

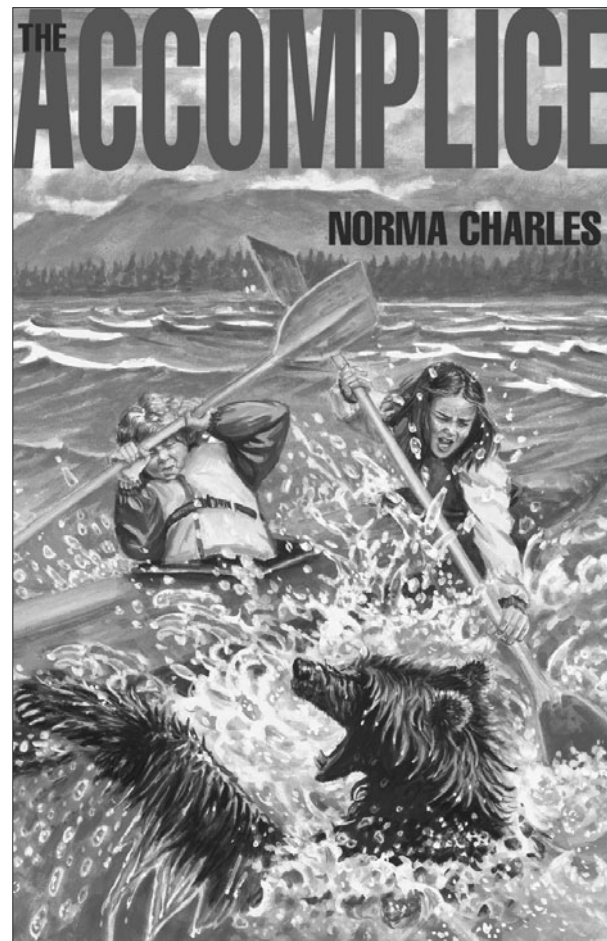
The Accomplice

by Norma Charles

AGES 10 AND UP • GRADE LEVEL 5 TO 8

ABOUT THE BOOK

Twelve-year-old Megan is surprised when her father suddenly calls after a year's absence to propose a secret weekend reunion. Despite memories of his drinking and temper, she convinces herself and her younger sister, Jen, that the meeting is harmless. Before stealing away, she hastily writes a note for her mother. But when the adventure turns from rebellion to danger, Megan has second thoughts. The girls are shuffled into cars, taxis and ferries before they board a boat to a remote island where their father introduces them to his new Irish bride, Bridget, and their baby stepbrother Joey. Angry and frightened, Megan begins to suspect she has been an unwitting accomplice to a scheme that threatens them all. Can she paddle across the channel for help or will she be stranded with a man who is fast becoming a stranger? *The Accomplice* was shortlisted for the 2002 Sheila Egoff Children's Literature Prize.



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YOUNG ADULT FICTION



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Norma Charles is a member of CWILL, PEN, Federation of BC Writers, CANSCAIP and the Writer's Union. She is the author of *Sophie Sea to Sea*, *Runaway*, *Dolphin Alert*, *Darlene's Shadow*, *Amanda Grows Up*, *No Place for a Horse* and *April Fool Heroes*. Her first children's book, *See You Later, Alligator*, sold over 100,000 copies. She was a teacher-librarian with the Vancouver School Board for 10 years and now lives in Vancouver and gives workshops, teaches writing at UBC and writes full time. Norma will publish a new novel with Raincoast next spring.



BEFORE THE BOOK • Words You Need to Know

exasperated	cafeteria	petrified	galvanized	disdainfully	scrumptious
mesmerized	lacquered	specifically	lurching	riotous	famished
vigour	moustache	smouldered	tussocks	paralyzed	squatters
cyclone	visualize	accomplice	unkempt	broadside	isolated

• Activities

1. Have you ever felt jealous of the attention your parents paid to someone else? What did you do?
2. Write a short story about a child who tells a lie in order to be able to do something or go somewhere which would otherwise be forbidden.
3. Think about how you might feel if you were caught in the middle between two people you cared about but who didn't like each other. Share your thoughts with a partner, and then listen your partner's thoughts.

EXPLORING THE BOOK • Chapter Questions and Activities

CHAPTER ONE

1. Why is Meg so angry with her mother?
2. Why does Megan lie to Jennifer about the phone call from her dad?

CHAPTER TWO

1. In what ways has Megan tried to please her father in the past?
2. Why do you think Jennifer insists on wearing the pajamas she has outgrown?
3. What does Megan do to feel better about lying to her mother?

CHAPTER THREE

1. Draw a picture of Megan's dad.
2. Why does Megan see her family as two separate teams?
3. Dad promises the girls a surprise. What do you think it might be?

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Look at a map of Vancouver Island and trace the probable route from Nanaimo to Eagle Island.
2. How does Megan feel about Bridget?

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Draw a picture of the cabin and its setting.
2. Why do you think Dad keeps putting off phoning the girls' mother?
3. What was Dad's surprise for Meg and Jennifer? How did each of the girls feel about it?
4. How did the gramophone get broken?

CHAPTER SIX

1. Describe two plants that grow on Eagle Island.
2. How does Dad feel about people visiting his island?
3. How does Meg feel about the proposed kayaking lesson?

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Why does Dad insist on fixing the outhouse roof?
2. What does Bridget think about the girls' mother not knowing where they are?

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Draw and label a picture of a two-person kayak.
2. What do you think about Dad's attitude toward life on the island?

CHAPTER NINE

1. Megan has a "dark seed of uneasiness in her chest." Why do you think that is?
2. How does Megan try to convince Jennifer that Bridget is an evil stepmother?

CHAPTER TEN

1. Why do Megan and Jennifer have to go for help?
2. What does Megan do that reminds her of her father?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. Draw a series of pictures like a comic strip to show the girls' struggle with the bears.
2. How does Joey's accident change Dad's ideas about living on the island?
3. How has Megan's attitude toward Bridget and Joey changed?

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. How has Megan's understanding of her father changed?
2. How has Megan's relationship with her mother changed?
3. Use a Venn diagram to compare the girls' mother, Patricia, and their stepmother, Bridget.

Draw two overlapping circles. In one circle write words to describe Bridget, in the other write words to describe Patricia. Where the circles overlap write words that describe both women.



BEYOND THE BOOK • Activities

1. Make a poster or booklet on the care of turtles as pets.
2. Write a letter that Megan might have written to an advice columnist asking for advice about meeting her father, then write the response.
3. Create a "Missing Child" poster that might have been distributed if the girls' mother had reported their disappearance to the police.
4. What should you do if a child you are babysitting has a fall similar to Joey's?
5. Make a paper bag presentation about this story. Put six to ten items that relate to the story in a paper bag. As you take each item out and show it to the class, explain its relevance to the story.





• Curriculum Extensions

SCIENCE *Ecosystems* • What are the characteristics of the Pacific Northwest coastal ecosystem, particularly as found on offshore islands?

Bears • Make a poster about bears found on the Pacific coast. Identify the kinds of bears found and give some common facts on each.

Birds • Create a booklet about the birds of the Pacific Northwest coast. Be sure to include shorebirds, diving birds, and birds of prey. Describe the characteristics of each bird: what it looks like, how its voice sounds and where it lives.

Flora of the Pacific Coast • Make a poster showing some of the native trees and bushes of the Pacific coast. Include a brief description of the tree's physical characteristics, habitat and use by First Nations people.

SOCIAL STUDIES *Geography of Coastal B.C.* • Draw and label a map of Vancouver Island.

Economy of Coastal B.C. • Make a chart to show the positive and negative aspects of fish farming on the B. C. coast. Prepare to debate either for or against increasing the number of fish farm licences.

P. E. *Basketball* • Draw a diagram of a basketball court showing the dimensions.

Draw a series of diagrams showing how to dribble and how to shoot a basket.

Outdoor Education • Draw diagrams or write out instructions for the correct way to paddle and turn a two-person kayak.

ART *Carving* • Make a small carving from a piece of natural wood. Be prepared to share with the class how you decided what to carve and the process you used.

CAPP *Substance Abuse / Alcoholism* • Write a report about the symptoms of alcoholism and the possibilities of treatment.

Interview a representative for Alcoholics Anonymous and prepare an oral report for the class about this organization.



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The Accomplice Teacher's Guide (1-55192-606-7) and other learning resources for Raincoast titles are also available at www.raincoast.com. Many of these activities are inspired by the Reading 44 document published by the North Vancouver School District. Raincoast Books grants teachers permission to photocopy this guide for classroom use.

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