

How to Steal a Dog
By Barbara O'Connor
Discussion Questions

Chapter One

1. Why do you think Georgina doesn't want Luanne to tell her mom about Georgina's situation?
2. Have you ever been embarrassed about something and didn't want anyone to know?
3. Use context clues to figure out what "unkempt" means on p.4.
4. What do you think about Georgina's plan to steal a dog? Is there a case that stealing a dog is ok or is it never ok?
5. From what you know so far, describe the character Georgina.

Chapter Two

1. Why does Georgina think her brother will say "hot dang" to hearing her plan?
2. Do you think Georgina should have explained the "plan" to Toby? Why or why not?
3. What does Georgina mean when she says, "As I read my list of rules over again, I felt myself splitting right in two" ? (p.18)
4. Describe a time when you have felt like Georgina, like you needed to do something even though you knew it was wrong.

Chapter Three

1. Why do you think Toby does whatever Georgina says?
2. What do you think about Georgina's criteria for choosing a dog?

Chapter Four

1. Do you think Mr. White knows what Georgina's home life is like?
2. Compare and contrast Georgina's life to her friend Luanne's.

3. Why do you think the author misspelled the word himself and wrote it as *hisself*? (page 29, 1st paragraph)
4. Why does Georgina think Mrs. Whitmore will pay a reward for her dog?

Chapter Five

1. Why do you think Georgina gets so irritated with her brother Toby?
2. What was one very important part missing from Georgina's plan to steal the dog (that she forgot about)?
3. What does it mean when mama says, "I look as beat as I feel, don't I?" (p.39) What are some descriptive words Georgina used to describe what her mama looks like?
4. What do you think will happen when Georgina's family move into the house?

Chapter Six

1. Would your reaction be the same or different from Georgina's when her mama showed her the house they would be living in?
2. What do you think Georgina means when she says, "now I had a mama who had gone plumb crazy"? (p.42)
3. Why do you think mama uses her "mean" voice with the kids sometimes?
4. Have you ever heard of an Aesop Fable? If you have, explain/tell one to your group. If you haven't, look up in the dictionary what it is.

Chapter Seven

1. Why doesn't mama want the kids to leave their stuff in the house?

2. On page 49, Georgina says to mama, “maybe you could act like a mother.” Do you think mama acts like a mother? Why or why not?
3. Do you think Georgina should tell Mr. White what’s going on in her life?
4. Where do you think a good place to hide the dog would be?
5. Do you think Luanne still considers Georgina a friend? How do you know?

Chapter Eight

1. Why does Georgina look forward to being at school?
2. What do you think about Georgina’s response to mama when she said maybe she should just disappear off the face of the earth?
3. What do you think mama should do now that she lost the cleaner’s job?
4. What do you think the word “blubbery” means in the sentence “Toby got all blubbery but I just stood there looking at that boarded up door.” (page 60)
5. Where do you think Georgina’s family will go now that they can’t live in that home?

Chapter Nine

1. What are some things that make Georgina feel different from the other girls at her school?
2. Why does Georgina want mama to act like everything is ok?
3. Do you think it’s a good idea for Georgina to keep a notebook on how to steal a dog?
4. What do you think mama would do if she found out Georgina’s plan to steal a dog?

Chapter Ten

1. Why do you think Willy's reaction to Georgina's question "you wanna come with us?" meant yes to Georgina?
2. What do you think the author means when she wrote, "I (Georgina) was liable to think I shouldn't be doing this. So I turned my mind to "off" and grabbed Willy's collar" ? (p.71)
3. Do you think animals have feelings? Why or why not?
4. Do you think Mrs. Whitmore will put up a reward for Willy?

Chapter Eleven

1. Why do you think Georgina and Toby didn't see any reward signs?
2. Have you ever felt as though kids were laughing or making fun of you? Have you made fun of other kids?
3. By Georgina saying positive things in her mind, do you think she'll feel better about stealing the dog? Why or why not?
4. If you could be Willy, what would you be thinking to yourself at this point in the story?

Chapter Twelve

1. What kind of person is Carmella Whitmore? What is your opinion of her?
2. What was Georgina surprised about Mrs. Whitmore's house?
3. Do you think Georgina and Toby should have gone into Carmella's house?

Chapter Thirteen

1. What would you have done when the man at the house with Willy called out?

2. What do you think the man means when he says, “Never drop your gun to hug a grizzly bear, I always say.”? (p.106)
3. Mookie has a lot of sayings. On page 110, what does he mean when he says “And dumb? My daddy used to say he didn’t have both oars in the water.”

Chapter Fourteen

1. What made Georgina worried when Toby started talking to mama about getting money?
2. How do you think mama and the kids would feel about sleeping in the Motel 6, even for one night?
3. Do you think Georgina should be worried about Mookie? Why or why not?
4. Do you think Carmella will find money for the reward? Why or why not? How will she get the money?

Chapter Fifteen

1. Why do you think Georgina can be so mean to Toby?
2. Georgina had a little voice in her head say “what are you doing (stealing the dog)?” Have you ever had a time when you had a voice inside you tell you when something was wrong that you or someone else was doing? Explain.
3. What do you think would happen if Mookie sees one of the wanted signs about Willy? Discuss.

Chapter Sixteen

1. Why does Mookie sometimes work for free?
2. What is Mookie’s motto and what do you think it means?
3. Why doesn’t Mookie say something more to Georgina about Willy?

4. Georgina writes in her purple notebook “sometimes, the more you stir it, the worse it stinks.” Why does she write this? (p. 135)
5. Mookie seems really unsupportive about going to school. Why do you think he thinks this?

Chapter Seventeen

1. How do you think Georgina and Toby are managing school things with what’s going on outside of school?
2. Mama’s friend Patsy takes the kids to school and they see Mookie. Patsy comments that he looks happy. Do you think Mookie is a happy person? Why or why not?
3. If Toby and Georgina give Willy back to Carmella, do you think she would forgive them? Discuss
4. It doesn’t seem that mama’s car is working. What do you think she’ll do? Discuss

Chapter Eighteen

1. Georgina sees bicycle tire tracks and their car starts back up. What could these things mean?
2. If Georgina feels so bad about stealing the dog, why doesn’t she tell Carmella? Mention something besides money.

Chapter Nineteen

1. What does Georgina mean when she says “The quiet that came back to me felt solid and mean, like a slap across the face,” on page 154?
2. Why do you think Mookie decided to leave his spot at the old house?
3. Have you ever been wrong about someone? You thought they were one way but then you found out more about them and it changed your mind?
4. Do you think Carmella will give any money to Georgina and Toby for Will? Why or why not?

Chapter Twenty

1. Why did Georgina decide to go through telling Carmella the truth?
2. How did Mookie find out about whom Willy really belonged to? Why was Mookie nice to Georgina if he knew the truth?
3. Why do you think Carmella continues to be nice despite what Georgina has done?
4. How would you describe Georgina from the beginning of the book until now?
5. Think of a motto for yourself.

Chapter Twenty-One

1. What is Georgina's idea of being "normal."?
2. Reread the last four pages of the book. Do you think the story has a happy ending? Discuss.
3. Imagine that the book is written from another character's perspective. How do you think the story would be different if Toby, mama, or Mookie were the narrator?
4. Would you consider Georgina a good person or not? Explain.
5. What lessons have Georgina and Toby learned from this whole ordeal?