



# JUNONIA

by KEVIN HENKES

Discussion Guide

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



PHOTO BY MICHELLE CORPORA

**KEVIN HENKES** is the creator of many books for children. He has written both picture books and novels, including *Olive's Ocean* (for which he received a Newbery Honor), *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*, and *Kitten's First Full Moon* (winner of the Caldecott Medal). He and his wife, Laura Dronzek, live with their son and daughter in Madison, Wisconsin. You can visit him online at [www.kevinhenkes.com](http://www.kevinhenkes.com).

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Discussion guide created by Edward T. Sullivan, a librarian and author who has written many articles about and reviews of children's and young adult books.

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

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Alice Rice is nine-going-on-ten. The week of her tenth birthday, Alice and her parents go to Florida, just as they do every year. But this time some of the people who are always there are missing and some new people have come, which unsettles Alice, who wants things to be exactly the same as they always are. Alice comes to realize that there are some things in life she cannot keep the way they used to be, and that it can take a long time to get used to some changes. Turning ten turns out to be a bigger deal than Alice ever anticipated.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. Discuss the concept of foreshadowing with your students. When Alice and her parents are crossing the bridge to the island, Alice gets a bad feeling she has never felt before. Ask students what they think this could mean for Alice's vacation, and ask them if they can find any other examples of foreshadowing in the story.
2. How does Alice feel about what she calls the "speck" on her face? If you could change something about your own appearance, what would it be?
3. Instead of believing "that God was an old man in flowing robes with a white beard and a temper to beware of," Alice imagines "her perfect, personal God" as female. "She would live in the ocean because water covered most of the earth, and her name would be Junonia because a junonia was such a rare shell, the one Alice coveted more than any other" (p. 26). What would be your image of a "perfect, personal God"?
4. Why is Alice disappointed that Kate is coming with her boyfriend and his daughter?
5. When Alice and her father are driving back to the cottage from the shell store, she is "angry at her father, Kate, the world. She felt the pull of something beyond her control, something unseen and unfair" (p. 33). Was there a time in your life when you have felt like Alice? What made you feel that way?
6. What does Mallory say and do to make Alice realize that she is lucky to be nine, almost ten?
7. When Alice learns that Mallory's parents are divorced and that her mother has gone to France, she thinks that "if the details of her life and Mallory's life were interchanged, she, Alice, would be miserable" (p. 57). Is there someone you have empathized with in a similar way?
8. What is Alice's reaction when she hears Mr. Barden call Mallory "the prettiest girl I ever saw" (p. 68)? Do you think Alice is overreacting?
9. When Mallory shows Alice Munchkitty, she says her dad said that there are "some things in life that you can't fix to the way they used to be" and that "it takes a long time to get used to some things that are new, or when things change" (p. 86). What does Alice realize when she hears this? What are some new and changed things that Alice has to get used to?
10. Why does Alice make a point of telling Mallory that she has ten gelato spoons—and no extras—because *she* is ten (p. 120)? How does Alice feel later when she finds the blue gelato spoon she'd thought was gone? Why does she decide to send that spoon (and another one for Munchkitty) to Mallory?
11. What do you think Mr. Wishmeier means when he tells Alice, "It gets better" (p. 153)?
12. When Alice goes to the beach alone for the first time, she finds the experience exhilarating, and it makes her feel free. Was there an experience in your life when you have felt the same as Alice?
13. How does Alice feel about Mr. Wishmeier's leaving a junonia on the beach for her to find? What does she discover about the junonia shell that makes her happy?
14. When Alice and her parents cross the bridge back to the mainland, she thinks: "Here I am. I have my parents. We're alone together. I will never be old. I will never die. It's right now. I'm ten" (p. 176). What do you think she means by this? What do you think makes her think this?
15. Discuss the concept of metaphor with your students. Note that the novel opens and closes with Alice crossing a bridge between the island and the mainland, and ask them why that might be a metaphor for her life. Ask them to identify other examples of metaphor in the story.