

### **A Year Down Yonder** by Richard Peck

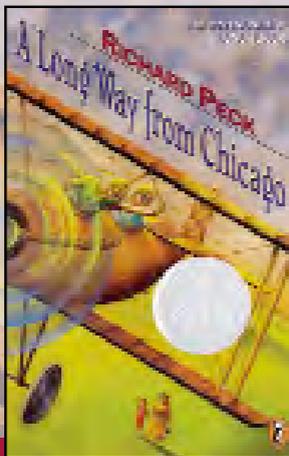
HC: 978-0-8037-2518-8 • \$16.99  
PB: 978-0-14-230070-1 • \$6.99  
Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up

When Mary Alice is sent to live with the ever-unpredictable and eccentric Grandma Dowdel for a whole year, there's no way she can begin to imagine what's in store.

- A Newbery Medal Winner**
- An ALA Best Book for Young Adults**
- An ALA Notable Children's Book**
- A School Library Journal Best Book of the Year**
- A Booklist Best Book of the Year**



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### **A Long Way From Chicago** by Richard Peck

HC: 978-0-8037-2290-3 • \$16.99  
PMC: 978-0-14-240110-1 • \$6.99  
PB: 978-0-14-130352-9 • \$6.99  
Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up

Join Joey and his sister, Mary Alice, as they spend seven unforgettable summers with the worst influence imaginable—their grandmother!

- A Newbery Honor Book**
- A National Book Award Finalist**
- An ALA Best Book for Young Adults**
- An ALA Notable Children's Book**
- A Horn Book Fanfare Selection**



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### **A Season of Gifts** by Richard Peck

HC: 978-0-8037-3082-3 • \$16.99  
Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up

The best gifts are the ones that last a lifetime.

It's 1958 and a new family has moved in next door to Mrs. Dowdel—a family in desperate need of her help (whether they realize it or not). Join Bob, Phyllis, and Ruth Ann as they get swept up into the whirlwind escapades of their next door neighbor!



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### **Twenty Minutes a Day** by Richard Peck

Read to your children  
Twenty minutes a day;  
You have the time,  
And so do they.

Read while the laundry is in the machine;  
Read while the dinner cooks;  
Tuck a child in the crook of your arm  
And reach for the library books.

Hide the remote,  
Let the computer games cool,  
For one day your children will be  
off to school;  
“Remedial?” “Gifted?” You have  
the choice;  
Let them hear their first tales  
In the sound of your voice.

Read in the morning;  
Read over noon;  
Read by the light of  
*Goodnight Moon*.

Turn the pages together,  
Sitting close as you'll fit,  
Till a small voice beside you says,  
“Hey, don't quit.”



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## **HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB**

Think it would be hard to start your own book club? Think again!  
All you need are some friends who are as excited about  
the books they read as you are and a little bit of organization.

### **HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:**

**The best way to find people to be in your book club is to ask your friends.**  
Think of all the people you know who like to read, and ask them to join. If you still don't feel like you have enough people, ask each of your friends to bring someone else. You can usually get a good discussion going with 6–8 people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your club, check with your school, local library, or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

### **Figure out when and where you want to meet.**

Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, on the beach, or in your school's library. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the “wheres” and “whens” right now, don't worry! It's YOUR group so YOU get to make all the decisions. All you have to do is get together once, and you can work out the rest of the details later.

### **Decide how you will choose books, and how the discussions will be run.**

Maybe you have a favorite author that you and your friends would like to focus on. Or maybe you want to take turns picking your favorite book. Maybe one person likes to talk and would like to lead the discussion, or maybe you would rather just get together and talk about the books you are reading. If you get stuck, you can often find discussion questions online (try the publisher's website) or at your local library or bookstore.

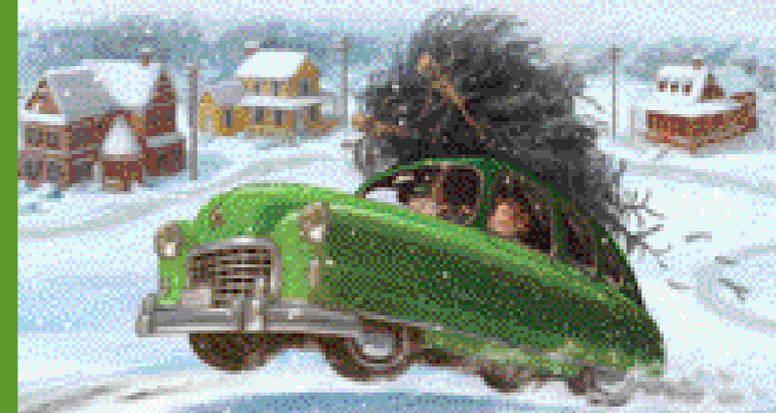
**The most important thing to remember is that there's no right or wrong way to have a book club. Do what you're comfortable with and always have fun, and your group will be a success!**

For more discussion guides to get your group going, visit  
[www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)

## **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

# **RICHARD PECK**

## **A Season of Gifts**



The companion to Newbery Medal winner **A YEAR DOWN YONDER**  
and Newbery Honor winner **A LONG WAY FROM CHICAGO**

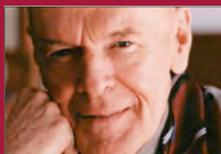
## ABOUT THE BOOK



One of children's literature's most adored characters is the eccentric, forceful, bighearted Grandma Dowdel, star of the Newbery Medal-winning *A Year Down Yonder* and the Newbery Honor-winning *A Long Way From Chicago*. And it turns out that her story isn't over—not even close.

It is now 1958, and the incomparable Grandma Dowdel is back for a new set of adventures with the family who has moved in next door . . . and they're about to find out just what kind of adventures await them.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Richard Peck has written over thirty novels, and in the process has become one of America's most highly respected writers for young adults. A versatile writer, he is beloved by middle graders as well as young adults for his comedies and coming-of-age novels. He now lives in New York City. In addition to writing, he spends a great deal of time traveling around the country attending speaking engagements at conferences, schools and libraries.

Mr. Peck is the first children's book author to have received a National Humanities Medal. In addition, he has won a number of major awards for the body of his work, including the Margaret A. Edwards Award, the ALAN Award, and the Medallion from the University of Southern Mississippi. Virtually every publication and association in the field of children's literature has recommended his books, including Mystery Writers of America which twice gave him their Edgar Award.

For more information about Richard Peck, visit [www.scbwi.org/store.htm](http://www.scbwi.org/store.htm) to purchase the SCBWI Master Class DVD "Richard Peck: On Writing the Novel for Young Readers."

Find out more about his books at [www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the relationship between the Barnhart kids from *A Season of Gifts*—Bob, Ruth Ann, and Phyllis—and Mrs. Dowdel? How are their experiences similar to those of Grandma Dowdel and her grandchildren in both *A Long Way from Chicago* and *A Year Down Yonder*? How are they different?
- Moving to a new town is always difficult, but especially when, as Mrs. Barnhart says, "all eyes are upon us." What does that mean? How does that influence the way the Barnharts act in town? What is the town's reaction to them both before school starts and in school?
- What does Bob think of Mrs. Dowdel when he first moves in next door? How does his opinion of her change?
- Who are the Cowgills, the Flukes, the Leapers, and the Burdicks? How do their interactions with the Barnharts, Mrs. Dowdel, and the rest of the town shape the story? What is Mrs. Dowdel's relationship to them and how does she ultimately give them all what they deserve?
- Why does Ruth Ann idolize Mrs. Dowdel? What does Ruth Ann learn from Mrs. Dowdel and what does Mrs. Dowdel gain from having Ruth Ann around?
- After moving, Phyllis seems to be getting into more and more trouble. When did you first notice that she might be doing things she shouldn't? When do the other characters notice what she's doing? How does Mrs. Dowdel help to stop Phyllis from spinning totally out of control?
- Mrs. Dowdel acts aloof and uninterested, but she does a lot to help the Barnharts when they are settling in next door. What are some of the things she does for the family? How does she carry off all her schemes? And how do the Barnharts repay her many gifts to them?
- Which characters apart from Mrs. Dowdel can you recognize from *A Year Down Yonder* and *A Long Way From Chicago*? How do those characters interact with Mrs. Dowdel? What similarities do you see in the way people in the same family act even after so much time has gone by?
- How have the Barnharts changed by the end of the story as a result of their interactions with Mrs. Dowdel? What situations have changed as a result of Mrs. Dowdel's involvement and what were the outcomes? How is *A Season of Gifts* an appropriate title for this story?



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## Don't Miss These Great Richard Peck Books!

NEW



*A Season of Gifts*  
HC: 978-0-8037-3082-3



*A Year Down Yonder*  
HC: 978-0-8037-2518-8  
PB: 978-0-14-230070-1



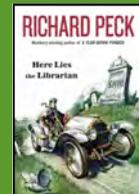
*A Long Way from Chicago*  
HC: 978-0-8037-2290-3  
PB: 978-0-14-130352-9  
PB: 978-0-14-240110-1 (Puffin Modern Classic)



*On the Wings of Heroes*  
HC: 978-0-8037-3081-6  
PB: 978-0-14-241204-6



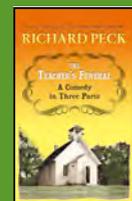
*Fair Weather*  
HC: 978-0-8037-2516-4  
PB: 978-0-14-250034-7



*Here Lies the Librarian*  
HC: 978-0-8037-3080-9  
PB: 978-0-14-240908-4



*The River Between Us*  
HC: 978-0-8037-2735-9  
PB: 978-0-14-240310-5



*The Teacher's Funeral*  
HC: 978-0-8037-2736-6  
PB: 978-0-14-240507-9



### *A Season of Gifts* by Richard Peck

The best gifts are the ones that last a lifetime.



### *A Long Way from Chicago* by Richard Peck

★ "A small masterpiece of storytelling . . . the novel reveals a strong sense of place, a depth of characterization, and a rich sense of humor."  
—*The Horn Book*, starred review



### *A Year Down Yonder* by Richard Peck

★ "Humorous and heartwarming . . . Even high school and adult [readers] will enjoy *A Year Down Yonder*."  
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

