discussing the novel.

3. When Samantha finds out her sister is alive and she meets her in person, she is very happy. If Samantha were to write an entry in her diary, let's say Chapter 22 of the novel, what would she write?

## Reading

1. Notice in a mystery novel, one person, event or object leads to more knowledge about a character or idea. Sometimes, in fact, a lot of times we are lead to believe completely the wrong thing. In *Do You Know the Monkey Man?* we keep reading because we want to solve the mystery with Samantha. We want to know if her sister is still alive and find her father. Read another book similar to this novel only in the aspect of suspense. In *Nicky Deuce Welcome to the Family* by Steven R. Schirripa and Charles Fleming (2005), one will be hooked right away. It is a mystery but with humor embedded in almost every page! Nicky is not looking for a lost relative, instead he makes a really big assumption about his uncle early on in the novel. Read the novel and make a list of events, words, people etc. that allow Nicky to build up his assumption that his uncle is a mafia guy. Then, have a class discussion about why you liked or disliked the novel. Have fun reading!
2. We read in the novel that Samantha likes to read. She starts a book and finishes it within days. She lived a pretty good mystery herself! What books might you recommend to her and why?
3. This activity is based on the "greatness of unconditional love." Read the picture book, *Nacho and Lolita* (2005) written by Pam Muñoz Ryan and Illustrated by Claudia Rueda. Refer to Chapter 17, page 159. Joe says the following,

"I never stopped thinking about you, Sam," Joe said, his elbows on the table, leaning toward me. "I knew I could never go looking for you. But I always hoped you'd come looking for me. I just didn't think you'd come looking so soon. And I never figured out what I'd do if you actually found me."

There are different kinds of love for different relationships. For example, the love of parents toward their children, the love of children toward their parents, husband and wife, best friends, sisters and brothers, etc.

**Journal entry:** Is there anyone in your life you love unconditionally that you would do anything, sacrifice anything, travel across anything to demonstrate your love? Why do you love this/these individuals so much?

## Music

1. Have students play the music to "Do you know the muffin man" on their instrument. If they do not play an instrument, they need to sing the nursery rhyme as they accompany someone who does play an instrument. Students can do this in small groups of up to four so that each group has at least one person who plays an instrument. Students can tape their performances on cassette. The teacher can

number them at random and all classes reading the novel can participate in voting for the most talented performance. Students shouldn't be shy about doing this because it's not videotaped.

2. Samantha's personality and mood changes throughout the novel. If this novel were to be made into a movie, what song would you choose to be played at the beginning of the movie, before it starts? What song would you choose to play between chapters five and six? What song would you choose to play between chapters nineteen and twenty? What song would you choose to play at the end of the movie? Copy the lyrics to your four songs in the order of the novel/movie and provide a hardcopy for the teacher. This activity can be done in groups of four. Each person in the group has to be prepared to explain why they chose a particular song for the particular spot in the movie. Each group should be ready to play a one four- minute excerpt of their four songs (using a one minute excerpt from each song) for a presentation to the class. Also, a brief one minute presentation on why the four songs were chosen. Each person in the group has to support their choice in during this minute. So, each group has five minutes to present their selections. The class then votes on the best combination of four songs. The winning group gets a prize or extra credit points.

## **RELATED READINGS**

If you enjoyed this novel, here are some other novels you might enjoy.

*Lupita Mañana (1981)* by Patricia Beatty

*West to a Land of Plenty (1998)* by Jim Murphy

*Nothing but the Truth (1991)* Avi

*Friends (2005)* Edited by Ann M. Martin and David Levithan

*Nicky Deuce Welcome to the Family (2005)* by Steven R. Schirripa and Charles Fleming

If there are any students with a Spanish-speaking background, the following books contain several stories with related themes to *Do You Know the Monkey Man?*

*It's All in the Frijoles (2000)* by Yolanda Nava

*An Island Like You: Stories from the Barrio (1996)* by Judith Ortiz Cofer

*Béisbol en abril y otras historias (1990 )* by Gary Soto

*Baseball in April and other stories (1990)* by Gary Soto

**Teacher Study Guide for *Do You Know the Monkey Man?* (2005)**

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