

PEACHTREE POINTERS

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

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My Brother's Hero *By Adrian Fogelin*

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6x9 inches / 224 pages

Middle Reader / Ages 8-12 / Fiction

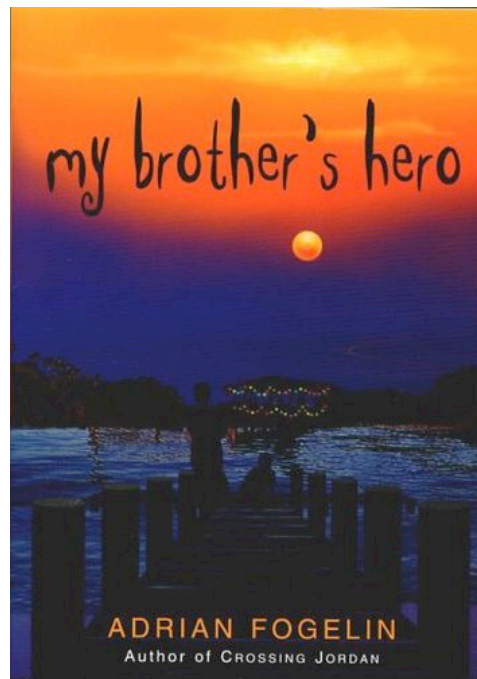
ABOUT THE BOOK

Ben Floyd has a lot on his mind. In only eighteen months he will be old enough to get a learner's permit to drive, but that seems a lifetime away. Ben enjoys the close-knit group of friends in his small neighborhood, but lately he has been longing for a taste of adventure. Keeping an eye on his younger brother Cody is getting to be a big responsibility. And he is confused by complicated feelings he has for his lifelong friend, Cass.

An unexpected turn of events finds the Floyd family in the Florida Keys over Christmas vacation and offers Ben a welcome opportunity to escape the neighborhood routine. Here he meets Mica, an independent, strong-willed girl who lives a nomadic life aboard a boat with her marine biologist father. Mica teaches Ben and Cody to fish, sail, and snorkel, and together they explore the interior canals and coastal waterways. But Ben soon realizes that adventure sometimes brings danger, and in the process tests the limits of his own courage.

AWARDS

- 📖 2003 Parent's Choice Award
- 📖 2006-2007 Master List, Sunshine State Young Reader's Award (FL)



THEMES

- ❑ Risk taking/courage
- ❑ Family issues/Sibling rivalry
- ❑ Non-traditional families
- ❑ Heroism
- ❑ Divorce
- ❑ Alcoholism
- ❑ Coming of Age/Finding your identity
- ❑ Relationships/Inner Feelings
- ❑ Florida Sea Life
- ❑ Vacations

PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

“As in Adrian Fogelin’s previous novels, **CROSSING JORDAN** and **ANNA CASEY’S PLACE IN THE WORLD**, this story has plenty of action, but it’s the emotional drama, revealed in funny, realistic dialogue and spot-on descriptions, that distinguish the novel. Readers just leaping into adolescence will easily connect with Ben, who is both sharply observant of and bewildered by the adult world and his own place in it.”

—Booklist

- Have students keep a notebook/journal where they can record their thoughts and reactions to the book. Begin the unit by asking students to write about a family vacation. They should include who was with them, where they went, what they did, and anything else they feel was important. Allow students 5-10 minutes to write their journal response. You could also have students draw a picture. Once they are through, invite students to share their entries with the class or with partners.
- Have students complete a book preview scavenger hunt for **MY BROTHER'S HERO**. Have them locate the author and the year the book was published. Ask them to make a prediction of what the book will be about by examining the title and the cover. Ask them their definition of a hero. Share predictions with the class and create a class prediction chart by including everyone's input. Post the prediction chart in a place where students can see it. (Continue to refer back to the chart during the reading.) Read the blurb on the back/inside cover and have students check their predictions as well as write in their journals at least one thing about the book that they think will appeal to them.
- Read the Table of Contents together as a class. See if students can guess what each chapter will be about.
- Provide students with information about the state of Florida, and share a few facts about the state each day. Visit <http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/kids> for informative fun facts about Florida. Also, check out books about Florida and the plants and animals native to this area from the school library and place them in the class library for students to read throughout this unit.
- Ask students if anyone has visited Florida. If so, ask them to describe the physical environment. Show students

Briefly discuss Tallahassee and Key West. Describe the geographical differences between the two using a Venn Diagram.

- Share pictures of the ocean and sea life with students. Visit <http://jrscience.wcp.muohio.edu/html/TropEcolImages.html> for pictures of the Florida Keys, Atlantic Ocean, and Coral Reef.
- Discuss the sea life in that area. Tell students the book mentions many plants and animals and gives their scientific Latin names. Create a plant and animal chart and record the names of all the plants and animals mentioned as you read the book. Record the common name and the Latin name for each item.

AS YOU READ

- Allow students to have a choice in reading method. Students can read aloud, read in pair or small groups, or read independently.
- Have class discussions with students about what the characters may be thinking based on what they have read. Have students write diary entries from each character's perspective (Ben, Cody, and Mica).
- At the end of each chapter have students discuss what was read. Show them how to make inferences, connections, predictions, and draw visualizations to help clarify what was read. Create a class list of questions and display them in the room. Invite students to answer them during class discussions of the novel.
- "Say Something" activity. Put students in groups of two or three and have them take turns reading a portion of the story aloud. As they read, they will stop to offer a comment about the story. The group will reflect on what their partner has said and respond.
- Have students keep double entry journals. Students will fold a sheet of

write verbatim a quote from the text.

On the right side, they will record a comment, a question, a connection, or a visual symbol relating to the quote.

- Create a character bulletin board. Display words, character traits, quotes, and activities that will help students make connections with each character.
- As you read each chapter, add names of sea life discussed in book to the chart.
- Pre-teach key vocabulary words by having students skim to find them, and then use context clues to guide them to a definition.
- Help students understand what realistic fiction means. Ask them what makes this book realistic fiction. Find passages in the book that support this position.

AFTER YOU READ

- Provide students with information about the author. Do a class navigation of her website at www.adrianfogelin.com to read about her background and other book titles she has written. Find out if anyone has read any of her other novels.
- Ask students on a scale of one to five, one being best and five being worst, rate the book's themes listed on page one of this guide and evaluate the characters. Discuss their reasons for the ratings.
- Ask students to retell the story. Have them include story elements, such as setting, plot, main characters, and conflicts. Retellings can help students be more specific in their summarizing.
- Revisit any questions or predictions that were made during pre-reading. See if any students were accurate in their guesses. If so, why?
- The story leaves you wondering what will become of Ben and Cass. Have students make a journal entry that describes what may happen.
- Ask students to whom they would recommend this book, and why.

about living on a boat. How would they spend their time?

- Have students make a journal entry about being lost at sea. What would they do to survive?
- Predict: Will Mica's father change and turn his life around? Support answers with examples from the book.
- In the book Ben gives Cass a postcard. Have students create postcards and send them to someone special in their lives. This could be a friend, family member, or anyone else they care about.
- Revisit the journal entry from the "Before You Read" section about what a hero is. Have students write another entry about why this book is titled **MY BROTHER'S HERO**.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

(Classroom Activities)

Language Arts

- Teach students about imagery, similes, and metaphors. Find examples of each in the text.
- Instruct students on the components of writing a friendly letter. Visit <http://englishplus.com/grammar/00000143.htm> for information about how to write a friendly letter. Have students pretend they are either Ben or Cody, and have them write a friendly letter to one of the characters from the book.
- To add to the previous activity, teach a lesson on sequencing by creating a friendly letter with the class. The next day, have the letter written out on word wall strips or extra large index cards. Pass out sections to students and have them put the letter in correct order. At the end of the activity, point out the main parts of a friendly letter with the students.
- Have students write a letter to the author that includes what they liked and disliked about the book. If they

changes they would propose.

- Have students write poems about animals, the ocean, or the characters. Visit <http://www.kathimitchell.com/poemtypes.html> for a list of different poem styles.
- Mica and Ben both dive from the mast of a boat. Discuss the sport of diving and have the students do a report on a famous diver.

Social Studies

- Find out if anyone has traveled to Florida, and where they stayed. Go to <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/usa/statesbw/florida.shtml> and print out the map of Florida. Have students color the map. Discuss the geographical features of the state, paying special attention to the Keys. Point out that northwestern Florida is a panhandle, and the Keys are islands.
- Have students compare and contrast their state to the state of Florida. Investigate population, recreation, location, lifestyles, etc.
- Have students research Florida's natural landforms. Have students create a "Florida's Landforms" book. The book should include pictures of each landform, the definitions, and the areas where these landforms are found in the state.
- The book discusses practices of putting boats in a mangrove tunnel to keep them safe from hurricanes. Have a class discussion about hurricanes. What causes them and how do they affect the areas they reach? For a wealth of information about hurricanes, visit <http://www.weatherwizkids.com/hurricane1.htm>. To play an online interactive game about creating a hurricane, visit <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/pdf/canelab.htm>.

Science

- created with the scientific Latin names from the "Before You Read" section of this guide. Have students research the plants and animals to create a book. Books should include a picture of either the plant or animal, the Latin name, and a minimum of two facts about each entry. Create a cover, a title, and a table of contents to complete the book.
- Research different types of animal life found in Florida waters. The book mentions man-o-wars, barracudas, egrets, pelicans, mangrove crabs, thorny sea star, heron, jacks, nurse shark, coral, brain coral, elkhorn coral, etc. Bring in texts of various reading levels or visit the library as a class to find information about these animals. Have students create a poster including pictures and interesting facts. Allow them to share their posters with the class.
- Arrange a class field trip to the local aquarium.
- Discuss environmental issues concerning Florida's coastline and sea creatures. Some concerns to discuss: pollution, endangered animals, diminishing Everglades, increasing water levels, decreasing fresh water supply/water conservation, global warming, hurricanes. Have students work independently or in small groups. Allow them to choose one of the above environmental concerns to write and create a poster about. Give them an opportunity to share this information with the class.
- The way mangrove trees secrete salt through their leaves is mentioned in the story. Have students study mangrove trees and how they survive where other trees can't. Visit www.naturia.per.sg/buloh/plants/mangrove_trees.htm for more information about mangrove trees. Create a class chart drawn like a mangrove tree. Allow students to write

from the information found.

- Watch a video on Florida's coast and sea creatures. Discuss. Have students work in small groups to produce a commercial about Florida using the information from this video and sources used throughout this unit. They should include props, pictures, and a map. Commercials should be three to four minutes in length. Have groups present their commercial to the class. Videotape commercials if possible and allow each student to take the video home to view with their family.

Math

- Have students research sea depths and water temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico for the last twenty years. They should get information and categorize data by five-year increments. A sample chart:

Sea Depths and Water Temperature in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico

Years	Sea Depth	Water Temperature
Current Year		
Five years ago		
Ten years ago		
Fifteen years ago		
Twenty years ago		

Discuss with students why these changes are taking place and reasons for the increasing water levels and temperatures. Have students write a report on global warming and include information discussed in class. Report should include causes, effects, and possible solutions. Visit www.epa.gov/climatechange/kids/ for information about global warming.

- Measure the distance the Floyds traveled from Tallahassee to Key West for their vacation. Measure the distance from your home to where the Floyds lived and vacationed. Solve the difference from each location. Visit <http://www.symsys.com/~ingram/mileage/index.php> to get the number of miles between cities. Visit [to get the United States map. Have students mark the path from their location to both cities in Florida.](http://www.</div><div data-bbox=)

- Have students research the population growth in Tallahassee and Key West, Florida, within the last 5 years. Using Handout #1, Graphing Population in Florida, make a graph showing the population for these two cities within the last five years. Visit www.census.gov/popest/counties/CO-EST2006-01.html to get population estimates by state, then county, from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Art

- Have students paint an ocean scene showing what they think the Florida Keys look like.
- Have students draw a beach scene including seashells, sea creatures, and a sunset. They can sprinkle glitter on the picture to have a shimmering effect.
- Make starfish by cutting out stars and decorating with crayons, glitter, glue, and sand.
- Using the Florida map, create a replica of the map with chalk on the playground area. Have students label the major cities. For fun they can step count the distance between cities.

Culminating Activities

- Snorkeling is a way that characters in this book had fun while learning about the wildlife in the sea. Invite a snorkel expert to the class to demonstrate and discuss snorkeling.
- After you have read the book and done many of the activities in this guide, have a "beach day" with the class. Allow students to bring in seashore mementos (shells, starfish, etc.), vacation pictures, and other beach theme items.

Diving Sites and pictures on Florida Keys
<http://www.florida-keys.fl.us/divesite.htm>
<http://www.florida-keys.fl.us/diving.htm>

Dive Log and other information about diving and snorkeling

<http://www.florida-keys.com/diving/FloridaKeysDiveLog.pdf>
and

<http://www.florida-keys.com/diving/>

Map of Florida (blank map)

http://www.eduplace.com/state/fl/pdf/fl_map.pdf

All about Florida for Kids

<http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/kids/>

Information about Climate Change

http://www.redorbit.com/news/science/910505/aster_climate_change_is_putting_the_heat_on_florida/index.html

U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov/>

SUGGESTED READING

- > **CROSSING JORDAN, THE BIG NOTHING**, and other books by Adrian Fogelin
- > **SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELING PANTS** by Ann Brashares
- > **KEEPING THE MOON** by Sarah Dessen
- > **THE PURPLE HAT GANG** by Judith Kristen
- > **THE SPEED OF LIGHT** by Ron Carlson

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Adrian Fogelin was born in Pearl River, New York, and is the daughter of fiction writer Maria B. Fogelin. After growing up in a home littered with manuscripts in various stages of production, she felt that writing was a very normal occupation. Fogelin earned a BFA in stone carving and bronze

casting sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design. She enjoys writing, gardening, tagging migrating monarch butterflies, and birding. Fogelin's novels, **ANNA CASEY'S PLACE IN THE WORLD**, **CROSSING JORDAN**, **SISTER SPIDER KNOWS ALL**, **MY BROTHER'S HERO**, **THE BIG NOTHING**, and **THE REAL QUESTION** have received outstanding reviews and numerous awards. They are written with honesty, warmth, and a kid-brand of humor, guaranteed to captivate young readers. She currently lives in Tallahassee, Florida, with her husband.

Adrian Fogelin offers two programs for schools. "Think Like an Author" is an interactive creative writing workshop for students and teachers; it uses unusual writing prompts such as smells, objects, photos, and mysterious wrapped boxes. The objective of the exercises is to get participants excited about the process of writing. "The Art of Writing" involves a discussion about the process of writing and includes a Q & A session and a book signing. Fogelin brings a manuscript and galley to show the stages a book goes through from idea to finished product. A couple of exercises from "Think Like an Author" are also included. For additional information on Adrian Fogelin, please visit her website at

www.adrianfogelin.com.

(Intended audience: Grades 4-9)

We have authors and illustrators who visit schools and libraries! For information regarding author appearances, please contact our Marketing Department at 404.876.8761 x111 or hello@peachtree-online.com.

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