

## About *THE GIRL IN THE WELL IS ME*

Newcomer Kammie Summers has fallen into a well during a (fake) initiation into a club whose members have no intention of letting her join. Now Kammie's trapped in the dark, growing increasingly claustrophobic, and waiting to be rescued — or possibly not. As hours pass, the reality of Kammie's predicament mixes with her memories of the highlights and lowlights of her life so far, including the reasons her family moved to this new town in the first place. And as she begins to run out of oxygen, Kammie starts to imagine she has company, including a French-speaking coyote and goats that just might be zombies.

“A brilliantly revealed, sometimes even funny, exploration of courage, the will to live, and the importance of being true to oneself. The catastrophe draws readers in, and the universality of spunky Kammie's life-affirming journey will engage a wide audience. Moving, suspenseful, and impossible to put down.”

— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“Funny, surreal, occasionally heartbreaking ... a compulsively readable story.”

— *School Library Journal*

“A gripping story that doesn't shy away from the dark places but explores them with heart, humor, and light.”

— **Kate Messner**, author of *All the Answers*

“I dare you to pick up this riveting novel without reading straight through to its heart-stopping conclusion.”

— **Katherine Applegate**, Newbery Medal-winning author of *The One and Only Ivan*

## About KAREN RIVERS

**Karen Rivers** has written novels for adult, middle-grade, and young adult audiences. Her books have been nominated for a wide range of literary awards, including the Silver Birch Award, the Stellar Book Award, the White Pine Award, and the Sheila A. Egoff Children's Literature Prize.

When she's not writing, reading, or visiting schools, she can usually be found hiking in the forest that flourishes behind her tiny old house in Victoria, British Columbia, where she lives with her two kids, two dogs, two birds, and two fish.

## Curriculum

Grade 5, 6, 7, 8 Language (Reading, Writing)

Grade 5, 6, 7, 8 Health and Physical Education (Healthy Living)

## Student Objectives

After reading *The Girl in the Well Is Me*, students should be able to:

### Grade 5-6:

- More thoroughly discuss texts through reasoning and interpretation
- Analyze literary devices and styles in the text in order to see how these help to construct meaning.
- Define patterns and features of the text that help to convey its message.
- Demonstrate their understanding of the text through class discussion and written response.
- Organize ideas and themes in their own writing in an effective manner.

### Grade 7-8:

- Identify stylistic devices that add meaning to, enhance, and elaborate upon the text.
- Examine organizational patterns and how these assist in the communication of meaning
- Organize and effectively present ideas both orally and in writing, with an eye towards refining their voice, form, fluency, and vocabulary.

## Getting Started

1. Consider introducing the students to the “Baby Jessica” story as an example of a “real world” incident.
2. Survey the class; have any of the students been moved? How did that make them feel?

## Discussion Questions

1. If Kammie is as smart as she believes she is, why would she agree to the girls' initiation in the first place? (Chapter 1)
2. What drew Kammie to these girls? If she is their opposite, why should she want to join them or care what they think of her? (Chapter 2)
3. Why would Kammie start to reminisce about the past? What does she seem to think about her situation so far? (Chapter 3)
4. Why does Kammie only seem to miss material things? Why, at this moment, would she not miss people? (Chapter 4)
5. Kammie says she'll "miss" Robby. What is she assuming will happen to her? Is she right to assume this? (Chapter 4)
6. Is Kammie too focused on her "things?" Why would she focus so heavily on a single item? (Chapter 5)
7. Why else might Kandy have taken so long to return? (Chapter 6)
8. Are Kammie's feelings reasonable, or is she overreacting? (Chapter 7)
9. How else might Kammie have reacted? What other course of action could she have taken? (Chapter 8)
10. Despite everything she has said, do you think Kammie can still love her father? (Chapter 9)
11. Who "put" Kammie here? Was it herself? Her father? Kandy? (Chapter 9)
12. Kammie admits to lying; when else has she lied to herself or others? (Chapter 10)
13. How do you think things will change for Kammie? (Chapter 11)
14. How has Kammie herself changed? How will she react to things now? (Chapter 11)
15. Was Kammie's experience in the well a positive one? (Chapter 11)

## Class Activities

### Grade 5-6:

- Have students map out some of the locations mentioned in the work, such as Kammie's motorhome, and contrast it with her old home. How would a change such as this make her feel?
- Likewise, have students map out how they think the rescue operation may have gone: How do they think Kammie was reached? What is surrounding the well? What is at the bottom of it?
- With students being in a similar age range to Kammie, ask if they think her narration is "accurate" to how an eleven-year-old thinks. How might they change the narration?

### Grade 7-8:

- Have students discuss the relationships between the characters. How does Kammie's predicament change things between them?
- Discuss the significance of the changes Kammie goes through (her location, living situation, relationships). How do students think these things may have shaped Kammie's actions and situation?