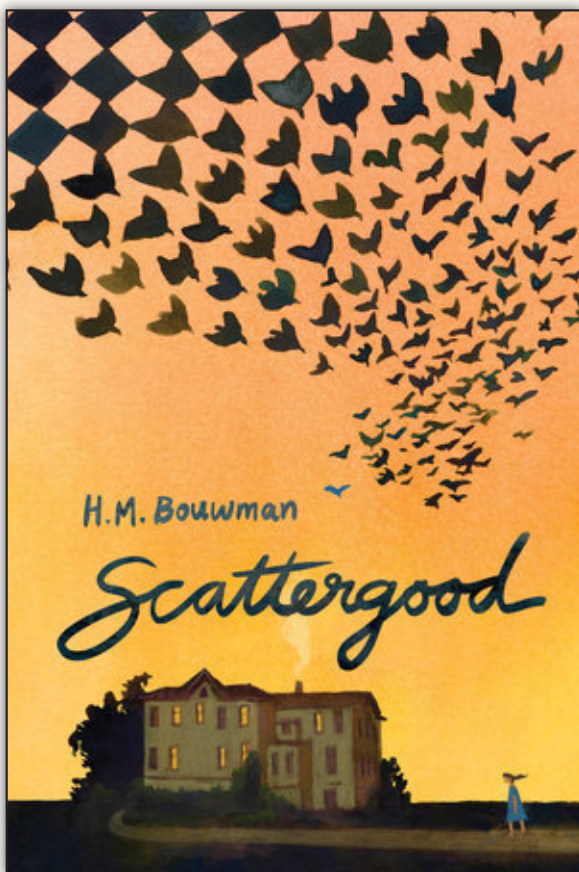


HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Grades
5 & Up



Neal Porter Books

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Scattergood

by H. M. Bouwman

A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection

★ "A timeless coming-of-age novel."

—Booklist (starred review)

★ "Engaging, textured, and deeply humane."

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

ABOUT THE BOOK

In rural Iowa in 1941, twelve-year-old Peggy's quiet life is turned upside down by refugee arrivals, first love, and a heartbreaking diagnosis.

Growing up a farm girl, Peggy's life has never been particularly exciting. But a lot changes in 1941. Her friend Joe starts acting strangely around her. The Quaker hostel nearby reopens to house Jewish refugees from Europe, including a handsome boy named Gunther and a troubled professor of nothing. And her cousin and best friend, Delia, is diagnosed with leukemia—and doesn't even know it.

Peggy has always been rational. She may not be able to understand poetry and speak in metaphors like Delia, but she has to believe she can find a way out of this mess, for both of them. There has to be a cure. And yet the more she tries to control, the more powerless she feels. She can't make Gunther see her the way she sees him. She can't help the Professor find his missing daughter. She's tired of feeling young and naive, but growing up is proving even worse.

A historical coming-of-age novel that feels as alive and present as today, *Scattergood* offers even readers familiar with World War II a fascinating new glimpse of history, far from the battlefields of Europe and the shores of New York City. H. M. Bouwman presents a raw and unapologetic snapshot of a girl battling her own shortcomings and the random nature of life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Define historical fiction. Cite the historic facts in this work of fiction. Why is setting an essential element in historical fiction? How does Peggy's daily life help reveal the setting? Discuss the economic situation of Peggy's family. How does this reflect the time in which the novel is set? Think about the way the neighbors in West Branch, Iowa, support one another. In what way is this a survival story?
- Peggy's cousin and best friend, Delia, is dying of leukemia. Why aren't Peggy's parents honest with her about Delia's diagnosis? Cite passages that reveal how they dance around the issue. Debate whether they should have been truthful with her when they first learned of Delia's illness. How does Peggy discover the truth about Delia's condition? At what point does she tell her mother that she knows Delia is dying?



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#Scattergood

- Explain why Delia's parents allow her to believe that she is suffering from anemia. How does Delia find out that she is dying? Why is Delia so angry when she learns that Peggy has known her prognosis for a while? Discuss what Peggy means when she thinks, "Delia knew, and I knew, and we could talk freely again. And somehow that made things easier" (p. 212). Describe Peggy's visits to Delia after they both learn the truth.
- Peggy is gifted in math. How does she apply math to every problem in her life? Discuss her efforts to find a cure for Delia. In what way is her approach similar to solving a mathematical equation? There are right and wrong answers in math. How is medical research different? Discuss Delia's reaction when she learns about Peggy's efforts to find a cure for her.
- Describe Ida Jean Norton. Why doesn't Peggy enjoy her company? Contrast Peggy and Ida Jean's personalities. Explain what Ida Jean means when she says that Peggy is a "brown and rust and orange type of person" (p. 143). What colors might best describe Ida Jean? Peggy tutors Ida Jean in math. Discuss what she means when she thinks, "Reverend Miller would call teaching Ida Jean 'throwing pearls before swine'" (p. 46). At what point does Peggy realize Ida Jean's gift?
- Scattergood is a former Quaker boarding school that has been converted into a refugee hostel. Joe Clark talks Peggy into learning chess from Professor Abram Lohman, a Jewish refugee at Scattergood. Why does Joe think Peggy can learn chess so easily? How are her games with the Professor about more than chess? What do the two learn from each other? In what way does the Professor help Peggy deal with Delia's illness and impending death? Discuss the many ways Scattergood broadens Peggy's world.
- Peggy is naïve about boys and romance. She has a crush on Gunther, a refugee boy at Scattergood. How does she misread his attention to her? Explain Camilla's feelings for Gunther. Ida Jean has a crush on Joe Clark. How is it obvious that he has eyes for Peggy? Discuss the scene where Peggy and Joe kiss. Explain why her father is so angry when he finds them. Peggy's father trusted Joe. Debate whether he loses trust in Joe after the kissing incident in the field.
- Discuss what Peggy's father does to anger her mother. What does Peggy discover when she tries to find her parents' wedding announcement in an old newspaper at the library? Explain what she means when she thinks, "[Dad had] gotten his second choice" (p. 277). What is Peggy's role in helping her dad mend fences with her mom?
- What is the role of religion in the novel? Peggy's family attends the Methodist church. How do Reverend Miller's sermons confuse Peggy? The Professor tells Peggy many stories from the Jewish faith. How does she take parts of his stories and create new stories to tell Delia? Why does she feel guilty for doing this? At what point does Peggy decide that she doesn't believe in God?

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



H. M. Bouwman is an author of middle grade fantasy and historical fantasy, including *A Crack in the Ocean*, *A Tear in the Sea*, *Gossamer Summer*, and *Scattergood*. She teaches creative writing at the University of St. Thomas and lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, with her family. Learn more at HMBouwman.com.

