



A FEARLESS SKATEBOARDER A QUIRKY PRINCESS

Two very different girls and
the summer that was almost a fairy tale.

www.NancyViau.com



Discussion Questions for Beauty and Bernice

Written by Nancy Viau

Educators, please use and adapt these comprehension questions to fit the needs of your classroom.

The questions are inspired by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis's *Strategies that Work*, and allow for practice with the following reading strategies: Making Connections, Questioning, Visualizing, Inferring, Determining Importance, and Synthesizing.

Pre-Reading Questions

Based on the cover, predict what this book will be about.

What does the title remind you of?

Have you read any other books by Nancy Viau? If so, what do you expect to find in this book?

Read the back. What part intrigues you most? Do you think two very different people can be friends? If so, what would make their friendship difficult or easy? If not, why not?

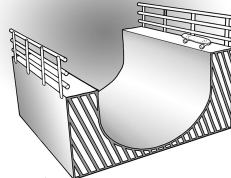
Read the acknowledgments. To whom does Viau credit with helping her bring this book to publication?



During Reading Questions

Chapters 1-3

- When Bernice Baransky was younger, how did she feel about princesses? How does she feel about them now?
- How old is Bernice? What does she like to do?
- How would you describe the princess who moved in across the street from Bernice? Do you think she's a real princess? Why would she be wearing shiny slippers, a pink gown, and a tiara?
- The first few chapters establish a contrast between Bernice and the princess. In what ways are they different? Think about personalities, clothing, and manner of speech to get you started.
- Nancy Viau introduces us to several unique characters in the first three chapters, including Bernice, Bernice's parents, Roxanne, and Odelia. Which one(s) can you relate to most? Why?
- What does Bernice love to do?
- What is Odelia's job? What is she expected to do?
- What do you think will happen between Bernice and Odelia? Do you think they'll get along? What problems can you anticipate?



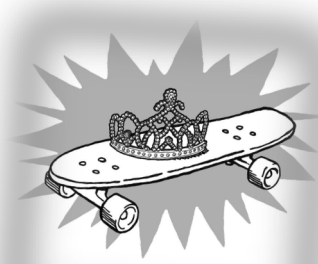
Chapters 4-6

- How and where did the Porchtown Skate Park get built?
- Given the different descriptions of Bernice, draw what you think she looks like. Compare your drawing with a friend's.
- Why doesn't Bernice like Odelia initially? Why does Odelia object to Bernice's accessories?
- Nancy Viau uses interesting word choice throughout this book. She uses numerous specific vocabulary to make her scenes



authentic. For example, Bernice talks about kids at the skate park “grinding the flat bar.” What different vocabulary can you find that describes skateboarding? How does it help to make the scene more realistic?

- *Beauty and Bernice* is written from the first-person point-of-view, following Bernice’s perspective. How would the story change if it were written from Odelia’s perspective?
- Why do you think Odelia wants to be with Bernice?
- In addition to strong vocabulary, Viau uses interesting descriptive language. For example, in the beginning of chapter 5 she says, “Sweat soaks through my gloves and the butterflies in my stomach have turned into blood-sucking vampire bats.” What do you think this means? Why do you think Viau chose this phrasing?
- Why does Bernice crash in chapter 5?
- Why doesn’t Bernice want to be seen hanging out with Odelia? What does this suggest about her?
- How is Bernice both tough and wimpy?
- What does Bernice really want?



Chapters 7-9

- The title of chapter 7 references Shakespeare’s “Song of the Witches” from *Macbeth*. Look up this poem and read it aloud. How do you think this could relate to *Beauty and Bernice*?
- Why doesn’t Bernice tell Roxanne about Wyatt at Winnie’s Icy Igloo?
- What do you think Bernice’s parents are talking about when Bernice overhears them? Make a prediction about how Viau is developing secrecy as a theme.
- What adjective(s) could you use to describe Odelia? Bernice?
- Why did Odelia visit the Martin house?



- What vocabulary stands out to you? Write these words down in a notebook or illustrate your favorite.
- Odelia's 3rd lesson for Bernice is to "Be a pine tree, never a willow." Why does she think this is important?
- Why doesn't Bernice want her dad to see her hanging out with Odelia? Does Odelia know?
- Why doesn't Bernice want the kids from the skate park to know she hangs out at Smile Academy?
- How do the roles shift between Bernice and Odelia at Smile Academy?



Chapters 10-12

- What is Down syndrome? What do you know about it? What do you wonder about it?
- Bernice describes Odelia as odd. In what ways is she odd?
- Are Bernice and Odelia becoming friends? Explain.
- What is an octogenarian?
- What does Bernice struggle with? What does she want?
- Another theme Viau is developing in this book deals with socialization. What do you think she's trying to say about etiquette and learning how to behave in a way that is generally acceptable to society?
- How can Odelia tutor Bernice on socialization when she doesn't understand the "regular" rules?
- Why does Odelia wear fancy clothes and act like a princess? Is she really a princess or using it as a coping mechanism?
- How is Bernice courageous in chapter 11?
- Why doesn't Bernice tell Roxanne that she likes Wyatt?
- Is Roxanne a good friend? Why or why not?
- What adjective(s) would you use to describe Bernice's parents?
- In what ways are Bernice and Odelia alike?



- Bernice suspects that there's more to Odelia than she lets on, that there's a part of her that hates being proper all the time. What do you think?
- In lesson 5, Odelia tells Bernice that conversation is like a game of chess. What does this mean? What else does Bernice say about conversation? Do you agree with her?
- How is each girl trying to change the other?

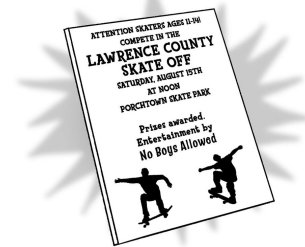
Chapters 13-15

- What mood does Viau establish at the beginning of chapter 13? How does she do this?
- There is a shift in the narrative in chapter 13 in the "serendipitous turn of events." What is this, and why is it important to the narrative?
- Why is Wyatt laughing?
- Where do you think Odelia gets her outfits? Where has she been all her life that she is so sheltered?
- Is Odelia happy with her life?
- Why doesn't Bernice ask Odelia about her life and background?
- In chapter 15, Bernice reads *Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli. Have you ever read this book? If so, how does *Beauty and Bernice* remind you of *Stargirl*? If not, what other story does *Beauty and Bernice* remind you of?
- What do you think Bernice's Mom and Dad are discussing in chapter 15?



Chapters 16-18

- What does Bernice want from Roxanne? How does Roxanne react when Bernice takes steps towards this?
- What happens at Smile Academy? Why does Bernice do what she does?
- In what ways is Bernice changing? How is she being courageous? How is she using what Odelia teaches her?
- Nancy Viau intersperses “snapshots” to describe things like setting and to describe inner feelings throughout the book. For example, in chapter 17, she describes how Wyatt rides on the half-pipe so that the reader can visualize this scene. She also goes into Bernice’s head to let the reader know that Bernice is pretending to understand Wyatt’s explanation of the trick. Find additional examples of “snapshots” and “thoughtshots.” Which one is your favorite? Why?
- What do you think is going to happen between Wyatt and Roxanne?
- Why doesn’t Odelia buy her clothes?



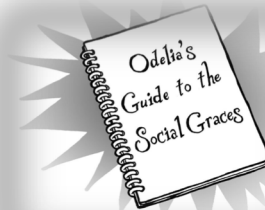
Chapters 19-21

- How much time has passed from the beginning of the story until chapter 19?
- Why does Nellie have to leave Smile Academy?
- Why do you think Wyatt asks Bernice over? How do you think he feels about her? Use evidence from *Beauty and Bernice* to back up your answer.
- How is Roxanne and Bernice’s relationship changing?
- How does the mood at the end of chapter 19 differ from the mood at the beginning of chapter 13? Why? What has changed?
- In chapter 20, Odelia tells Bernice how to be a gracious guest. This includes wiping your shoes, and if they are dirty, to take



them off. Do you follow these rules? What other ways can one be a gracious guest?

- Every one of Odelia's lessons follow a template. What is it? Write one lesson for a friend or for yourself using Odelia's language and format.
- In preparing to go over to Wyatt's, Bernice becomes overwhelmed by the social etiquette rules. What rules have surprised you so far? Are there any that you follow? Are there any that you think are outdated? Which lesson do you think is the most important? Why?



Chapters 22-24

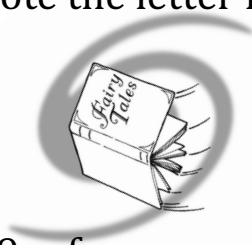
- Why are Bernice's parents acting weird? What does birthright mean? How does this affect Bernice's identity?
- Why do you think Bernice's parents don't show Bernice the letter?
- Chapter 24 introduces the reader to Bernice's bedroom. What are some of the objects she shares with the reader? What does this say about her and who she is?
- How has Bernice's thinking shifted in regards to Odelia? In regards to the kids at Smile Academy?

Chapters 25-28

- The title of chapter 25 references "The Ugly Duckling." How is Bernice changing similar to how the duckling changes in that story?
- How has Bernice arranged to teach the kids at Smile Academy to skateboard? How do you think Bernice manages to safely teach them so that no one gets hurt? What are some of the things she needs to consider?



- What does Odelia reveal about her family? Why is this significant?
- Do you agree with Bernice’s parents’ decision to put the birthright letter away and disregard Bernice’s questions about “things you can’t change?” Why or why not?
- Odelia’s lessons are similar to Mr. Browne’s precepts in *Wonder*. Both teach life lessons. If you’ve read *Wonder*, compare the precepts with Odelia’s lessons and find one that teaches a similar theme. If not, find a quote that has a similar meaning to one of Odelia’s lessons.
- In chapter 28, Bernice tells Odelia about her real mother. Why do you think Odelia reacts the way she does?
- Who do you think wrote the letter Bernice reads at the end of chapter 28?



Chapters 29-32

- The title of chapter 29 references another story. Can you figure out which one?
- When Bernice is nervous about the Lawrence County Skate-Off, she tries to find Odelia, but her house is dark. Where do you think she went?
- What’s the name of the band Bernice is excited about?
- In chapter 30, Bernice uses some of the etiquette rules she learned from Odelia at the skate park with J-Bone, and he gives her a turn to practice her runs. Do you think he would have let her have a turn if she had asked differently? Why or why not?
- What do you think of Courtney Lance, particularly in regards to the social etiquette Bernice has learned throughout the book?
- How do you think Bernice feels about the scholarship Mr. Gregory offers to Smile Academy? Why?



- When No Boys Allowed tries to talk with Bernice, she instead heads towards Odelia. Why?
- What does Bernice learn from Odelia in chapter 31?
- How have the girls changed one another?
- What does Bernice learn about Odelia (and herself) in chapter 32?

Post-Reading Questions

Did you enjoy the book? Why or why not?

If you could read the same story from another character's point of view, who would you choose and why?

In what ways is *Beauty and Bernice* a modern-day fairy tale?

What do you think the main theme, or message, of *Beauty and Bernice* is? What are some secondary themes?

What were some of the most meaningful things you learned from this book?

Do you think two very different people can be friends? Why or why not?



For more information on Nancy's books, school and library visits, and her current schedule, please visit www.NancyViau.com.

