



## **Caroline B. Cooney**

### **Biography**

There's "no question that many of today's teenagers must contend with drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and widespread sexual activity which often begins frighteningly early," Caroline B. Cooney tells Deborah Klezmer in a recent article. "Though it's ridiculous to suggest that these problems don't exist, I have the impression that kids still yearn for absolutely wholesome childhoods. They want hope, want things to work out, want reassurance that even were they to do something rotten, they and the people around them would still be all right."

Caroline B. Cooney is comfortable in many literary genres. From the suspenseful series, ***The Face on the Milk Carton***, to the time travel tales of ***Both Sides of Time***, Cooney pulls in her readers with exciting plot lines, credible characters, and realistic dialogue.

Caroline B. Cooney lives in a small seacoast village in Connecticut. She has written over 50 books for young people, including ***The Party's Over***; the acclaimed ***The Face on the Milk Carton*** trilogy; ***Flight 116 Is Down***, which won the 1994 Golden Sower Award for Young Adults, the 1995 Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award, and Book for the Reluctant Young Adult Reader; ***Flash Fire***; ***Emergency Room***; ***The Stranger***; and ***Twins***. ***Wanted*** and ***Terrorist*** were both 1998 ALA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers. Ms. Cooney also wrote the 1980 television screenplay *Rear View Mirror*, starring Lee Remick.



## **Suggested Activities for Specific Books by Caroline B. Cooney**

### ***Among Friends***

- Did you learn anything about yourself after reading the story? Explain.
- Discuss the role of personal change in the story. Which character changed the most? The least?
- Compare and contrast each set of parents found in ***Among Friends***.
- Could you identify yourself with any of the characters in the story? Did you connect with any part of the story?
- After reading the story, do you view friendship differently? Why?
- What advice would you give Jennie regarding her tendency to brag or to "Paul Classified," regarding his inability to communicate?

### ***Both Sides of Time* and *Out of Time***

- Create a collage from magazines to represent the era in which you live. Create a second collage from the perspective of 100 years from now. Discuss what is unique to your era and how you imagine the future.
- What period of time would you most like to travel to and why?
- What is the role of women and men in ***Both Sides of Time*** and ***Out of Time***? What is the same and different for men and women living in 1898 and 1998?
- Use a Venn diagram (page 7) to compare and contrast Annie Lockwood's parents with that of Devonny Stratton's.
- Do a character study of the leading male and female characters in ***Both Sides of Time*** and ***Out of Time***. How does each character portray strength and weakness? How does each character accomplish goals?
- Discuss the role of social class in each book.
- Discuss the role of Katie in ***Out of Time***. What does she represent and how does she help Strat?
- Do you think parents have more influence and power over their children today than they did a hundred years ago? Explain.

### ***The Face on the Milk Carton, Whatever Happened to Janie?, The Voice on the Radio***

- After completing the series, create a character sketch of Janie Johnson, Reeve Shields, Jodi Spring, and Stephen Spring using as many descriptive words as you can in one or two sentences.
- Did you find Janie to be both obnoxious and sympathetic in the story? Give examples.
- Compare and contrast the parents in the trilogy: Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Shields, and Mr. and Mrs. Spring.



- Hannah becomes a member of the cult, Hare Krishna. Use both print and electronic resources to define the meaning of a cult and provide a brief history of the Hare Krishna—or other cults—in the United States.
- Have you ever seen a legitimate advertisement for a missing person? How did you know it was legitimate? Where did you see it and what did it say? What can “missing” mean?
- In *The Face on the Milk Carton*, Janie assembles a variety of clues before confronting her Connecticut parents about her past. What are the clues and how and where did Janie find them?
- Janie Johnson finds solace in her journal. Why?
- What makes Janie Johnson a sympathetic character? What doesn’t make Janie Johnson sympathetic?
- What are your earliest memories? Can you remember what it was like being three years old?
- Why does Janie have so much guilt about being kidnapped?
- Select one paragraph that evokes feelings of warmth, confusion, or anger. Explain why word choice is so important to the success of the paragraph.
- Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Janie’s Connecticut and New Jersey families.
- How is the reader connected to part one of the trilogy and possibly interested in part three? What makes the story fresh, well woven, and suspenseful?
- What did Jodie and Stephen learn about themselves during their trip to New York City? And how did this scene advance the story?
- If you read parts one and two of the trilogy, describe how Reeve and Janie changed during the course of the story.
- For readers who did not read parts one and two, how did the author advance the series yet allow the reader to know Janie’s history?
- Imagine you are a talk show host at a college radio station. You are to design a program that has opening music, a brief sentence highlighting the program’s topic, a topic that is discussed for one minute, a suspenseful monologue, an advertisement, a program summary, and closing music. Your program cannot exceed three minutes. Write down how you would fill in all the elements listed. If you have the opportunity, record the program.
- When and how did Janie finally create a healthy relationship with her birth mother?
- Forgive and forget? Can it be done in real life? Is it done in the story? Trace the relationship of two or three characters. Did one character ever feel betrayed by another? Give two examples of betrayal and redemption among characters in the book.



**Operation: Homefront**

- Use two sources—one electronic, one print—to write a synopsis of the Persian Gulf War. Describe key political and military leaders from the United States, Iraq, United Arab Emirate, and Kuwait. What is national interest and what did each nation want to protect and fight for?
- What does an all-volunteer armed forces mean?
- How would you feel if one of your parents were called up to serve in a war? Would you have new responsibilities? If so, what would they be?
- What is Laura doing differently in the story that she didn't do before her mother was called to serve in Operation Desert Shield?
- What other roles are reversed in this story?

**Twenty Pageants Later**

- You are in competition with a family member for recognition from a third party. You and your competitor need to convince the third party that you really deserve a chance to “get away” to polish needed skills. Use Scottie-Ann and Dane as models for behavior and persuasion skills.
- Pretend that you have an awkward relationship with a friend who is as competitive and successful as you are. Demonstrate how you can acknowledge success, respect, and friendship.
- Create a monologue in which you articulate future dreams and the challenges you will face to meet those dreams.

**Discussion Questions**

- Do you think young men and women can equally appreciate the stories of Caroline B. Cooney?
- As a young person, do you find that Caroline B. Cooney's school settings are realistic? Explain.
- What morals can be learned in such titles as *Driver's Ed*, *Hush Little Baby*, and *Flight 116 Is Down*?
- Caroline B. Cooney wrote the book, and subsequent screenplay for *The Face on the Milk Carton*. Compare the book with the movie. What was the same and what was different? Which did you like better and why?



## **Selected Bibliography**

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For further reading about the author:

Klezmer, Deborah. "Caroline B. Cooney." *Authors & Artists for Young Adults*, edited by Agnes Garret and Helga P. McCue. Vol. 5. .Gale Research. 1990.