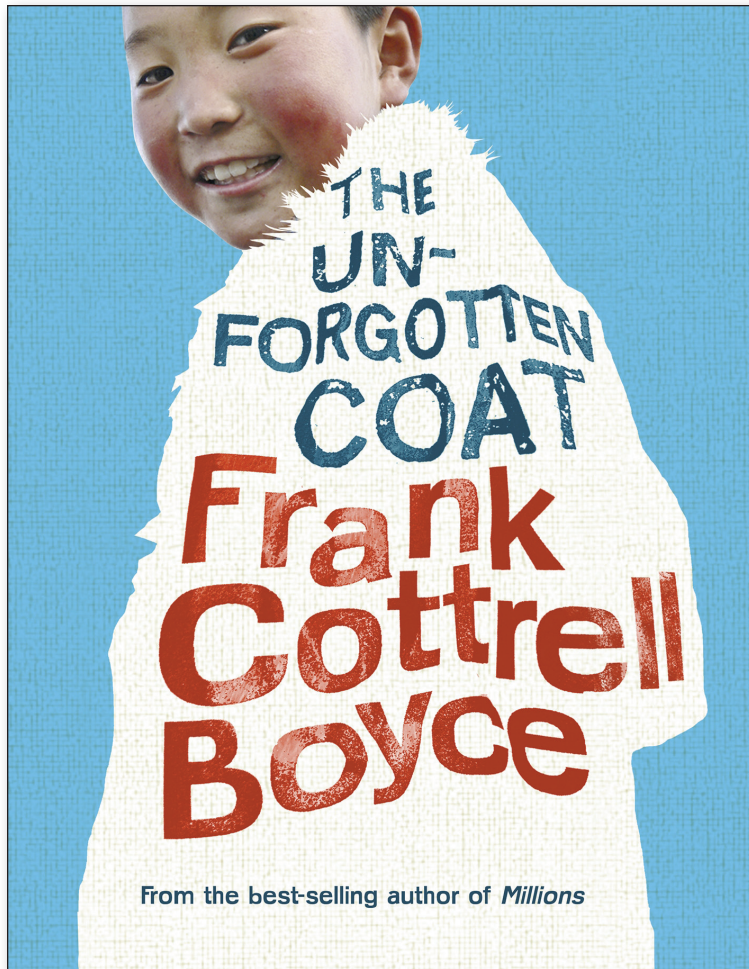


DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Unforgotten Coat *by Frank Cottrell Boyce*



ABOUT THE BOOK

When two Mongolian brothers inexplicably appear one morning in Julie's Year Six class, no one, least of all Julie, knows what to make of them. But then Chingis, the older of the two, proclaims that Julie is to be their "Good Guide," a nomadic tradition that makes her responsible for welcoming the brothers to their new home. Now Julie must somehow navigate them through soccer, school uniforms, and British slang, all while trying to win Shocky's attention and an invitation to her friend Mimi's house. Often laugh-out-loud funny, this moving and simply told novella tugs at the heart—a unique story of immigration, both fierce in its telling and magical in its characters.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Using an atlas, show your class a map of the United Kingdom and locate Liverpool, then locate Mongolia on a map of Asia. With a globe, show students how far apart the two places are.
2. Working in pairs, have students use online and print resources to research information on Mongolia. Ask each pair to share ten facts they learned about the country with the rest of the class.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How old do you think Julie is when she tells this story? What leads you to this conclusion?
2. Why is Chingis insistent about his little brother's staying with him? What does he say his reason is? Do you think that is the real reason? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think Chingis is so defiant about everything Mrs. Spendlove asks him to do? What effect does his defiance have on her and the students?
4. How does Julie feel when she hears Chingis say his brother is an eagle?
5. What does Chingis want Julie to do for him and his brother? Do all new students need this help? How does your school welcome new students? Do you think this is helpful?
6. Where does Julie find Chingis's coat? How long has it been since she last saw it? How does she feel when she finds it?
7. What does Julie do to be a Good Guide to Chingis and Nergui? Would you have done the same? Do you think she should have done anything differently?
8. What does Chingis say is the reason he and Nergui had to leave Mongolia? Why do you think they left?
9. What are some things Julie notices about her school when she becomes a Good Guide that she hadn't noticed before?
10. What does Julie mean when she says Chingis and Nergui "were *learning* themselves ordinary" (page 38)? Why does it upset her?
11. What is an *ovoo*, and what is it supposed to do?
12. When Julie and her mother go to Chingis's apartment to return his coat, what does Julie expect to find? What happens instead? Did you expect this to happen?
13. When Julie goes through Chingis's coat pockets, what does she find? What do the items she finds make her realize about the photographs?
14. When Julie leads Chingis and Nergui back to their apartment from the beach, why does Chingis say Julie has cheated them?
15. What does Mrs. Spendlove announce to the class the next day? How did this announcement make you feel? Do you think the students felt the same way? Why or why not?
16. What does Julie notice about Chingis's coat in the lost-and-found bin years later?
17. What does Julie mean when she says, "Chingis's Mongolia was one big mental *ovoo*" (page 86)?
18. What do you think the demon that Chingis and Nergui are running from represents?
19. If students from another country came to your school, what are some things you would do to make them feel welcome?
20. Did you find the novel funny? Or sad? Or both? How did it make you feel? Can you think of other books or situations you've been in where you didn't know whether to laugh or cry?

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Have students, in pairs or small groups, create a picture dictionary with important phrases that students from another country, like Chingis and Nergui, could use to help them become familiar with the school.
2. Locate an agency or organization in your area that assists with the relocation of refugees and ask for a representative to speak to your class about their work.
3. Ask the class, in small groups or pairs, to research and report on an article about refugees posted within the last year on the websites of Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org) or Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org).



Photo by Chay Heney

ABOUT FRANK COTTRELL BOYCE

Frank Cottrell Boyce won the 2004 Carnegie Medal for his first children's book, *Millions*. He has since written three novels for children, including *Framed*, which was short-listed for the 2005 Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Children's Book Award, and *Cosmic*, which was short-listed for the 2009 Carnegie Medal, the *Guardian* Children's Fiction Prize, and the Roald Dahl Funny Prize. *The Unforgotten Coat* is his first book with Candlewick Press. He lives with his family in Liverpool.

Praise for *The Unforgotten Coat*

★ "A tight, powerful story—brimming with humor, mystery, and pathos—about illegal immigration and the price it exacts on children."

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

★ "Funny, sad, haunting, and original, Cottrell Boyce's story leaves important elements unexpressed. As with lace, these holes are part of the design, echoed in the unadorned photos: a path through a dark forest; wagon tracks across a field that meet the lowering sky; shadows on a yurt wall. To complete the narrative, readers must actively participate. They'll find myriad paths to follow—immigration, demons, social networking, the mystery of cultural difference, and the nature of enchantment. A tricky, magical delight."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

"A funny and affecting book for children ages 10 to 14. . . . This story from the author of *Millions* may make readers regard foreign students at their schools with new appreciation."

—*The Wall Street Journal*

This guide was written by Edward T. Sullivan, a librarian and writer from Oak Ridge, Tennessee.



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