They Never Came Back
by
Caroline B. Cooney

Teacher’s Edition
About JLG Guides

Junior Library Guild selects the best new Hardcover children’s and YA books being published in the U.S. and makes them available to libraries and schools, often before the books are available from anyone else. Timeliness and value mark the mission of JLG: to be the librarian’s partner. But how can JLG help librarians be partners with classroom teachers?

With JLG Guides.

JLG Guides are activity and reading guides written by people with experience in both children’s and educational publishing—in fact, many of them are former librarians or teachers. The JLG Guides are made up of activity guides for younger readers (grades K–3) and reading guides for older readers (grades 4–12), with some overlap occurring in grades 3 and 4. All guides are written with national and state standards as guidelines. Activity guides focus on providing activities that support specific reading standards; reading guides support various standards (reading, language arts, social studies, science, etc.), depending on the genre and topic of the book itself.

JLG Guides can be used both for whole class instruction and for individual students. Pages are reproducible for classroom use only, and a teacher’s edition accompanies most JLG Guides.

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And in case you think we forgot the librarians, be sure to check out the Library Applications page, shown on the table of contents in each guide.

From all of us at Junior Library Guild, we wish you and your students good reading and great learning . . . with JLG Selections and JG Guides.
They Never Came Back  
by Caroline B. Cooney  
JLG Guide produced by School Street Media for Junior Library Guild

Table of Contents

About the Book and the Author ................................................................. 4  
Prereading Activities ............................................................................. 5  
Vocabulary throughout the Book ............................................................. 6  
Analyzing the Writing: Story Elements ................................................... 7  
Word Studies Connection ....................................................................... 11  
Social Studies/Economics Connection ..................................................... 13  
Discussion Questions ................................................................................ 14  
Writing Application .................................................................................. 15  
Suggestions for Further Reading .............................................................. 16  
Correlations to National Standards (Grades 9-12) ..................................... 17

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About the Book and the Author

They Never Came Back
by Caroline B. Cooney

Years ago, Tommy’s cousin, Murielle, disappeared. Then one day during summer school, he
thinks he sees her across the cafeteria. But the girl—a dead ringer for his cousin—insists her
name is Cathy. Tommy reluctantly believes her. His parents, when they meet her, suspect she’s
lying.

What JLG Reviewers Say about They Never Came Back:

★ Caroline B. Cooney’s writing is taut and suspenseful, and surprising twists will
keep the reader turning pages.

★ The possibility of mistaken or double identities is inherently captivating.

★ The novel’s world is strikingly contemporary. Cell phones and social networking
play crucial roles in the plot’s development, as do financial collapse and fraud.

★ Murielle’s predicament taps into primal fears even as it raises sophisticated
questions about parents, children, and their responsibilities to one another.

Caroline B. Cooney’s career started with a romantic short story. “I had a short story published
Scholastic called me and asked me to expand the story into a young-adult paperback romance. It
was called An April Love Story.”

From there, Ms. Cooney tackled dozens of topics, including danger and mayhem, but she believes
there is hope at the heart of her novels. “I approach serious subjects, and I like to have the good
guys win and have the parents among the good guys,” she explains to TeenReads. “I believe my
readers are crazy about their parents and want to be just like them when they grow up.”
Prereading Activities

Book Summary
Cathy Ferris is in summer school, eating lunch in the student center, when Tommy Petrak approaches her thinking she is his cousin Murielle. Five years before, Murielle’s parents had fled the country to avoid being charged with using their brokerage firm to steal from their clients. Murielle had been taken into foster care, and Tommy’s family had lost contact with her. Soon we learn 15-year-old Cathy is Murielle and has spent the past five years keeping her past hidden. And it would have stayed that way if she hadn’t tempted fate by making a plan to attend summer school where she knew her cousin Tommy would be.

Understanding Genre: Mystery
1. What is a mystery? What kind of book is labeled a mystery?
   
   A mystery is something that is secret or unknown. A mystery book is one in which the full story and all its connecting elements are unknown and needs to be solved by the character or characters in the story. It can be a work of fiction or nonfiction.

2. Above is a summary of They Never Came Back. What elements do you think need to be answered to solve this mystery?
   
   Possible answers: How did Murielle get separated from her parents and then her cousin and his family? Where has Murielle been for the past five years? Why is Murielle now calling herself Cathy? Will Cathy’s true identity be discovered?

3. Why do you think people like to read mysteries?
   
   Possible responses: Mysteries are like puzzles that readers can try to solve. Mysteries are often thrilling and suspenseful.

4. What is a clue, and why is it important for a mystery story to include clues?
   
   Possible response: A clue is a piece of information that helps a story’s characters, and its readers, solve a mystery. Clues link up to each other to resolve the mystery. They create suspense and keep readers interested.
**Vocabulary throughout the Book**

Find each of the following words in *They Never Came Back* on the page number given in parentheses. Read the word in context. Then look up the word in a dictionary. Determine the part of speech and the definition for the word that best fits the way the word is used in the story. Write that definition below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accelerated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>speeded up; covering a lot of information over an abbreviated time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collective</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>involving all members of a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loathing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>extreme dislike or disgust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extradited</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>surrendered an alleged criminal from another jurisdiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>having the customary beliefs and traits of a certain group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quizzical</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>questioning; bemused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au pair</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>a foreign girl who does domestic work, including childcare, for a family in return for room and board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contradictions</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>a situation in which the factors are inconsistent with each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auditors</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>those who are authorized to examine and verify accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misrepresentations</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>false or misleading methods or information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interrogated</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>to be questioned, usually in a formal and systematic manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ephemeral</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>lasting a very short time; fleeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theory</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>speculation drawn from the available information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ludicrous</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>ridiculous; absurd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peaked</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>looking sickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fugitives</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>those who flee or escape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analyzing the Writing:
Story Elements

Point of View
From what point of view does the narrator tell the story? What do you notice about the chapters?

This story is told in the third-person narrative. For most of the book, the chapters alternate between telling the story from Cathy’s point of view and from Murielle’s point of view, with a time span of five years.

Setting
They Never Came Back has various settings, in both time and place. Describe both time and place settings that you found as you read the book.

This story takes place in Connecticut, in her previous home in Greenwich and in her current home in Norwich. The various places include her parents’ house, her aunt and uncle’s house, her foster home, and school. The time settings switch between current time and five years previous, when Murielle’s parents first left.

Characters
They Never Came Back has a lot of characters who play a part in the unraveling of Cathy’s secret. The key characters are listed below. Explain who these characters are and how they fit into this mystery.

1. Tommy Petrak
   Tommy is a student at Cathy’s summer school. He is the cousin of Murielle, who recognizes her even though she is hiding behind another identity. He is the person who, in a sense, begins the mystery of this story.

2. Rory and Cade Lyman
   The Lymans are the parents of Murielle. They have fled the United States to avoid being indicted for stealing from their brokerage clients.
3. Lois and Travis Petrak

The Petraks are the aunt and uncle of Murielle and the parents of Tommy. Lois is the sister of Murielle’s mother Rory.

4. Spencer Tartaglia

Spencer is Cathy’s friend with whom she car-pools to summer school every day.

5. Julianna Benner

Julianna is a fellow student and friend of Cathy. She is also the daughter of the Lymans’ former office manager, who spent two years in prison for being a part of the Lymans’ mismanagement and theft of funds.

6. Meg and Ava

Meg and Ava are also fellow students and friends of Cathy and are very interested in the story of Murielle. They try to piece the clues together to discover whether Cathy is really Murielle.

7. Marnee and Bob Ferris

The Ferrises are Murielle’s and, subsequently, Cathy’s foster parents. Cathy calls her foster mother “Marmee” and her foster father “Dad Bob.”

8. Matt Keefer

Matt Keefer is the FBI agent who is trying to find Rory and Cade Lyman.
Conflict
Most stories, no matter what the genre, involve conflict, creating tension and excitement for the reader. Conflict helps develop the storyline, propelling the characters forward as they seek resolution.

There are a variety of different types of conflict, and a story can have more than one kind. For example, there can be internal conflict, which is when a person struggles within him- or herself. There are interpersonal conflicts—disagreements or misunderstandings people may have with each other. Another common conflict is one with authority, be it a teacher, parent, boss, or the government.

In *They Never Came Back*, many of the characters are dealing with some kind of conflict. Determine what the conflicts are for each of the following characters.

1. Murielle/Cathy

   Answers will vary. Murielle’s predominant conflict is with her parents’ departure and wondering how they could have left her behind. Did they love their freedom more than they loved her? Murielle also struggles with her own feelings for her parents. How much does she love them? Can she forgive them for leaving? As Cathy, Murielle tries to keep her real identity hidden, yet is obviously not at peace with being someone she knows she isn’t.

2. Tommy

   Answers will vary. Tommy’s mother is the sister of Rory, Murielle’s mother, and was greatly affected by what Rory did. Tommy finds it hard not to feel very angry with Murielle’s mother and father.

3. Julianna

   Answers will vary. Julianna and her family were profoundly affected by the actions of the Lymans. Julianna feels angry with Cathy though she realizes that “it wasn’t Cathy’s fault. Even if she was Murielle, it wasn’t her fault.”
4. Lois Petrak

Answers will vary. Lois says, “I’ve been mad at Rory every day for five years.” But Rory is her sister, and although she is angry with her for what she has put the Petraks and Murielle through, Lois still loves her.

5. Marnee and Bob Ferris

Answers will vary. The Ferrises are foster parents who care for children who need a home. Sometimes these children need a home for just a short time, and some need a long-term home. Though the Ferrises understand this, they still feel sad when a child leaves their home, as they are when Jamesy is returned to his mother.

Analogies

An analogy is defined as “a likeness in one or more ways between things otherwise unalike.” Authors use analogies to give depth to a feeling or situation. In They Never Came Back, the author uses analogies to emphasize the characters’ feelings. An example would be when Tommy begins to realize that Cathy is not his cousin Murielle: “Tommy sagged, looking beaten as a kid who thought he has won the big basketball game, only to lose in the last two seconds.”

1. Find other examples of analogies in this story. Do you think the analogies are effective?

Answers will vary. One analogy in this story is “Cathy could feel herself losing weight, as these people made off with pieces of her.” Another analogy is “[Cathy] made her brain as thin and sharp as a pencil and pointed herself at the Latin.”

2. Make up your own analogy. Discuss with your class whether your analogy is strong enough to further explain the feeling or situation you used.

Answers will vary.
Word Studies Connection

Latin’s Influence on the English Language
Cathy is in summer school to learn Latin. Though Latin is sometimes called a “dead language,” it is actually in use today in some form in English and other languages, and it is still taught as a language in many schools and universities. Understanding the basics of Latin is helpful in understanding our own “living” English language.

Cathy chooses to learn Latin because it uses the same alphabet that English uses. She also finds that Latin is “as orderly as arithmetic.” Many of English’s prefixes and suffixes are from Latin, as are many of its root words. For example, the Latin *dic* or *dict*, means to speak, giving English the word *dictionary*. (Note: English also gets many of its root words, prefixes, and suffixes from Greek.)

The following are some common English words that have a Latin root word, prefix, suffix, or sometimes a combination of two or all three. There are times when different words mean the same thing and times when a word has more than one meaning. Also, it is often possible for an English word to have more than one root word. (You will see examples of these instances with this exercise.) Use the chart on the next page to determine the Latin contribution to each of these words. Use your dictionary to discover which part of the word is from Latin and what its original meaning is.
## Latin Prefixes, Root Words, and Suffixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Root Word(s)</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alternate</td>
<td>altern</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>ate</td>
<td>state of being</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>audition</td>
<td>aud</td>
<td>sound</td>
<td>ion</td>
<td>condition or action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biology</td>
<td>bio</td>
<td>life</td>
<td>logy</td>
<td>the study of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>construct</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>together; with</td>
<td>struct</td>
<td>to build</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dentist</td>
<td>dent</td>
<td>tooth</td>
<td>ist</td>
<td>person, member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exhale</td>
<td>ex</td>
<td>out of</td>
<td>hale</td>
<td>make whole, sound (healthy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>falsify</td>
<td>fals</td>
<td>to deceive</td>
<td>fy</td>
<td>make, form into</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human</td>
<td>hum</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>an</td>
<td>one that is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>illegal</td>
<td>il</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>legal</td>
<td>pertaining to the law</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>imbib</td>
<td>im</td>
<td>in; into</td>
<td>bibe</td>
<td>to drink</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impolite</td>
<td>im</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>polit</td>
<td>polished</td>
<td></td>
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<td>incorporate</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>into</td>
<td>corp</td>
<td>body</td>
<td>ate</td>
<td>to make</td>
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<td>indirect</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>direct</td>
<td>straight</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>postpone</td>
<td>post</td>
<td>after</td>
<td>pone</td>
<td>place, put</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>query</td>
<td>quer</td>
<td>to ask</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>state of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>tribute</td>
<td>tribute</td>
<td>a thing that is paid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vacant</td>
<td>vacant</td>
<td>to be empty</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Social Studies/Economics Connection

Murielle’s parents were investment brokers and owned a brokerage firm. To be a broker, a person must be licensed by the state in which he or she works. To be licensed, brokers-to-be must take the appropriate classes and pass the appropriate exams.

People often use brokerage firms to invest their savings and pensions. Over time these investments grow, making money for the investors. The brokers earn fees for their services of managing and investing their clients’ money.

When a person chooses a brokerage firm, he or she trusts the brokers of that firm to be knowledgeable and honest. Brokers have a fiduciary responsibility, meaning they must place their clients’ interests above their own. Unfortunately, there have been cases in real life much like the one in They Never Came Back in which brokers have not done so.

There is a governmental organization called the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) whose mission is “to protect investors, maintain fair, orderly, and efficient markets, and facilitate capital formation.” The foundation of the SEC’s formation was laid after the stock market crash of 1929, and it establishes regulations for the national and international investing world. (You can read much more about the SEC at www.SEC.gov.)

1. Explain what Murielle's parents did and why they fled the United States.

2. Also explain what Julianna Brenner’s mother was convicted of and why she was sent to prison.

3. Use your media center to find and research a real-life case of financial wrongdoing. Describe what happened: Who was involved; what was the accusation; and what was the resolution?
Discussion Questions

1. Describe Murielle’s transition into the identity of Cathy.

2. Ava, Cathy’s schoolmate and friend, asks the question, “What kind of parents decide that money and freedom matter more than their little girl?” Explain what you think of Murielle’s parents’ decision?

3. How does Spencer seem to feel when he finds out that Cathy is really Murielle? How would you have felt?

4. Once Murielle is reunited with her aunt’s family, she feels that her foster parents becomes “smaller and less important.” Why do you think she feels this way? Do you agree?

5. Before others know Cathy is Murielle, there is talk of a plan to flush Rory and Cade Lyman out by having Cathy “pose” as Murielle. What is that plan? Do you think a lie is ever justified?

6. When Ava poses as Murielle and posts a letter on the Internet thinking Murielle’s parents might find it, do you think she was helping Murielle or interfering?

7. Julianna wants the Lymans to be found. Why? Do you think you’d feel as she does?

8. Reread page 192. Murielle feels there is one gift she can give her parents, and that is permission. What does she mean, and do you think she makes the right decision with what she types back to them?

9. Have you ever mistaken one person for another? Were you as sure as Tommy was when he first saw Cathy and thought she was his cousin Murielle? Describe your experience.
Writing Application

Throughout *They Never Came Back*, Murielle struggles with the feelings she has for her parents. In essay form, describe the conflict Murielle has had and the reasons for it. Do you think by the end of the book she has resolved her feelings for her parents, or do you think she will continue to deal with her conflicted feelings for them? What in this story supports your opinion?
Suggestions for Further Reading

Other Books by Caroline B. Cooney:

If the Witness Lied
The Ransom of Mercy Carter
Whatever Happened to Janie?
What Janie Found
The Voice on the Radio
The Face on the Milk Carton
Prisoner of Time
Code Orange
Wanted!
Out of Time
Diamonds in the Shadow
Twins
Losing Christina: Fog
Hit the Road
Goddess of Yesterday
The Time Travelers Series
Point Series (Scholastic)
...and many more!

You Might Also Like These Mysteries:

Busby, Cylin and John Busby. The Year We Disappeared: A Father-Daughter Memoir, Bloomsbury, 2008. (Nonfiction)
Dasner, James. The Maze Runner. Delacorte, 2010
## Correlations to National Standards
### For Grades 9-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Standard Number</th>
<th>Standard Objective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.1</td>
<td>Reading for Perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.2</td>
<td>Reading for Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.3</td>
<td>Evaluation Strategies</td>
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<td>NL–ENG.K–12.4</td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.5</td>
<td>Communication Strategies</td>
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<td>NL–ENG.K–12.6</td>
<td>Applying Knowledge</td>
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<td>NL–ENG.K–12.7</td>
<td>Evaluating Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.8</td>
<td>Developing Research Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.12</td>
<td>Applying Language Skills</td>
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<td>NSS–EC.9–12.7</td>
<td>Markets and Market Prices</td>
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<td>Social Studies: Economics</td>
<td>NSS–EC.9–12.10</td>
<td>Market Institutions</td>
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<td>Social Studies: Economics</td>
<td>NSS–EC.9–12.15</td>
<td>Investment</td>
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