

I'm Not Who You Think I Am  
by Peg Kehret

About the book:

During her thirteenth birthday party, Ginger Shaw notices an odd woman staring at her in the restaurant. Next she sees the woman parked in front of her school and near her home. Telephone calls from an unidentified caller make Ginger even more uneasy, especially after her parents leave town on business. When the woman finally corners Ginger at the bus stop, she divulges an unbelievable secret.

In this fast-paced page-turner, suspense is interwoven with issues of loyalty and honor as Ginger desperately tries to save both her identity and her life.

About the guide

This guide includes discussion questions and projects appropriate for children's book clubs, literature circles, and classroom discussions. It is intended to provoke thought and insight into the themes of this book which include loyalty, self-identity, standing up for what's right, trusting your intuition and family relationships.

About the author:

Peg Kehret lives in a log house in the woods near Mount Rainier National Park, in Washington State. She and her husband have two grown children and four grandchildren. Peg's popular books often appear on recommended lists from the International Reading Association and the American Library Association. They are regularly nominated for young readers' awards. She has published forty-five books.

Author Interview:

1. How did you decide to weave these two very different plot lines together?

For a long time I thought I was writing two separate books. One I called "the stalker" book and the other one I thought of as "the coach" book. I would work on one manuscript for awhile, then switch to the other. I went back and forth for a long time but I wasn't satisfied with either book. Then one day I realized that the two ideas could be part of the same story. As soon as I tried that, the plot gelled and I was able to finish the book.

2. Do you think we are taught not to trust our instincts and intuition? Why?

We are taught to follow the rules. There's nothing wrong with that but I think we also need to teach children to think for themselves and to pay attention to their instincts.

3. Why do you think some parents take sports so seriously?

I think they are living their own dreams through their children. An incredible amount of parental pressure gets put on students – both in athletics and academics – by parents who mean well. They want what’s best for their kids but their own competitive feelings overpower their good judgment.

4. Did you ever have a coach or teacher like Mr. Wren who influenced you?

Mr. Wren is loosely based on my son, who has been a teacher and coach for more than twenty years. He’s encountered numerous parents who want their child to be the star athlete, at any cost.

5. How do you maintain such suspense in your writing?

I work hard at it. I love to write suspenseful stories and often scare myself as I’m writing. I know that if I create tension in myself over what is happening in a book, then the readers will probably be caught up in the tension, too.

There’s a craft to it, as well as an art. I’m especially careful with the first and last sentence of each chapter.

Pre-reading:

What do you think the title might mean? How can people not be who you expect? Has someone ever turned out to be different than what you expected? How did it change the way you felt about them? Did you become less trusting after that?

Discussion Guide:

1. Read the first paragraph of the novel. Have you ever had this sensation yourself? When? How did it make you feel? What should you do in this situation?
2. Ginger’s intuition is right about the woman and yet she doubts her decisions several times. Why? Are we taught to ignore our intuition and fear? How do you know when you’re feeling threatened or just being paranoid?
3. Discuss the poster that Ginger received: Live with Purpose and Honor. What does it mean? Can you give examples of people who do this? What does it mean in everyday life at school? Which part is more difficult: purpose or honor? Why?
4. What businesses do her mother, father and sister run? Do any of these sound appealing to you? What do you think would be the most difficult aspect of working with the public? Have you ever considered opening a business of your own? What would you do?
5. What does Ginger want to be when she grows up? How does she practice her skills? Do you have a goal like hers? How can you develop your talent for it? Why do you think her parents don’t support it?

6. Compare Karie's house to Ginger's. Why do they each appreciate the other's home? Do you always want what you don't have? Why? Is there a way to carve out more of what you need in the home you have?
7. Describe Mrs. Vaughn. What kind of person is she? What does she want? What is she willing to do to get it? Are her motivations more insidious than they first appear? Why?
8. What kind of coach is Mr. Wren? Do you agree with his philosophy on coaching or with the parents who are trying to have him fired? Why are sports so important? What do kids gain from being involved in them? Is there a way to make it more balanced?
9. Why is Joyce Enderly following Ginger? Is she dangerous? Why or why not? What is her past? How did she get released from the hospital? How can we protect the public without infringing on the rights of others?
10. Why is Ginger forced to choose between what she believes in and her family's livelihood? Do you think she makes the right decision? Would you have made the same one?
11. Ginger doesn't want to ruin her parent's business trips by calling and upsetting them. Is this a mistake? Why? What would your parents do in this situation? When are kids old enough to stay home when parents are gone?
12. How do Joyce and her thug try to trick Ginger into going with them? Would you have gone under their pretense? How did she trick them and get help? Do you have a signal with anyone?

#### Projects:

#### Language Arts:

Research a career that you are interested in learning more about like Ginger was in sports broadcasting and Karie was in weather forecasting. Answer the following questions about your career:

How much education do you need?

What are the top schools in the country for that field?

How much will a novice to the field earn?

What special skills and abilities are needed for success?

#### Art:

Sketch out images from the book (for example, the white car, a basketball, or an adoption certificate) and watercolor them. Then, tear the images (or cut like a puzzle) and rearrange them on black construction paper. This will give your image a fragmented, nightmarish appearance much like the week Ginger had!

Music:

Find or create song lyrics through the eyes of one of the characters. Add musical accompaniment if you have that talent as well.

Social Studies:

Research one of the following topics from the novel reporting in a brief presentation about what you learned. (Use at least three resources only one of which may be an internet site):

Adoption

Mental Illness

Missing and Exploited Children

Stalking

Coaching theories

Sports Announcing

Weather Prediction

Catering

Event Planning

Piano repair

Eyewitness accounts

Coercion

Math:

Create a business plan for a small job you (and perhaps a friend or two) could run. Figure out how much, if any, you would need for start-up costs. How much for advertising and how much you would make an hour. Set goals for salaries earned for three months and graph your results.

Science:

Study the science of identity. What are the new methods for identifying paternity, victims and suspects? How accurate is DNA testing? Has it freed innocent people from prison? Are there any problems with it? Where do law enforcement officials find it? How is it analyzed?

Internet Resources (use with caution, content not guaranteed appropriate):

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

National Institute of Mental Health

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<http://www.met.police.uk/stalking/advice.htm>

Advice for victims of stalking

[http://careerplanning.about.com/od/careerchoicechan/a/myths\\_choice.htm](http://careerplanning.about.com/od/careerchoicechan/a/myths_choice.htm)

Ten career myths with great links

[http://www.quintcareers.com/younger\\_teen\\_job\\_dos-donts.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/younger_teen_job_dos-donts.html)

Teen business Do's and Don'ts

This teacher's guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and author of the book *Sketches from a Spy Tree*. Visit her website to find many other guides to children's literature!