



TEACHER NOTES

Teacher Notes by Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM

WALKER BOOKS

ABOUT the BOOK



QUEENIE IN SEVEN MOVES
CREATOR: ZANNI LOUISE
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To Queenie, home is Peachy, the little house where she's lived forever. But when she and her mum have to leave Peachy, Queenie discovers that home isn't a place at all. It's making new friends and reconnecting with old ones, letting yourself be uncomfortable, and finding the courage to share your song with the world.



ABOUT *the* AUTHOR

Based in the Byron Bay hinterland, *Zanni Louise* is passionate about writing quality books for children and inspiring people to write their own stories. Zanni has written 16 books for children, including picture books and junior fiction. Her books have been described as quirky, warm and funny, and are sold in many foreign territories. She's been twice listed in the CBCA Notables, and her picture book *Archie and the Bear* illustrated by David Mackintosh was selected for the highly prestigious international children's catalogue: *The White Ravens*. See her website: <https://www.zannilouise.com/>

See also: Interview with Zanni Louise

<https://readingwithachanceoftacos.com/interview-with-zanni-louise/>

ABOUT *the* TEACHER NOTES AUTHOR

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and publishes regularly on children's literature, Australian fiction, and publishing history. She was inaugural director of and is a Life Member of the Queensland Writers Centre, and was co-founder of Jam Roll Press. Her publications include *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia* (1946-2005) (2006) co-edited with Craig Munro and *Hot Iron Corrugated Sky: 100 Years of Queensland Writing* (2002) co-edited with Stuart Glover. In 2012 she was recipient of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature. In 2014 she received the Queensland Writers' Centre's Johnno Award.

In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.

Q&A with ZANNI LOUISE

In the acknowledgements at the end of the book you describe the initial inspiration behind this novel – a personal experience of having to move with your family and to stay with friends. What did this experience demonstrate to you?

Being forced into an itinerant situation because of the housing crisis was at first unsettling. It was the first time I'd had to question my basic right to safety, not to mention the safety and security for my kids. But letting go of some basic comforts and accepting help from friends was very humbling as well as being good for us in other ways. We became close to the friends we stayed with. Having less possessions was liberating. And we had more time for things like reading, music and writing.

Did you have actual places in mind when you created the settings in this book?

The places are very loosely inspired by the north coast NSW region where I live. The town, Curlew Point, is a fictional town probably most resembling somewhere like Mooloolaba in South East Queensland or perhaps Brunswick Heads in NSW. The rainforest is inspired largely by places like Huonbrook in NSW. All the places in *Queenie* are entirely fictional but I draw from the climate, the mood, and also the architecture of these places.

As these notes discuss, the book is about homes and homelessness; friendship and love; creative passion; dealing with change; and growing up. How much of your own childhood experience is reflected in this novel?

I have always been drawn to creative pursuits so inevitably my middle grade characters share these interests too. I think I was probably more open to change than Queenie was when I was twelve. I was always seeking adventures whereas she recoils from it. But on the whole, I'm drawing from feelings I experienced at that age as I write. Queenie's competitiveness with Sparrow feels very familiar as do her intergenerational friendships.



The pandemic is very much a background to this novel as the characters are adapting to a sense of things returning to normal. Do you think that literature has a place to play in confronting traumas such as the recent pandemic?

Well, yes. I think that literature plays a very important role in reflecting back real-life experiences. As I wrote *Queenie in Seven Moves*, I consciously absorbed the experiences that were happening around me as I wrote. The story became a time capsule. For kids who experienced that time, it will feel familiar – the real estate agents having to wear gloves, for instance. People needing to sanitise.

For those who were too young, it will be like opening someone else's time capsule and seeing what the world was like at that time. Because the pandemic experience was so specific to each person and each location, I felt it was important to capture what this very Australian regional coastal town experience was like during this time.

Is there any other personal insight into this novel that you'd like to share with readers?

Writing this novel was the first time I truly dove into a very personal experience. I discovered how much I loved writing contemporary realism. I intentionally kept in pop music references and other things specific to our contemporary experience, like the way kids talk right at this moment and some of the topics my daughter and her friends enjoy talking about. I tried to switch off my critical brain and enjoy the creative experience as much as possible as I wrote. This meant the story became almost a living, breathing organism, changing and growing as it absorbed the world around us.



TEACHER NOTES

A. CRITICAL LITERACY: BEFORE AND AFTER READING THE BOOK

The title of this book refers to Queenie and her mother's need to move seven times. After you have read the book, discuss the title, and what other title the book might have had.

Before reading, examine the images that feature on the cover, and discuss what the book might be about, and any other suggested messages in the cover design. [See also D. Visual Literacy Activities below.]

Examine the cover (front and back) after your reading, and then discuss the cover's relationship to the internal written and visual text.

B. THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

NOTE: A list of references to use as a starting point for activities in this section can be found below in the Bibliography.

MOVING HOUSE AND HOME

Discussion Point: One of the biggest upheavals in a life is moving house when you have become attached to a particular home. Queenie loved 'Peachy', the house they had rented for some years, and didn't want to leave it. How does Queenie learn to adapt to her new circumstances?

Discussion Point: Have you ever moved house? How did that feel to you?

Discussion Point: Discuss this quote: *'because change doesn't kill you. It makes you stronger'* (p 209).

PANDEMIC

Discussion Point: This novel pays tribute to the experiences of living through the pandemic. Read and discuss these two quotes:

'It's lovely having someone young around.' ... They wouldn't have been able to see anyone, because they were most at risk of getting sick from COVID.' (p 31)

'It seems weird, seeing people rub germ protection into their hands, then stand shoulder to shoulder with twelve million strangers that could potentially give them COVID.

But this is COVID-normal.

And people have missed live music. We can share a few germs in the name of music.' (p 211)

Discussion Point: What did your students learn during the pandemic? What were the disadvantages and advantages of lockdowns?

Discussion Point: What other novels have you read that feature the pandemic? Emily Gale's *The Goodbye Year* (Text Publishing, 2022) is one; locate and read others. [See Bibliography.]

FRIENDSHIP AND ROMANCE

Discussion Point: Queenie has become estranged from her best friend Sparrow Hawkins but eventually rediscovers that friendship. Why did their friendship sour, and what brings them together again?

Discussion Point: Queenie and Dory have a crush on each other. But when Maggie, Dory's mother, catches them kissing she reacts very negatively. Is her response appropriate? Could she have handled things differently?

Discussion Point: Friends are often people of one's own age-group but this novel shows that we can befriend people who are very different in age or experience, for example, Queenie and Audrey find they have a lot in common. What makes a friendship work?

CARE FOR THE ELDERLY AND OTHERS

Discussion Point: Diamond Sands Seniors Village seems to be a caring facility with staff who really care for their residents. What evidence of this was apparent in the novel?

Discussion Point: Queenie learns to respect Audrey, Walter, and the other residents at Diamond Sands and realises that age is not a deterrent to having fun and learning new things. Her role as choir master and matchmaker shows her that life can continue to present challenges and new experiences no matter what your age. What does Queenie learn from becoming friends with Audrey?

Discussion Point: Ruthie is a midwife and spends a lot of time assisting new mothers. 'The caring profession is an honourable one. ... Making an actual difference.' (p 110) Discuss the truth of this statement and any experiences you have had that might support it.

HOMELESSNESS

Discussion Point: 'It takes me a few beats to realise that homelessness comes in lots of shades.' (p 57) Discuss this statement both with regards to the novel and to your observations of real life.

Discussion Point: The difficulties of the rental market are revealed in this novel (pp 47–8). Discuss in relation to media reports you have read about the cost of living crisis and the inflated prices being charged for both rentals and property sales.

Discussion Point: What did Queenie discover when living with other people? What issues did she confront and how did she resolve them?

Discussion Point: Queenie and her mother are homeless for a short period of time but endure some challenges such as the rain-sodden caravan. Without a paying job and a support network their homelessness might have been extended. Discuss the factors that lead to homelessness and how that might impact a family.

Discussion Point: Governments and philanthropic organisations face a huge challenge in dealing with homelessness. Research the Australian situation, and then discuss possible solutions to the problem.

COMMUNAL AND UNCONVENTIONAL LIVING

Discussion Point: Ruthie's house and the living conditions of her tenants Daisy and Sonny, and Xen and Tara are somewhat typical of the Nimbin style culture of the central coast of NSW where the author resides. What are the positive aspects of their lifestyles? What are the negative ones?

Discussion Point: 'Unlearning' is the word used by Daisy to describe Xen's attitude to Tara's upbringing. What do you understand about such approaches? What was your opinion regarding Tara's daily lack of routine and exposure to the elements in this novel? Is Xen a responsible parent?

MUSIC AND CREATIVITY

Discussion Point: Queenie's great passion is guitar playing, singing and songwriting. But she isn't in it for the fame. She simply loves being creative. Invite students to discuss her attitude to her music. Then invite them to share what they are passionate about.

Discussion Point: Queenie suffers from performance anxiety. How does she overcome that?

Discussion Point: Dory is crazy about chess but Queenie finds it boring. Discuss the differences between people and how we each have our own interests and passions.

GROWING UP AND DEALING WITH CHANGE

Discussion Point: Queenie is not only dealing with moving house, but also faces other changes in her life. She's about to finish primary school and start secondary school. Her mother is entering a new relationship. Queenie is feeling romantic feelings for Dory. And her attitude to Sparrow is about to be revised. How much of maturation is about dealing with change?

Discussion Point: Invite students to discuss any similarities between the changes Queenie experiences and any changes they have also experienced.

Discussion Point: What values does Queenie demonstrate in this novel?

C. ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

GENRE

Discussion Point: This novel is a work of realistic middle grade fiction which includes a rite of passage from childhood to young adulthood. What are the tropes of realistic rite of passage fiction that are employed in this novel?

PLOT & STRUCTURE

The novel is structured in seven parts based on Queenie's seven moves as follows:

1. Diamond Sands Seniors Village
2. Elliotts' (Sentimental Street)
3. The Caravan, Shoestring Creek
4. Ruthie's House
5. Dimitri's Place
6. The Tent
7. Heritage Gardens.

Discussion Point: The structure is enhanced by strong opening and closing sentences to chapters, for example:

Beginnings: 'Any word about the house?' (Ch 12, p 55)

Endings: ' "Paradise, hey," mutters mum.' (Ch 26, p 126)

Which chapter beginning or ending did you find particularly gripping?

NARRATIVE PERSON & PERSPECTIVE

Discussion Point: This story is told in first person present tense from Queenie's point of view. This lends an immediacy to the writing, well-suited to the feelings and events described. How might the novel have changed had it been written in third person?

STYLE & USE OF LANGUAGE

Discussion Point: The novel employs a range of literary devices, for example, personification and simile:

'My chest is tight. I clutch Mr Grey's guitar like it's going to fly away.' (p 2)

'Its mauve flowers wave at my window, like little purple paws.' (p 8)

'it looks like the table swallowed her.' (p 22)

What other usage of such devices did you particularly note in reading this novel?

CHARACTERS

Major Characters

Queenie Jean Anderson; her mother; Dory Elliot, Queenie's new friend; Dimitri, a real estate agent and her mother's boyfriend; Sparrow Hawkins, Queenie's former best friend.

Minor Characters

Curlew Point Primary: Mr Grey, Music Teacher; Mrs Doherty, Principal; Max Rawling; Mrs Fig, head of the P&C, canteen and school book club; Lili Evans; Miss Daisy Donaghy, the substitute teacher; Maggie and Tim Elliot, Dory's parents; Sally; Mr Baqri; Mrs James, Year 4 teacher; Adelaide, Mrs James' daughter.

Betsy, neighbour, landlord and babysitter.

Diamond Sands Seniors Village: Sue Townsend; Duncan; Meg; Audrey; Wayne; Walter; Jerry, the pianist; Maud; Ron; Neville Hawkins.

Shoestring Creek: Ruthie, owner and midwife; Daisy, Queenie's substitute teacher; Sonny, her partner; Xen and child, Tara.

Discussion Point: Which of the characters did you find most interesting, and why?

SETTING

Discussion Point: Diamond Sands Seniors Village is compared by Queenie to *Home and Away* (pp 23–4) because of the romantic intrigues she hears the residents discussing. Was this an apt comparison?

Discussion Point: Setting is described using a variety of senses, for example: *'The dining room also smells Windex-y. The scent is infused with sour cabbage. Old people sit gathered around round plastic tables, some hunched. Some poking at their food with cutlery. We take the only two empty seats on a table in the middle of the room. Fake flowers float in a bowl of water in the centre of the table.'* (p 22) Encourage students to experiment in writing a description employing sight, smell and other senses in this way.

WRITING EXERCISES

Invite students to write a short story based on the theme of moving house.

Make a list of words that come to you, as Queenie does in this book, and then craft song lyrics from those random words. [See Bibliography.]

Write an acrostic poem using the letters in Shoestring Creek.

Queenie makes a list of things her perfect home must have (p 21). Invite students to make their own list of things contained in a perfect home.

If you were given five words to describe each of the seven homes Queenie and her mother visit, what would they be?

Read the ads people post looking for a home (p 152). Then create your own imagined advertisement in enticing language.

Queenie writes a poem celebrating her seven homes (p 226). Invite students to write a homage to a home or to several homes. For example, they might celebrate their own family home; the home of their grandparents; their best friend's home or someone else's home that they have visited.

FURTHER READING IDEAS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Read and compare this novel to other novels about music.
2. Read and compare this novel to other novels about moving house. [See Bibliography.]
3. Visit websites about homelessness to research the topic. [See Bibliography.]
4. Research some of the other concepts and references mentioned in the Q&A with Zanni Louise.
5. Create a classroom display of other novels about the issues explored in this novel.

D. VISUAL LITERACY & VISUAL ARTS ACTIVITIES

Design a new cover for this novel.

Queenie and her mother visit an exhibition featuring portraits of people on trains. Encourage students to sketch a stranger they observe on public transport and then to complete the portrait in class. Then create an exhibition as a classroom response to this novel.

Choose one of the seven homes described in this novel and invite students to draw an image of what they imagine from that description.

E. FURTHER IDEAS USING TECHNOLOGY

Research online any of the topics covered in these notes.

Listen to, and watch videos of Billie Eilish, Queenie's idol.

Listen to *Queenie Jean* by scanning the QR Code at the back of the book.

WORKSHEETS

COMPLETE THE DRAWING

Add detail, objects, and other people to this drawing to relate it to the novel you have read, e.g. Garfield, the ugly garden gnome that Queenie took from Peachy.

QUIZ

This quiz might be used to test comprehension of the novel.

1. Who is Queenie's favourite singer/songwriter?
2. What game does Dory enjoy and excel at?
3. Who is Audrey's love interest?
4. What does Dimitri do for a living?
5. Who is Queenie's music teacher?
6. Where do Ruthie, Daisy, Sonny, Xen and Tara live?
7. What name did Queenie give to her former home?
8. What career would Daisy like to follow instead of teaching?
9. What contest does Queenie enter?
10. Where do Queenie and her mother finally find a home to rent?

Answers: 1. Billie Eilish. 2. Chess. 3. Walter. 4. He is a real estate agent. 5. Mr. Grey. 6. Shoestring Creek. 7. Peachy. 8. She wants to study medicine and become a doctor. 9. Summer Song Contest. 10. Heritage Gardens.

CONCLUSION

Queenie in Seven Moves is a heartfelt novel about the 'in-between times' – moving house, going to secondary school, losing and finding friends, falling for her first boyfriend, learning to overcome performance anxiety as a musician, adapting to a stepfather – these are all part of the suite of changes that Queenie has to adapt to. Not just seven moves, but many other changes are occurring in her life, but in the end, Queenie has learned to deal with things in her own unique way.

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FICTION

Note: Some titles are young adult and may not be considered suitable for a middle grade readership.

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ALSO BY ZANNI LOUISE

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- *Cora Seen and Heard* 2024
- *Hazel's Treehouse* illustrated by Judy Watson 2024
- *Florence & Fox* illustrated by Anna Pignataro 2022

Hardie Grant Publishing

- *Too Busy Sleeping* illustrated by Anna Pignataro 2015
- *Tiggy and the Magic Paintbrush* (Series) illustrated by Gillian Flint
- *Archie and the Bear* illustrated by David Mackintosh 2017
- *Pigagus* illustrated by Anil Tortop 2022
- *Monsties* (Series) illustrated by Kyla May

Five Mile

- *I Feel the World* with Arneika Johnson illustrated by Nia Gould 2022
- *Human Kind* (Series) illustrated by Missy Turner
- *We Are All People* illustrated by Sinead Hanley 2022
- *Stardust School of Dance* (Series) illustrated by S.R. Sánchez
- *Wonder Earth* with Tiff Bollhorn illustrated by Sophy Louise Smith 2021

Scholastic Australia

- *Errol!* illustrated by Philip Bunting 2018
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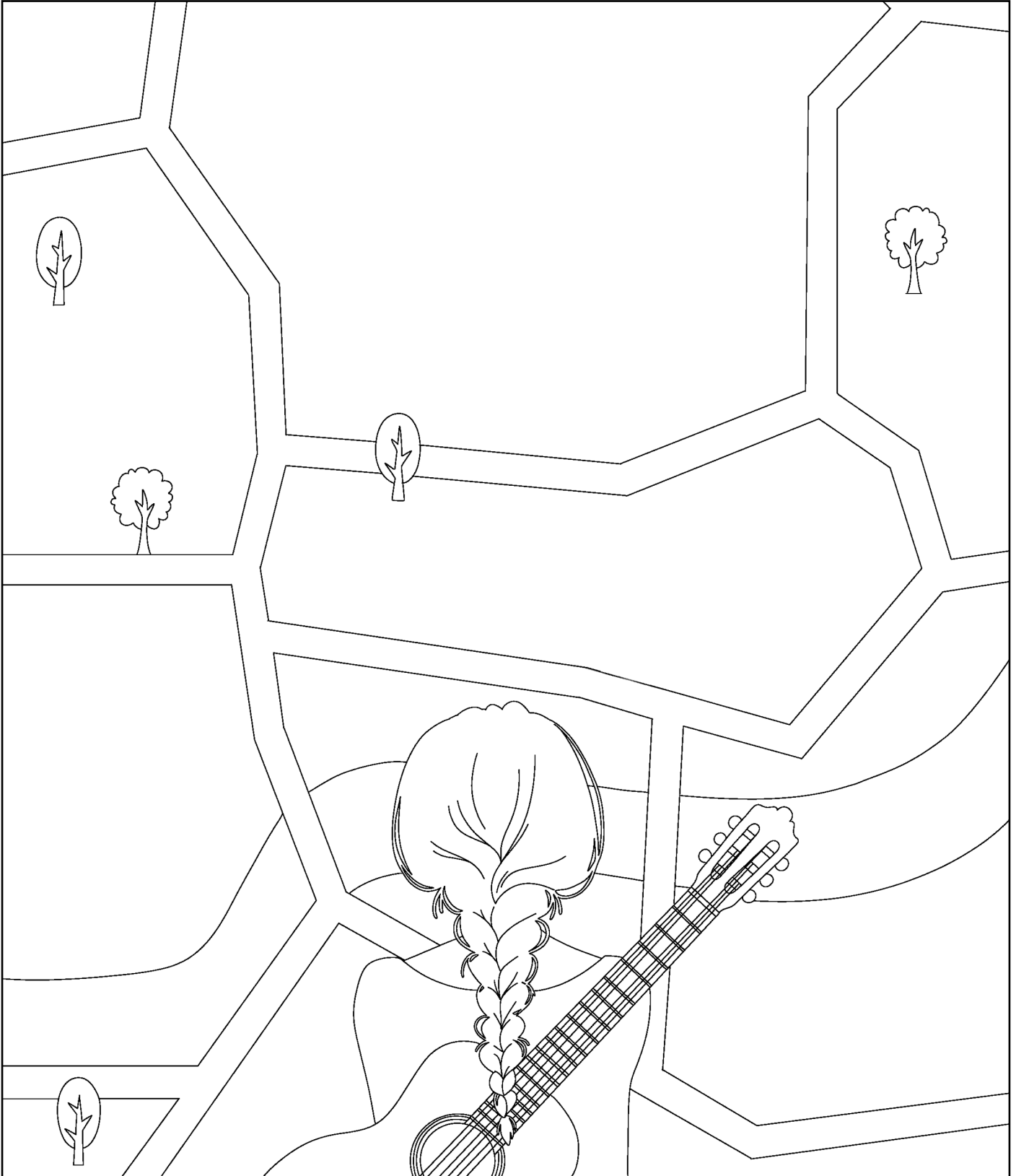
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1. Complete the Drawing

Add detail, objects, and other people to this drawing to relate it to the novel you have read, eg Garfield, the ugly garden gnome that Queenie took from Peachy.



2. Quiz

1. Who is Queenie's favourite singer/songwriter?

2. What game does Dory enjoy and excel at?

3. Who is Audrey's love interest?

4. What does Dmitri do for a living?

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