

NOTICE AND NOTE SIGNPOSTS IN *WALK TWO MOONS*

LOCATION: *Chapter 1, Page 3* Sal's father shows her a fireplace that had been hidden behind a plaster wall.

Aha Moment

WHAT WE NOTICED

We're barely into the book and we see a critical Aha Moment, though at this point, readers won't realize just how important Sal's words are: "I realized that the story of Phoebe was like the plaster wall in our old house in Bybanks, Kentucky" (p. 3). When authors use words such as "realized" or "understood" or "figured out," we see that the character is having an Aha Moment and we want to ask ourselves how this changes things. This early in the book, we really don't know the meaning of Sal's Aha, so we'll have to keep reading.

Here's what we'd say to students who have learned this lesson but weren't reading attentively enough to notice the Aha Moment signpost: "Let's reread this paragraph that begins at the bottom of page 2." [Read aloud with students or let them read on their own.] "Think about the Aha Moment we've discussed, and if you need to, review what it is by looking at the chart up here. Remember that the word 'realized' is one of those words that shows us that a character has figured something out. And once we see that, what are we supposed to ask ourselves?" [Hopefully, students will remember the anchor question, but if not then just prompt it.] "Now, let's talk about what this Aha might mean." [Again, it's early in the book, so don't worry if speculations are simply, "I'm not sure" or "Phoebe—whoever that is—is somehow like a plaster wall."]

If we haven't taught the Aha Moment lesson at this point, then we wouldn't try to teach it with this as the example because the readers really won't be sure how to answer the anchor question.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 2, Page 5* Sal mentions that Gram and Gramps want to see "Momma, who was resting peacefully in Lewiston, Idaho."

Contrasts and Contradictions

WHAT WE NOTICED

This is a sophisticated use of Contrasts and Contradictions. The author has used the euphemism "resting peacefully" with no suggestion that it might mean "buried" unless the reader has noticed the word "buried" in the previous sentence.

If you want, point out to students that when authors use words or terms that might mean more than one thing (the contrast between taking a peaceful nap and having died is stark), they should stop and ask themselves, "Why would the author use this term/word." In this case, why would Creech say that Sal's mom was resting peacefully? Some might speculate that she has been ill and is recuperating; some might say she's been injured; and others might wonder if this means she has died. Don't confirm, just ask for evidence in the text to support their thinking, then keep reading.

YOUR NOTES

NOTICE AND NOTE SIGNPOSTS IN *WALK TWO MOONS*

LOCATION: *Chapter 2, Pages 7–8* Sal explains how important trees are to her.

Again and Again

WHAT WE NOTICED

Even this early in the book, Creech has already mentioned “trees” several times, first on page 1, and now, on page 7, she tells us that Sal’s middle name is Tree. Noticing this repetition, and watching for it as we read on, will enable us to learn something about Sal’s character and her connection to her mother and to nature.

“Trees” will come up frequently throughout the book, but make note especially of pages 98–101, in which an entire chapter is devoted to “The Singing Tree.” Trees will show up again on 122, 215, 257, 268, and 277, all of the references strengthening Sal’s connection to both her mother and to nature.

If we have taught the Again and Again lesson and students don’t mention how often “tree” has appeared even by this point, we’d probably stop and simply remind students to think about the Again and Again lesson and ask them what image or word keeps reappearing. Then we’d ask why they think “trees” keep appearing again and again. We’ve found that most students realize, even this early, that her mother—and therefore perhaps Sal—loved nature. One student told us, “Since her mother named her after a tree, and since trees are mentioned so much, maybe this is just a way of showing how much Sal is connected to her mother.” Maybe, indeed!

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 3, Pages 13–14* Phoebe declares Sal brave while Sal declares herself to be afraid of many things.

Contrasts and Contradictions and Aha Moment

WHAT WE NOTICED

When Phoebe calls Sal courageous and Sal denies it, we have a classic contradiction—one says she is and the other says she isn’t. When authors show us such contradictions, we want to pause and ask ourselves, “Why would the character act this way?” In this case, we want students wondering why Phoebe would maintain that Sal is courageous while Sal would say she isn’t. One student explained, “Phoebe thinks she’s brave because Sal would touch a spider, but Sal knows that’s not really bravery. Sal’s afraid of the things she can’t control. Maybe this is going to be about Sal learning that she can’t be afraid of things she can’t control, because most things in life that are really important, you can’t control at all.” Nice.

We also hope students will see that in the middle of page 14, Sal has an Aha Moment that is part of this discussion of bravery. She says, “What I have since realized is that if people expect you to be brave, sometimes you pretend that you are, even when you are frightened down to your very bones.” Students who notice this should then discuss “How might this Aha change things?” Another student, in answering that question said, “It’s like for prediction. You can see that she’s going to have to be brave about something. And she’s already said that she’s not brave about really hard things, like cancer. I bet her mother has cancer.”

YOUR NOTES

NOTICE AND NOTE SIGNPOSTS IN *WALK TWO MOONS*

LOCATION: *Chapter 4, Page 22* Sal connects blackberries to memories of her mom.

Again and Again

WHAT WE NOTICED

Blackberries have already been mentioned again and again, and by the end of the book, will have appeared more than thirty times. While we don't expect—or want—students to interrupt their reading each time Sal or another character mentions a blackberry, we do want them to be alert to the repetition and to occasionally ask themselves why blackberries keep showing up again and again. They are often connected, in Sal's mind, to her mother and happier days, and late in the book they'll become associated with Ben, too.

Here are some other points in the book in which blackberries are mentioned in some *significant* way: pages 29, 32, 35, 121, 122, 205, 214, and 215.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 5, Page 25* Sal focuses on her rush to get where they are going.

Again and Again

WHAT WE NOTICED

Once you've taught the Again and Again signpost, some students will find all the spots where frequently used words or phrases are mentioned. "Rush, rush, rush" might be one that some students key in on. If so, they'll hear the urgency that Sal is feeling.

The phrase came up first on page 6, and will appear again on pages 38, 55, 57, and 72.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 6, Page 30* Sal's feelings about Mrs. Winterbottom contrast sharply with what she has observed.

Contrasts and Contradictions or Aha Moment

WHAT WE NOTICED

Your students may see this signpost as a Contrast and Contradiction, noticing the sharp contrast between what Sal has actually observed and what she nonetheless feels. Sal has been observing Mrs. Winterbottom carefully and has noticed that everything she has said indicates that she is an enthusiastic and committed homemaker. But there is something—she doesn't know what—that contradicts all of that evidence. Despite all that she has observed, Sal feels that Mrs. Winterbottom is not the happy housewife she seems to be. Noticing this, students might begin to wonder just what is happening with Phoebe's mother, and how it might shape the plot.

Or they may see it as an Aha Moment. You'll want to encourage the conversation and give kids time to share their reasons. Some will see that Sal has had an important if incomplete insight into Mrs. Winterbottom. Sal continues to analyze her thoughts and feelings for several pages, never completely understanding them, but concluding for the moment that "It all seemed peculiar. They acted so thumpingly *tidy* and *respectable*." We know that something is wrong here, though we aren't sure what.

YOUR NOTES

NOTICE AND NOTE SIGNPOSTS IN *WALK TWO MOONS*

LOCATION: *Chapter 6, Pages 33–35* Sal recalls picking blackberries with her mother, and then an incident with her father and mother.

Memory Moment or Contrasts and Contradictions

WHAT WE NOTICED

Here Sal follows one memory—of picking blackberries—to another, a memory of a strange incident involving her father and mother. When your students speculate about what they learn from this memory about Sal, her father, and her mother, they may better understand why her mother left and why Sal is struggling so desperately with her loss.

Two students saw this same scene in two ways: One reported, “There’s so much detail in this memory, you like just really see it, and it seems sad, the way her mom was crying, and it was like Sal was realizing that her mom just wasn’t happy.” The second reported, “That’s how you know it’s more a contrast and contradiction. See, here, it says, ‘It was all sad instead of happy’ (p. 35). That’s a contradiction. I think that Sal’s mom was trying to be happy, but she never felt like she measured up and Sal was remembering it.” The first student responded: “So, the question of why is this memory important is because it was, like, the memory was the contradiction. It’s like Sal knew, but didn’t really understand until now that her mom wasn’t happy.” Note the use of evidence from the text.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 7, Page 38* Sal wonders why her mother left her.

Tough Question

WHAT WE NOTICED

Although the question “How could she leave me?” is raised simply and without any extraordinary effort to call attention to it, it is obviously a tough and painful one for Sal. When we see a character articulate a difficult question or doubt, we can be certain that it will be a central issue in the novel. This question is the one that will trouble Sal throughout the book.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 11, Page 60* Sal and Phoebe find a second mysterious note.

Again and Again

WHAT WE NOTICED

When this second unsigned note shows up, some students will identify this as Again and Again. In this scene, the two girls again find a mysterious note. The first note, which showed up back on page 51, was the adage, “Don’t judge a man until you’ve walked two moons in his moccasins.” This note is different—“Everyone has his own agenda.” As students wonder why this keeps occurring again and again, some students will focus on the content of the notes—short messages that offer Sal and Phoebe important life lessons—and others will focus more on the act of messages being delivered.

YOUR NOTES

NOTICE AND NOTE SIGNPOSTS IN *WALK TWO MOONS*

LOCATION: *Chapter 11, Pages 63–64* Sal finds herself getting nervous around a mysterious stranger, but she can't quite figure out why.

Again and Again

WHAT WE NOTICED

Here we noticed a mysterious character showing up again. Mysterious characters, however—those lacking a name and a clear role or relationship to the central character and who come and go with no apparent reason—should not be ignored, and we hope readers will wonder just why this one keeps appearing again and again. They know that he will play a significant role sooner or later.

A quick reference to “the lunatic” first appears on page 9. Then, the character, “the Lunatic” appears on page 42. As the story continues, he appears more often as he moves from being an unknown to a known character in the story. You can find references to him on pages 69, 118–120, 127, 137–141, 154, 183–188, 204, 220, 232, 235, 239, 242, 246–250, and 277.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 14, Page 88* Sal wonders what she didn't notice about her mom.

Tough Questions

WHAT WE NOTICED

Here, it is obvious to Sal that Phoebe's mother is worried, but Phoebe doesn't see it at all. This leads Sal to ask herself if *she*, too, had been unwilling to notice things about her own mother? As students come to understand that Sal's mother isn't coming home, they may recognize this tough question, and begin to realize this book isn't going to be so much about why Sal's mom left home, as about Sal's understanding and acceptance of it.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 16, Pages 99–100* Sal shares a memory of the singing tree.

Memory Moment

WHAT WE NOTICED

Here, Sal remembers the singing tree that was silent the day they learned her mother wasn't coming home. We have to speculate about why that memory has come to mind at this particular moment, and what that tells us.

Students may see this memory as *Again and Again* as the book continues.

YOUR NOTES

NOTICE AND NOTE SIGNPOSTS IN *WALK TWO MOONS*

LOCATION: *Chapter 17, Page 106* Another mysterious message sets Sal to wondering, “What does it matter?”

Tough Questions

WHAT WE NOTICED

In this scene, Creech gives us a tough question in the form of the mysterious message—“In the course of a lifetime, what does it matter?” Sal comes up with a tentative answer—that Prudence’s cheerleading tryouts probably wouldn’t matter very much, but that a mother leaving probably would matter a great deal. Figuring out how her mother’s disappearance matters, and what she can do or think about it, is one of the central problems of the book.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 20, Page 126* Phoebe’s mom leaves notes for her family.

Contrasts and Contradictions

WHAT WE NOTICED

Here, Phoebe’s mom, who has always been available to her family in many ways, disappears, leaving only a cryptic note. This is clearly behavior that contradicts what we’ve been led to expect from her. Though students won’t know why until they read on, we want them to pause and wonder why she would act this way. In doing so, they begin to speculate on the internal conflict she is dealing with.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 22, Page 137* Sal’s dad tells her that her excuses about her mom are “fishes in the air.”

Again and Again

WHAT WE NOTICED

Sal’s dad repeats an expression we’ve heard before, comparing Sal’s excuses to something that doesn’t happen—fish don’t live in the air—so he seems to be suggesting that there is something imagined or unrealistic about her thoughts, that she isn’t accepting reality in some way. As we notice and then discuss this repetition, students may come to realize that much of the novel, in fact, seems to be about Sal’s journey toward the discovery of the reality from which she has been hiding.

The first reference to the fish was on page 6. It occurred again on page 115 (where it’s also in the chapter title). And it will come up finally on page 277.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 22, Page 141* Sal’s dad explains that people can’t be caged like birds.

Words of the Wiser

WHAT WE NOTICED

We noticed that at this point Sal’s dad offers Sal an important lesson on how people must be treated. As students think of the key question—how might this memory be important—they may begin to speculate on how this advice might help Sal understand her mother’s departure.

YOUR NOTES

NOTICE AND NOTE SIGNPOSTS IN *WALK TWO MOONS*

LOCATION: *Chapter 23, Page 150* Sal remembers her mother's story about the Napi, the creator of men and women.

Memory Moment

WHAT WE NOTICED

On this page, we noticed that Sal shared a memory about a creation myth, and the decision by Napi, the creator, that people will die rather live forever. Sal had just shared the story of the baby's death, so this memory might be important in helping her understand that the baby's death wasn't her fault—or her mother's fault—it's just what happens in this world.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 26, Page 165* Sal and Phoebe focus on the word *sacrifice*.

Again and Again

WHAT WE NOTICED

Creech repeats the word *sacrifice* four or five times on this page. This is an example of repetition not found across the book, but just on one page.

If your students talk about the repetition of the word *sacrifice*, they may begin to think about who in this story made sacrifices, and what they sacrificed. They may recall that Sal's mother felt that in some way she had sacrificed herself, given up some of her identity, in order to be a good mother. They may remember the moment back on page 110, when she expressed the desire to be called by her real name, and may interpret that as a further clue that she felt she had given up—sacrificed—her real self. As they consider all the sacrifices made, they may be thinking about an important theme of the novel.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 26, Page 166* Sal realizes that her father was probably as frustrated with her behavior as she is now frustrated with Phoebe's.

Aha Moment

WHAT WE NOTICED

We noticed here that Sal suddenly recognizes that how she feels about Phoebe's behavior is probably how her father felt about her own behavior. The key question for an Aha Moment—how might this change things—pushes us to think about how Sal is maturing, coming to understand her own actions and how they affect others.

YOUR NOTES

NOTICE AND NOTE SIGNPOSTS IN *WALK TWO MOONS*

LOCATION: *Chapter 27, Page 175* Sal wonders if worry is a part of life and if death can precede birth.

Tough Questions

WHAT WE NOTICED

Here Sal asks herself several difficult questions. She asks if worry is always a part of life and reveals that she worries about something going wrong even when things seem to be going well. She also asks about the relationship between birth and death. While she's probably wondering if the baby died while still in utero, she also has posed an interesting question about having to give up something (a type of death) before moving on to something else (a type of new life).

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 27, Page 176* Sal's grandparents imply that her mother's departure had nothing to do with her.

Aha Moment

WHAT WE NOTICED

This is a critical Aha Moment as Sal finally understands something her grandparents have wanted her to realize. They confirm Sal's thought that Phoebe hadn't caused her mother to leave. At that point, for "the first time," as Sal flatly tells us, it occurs to her that perhaps she hadn't been responsible for her own mother leaving. Since Aha Moments help us understand how a character is changing, be sure to encourage your students to think through the key question: How might this change things?

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 30, Page 194* Sal and Phoebe discuss the letter Sal's mom had left her and why someone would leave without an explanation.

Memory Moment

WHAT WE NOTICED

Sal recalls the letter her mom had left for her. Some students might identify this as *Again and Again*, since the letter comes up more than once, and that's fine. The name doesn't matter. What matters is that they are noticing that Sal is referring to her mom's letter and trying to figure out what her mom has done. When characters return to something in their own past, we usually gain insight into internal conflict.
The letter was first mentioned on page 110.

YOUR NOTES

NOTICE AND NOTE SIGNPOSTS IN *WALK TWO MOONS*

LOCATION: *Chapter 33, Page 221* Sal questions if Mrs. Cadaver understood what things were worth before she lost them.

Tough Questions

WHAT WE NOTICED

Sal has been thinking about the note that was left on the porch and wonders if Mrs. Cadaver understood the worth of what she had before it was lost. Tough Questions like this one give insight into internal conflict and theme. Although some of our notes are brief, the moments are all critical. We wanted to show a mix of longer and shorter notes.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 39, Pages 245–246* Phoebe's mother appears with short hair and lipstick.

Contrasts and Contradictions

WHAT WE NOTICED

Watch for dramatic contrasts. Here, Phoebe's mother's appearance has changed drastically, showing us something about character development. Obviously, something has happened.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 41, Page 257* Sal reflects on all that has happened and reaches some conclusions.

Aha Moment

WHAT WE NOTICED

Several times on this page, Sal tells us, "Then I started thinking . . ." or "I thought about. . ." Although she says nothing so definite as "Suddenly I realized. . ." it's clear that she is coming to understand something significant. When characters say repeatedly that they are thinking about something, we want readers to pay attention to those thoughts.

YOUR NOTES

LOCATION: *Chapter 44, Page 277* Sal shares what she has figured out.

Aha Moment

WHAT WE NOTICED

Sal has journeyed a long way. It's not unusual in young adult novels for the author to wrap up by letting the protagonist explain what she has figured out. Sometimes that is done in dialogue with another character; other times, as in this book, it is done through internal monologue. When students know that they are reading the end of a book, and they see the main character using words like "explain" and "discover," they should realize that the character is sharing all she has figured out, generally giving us one last nudge toward theme.

YOUR NOTES