



## HOW TO SAVE A SUPERHERO

By **RUTH FREEMAN**

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Ten-year-old Addie knows that superheroes aren't real, and that they certainly don't hide out in retirement communities, but she may just have to change her mind.

Addie and her mom never stay in one place too long. They've been up and down and all around the country. When her mom, Tish, gets a new job at Happy Valley Village Retirement Community in Pennsylvania, Addie believes they'll be on the road again in a month. But this time, something is different—make that someone: Mr. Norris, a grumpy resident of Happy Valley and . . . a former superhero?

When a man starts prowling the Happy Valley grounds, claiming to be the great-nephew of a resident, Addie, Marwa, and Dickson soon stumble into a grand conspiracy involving the Manhattan Project, a shady weapons company, and the fate of the human race in this smart, funny middle grade novel.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Tish, Addie's mother, doesn't stay in one place very long. How does she end up with a job at Happy Valley Village (HVV) Retirement Community?
- Tish works as a companion to the residents. She is given one month to prove herself. Why do you think she is assigned Mr. Norris, the most difficult resident?
- Describe Happy Valley Village and the residents. Why is Arborvine considered the best hallway at the Village?
- Explain why Mr. Norris is at Arborvine. What is Mr. Norris's attitude toward HVV? What deal did he strike with Melinda Sloat, President and Chief Executive Officer of Happy Valley? How is Mrs. Sloat determined to win the deal?
- Addie is accustomed to being the new girl at school. Does this help or hinder her in making friends?

- At HVV, Addie becomes friends with Dickson, whose mother also works at Happy Valley. Explain why Dickson hides from his mother. Why does Dickson wait so long to reveal that Mrs. Sloat is his mother?
- Describe Dickson's favorite hiding place. Why is he so willing to share this place with Addie?
- How does the group change when Marwa, a new girl from Iraq, joins the group? What do the three have in common? Discuss their differences. Who emerges as the leader of the group?
- Describe Marshall, the guy at school who bullies Dickson. What advice does Addie give Dickson about dealing with bullies like Marshall? What gives Dickson the courage to finally stand up to the bullies?
- Dickson is suspended from school for a day after he gets into a fight with Marshall. Why does Mrs. Sloat blame Mr. Norris? How is blaming other people for things her specialty?
- What is Marwa's idea of a superhero? Why are she and Dickson convinced that Mr. Norris is a superhero? Explain the significance of Mr. Norris's coughs. Describe other incidents in the novel when Mr. Norris appears to possess extraordinary powers.
- How does Addie know where to find Mr. Norris? Describe the conversation that she has with Mr. Norris in the tower. How does he help Addie express her happy memories with Granny Lu?
- Mr. Norris offers Tish and Addie the apartment above his garage and makes Addie promise not to go in the garage. Why does she break the promise? How does the situation ultimately work in Mr. Norris's favor?
- Who is Marcus Fox? At what point is it obvious that he is an imposter? Mr. Norris thinks that Fox looks familiar. How does Mr. Norris finally connect the dots to Marcus Fox's identity? Debate whether Mrs. Sloat is in cahoots with Fox, or simply blinded by ambition.
- Why is Marcus Fox eager to get in Mr. Norris's garage? Discuss Addie's plan to outsmart Fox. How does she convince Mr. Norris that her plan will work? Explain the role of Dickson and Marwa in executing the plan. How does Mr. Norris recognize and reward the three children for saving him?
- Mr. Norris is a superhero. How are Addie, Dickson, and Marwa heroes?
- Addie loves drawing maps. How do Addie's maps of Happy Valley Village bring her adventure? Granny Lu once said, "Maps help show us the way" (p. 126). Then she said, "And some of us need to find our own way" (p. 126). To whom was she referring?
- How do Addie and Tish find their way by the end of the novel? What is Mr. Norris's role in helping and encouraging them? Explain the significance of the trip to Mount Repose, Maine at the end of the novel.
- Addie and Minerva are reading *The Wind in the Willows*. How does the novel have greater meaning to Addie as the mystery surrounding Mr. Norris escalates?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Ruth Freeman** is the author of *One Good Thing About America*, which received a Golden Kite Honor Award and was called a "touching novel" by *School Library Journal*. Ruth grew up in rural Pennsylvania but now lives in Maine where she teaches English language learners in an elementary school.