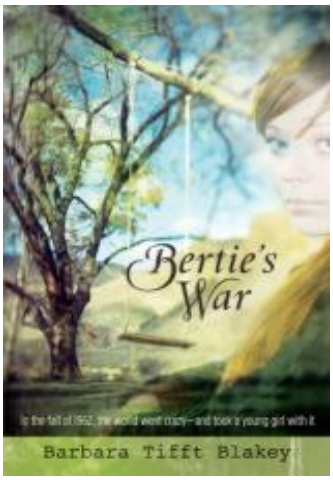
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Bertie?s War

by Barbara Blakey



About the Book

Everything has been going wrong for Bertie lately.

No matter how hard she tries to do and say the right thing, Bertie keeps tumbling into embarrassing --- and sometimes dangerous --- situations. Her stern father has too many rules, her know-it-all sister won?t stop teasing her, and her mischievous younger brother keeps getting into trouble. But what makes her really afraid are those Communist missiles pointed right at the U.S. As Bertie starts seventh grade in the fall of 1962, news of these missiles throws the nation into a panic and Bertie suddenly feels completely out of control. Can Bertie confront an ugly truth about herself and face her fears --- once and for all?

Discussion Guide

1. Throughout the story references are made to literary figures, such as Arwen in Rivendell. Record the characters, the novels from which they come, and whether or not you recognize them. What does Roberta?s reading choices reveal about her character? Explain.

2. Discuss a time someone else?s actions impacted you, like Aaron setting Bertie?s playhouse on fire. How did it make you feel? How did you react?

3. Of what are you afraid? Why? How do you deal with your fear?

4. Discuss the relationships between the siblings in the story. How does it compare to the relationship you have with your siblings? Of Aaron, Roberta or Tami, whom would you most like to have as a member of your family? Why? Whom would you least like? Why?

5. When you disobey your family?s rules, how are you disciplined? How does it make you feel? For what have you been disciplined? How often? Does the discipline make you want to obey better? Why or why not?

6. Roberta slips into make-believe day-dreams to help her deal with life. How do you deal with hardships in your life? Explain.

7. Roberta feels happy and safe at the ocean and with Oma. Where are you happiest? Why? With whom do you feel safest? Why?

8. How did you react to the scene in the story when the baby mice are killed? What would you have done if you were there? Have you ever seen an animal die? What happened? How did you feel? What did you think?

9. Have you ever lost someone close to you either because they died or moved away? When do you miss them the most? Do you think he or she misses you? Why or why not. Explain how you feel when you think about him or her. Do you believe you will ever see them again? Why or why not?

10. Tell about a time you were extremely disappointed like Roberta and the dinosaur bone. What happened? How did you feel? How did you get over your disappointment?

11. Compare how Roberta and Aaron spend their summer days with your summer activities. Do you think summer in the country is better or worse than a summer in town? Explain.

12. What do you think makes the world feel unsafe at times? What do you think should be done to make the world safer? Explain.

13. Why are rules so important to Roberta? How does trying to keep rules add to her fear? How does having no rules add to her fear? Is having rules good or bad? Explain.

14. If you knew you were going to spend up two weeks in one room with nine other people, who would you want the nine people to be and what specific items would you want to have with you? Give reasons for your choices.

15. Do you think Roberta will be less fearful now? Why or why not?

16. Explain the last line of the story: ?I wondered if Dad knew that sometimes Love wears a red-and-black plaid mackinaw.? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Author Bio

Barbara Blakey is a freelance writer and the author of the award-winning literature-based language arts program Total Language Plus. Barbara is also a nationally recognized speaker, conducting workshops and seminars for Christian women?s groups and homeschooling conventions for more than fifteen years. She lives in Olympia, Washington, with her husband, Terry.

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