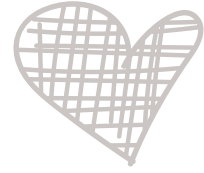


MEND

A STORY OF DIVORCE

A GRAPHIC NOVEL BY
SOPHIA RECCA



Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Reading Group Guide

About the Book:

Sophia's story of divorce is a heart-wrenching tale of how a nine-year-old girl's heart broke when her parents unexpectedly announced their divorce. Feeling lost and alone, Sophia initially puts the blame on herself.

Over time, self-loathing manifests into empowerment. Sophia goes on a mission to get her parents back by demanding they both remain in her life. Her heroism is driven by the prophetic words written on an old report card, an innocuous paper robot, and a single prayer that's miraculously answered.

About the Author:

Sophia Recca is currently 14 years old and attends private school in Las Vegas, Nevada. She is a straight "A" student, plays volleyball, and loves reading. Blind-sided by divorce at 11 years old, Sophia wanted to share her story with other readers to help ease the pain of young people who are going through divorce.

Vocabulary Activity

Words to know:

graphic novel, mend, divorce, pretend, chattering, daze, fainted, bungalow, comb, balance, ancestors, blind-sided

Complete the charts on the next two pages for each vocabulary word.

WORD	Definition (as used in text, include part of speech)	Quote from Text (include quote and page number)	Sentence (create your own sentence)	Illustration (create an illustration to symbolize the word as it appears in text)
graphic novel				
mend				
divorce				
pretend				
chattering				
daze				

WORD	Definition (as used in text, include part of speech)	Quote from Text (include quote and page number)	Sentence (create your own sentence)	Illustration (create an illustration to symbolize the word as it appears in text)
fainted				
bungalow				
comb				
balance				
ancestors				
blind-sided				

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Before you read:

1. Why has this text been written?

2. What is the topic of this text?

3. What is your first reaction to this text?

4. What prior knowledge do you have on the topic?

During reading:

5. Make connections to the text such as text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world.

6. How does the tone of the story change throughout the text?
What is the overall tone?

During Reading Continued ...

7. How do the illustrations support the tone? Cite specific examples.

8. Analyze Sophia's point of view. How does it change throughout the text? Cite specific examples

9. How can you relate to Sophia? Use specific examples from your life, and how they apply to Sophia's Story.

10. At what point in the story would you give Sophia encouragement? What would you tell her?

After reading:

11. How have your thoughts about this novel changed after reading it?

After Reading Continued ...

12. What specific moment in the novel helped change Sophia's perspective about divorce? What phrase, or saying has been symbolic in your life?

13. After reading this novel, if you could speak to Sophia what would you ask her?

14. How does the use of figurative language throughout the novel help you better understand Sophia's emotions?

15. If you could create a graphic novel about your life, what would it be called? What would it be about? How would it help others? Why do you think Sophia titled her book, *Mend*?

ANSWER KEY

Before you read:

1. **Possible response:** For Sophia Recca to share her story of being a child of divorce. To bring awareness of issues that people go through, and provide a resource for others in similar situations.
2. Divorce
3. Responses will vary.
Possible response: I think this looks like a book about a girl who is upset that her parents got divorced because the back cover shows a girl who looks sad and ripped apart.
*Response should include the student's reaction, then justification from the text.
4. Responses will vary.
Possible responses: Students who have parents that are divorced, seeing divorced parents on a television show, or from another book, etc.
Suggested: Allow students to share out loud. This will help all students have a basic understanding of the topic if they do not have their own experiences or connections.

During reading:

5. Responses will vary.
6. Responses will vary. Ensure that students justify their response using textual evidence along with personal experience. Refer to students' text-to-self connections. This should help guide the student to identify the author's tone.
Possible responses:
Beginning: happy, loving
Middle: concerned, depressed, disheartened, compassionate, empathetic, introspective
End: loving, hopeful, elated, expectant, sanguine
Possible overall tone: optimistic, passionate, reassuring, encouraging, hopeful.

ANSWER KEY: During Reading Continued ...

7. Responses will vary.

Responses should support the tone in question 6.

Possible response: The tone of the story is _____. On page _____, the illustration supports this tone because _____. Examples could include facial expressions, color used to convey the tone (i.e, dark or light colors).

8. **Possible response:** Sophia feels that in the beginning she lives in a happy family that is safe, exciting, and loving. For example, while taking a Christmas photo, she describes them as one big happy family. As the story progresses and her parents are fighting, her feelings turn to blame and sadness. For example, she is sitting against her wall, the illustrations are very dark, her body language displays a sense of confusion and her face appears sad and she asks, “Am I the reason?” By the end of the story, Sophia is feeling hopeful, confident, and heroic. For example as she talks to her parents towards the end, her body language displays confidence. She is standing tall, her face shows a smile, and in the family pictures there is a softness to her appearance, and a smile that is only seen in the first pages of the book.

Responses should include examples directly from the text and illustrations to justify their answer.

9. Responses will vary.

- Students may connect Sophia’s situation to their own if parents are divorced.
- Students may connect a different event in their life to Sophia’s and relate to the emotions of the story more than the content.
- Students should reflect on the story, illustrations, emotions and actions. They may relate to any one or all of those depending on their personal situation.

10. Responses will vary.

Possible response: When Sophia hears her parents fighting, I would tell her that it is never her fault. Parents often have issues that are much deeper than what the child may see, and issues they don’t even know exist. How they feel about each other and how they feel about their children are very different. They love you, Sophia. Be strong and do not blame yourself. I would choose this moment in the book because I often feel that things are my fault when other people are having a problem around me. I can

ANSWER KEY: During Reading Continued ...

relate to Sophia's feelings, and I would want someone there to remind me that things may be deeper than I know, and that it is not my fault in anyway.

- Students should identify a point in the story that they would encourage her, explain in detail what they would say, why they would say it and expand on a connection they may have to that moment and why they chose it.

After reading:

11. Responses will vary.

- Student should refer to “before you read” section, question 3, then expand on how their thoughts have changed using specific examples from the text.

12. The specific moment in the novel that changes Sophia's perspective about her parents divorce was the first grade report card where he teacher wrote: “You're an angel spreading your wings to help others.” Sophia realized in this moment that she could put herself back together, and be the one to fix things for her family.

- Students should then reflect on a saying that is symbolic in their life. Something they were told by a parent, teacher, coach, friend, family member, stranger...they should explain how this saying might go through their minds at different times in their lives during different events or situations, explain how it helps them, or helped them get through a situation.

13. Responses will vary.

Responses should include a question they have for Sophia that is sparked by a specific situation, illustration, or saying from the novel. Students should elaborate as to why they would want to know the answer, how it would help them,

For example: You seem so strong and heroic in the novel. Your story is such an inspiration, but did you have points that you felt like you couldn't help anymore? Did you ever feel like you couldn't help your family heal, and that it was going to feel bad forever? I would want to know because I too have been in a situation where I was doing everything I could to help, but at times I just couldn't make it happen and I felt like giving up.

14. Figurative language throughout the novel helps the reader feel the emotions, and connect with the situations going on. For example, when Sophia uses the simile,

ANSWER KEY: After Reading Continued ...

“When dad is home, I soak him up like the sun,” I can really tell how much she misses him and how she just takes in his every word, and action because she misses him so deeply. The onomatopoeias used during the fight with her parents such as, “thud,” gave me a chill because I knew from my own knowledge that that was more than just a verbal argument. That made me feel anxious and afraid because I could tell that this was a serious fight between her parents and I felt the fear and anticipation of what was going to happen next. Sophia also says, “I ran back to my bed in a flood of tears and cried myself to sleep.” I knew with that description that she was sobbing uncontrollably and was unable to contain her emotions.

15. Responses will vary.

- Students should design their idea following the format used in *Mend*.

Possible response: Sophia titled her book, *Mend*, because she felt so broken after the divorce of her parents that she never thought she could feel whole again. But through heroism, inspiration, and prayer, Sophia was able to mend her broken heart, and broken family.

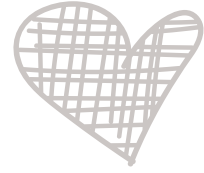
* Responses should be supported with evidence from the text.



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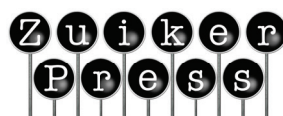
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Discussion Topics:

1. Define "mend." What does it mean to mend something?
2. What is a graphic novel? Why do you think this story is written in this format?
3. What is divorce?
4. How did the tone of the story change once Sophia's parents told her and her brother they were getting divorced?

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Discussion Topics Continued ...

5. How do the illustrations help the reader understand the emotional impact this decision had on Sophia?
6. Did Sophia's parents make the right decision? Discuss.
7. What is the turning point in this story? When does Sophia feel that there is hope for a happy ending?
8. How did Sophia gain the strength to be a hero in this story?
9. What characteristics make a hero?
10. How do you think Sophia's life will be affected by these events moving forward?

Writing Prompts

1. What is divorce? How does divorce impact parents, children, and friends of the family. Refer to details from Sophia's story in your writing.
2. What traits make a hero? There are many different ways to define hero. Write about a hero in your life, and compare them to the heroic acts Sophia was driven by in the novel.
3. Often times we read a novel and it sparks an emotion within us that is unrelated to the topic. What emotions did you feel while reading *Mend*? Did you feel fear, sadness, happiness, hope, etc.? Describe the connections you made to Sophia on an emotional level.
4. Describe the significance of the title. Give your life a title, and explain how that one word describes something significant in your life.
5. Choose a page in the graphic novel. Put yourself in Sophia's shoes. Analyze the illustration and write a story based on that alone. How do you feel, what is happening, what led to that moment, what will you do next?

Extension Activities:

1. Sophia came across her report card from first grade and it changed her life. What item, comment, or experience seemed insignificant in your life, but then became significant? Create a mini comic strip of this moment. Using 6 to 8 boxes, describe the significance through dialogue and illustrations.
2. Are you a child of divorce? Compare and contrast the feelings Sophia experienced to your own experiences. If you are not, find a friend who is a child of divorce. Discuss the differences between them and Sophia. Create a graphic organizer to compare and contrast the information.
3. Do some research. What support groups, online groups, and/or websites would be resources to help someone who is in a situation where their parents are getting divorced? Create a brochure that contains the information you found.
4. In the novel, refer to the “Take 5!” section. Denis Scinta is a family lawyer who suggests five parent take-aways about divorce. Write down five take-aways about divorce from your perspective. What are the five main points that you would suggest to a parent who is getting divorced?
5. Create your own graphic novel. What would it be called? Why is that significant? How do you intend for your novel to help others? Refer to *Mend*. Look how the color and illustrations guide the reader’s emotions and create a mood and tone with very little dialogue. Be creative on how you convey your message.



ANSWER KEY

Reading Group Guide

Discussion Topics:

1. Define “mend.” What does it mean to mend something?

Possible responses:

- To repair something.
- To mend something is to fix it, or put it back together.

2. What is a graphic novel? Why do you think this story is written in this format?

Possible responses:

- A novel in comic-strip format
- I think this story is written as a graphic novel to help the reader see the emotions that the people felt during this difficult time in their life. By seeing their facial expression in combination with the text, the reader can connect to the people and have a better understanding of how they felt.
- I think that this story is written as a graphic novel because the content is very serious and personal, and this provides a more in-depth view of the emotions and situations that the people experienced. It helps the reader connect with the author and feel her emotions as she describes her experience.
- Responses may vary. Students should support their response with evidence from the text.

3. What is divorce?

Possible responses:

- The legal dissolution of a marriage by a court or other competent body.
- When two people decide they don’t want to be married any longer.

4. Define tone. How did the tone of the story change once Sophia’s parents told her and her brother they were getting divorced?

Possible responses:

- Tone is the way the author expresses his/her attitude through writing.
- The tone of this story in the beginning is happy and optimistic. After her parents told them they were getting divorced the tone changed and could be described as sad, sorrowful, somber, heartbroken, confused.
- Responses may vary. Student should support their response with evidence from the text.

Discussion Topics (with answers) Continued ...

5. How do the illustrations help the reader understand the emotional impact this situation had on Sophia?

Possible responses:

- The illustrations help the reader understand the emotional impact this decision had on Sophia in many ways. The illustrator used bright colors when Sophia was happy and hopeful. When Sophia was feeling scared and alone, the illustrator used dark colors. The detailed expressions on the characters faces convey emotions that most people can relate to, therefore providing a connection between the graphic novel and the reader.
- Responses may vary. Students should support their response with evidence from the text.

6. Did Sophia's parents make the right decision? Discuss.

Possible responses:

- Responses may vary.
- Students should support their response with textual evidence in addition to their own personal experience or opinion.

7. What is the turning point in this novel? When does Sophia feel that there is hope for a happy ending?

Possible responses:

- The turning point in this story is when Sophia is cleaning her room and comes across her first report card. It read, "You're an angel spreading your wings to help others..." She realized at this point that this was about her having a gift or ability to fix things. Sophia realizes there is hope when her parents listened to Sophia and her brother in the living room that night. They put their heads on their pillows and cried. She felt her heart and the hearts of her family begin to mend.
- Responses may vary. Students should support their response with evidence from the text.

8. How did Sophia gain the strength to be a hero in this story?

Possible responses:

- Sophia gains the strength as she comes across an old report card and a prayer that is answered. She takes her devastation, fear, and self-loathing and manifests these emotions into power.
- Responses may vary. Students should support their response with evidence from the text.

Discussion Topics (with answers) Continued ...

9. What characteristics make a hero?

Possible responses:

- Courage, bravery, selflessness, patience, persistence, perseverance, passion, strength, kindness
- Responses may vary. Students should justify their response and provide an example.

10. How do you think Sophia's life will be affected by these events moving forward?

- Responses may vary. Students should use evidence from the text to support their response.



Writing Prompts

(Responses may vary. Students responses should be based on research and evidence from the text.)

1. What is divorce? How does divorce impact parents, children, and friends of the family. Refer to details from Sophia's story in your writing.
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(Responses may vary.)

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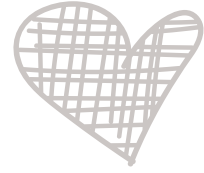
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Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Comprehension Test:

1. Who is Sophia Recca?

2. How old is Sophia?

3. Who does Sophia live with at the beginning of the novel?

4. How does Sophia describe her family?

5. Why was Sophia's life changed forever?

6. Describe Sophia's relationship with her mom.

Comprehension Test Continued ...

7. Describe Sophia's relationship with her dad.

8. How did Sophia react to her parents fight?

9. How did Sophia react to the news of her parents' divorce?

10. Where did Sophia's dad go?

11. How did Sophia react to her dad leaving?

12. What are some things Sophia and her brother did with their dad?

13. What are some things Sophia did with her mom?

Comprehension Test Continued ...

14. What significant marking did the illustrator add to Sophia's picture to symbolize how she was feeling about the divorce?

15. What item did Sophia come across that was the turning point in her story? What did it say?

16. What did Sophia do to "mend" her family?

17. How did Sophia's mom react to her plan?

18. How did Sophia's dad react to her plan?

19. Referring to the epilogue, what is Sophia doing now?

20. Why did Sophia share her story?

Answer Key:

1. Author.
2. 14 years old.
3. Mom–Nicole, Dad–Randy, Brother–Michael.
4. Most amazing mom in the world, most amazing dad in the world, brother always in his room: one big happy family.
5. Her parents decided to get divorced.
6. Her mom is a caretaker and always there. She wakes her up, gets her breakfast, and drops her off at school. Her mom is her world.
7. Her dad is not home much and she wishes he were. When he is home he listens to her play guitar, makes dessert, and cuddles on the couch watching movies. Her dad is her world.
8. Sophia was scared and confused. She didn't know what to do. Her knees started shaking, her teeth started chattering, and her body broke out in a cold sweat. She tried to convince herself it was a bad dream, and cried herself to sleep.
9. She cried into her pillow, asked questions, ran to her room. She blamed herself, felt alone, and prayed.
10. To live in California.
11. She begged him not to go, and promised to be better. She chased his truck down the street until she couldn't run anymore. She sat out front hoping he would return for what felt like years.
12. They stayed with him in California, and would comb the sand for seashells, look for birds, play with crabs, and at bedtime dad would read them a story. Dad was making up for lost time.

Answer Key: Comprehension Test Continued ...

13. Mom would read them a story and tuck them in at night, Sophia helped mom begin to find her independence. She woke her mom up when she fell asleep in Sophia's bunk bed. Mom was making up for lost time.
14. To symbolize how Sophia was feeling, the illustrator added a crack down the middle to symbolize the feeling of being broken, or split into two separate pieces.
15. The item she came across was her first report card. It read, "You're an angel spreading your wings to help others..."
16. Sophia put her self back together again and made a deal with God. She decided to help her family heal. She made breakfast for her mom, helped her balance her checkbook, kept up her schoolwork, played the guitar for her, and played with her hair so she felt like a queen. With her dad, she hugged him, made crafts, cooked food and tried to show him he was her hero. She told them both that they needed to live in Las Vegas and be in her life. She demanded that they put their family back together the best way they could.
17. She was speechless, and then mom agreed to the plan and cried into her pillow. She told Sophia's dad that he was her best friend and she didn't want to lose him. She agreed that they could do anything together when it came to their kids. And together their hearts mended.
18. He was speechless, and then began making excuses about work. Sophia stood up to him and told him she was a more important reason to come back to Las Vegas. Her dad moved back and bought a house near Sophia's mom. He agreed that he would do anything to keep his kids in his life. He agreed with mom that they could do anything together when it came to their kids. And together their hearts mended.
19. Sophia is going into 8th grade, her mom and dad are getting along, she is doing well in school, sings in the honor choir, traveled to New York City, and she is happy about life and proud of her parents.
20. Sophia wants to let people know that as hard as it was, she lived through the divorce of her parents. She made it through, and she knows that anyone going through a similar situation can get through it too.