



Shoot the Moon

TEACHER GUIDE

Sixteen-year-old Charlie lives with her mathematician father who is subject to mood swings and depressive episodes. Reminding him to take his meds, or even to get out of bed, is on her daily to-do list. When her high school crush Lachlan surprises her by asking her out, Charlie is over the moon. But when her dad suddenly disappears, Charlie needs to put Lachlan—and everything—on hold to find him.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Over the last twenty years, **Matt Beam** has published a range of works from young adult novels (*Last December*) to middle-grade chapter books (*Earth To Nathan Blue*) to picture books (*The Zombie Prince*) and urban photography books (*City Alphabet*). This is his second novel dealing with the realities and challenges of bipolar disorder. He lives in Toronto with his family, and when he isn't writing, he teaches at a school for students with dyslexia. To learn more about Matt's work, visit his website: mattbeam.com.

THEMES:

Family, Divorce, Mental health, Mental illness, Bipolar, Relationships, Friendship, Romantic Relationships

PRE-READING QUESTION:

The novel deals with a character with bipolar disorder. Ask the students what knowledge or experience they have with this condition. To prepare for the discussion, visit Mood Disorders Canada mdsc.ca.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The narrative of *Shoot the Moon* hinges on Charlie's decision to live with and take care of her father. Charlie has to balance her desire to care for her father with needing love and care from him. What challenges does this present for each character? If Charlie didn't have to take care of her father, how might their relationship be different?
2. The story takes the theme of choosing between parents in divorce and increases the stakes exponentially. How does Charlie's decision to side with and live only with her father instead of her mother challenge or reinforce modern values and stereotypes? Do you agree with her choices and the reasons for them? Would you have chosen differently?
3. Charlie is head over heels about Lachlan. Sometimes when seeking a romantic partner, a person looks for a personality that is either similar or very different from what they receive from their parents. Which way has Charlie gone in regards to Lachlan? Why has Charlie gravitated toward him?
4. When trying to solve a problem, we often go to others for another perspective or advice. For Charlie, that means speaking to her father's ex-lover, even though speaking with Jordan is a significant challenge for her. How does Charlie handle this? Where in the conversation might it have turned for the worse?
5. When we choose a professional path, we are often influenced by the careers our parents/caregivers have chosen. Charlie's father has a PhD in Mathematics. Is Charlie influenced or impacted by her father's profession? In what way are your own professional goals related to your parents' occupational roles? What are the pitfalls of going against or toward your parents' paths?
6. Charlie makes the dangerous decision not to alert her mother about her father's disappearance. Can you justify why Charlie made this choice? What would have happened if Charlie had called her mother earlier?
7. When someone has a mental illness, it can be challenging for them to maintain autonomy while still getting the help they need. How well does Charlie maintain this balancing act of caring for her father and also allowing him to have autonomy?
8. Now that you have finished *Shoot the Moon*, think about what you have learned about bipolar disorder. Has your understanding shifted or been added to? In what ways?



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