



Stand By Me

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eBook ISBN 978-1-84717-994-4**Judi Curtin**

Teaching Guide

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RATIONALE & THEMES

Molly and Beth are concerned about Graham, an entertaining and eccentric relative and septuagenarian. He seems saddened by a letter he has received.

Keen to help, the girls prompt him to reveal a story of a childhood friendship that has haunted him with guilt for decades.

The letter announced the death of his childhood friend.

Determined to help, the girls use Rico's Time Portal to return to 1960 and attempt to resolve the issue.

Their initial intervention is ineffective, and they must return, bringing Graham with them. Suspending his disbelief, he is plunged into a world of forgotten memories.

Events swirl as they struggle to bring meaning to what they discover, and allow Graham to find peace and leave his guilt in the past.

The themes explored are:

- Friendship
- Bereavement and loss
- Time travel
- Guilt
- Disability
- Social class bias
- Intergenerational relationships

SUMMARY

Worried by their friend Graham's sudden sadness, Molly and Beth coax him to tell the story of a childhood friendship, splintered by tragedy and class prejudice, that still fills him with guilt.

A recent letter informing him of his friend's death has upset him.

Determined to help, Molly and Beth revisit the Time Portal in Rico's shop and return to 1960.

Unable to overcome prejudice, their trip is unsuccessful and they return frustrated.

Determined not to abandon their quest, they reveal their secret to Graham, inviting him to accompany them for another visit to the past. He reluctantly agrees.

Adopting a different approach, they seek out his friend, now living in an institution for the blind. Graham believes that her blindness was caused by an accident that he was partly responsible for.

Without the comfort of 21st-century gadgets, they must use their ingenuity and Graham's memory of the time to locate his friend Jeanie.

When they finally meet, in the idyllic setting of her garden, Molly and Beth deftly question her and unpick the story. It gently unravels to reveal a progressive illness that robbed her of her sight, which Graham was unaware of.

Graham realises that his friendship has always been a support for her, and that her life is fulfilled and she is contented.

Buoyed by these assurances, he returns, at peace with his past.

Section 1 Back to Rico's Pages 5-83

APPROACH

This is a gentle tale of a relationship damaged by a tragic accident and class prejudice. It chronicles how Molly and Beth move across time as they try to help their friend Graham find peace.

The themes sit firmly within the remit of the SPHE and PDMU guidelines. Development can be more effectively facilitated with small-group discussion.

The guide is divided into 3 sections to reflect the development of the story.

SUMMARY

Graham is Beth's dad's uncle, and she and Molly consider him the craziest septuagenarian they know.

When they meet him on their way to buy ice cream, he is rescuing a family of ducks. He then leads them in some hill-rolling excitement, before his example in the animal shelter persuades them to donate their treat money too.

Later, visiting Graham, the girls watch as he shares his meal with Charlie, a homeless man he has befriended.

Visiting Graham again, Molly and Beth detect a sadness that surrounds him.

Probing gently, they prompt a recollection about Jeanie, his friend, and her family's disapproval of him. As the memory becomes painful, he shifts the conversation.

When they leave, the girls confess to each other that they tried to read a letter on his table and are unable to make sense of what they glimpsed. However, their curiosity to hear the story drives them to raise the subject with Graham again.

The girls are able to discover that Graham's sadness is due to the news that Jeanie, his childhood friend, has recently died.

Gradually, during three visits, Graham relives the events of the tragic summer of 1960.

He had noticed that his friend Jeanie had become disinterested, and he suggested they climb their favourite tree as a distraction.

Jeanie reached the top first and Graham had to watch helpless as she slipped and tumbled, landing heavily at the base.

His last glimpse of her was as the ambulance stretchered her away.

Enquiring at her home, he met a hostile reception from her mum, who informed him coldly that Jeanie was blind and he must never try to contact her again.

Devastated by Graham's story, Molly and Beth determine to find a solution. They take advantage of Rico's Time Portal to visit 1960 and attempt an intervention.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read p8.** Graham has rescued a family of ducks, observing that he was the only one prepared to help. Why are some people always prepared to help, while others prefer only to watch? What makes people more likely to offer to help?
- **Read p12.** Molly and Beth are persuaded to donate their ice cream money to the animal shelter. What was the prompt that changed their minds? How did the poster encourage them? Was this a deliberate tactic? How are images used to control how we feel?
- **Read pp32 & 54.** Molly and Beth persist with their questions until Graham reveals the story of Jeanie's accident. Was their prying justified? How should you respect another person's privacy?
- **Read pp56-57.** Jeanie's mother disapproves of Graham because she believes he is rough. What does she see when she looks at him? How accurate is her view? How does prejudice affect how we see others? Should parents approve their children's friends?

ACTIVITIES

1. Really silly (Read pp9-10)

Graham persuades Molly and Beth to roll down the hill. It is silly behaviour, but they all enjoy it very much.

Can you describe something silly that you like to do that others might think inappropriate?

Explain what it is and why you do it.

2. Graham (Read pp16-17)

Graham's home and the things it contains are unconventional, and this reflects his eccentric character.

From the description of his home, decide on five statements that you think are facts.

Use your fact statements to give five opinions that you think Graham might agree with.

3. The dentist (Read p20)

Molly and Beth believe that Graham's description of any situation would be comic.

Later that evening, Graham remembers the girl's challenge and recalls an entertaining visit he had to the dentist on a trip abroad. He writes a short account of it to amuse them.

Create the account he wrote for them.

4. The mystery (Read pp43-44)

Molly and Beth are intrigued that Graham has never tried to find Jeanie and visit her. They believe that the events of 1960 are the reason.

Before you read any further, use your imagination to decide what might have happened, and write a brief description of your theory.

When you reach the end of the story, you can compare your version with the author's version.

5. Attraction (Read pp55-58)

Jeanie and Graham recognise qualities in each other that they like, and these attractions form the basis of their friendship.

We all recognise qualities in each other that we appreciate.

In small groups, create two lists of qualities that you think are attractive.

In the first list, describe five qualities that you think people find attractive about you.

In the second list, explain and then rank five qualities that you find attractive in others.

6. Concerned or nosey (Read pp53-70)

Molly and Beth's questioning is persistent.

They try to convince themselves that their prying is out of concern for Graham.

In groups, make two columns on a large sheet of paper, one for concerned questions and one for nosey questions. Read the section where Graham describes what happened, and then decide which column each of the girls' questions or prompts should go into.

When you have finished, decide if they were really concerned or simply being nosey.

7. Dear Jeanie (Read pp73 & 79)

Graham has written a long letter to Jeanie, apologising for his part in the accident and explaining his attempts to contact her.

A kindly nurse has given the letter to her, and Jeanie has kept it hidden. She suspects it is from Graham, but she is unable to read it herself and is reluctant to ask either her parents or the medical staff, in case they take it from her.

Could you read the letter to her?

8. Has he called? (Read p80)

Jeanie's parents are determined to stop her friendship with Graham, and have managed to frustrate all his efforts to contact her.

However, she is persistent, asking about him every day.

Her parents decide to invent a story that they hope will make her forget him.

Can you add a short paragraph to this page to explain what they do?

Section 2 1960-1969 Pages 84-175

SUMMARY

Exiting Rico's Time Portal into 1960, Molly and Beth begin their search for Jeanie, hoping to locate her before her accident, and somehow prevent it.

Distracted by their curiosity, they investigate their school building, where a very scary-looking teacher challenges them before marching them back to class.

Trapped in a Latin class, the girls are helped by Rita, a girl they know will become a famous singer. They make their escape at lunchtime to continue their search for Jeanie.

Locating her house, they crouch in the bushes as a young Graham approaches, and watch as he is dismissed sharply by Jeanie's mum.

Deciding to intervene, Molly and Beth approach the house, pretending to be Jeanie's friends. They attempt to promote Graham's cause, only to be rebuffed in the same sharp manner by her mum.

Deflated, the girls must return to the present.

Sharing what they discovered with Graham, they try to persuade him that he is without blame. Unable to convince him, they decide to return to the past and take him with them.

Sceptical until they step from Rico's shop, Graham gasps as he finds himself in the centre of 1969 Dublin.

Trying to coach Graham not to make a catastrophic intervention that might alter the fabric of history permanently, the trio tries to fix their bearings and form a plan.

Realising that they are nine years late to prevent Jeanie's accident, nevertheless they decide to try to find her and discover what happened.

Being more familiar with the 1960s, Graham takes the lead to locate the institution where Jeanie was sent.

A phone call provides a promising lead, but without money, they are stranded.

Graham recognises a hairdressing salon, and they offer to complete some odd jobs in return for the cash they need to fund their journey to Maynooth, where they believe Jeanie is living.

Their jobs completed, and with cash in hand, they make their way to Maynooth.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read pp96 & 100.** Molly and Beth have travelled back in time. They now know what is going to happen in the future for the people they meet. If time travel were possible, how would it affect us today? If the future exists, is today then someone's past? Could time travellers be living among us? How would we know?
- **Read pp108-109.** Molly and Beth are in time to witness Jeanie's mum dismiss Graham. If they had arrived sooner, could they have prevented the accident, or was it going to happen anyway? If events are going to happen anyway, do we really have choices that can make things happen differently?
- **Read pp120-121.** Jeanie's mum believes that because Jeanie is blind, there is little that she can now do. She uses the word 'handicapped' to describe her daughter. Today we use the word 'disabled'. How are the descriptions different? How do the words we use reveal what we think about people who are disabled?
- **Read p158.** Molly, Beth and Graham are stranded without any money. How much of our daily activity is dependent on cash or the ability to pay? How could you survive without access to money, or without the money your parents spend on you that you don't see?

ACTIVITIES

1. The 1960s (Read p86)

Molly and Beth realise that they are not prepared for living in the 1960s. They will need to do some research to prepare for their return visit.

Investigate the period and prepare a short survival guide to help them avoid being noticed.

What type of information will they need?

In groups, choose five categories and then collect three pieces of vital information for each of the categories.

You might find the following sites useful:

bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zx98q6f
bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zh72tfr

2. In trouble (Read p94)

Molly and Beth have been warned that they will be in trouble if they have not learned their Latin verbs properly.

The author uses the idiom that they will be in 'hot water' to emphasise how much trouble is in store for them.

What other expression could she have used?

Can you find other idioms to describe being in trouble?

Could you add a short explanation and an amusing illustration to explain the meaning of the phrases?

thesaurus.com/browse/in_hot_water

3. Ecce Romanii (Read p101)

Many schools taught Latin in the 1960s. Although the language has not been spoken for hundreds of years, many of the words we now use have their origins in Latin words.

Use the Internet sites below to explore the origins of some of the words we use today. Can you find ten interesting words in use today that have Latin origins, and explain the connection between their meanings now and their original Latin meanings?

minimus-etc.co.uk/

obrien.ie/media/greek_latin_roots.pdf

msu.edu/~defores1/gre/roots/gre_rts_afx2.htm

4. My daughter (Read p118)

Jeanie's mum has a less-than-complimentary opinion of her daughter, which she shares with Molly and Beth.

If your mum were to describe you, what characteristics do you think she would highlight?

Create the dialogue she might have with your friends if she were to describe you.

5. The interview

(Read pp119-122)

Molly and Beth are appalled at the opinions Mrs Cottrell-Herbert holds. They feel her views are biased, and wonder if she holds similar opinions on other subjects.

They would really like to interview her to identify how she feels on a range of topics.

In groups, prepare five questions on different topics, and then decide what you think her replies might be.

Identify where you think her replies are unacceptable.

barnardos.org.uk/fair_play_booklet-2.pdf

6. Rico (Read pp122 & 84)

Molly finds Rico a very strange character. She is wary of him, and just a little uneasy when he smiles at her.

Who is he really? Is he a Time Lord? Where in time is he from, and what sort of Time Gate does his shop conceal?

Use your imagination to create a short biography for him, and explain what you think his mission is.

Are Molly and Beth the only ones to use his shop? And how does he control their time travel?

Add an illustration of him to the biography.

7. Just go (Read p130)

Graham is stunned by Rico's advice. It has a great impact on him, and he decides that when he returns he will create a poster for his wall to remind him of what Rico said.

Can you help him create the poster? What images would he use, and how would the words be presented to maximise their impact?

8. How will we get there?

(Read p158)

Graham and the girls have neither the money nor the means to travel to Maynooth.

Molly is reluctant to walk the twenty miles, and they wrack their brains to think of an effective plan.

In groups, quickly brainstorm ten possible suggestions for them. Then carefully examine your ideas, and decide which two are most likely to be successful.

youtube.com/watch?v=GLpZ6RZHyoM

Section 3 Jeanie Pages 176-256

SUMMARY

With growing unease, Molly diverts Graham to a café before they reach Jeanie's cottage, trying to delay the meeting and taking the opportunity to warn Graham not to reveal to her who he really is.

Jeanie's cottage is in the school grounds, and she hears them approach, greeting them with a disarming laugh.

Immediately at ease, they share a conversation, Jeanie revealing that her dog is one of the first guide dogs in Ireland.

Subdued, Graham can only watch and listen as Molly and Beth chat to Jeanie, contributing only when prompted by Molly.

Fearing that he will reveal who he is, Beth deflects the conversation and prompts Jeanie to explain how she became blind.

Nudging Graham sharply to prevent him from interrupting, they listen as Jeanie explains that her blindness is unconnected to the accident she had falling from the tree. Rather, it was the result of a progressive eye disease she had since she was a child.

Overcome, Graham uses the excuse of stretching his legs to compose himself while Jeanie chats to Molly and Beth, querying their unusual expressions and explaining how she uses Braille.

Discovering a sketch of Graham that Jeanie has drawn, Beth persuades her to part with it, slipping it into her pocket as Graham returns.

Prompted by Graham, Jeanie recalls all the detail of their blissful summer of 1960, and they relive the songs and dancing they once enjoyed.

As the story unwinds, Graham learns how progress of her eye disease finally claimed her sight, and how the attitudes and prejudices of her parents kept them apart.

Listening to her, he realises that although they were never to meet again after her accident, the effect his friendship had on her life was profound and joyful.

When the time to leave approaches, he is content and reconciled. They all take the opportunity to dance 'The Twist' one final time.

Back at home, Beth presents Graham with the portrait Jeanie had drawn of him. She and Molly are delighted at the change their adventure has brought, allowing him to shed his years of guilt and enjoy the contentment that the experience has brought.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read pp193-194.** Graham wants to reveal who he is in order to ease the guilt he feels, irrespective of the effect this might have on Jeanie. Is he being selfish? Who is he really thinking of? Are there times when it is better to be silent?
- **Read p202.** Jeanie was labeled as a 'wild girl'. This coloured the way her parents thought about her. It also influenced the way she thought about herself. How do labels, either positive or negative, influence how we think about others?
- **Read p243.** Graham finally accepts that his dream of spending the rest of his life with Jeanie will never happen, and he returns with Molly and Beth. Should he have followed his dream, irrespective of the consequences? When does a dream change to an obsession, and what is the difference? How would you recognise when a dream is creating unhelpful consequences for you?
- **Read p251.** Graham's life and the decisions he made have been influenced by the guilt he felt for his part in Jeanie's accident. What is guilt, and how does it control our thoughts, feelings and actions?

Are there times when it is necessary to feel guilty? How can you deal with the negative impact of guilt?

[wikihow.com/Deal-with-Guilt](http://www.wikihow.com/Deal-with-Guilt)

ACTIVITIES

1. Food (Read pp177-178)

The waitress is confused, believing that Graham is being rude, asking for food she has never heard of.

In 1960, many Irish people had never travelled abroad, and these foods were unfamiliar to them.

Today, the food we eat is more European.

On your next shopping trip, identify the European foods that are now available, and list the countries they are from. Do we eat more European or Irish food?

2. Seeing dogs (Read p192)

Jeanie explains that Blackie is one of the first guide dogs in Ireland. She is pleased that she has been chosen to receive one, and explains that one of the Dublin newspapers wants to write an article on the initiative.

Molly volunteers to help, but she will need help.

Can you work in small groups to help her write the article?

You will need an interview with Jeanie, an illustration and an analysis of the benefit that this initiative will bring to other blind people.
[guidedogs.org.uk/microsites/guide-dogs-in-school/](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/microsites/guide-dogs-in-school/)
[guidedogs.ie/iopen24/](http://www.guidedogs.ie/iopen24/)

3. The Other Four (Read pp195-196)

Jeanie encourages Molly and Beth to close their eyes and experience the garden using their other senses.

Can you describe your favourite room using only your senses of hearing, smelling and feeling?

You will need to include a lot of fine detail, so that everyone can experience the room as you do.

Can you find at least one metaphor or simile for each sense to create the experience you want to share?

4. Choose one (Read p200)

As Molly listens to Jeanie's story, she wonders how it would feel to lose one of her senses.

In groups, decide if you had to lose one of your senses, which one you would choose to lose. Explain your choice in three statements.

Which sense is most important to you? Rank all five of them, then explain why you have ranked them in that order?

5. Braille (Read p210)

Jeanie is delighted to explain the Braille system. Molly and Beth are fascinated, making a mental note to research it as a project when they get back.

Their research uncovers five key benefits and/or applications for the system.

Recreate a copy of their project sheet.

In addition, they develop an idea of their own for modern digital technology to help blind people.

Use your imagination to describe what their idea was.

[primaryfacts.com/8391/louis-braille-facts-and-information/](http://www.primaryfacts.com/8391/louis-braille-facts-and-information/)
[royalblind.org/national-braille-week/braille-resources/presentations](http://www.royalblind.org/national-braille-week/braille-resources/presentations)

6. My fingers tell me (Read p224)

Graham closes his eyes as Jeanie gently strokes his face. Her fingers read every wrinkle and bump, creating an image for her of what he looks like.

Later, she writes a cinquain poem to describe what she 'saw' and learned from his face.

Can you create a copy of her poem?
[writeshop.com/writing-a-cinquain-poem/](http://www.writeshop.com/writing-a-cinquain-poem/)

7. The ripple effect (Read 227)

Molly and Beth have to be very careful not to do anything that will have unwelcome consequences.

It is interesting to realise that what we do today will permanently change the future.

Use your imagination to decide how today might be different if you travelled back in time and changed one event from last week.

On a sheet of paper, draw yourself and the change in the middle, and then use a line or circle diagram to show all the different consequences of your change.

8. The diary (Read p240)

Jeanie is trialing a new device for her blindness. It is an audio recorder that she can use to record her voice.

She is creating an audio diary, and will record her impressions of the meeting with 'Darren' (Graham) and the girls.

Can you help her to create the recording that she made for that day?