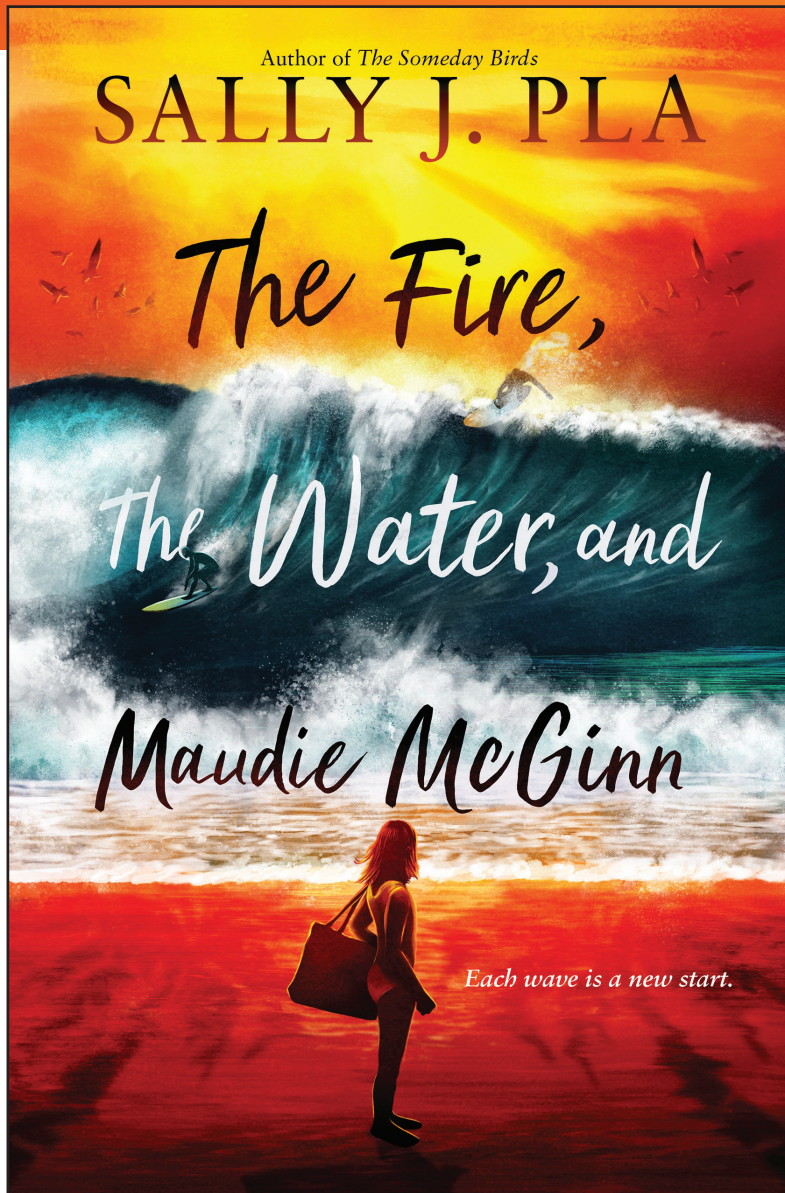


# DISCUSSION GUIDE

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**N**eurodivergent Maudie lives for the summers she spends in California with her dad, but this year she's shouldering the weight of a big secret, one that her mom warned her never to tell.

When a wildfire strikes, Maudie and her dad evacuate from the woods to the small beach town where her father grew up. Every morning, from their camper, Maudie can see surfers bobbing in the water. She wants to learn, but how could she ever be brave or cool enough to surf?

As Maudie navigates unfamiliar waters, she makes new friends, and her autism no longer feels like such a big deal. But her secret is still threatening to sink her. Will Maudie be able to reveal the awful truth about life with her mom and stepdad before the summer is over?

★ "Maudie's intimate first-person narrative fashion[s] a vulnerable portrait of one girl seeking to empower and redefine herself outside of her personal traumas." —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

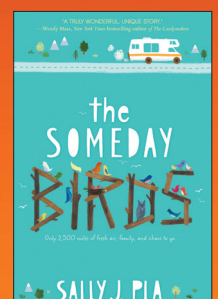
"A perceptive, poignant tale of self-discovery." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Readers will cry, cheer, celebrate, and not soon forget Maudie McGinn."  
—Pam Muñoz Ryan, Newbery Award-winning author of *Esperanza Rising*

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# Discussion Questions

- ★ Look closely at the title and illustration on the book's cover. What expectations do you have about the story based on the cover?
- ★ Main characters usually have an outer problem and an inner problem that can lead to conflict in the story. Describe two scenes from the story that reveal both the inner and the outer problems that Maudie faces.
- ★ Maudie's parents are divorced, so Maudie spends the school year with her mother and summer with her father. Compare and contrast Maudie's relationships with her mother and her father.
- ★ What are Maudie's strengths and her weaknesses? How do her weaknesses cause problems for her in the story?
- ★ As Maudie and her father spend time together on the long car ride away from the fire, Maudie acknowledges to herself that she can be annoying to others. Discuss examples of Maudie's behavior that prove challenging to others.
- ★ Describe the difference between how Maudie's mother and her father deal with her behavior.
- ★ Maudie meets several new people at the campground. What roles do Paddi, Begonia, and Max play in supporting Maudie and helping her grow in the story?
- ★ Etta was once a professional surfer who now moves from beach to beach. Why do you think she takes Maudie under her wing when Maudie expresses an interest in learning to surf?
- ★ Maudie is torn about keeping secrets in the story. What secret guilt does she carry about the fire that destroyed her father's cabin in Molinas?
- ★ Maudie witnesses a lady in a big, red bathing suit roughly disciplining her son at the beach. Why does Maudie feel compelled to intervene when no one else speaks up for the child?
- ★ Why do you think that Maudie's father has never before revealed the challenges he faced in school as a child? What similarities are there between Maudie's behavior and the behavior of her father?
- ★ What choices does Maudie make toward the end of the story that show growth on her part?
- ★ Why do you think Maudie risks participating in the Surf Bash even after her mother and stepfather arrive to bring her home with them?
- ★ Dr. Shakti proves to be a pivotal force in Maudie's life. How does Dr. Shakti help unlock the secret Maudie has been hiding about Ron?
- ★ In your opinion, which characters learn significant lessons in the story? What do they learn?

# Activities for Students

## Surfing Glossary

Maudie has to learn the vocabulary of surfing along with the physical skills that Etta teaches her in the ocean. Look back through the novel and locate key terms about surfing—from the different types of boards to the names of various moves on the waves—to make a glossary of surfing vocabulary. List the words you find in alphabetical order and write a definition for each surfing term.

## Personal Narrative

Maudie becomes consumed with learning how to surf during her time at the campground with her dad. Think back to a time when you were learning something new in your life, like how to water ski or make pasta, learn a new language, or lead a new club at school. What steps did you have to take to learn this new skill? Who was involved in supporting your passion for trying something new? What feelings did you experience during the learning process? Use this information to write a personal narrative that describes your journey in pursuing and developing a new interest.

## Character Study

Choose two important characters from the novel and brainstorm a list of character traits for each one. Then, think of a symbol to represent each character. Draw your two symbols large on white paper and attach the character's name to their symbol. Within each symbol, write the traits belonging to that character.

## Chapter Analysis

Select your favorite chapter from the novel. Reread the chapter and code the text with post-it notes to record your thinking as you read:

? = a part I questioned or was curious about

♥ = a favorite part or line

! = a part that surprised me

Meet with a partner to share your coded text and to discuss how your reactions to the selected chapters were similar or different.

## Tracking Story Events

Create an illustrated timeline of the story. Begin by choosing five to six important story events. Draw a small picture for each of these events in the order in which they occurred in the story. Include a short caption beneath each picture to explain what the drawings represent.

The discussion questions and activities in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both master's and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Demonstrations of Friendship

In each of the first two boxes below, write or draw a cartoon illustration of an example from the story of how others show friendship and understanding to Maudie. In the second set of boxes, write or draw instances where Maudie shows friendship and understanding to others.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Analyzing Conflict

Maudie faces several challenges as she tries to navigate her life. Conflict can exist between two or more characters, between a character and nature, and within a character as they wrestle with their own thoughts and actions. Cite examples from the story that are examples of the different types of conflict Maudie encounters in the story.

Conflict between Maudie and another character:

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Conflict between Maudie and nature:

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Conflict within Maudie:

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# Masks

You know—or maybe you don't—how they say a lot of autistic people, girls especially, have a sort of “mask” when they're being social? We try to camouflage, to blend in. I totally do that. I don't mean to. I don't set out to. The mask just happens. I so desperately want other kids to like me that my brain's command center takes over whenever I see a group of other kids, and it tells me: *Mask up!* (sort of like when, on *Star Trek*, the captain says, “*Shields up!*”) *Smile, lips! Look calm and happy! Act like them! Talk like they talk! Laugh when they laugh!*

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.