

# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE








## OPERATION: HAPPY

by

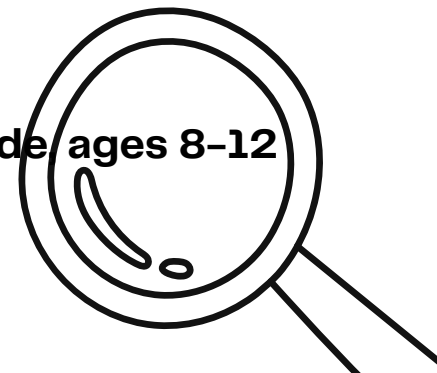
JENNI L. WALSH



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Created by Jennifer Guyor Jowett for middle grade (ages 8-12)



# BOOK SUMMARY



It's 1940, and Jody is moving with her military family yet again—this time to a small naval base in Pearl Harbor. She's always created a "top ten" list for each new home to help her adjust, and with Hawaii being so beautiful and her loyal dog Happy by her side, it's easy to find things to add.

But Jody's mom is convinced the island is dangerous and starts constantly practicing first aid. Jody also learns that Happy is beginning to slow down. To cope, she starts a list of fun things they can do together. "Operation: Happy" gives her something to focus on beyond the scary new experiences, like air raid drills and Yellow Fever vaccinations.

Before long, everyone's worst fears come true: Pearl Harbor is attacked. In the aftermath, Jody's father must stay behind as the rest of the family is evacuated, and Jody promises him she will keep everyone together. But things are hard in San Francisco, where she feels like an outsider. Worse, her mother has become depressed, and Jody worries she and her sister will have to go to an orphanage. With Happy by her side, Jody hatches a brave plan to keep the family safe ... Will Operation: Happy see them through?

**“As a family  
who moves  
a lot, home  
isn't a  
destination.  
Home is  
wherever  
we're  
together.”**

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jenni L. Walsh worked for a decade enticing readers as an award-winning advertising copywriter before becoming an author. Her passion lies in transporting readers to another world, be it in historical or contemporary settings. She is a proud graduate of Villanova University, and lives in the Philadelphia suburbs with her husband, daughter, son, and various pets.

Jenni is a USA Today bestselling author of the nonfiction *She Dared* series and historical novels *Hettie* and the *London Blitz*, *I Am Defiance*, *By the Light of Fireflies*, *Over and Out*, and *Operation: Happy*. She also writes historical novels for adults, including *Becoming Bonnie*, *Side by Side*, *A Betting Woman*, *The Call of the Wrens*, *Unsinkable*, and the forthcoming *Ace*, *Marvel Spy*. To learn more about Jenni and her books, please visit [jennilwalsh.com](http://jennilwalsh.com) or [@jennilwalsh](https://www.instagram.com/jennilwalsh) on social media.



*Philadelphia*



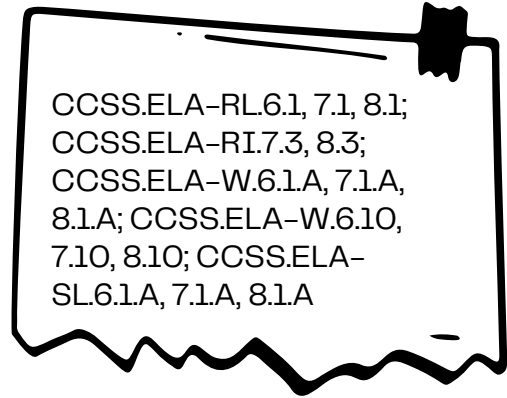
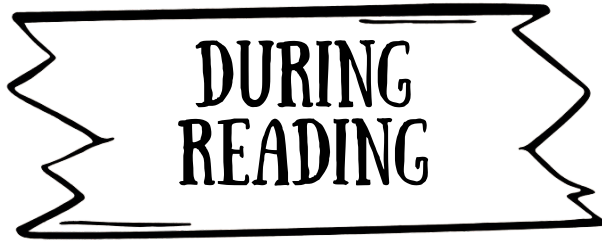
## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

These pre-reading activities allow students to draw from existing knowledge so that they are better able to make connections within the novel.

1. Introduce students to the game of Sardines (which is like Hide and Seek in reverse).
2. Jody's mother comments, "Sometimes we don't get the whole story" (56). Take a temperature gauge by having students stand on a line that marks their agreement/disagreement with this statement: It's always important to have the whole story. Discuss their reasoning. Ask students to place themselves on the line again after discussing (and again after reading), noting changes.
3. Have students consider the title *Operation: Happy* and the cover to make predictions about the book. Consider several aspects such as the small details, color choices, and the position of the characters.

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What items would you include on your bucket list?
2. What is the biggest change you have ever made? Describe the ways this was challenging for you.
3. Ten Best List—what are the ten best things about where you currently live?
4. How would you define what makes a home? (130)
5. In what ways would having a pet make a move to a new location easier?
6. What does it take to be a leader? After answering, look up the definition of leader. In what ways does the definition change your answer? List the qualities you feel best demonstrate leadership.



## Vocabulary

The author introduces several words that would have been commonplace during the 1940s. Using context clues and a dictionary, keep track of their definitions.

Vocab Word	Definition
cattywampus (5)	
lookie-loo (5)	
lickety-split (5)	
collywobbles (9)	
nifty (19)	

## Fear Detection

Which is Jody's larger fear as the book begins—when she may lose Happy or what's going on that has her mother so worried about living on the island? Keep track of your thoughts as you read through the book. You may wish to include the other fears Jody has as the novel progresses. Add details that help you determine how Jody is feeling, what she's thinking, and what is happening.

# POST-READING QUESTIONS

CCSS.ELA-RL.6.1, 7.1, 8.1;  
CCSS.ELA-RL.7.3, 8.3;  
CCSS.ELA-RL.6.6, 7.6, 8.6;  
CCSS.ELA-W.6.1.A, 7.1.A,  
8.1.A; CCSS.ELA-W.6.1.B,  
7.1.B, 8.1.B; CCSS.ELA-  
SL.6.1.A, 7.1.A, 8.1.A

1. Reread the author's dedication. Why do you think she included the comment in parentheses?
2. Chapter 2 is told from Happy's perspective. Which section of this chapter best illustrates the dog's narrative voice?
3. How does having Happy make Jody's move to Hawaii easier?
4. What motivates Jody to make the Operation: Happy list? How does this list differ from her other lists? (chapter 8)
5. Why does Jody's mom feel more nervous after she passed her Red Cross tests? (37)
6. How does Jody overcome her fear of the dungeon?
7. Jody's father tells her to "state her purpose" (91). In what ways does this help her?
8. Why do you think Jody's father chose her to lead Team Zuber (100–101)? Does she have the skills to become the leader? How is she better able to handle this responsibility than her older sister or mother? At what age is someone too young to lead their family?
9. Was it harder for Jody to make the move to Pearl Harbor or to San Francisco? Explain your answer with evidence from the text.
10. Jody uses a list to get her through difficult circumstances (181). In what ways does the list work to do this? Why is this an effective help?
11. What is the best step Jody takes in helping her family? Explain your answer.
12. Jody's mom begins making a list (198) when they move to their new apartment. Why is this significant?
13. What is the biggest challenge Jody faces throughout the book? Why do you think this?
14. If Happy were to put a list together, what might be on it?
15. The author chooses to write the final chapter in Happy's voice. Why do you think she made this choice? What significance does it hold?

# POST-READING ACTIVITIES

CCSS.ELA-RL.6.1, 7.1, 8.1;  
CCSS.ELA-W.6.1.A, 7.1.A,  
8.1.A; CCSS.ELA-W.6.1.E,  
7.1.E, 8.1.E; CCSS.ELA-  
SL.6.1.A, 7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9-10.1,  
11-12.1



## Word Exploration

Happy notices the “confusing” words that humans use (chapter 2). Explore unusual words from the 1940s or another decade. Craft a dictionary that includes the part of speech along with the definition.

## Foreshadowing

When practicing the blackout, Jody thinks, “It feels like everything has disappeared. Our friends. The school. The pool. The theater. The beautiful island. The ships that I’ve come to think of as our protectors” (43). Her response to the blackout foreshadows events to come. Create a before, during, and after image illustrating the differences in Jody’s life before the attack on Pearl Harbor and her life after. You might think of a way to symbolically represent the blackout to separate the before and after parts of the image.

## Map Making

Create a map of Ford Island, locating significant areas from the novel such as the dungeon and the location of Jody’s house and school. Include details such as the placement of the Navy ships located in Pearl Harbor on the day of the attack.

## Research

Some characters in the novel are vaccinated against yellow fever. Do some research on this disease. Write an essay detailing your findings.

Educator’s Guide created by Jennifer Guyor Jowett. Jennifer is a middle grade English and literature teacher, the author of *Into the Shadows*, and a contributor to Ethicalela’s Open Write, VerseLove, and various literary blogs. She enjoys reading, writing, traveling, dogs, and chocolate (in every order).

