

A Discussion Guide for

The Last Grand Adventure
By Rebecca Behrens

About This Book

Twelve-year-old Bea finds herself on a unique road trip with her grandmother, as they search for her grandmother's long lost sister—the legendary Amelia Earhart—in this charming and poignant novel from the author of *When Audrey Met Alice* and *Summer of Lost and Found*.



It's the summer of 1967—and Bea's world has been shaken up. Her mother is off in San Francisco, while her father has remarried in Los Angeles, adding a stepmom and younger stepsister to the mix. Bea, unsure of all the change happening around her, feels stuck.

So when her grandmother, Pidge, moves to a retirement community, Bea agrees to visit and help her adjust. But it turns out her grandmother isn't interested in "settling in"—what Pidge really wants is to hop a train to Atchison, Kansas, where she believes she'll be reunited with her long-missing older sister: Amelia Earhart. And she wants Bea to be her sidekick on this secret trip.

At first, Bea thinks her grandmother's plan sounds a little crazy. But Pidge does have thirty years of mysterious letters, written in "Meelie's" unmistakable voice, all promising to reunite. This journey might be just the adventure Bea needs. . . .

Bea and Pidge set off on their quest to reach Amelia. But getting halfway across the country proves to be far more of an adventure than either bargained for. Their journey takes them from the desert to the heartland, in planes, trains, and automobiles. And their search just might lead to surprising truths about their family—and each other.

About the Author

Rebecca Behrens grew up in Wisconsin, studied in Chicago, and now lives with her husband in New York City. A former textbook editor, Rebecca loves writing and reading about kids full of moxie and places full of history. She is the author of the middle-grade novels *When Audrey Met Alice*, which *BookPage* called "a terrific work of blended realistic and historical fiction," and *Summer of Lost and Found*, which *Kirkus* praised as "a good find indeed." Visit her online at www.rebeccabehrens.com.

Questions for Discussion

1. At the beginning of the story, how does Bea feel about travel and adventuring?
2. What are Bea's first impressions of her grandmother? How did you feel about Pidge at the beginning? Would you want to stay at her home, or travel with her?
3. Throughout the book, Bea describes the food she eats at home and on the road, clothing she and others wear, and popular music, TV, and films. How did those details help you know the book's time period? What did they tell you about the culture of the late 1960s?
4. What do the letters tell you about Meelie's personality? What do they tell you about her relationship with Pidge? How might the letters, and the memories they share, be different if they were written from Pidge's point of view?
5. How do Bea's journal entries help you understand her character? Do they show her feelings changing over time? Explain.
6. What effect do Meelie's letters have on how Bea feels about adventures and uncertainty? How do they make her feel about her family?
7. Bea and Pidge meet several other women and girls during their journey: Snooky, Ruth, Margo, the Wendell family, and Viola. How are those women like Bea and Pidge? How are they different? How does meeting them affect Bea?
8. How does Bea think her mother will feel about Bea and Pidge's adventure? How does she think it will change their relationship?
9. Bea and Pidge take several different modes of transportation throughout the book: cars, trains, buses, and airplanes. Which do you best like to travel by, and why?
10. For what reasons do Bea and Pidge feel pressure to get to Atchison by July 24?
11. How do Bea's feelings about being a sister change over the course of the book? What factors contribute to her change of heart?
12. Many of the characters in the book keep secrets. How did you feel about the ones Bea kept from her family, and those Pidge kept from Bea? How did secrets affect their relationships?
13. The author uses sensory language throughout the book to describe the places Bea and Pidge visit. How effective did you think those descriptions were at creating the setting? Which setting would you most like to travel to, and why?
14. Why do you think the author chose to use chapter titles? Pick your favorite chapter title. What do you think it means, and why is it your favorite?
15. How would you characterize the relationship between Bea and her family at the end? Has Bea's family situation changed over the course of the story?
16. Adventure, bravery, and anxiety are themes throughout the book. Bea is surprised to learn that even Meelie felt fear at times, saying, "I always kind of thought that brave people didn't feel afraid when they were doing their daring things." Do you agree with that statement? Explain why or why not.
17. At the end, Bea decides she is content with the letters remaining a mystery. Do you feel the same? What do you think is the "truth" about the letters, and why?
18. Why do you think the author used real quotations from the Earharts in telling this story? Which quotation is your favorite, and why?
19. What details about Amelia Earhart's life did you learn from reading this book?
20. What theories does the author share about Amelia Earhart's disappearance? What do you think happened to Amelia Earhart?