

Teacher's Guide for
Tracing Stars
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Indie Lee Chickory is the fish freak of Plumtown. She's an expert at making fish faces and has a pet, The Lobster Monty Cola, who lives in a salt-water pool outside her bedroom window. But while she likes fish very much, not everyone else does, which makes finding friends a little difficult. Sure there's her older sister, Bebe, but she has other friends--and also has a starring role in the upcoming town musical, which has made her pretty popular. So when Indie accidentally brings Monty to school, to disastrous results, Bebe almost dies of embarrassment and Indie is left without anyone. No friends, no sister, and no lobster.

One night, Indie wishes on her favorite star. She wants to find the lobster Monty Cola and to be a better Chickory so that Bebe will like her again. But finding Monty and being a better Chickory is an all day and all night job. During the day, Indie works at the theater, showing Bebe and her friends how much she can fit in with their crew. And at night, she searches for her lost lobster by building a fishing boat up in a tree with Owen Stone, who works in the props shop. Everything seems to be going well--until Bebe and her gang make it clear that being friends with Owen is a ticket straight to loserville.

Can Indie keep her friendship with Owen a secret?
And will doing so make her a better Chickory--or a worse

Estimated Lexile Level: 870

Common Core Grade Level Range (by Lexile and Text Complexity): Grades 4-5

Common Core Standards Addressed:

5.RL.2: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

5.RL.3: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

5.RL.6: Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

5.W.1: Write opinion pieces on topics and texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.

b. Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

c. Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., *consequently*, *specifically*)

d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented

5.W.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

c. Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.

d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

**Several Speaking and Listening Standards may also be addressed through various discussions and presentations methods employed by teachers.

***Tracing Stars* Essential Questions:**

How does Indie Lee Chickory, the narrator and main character, grow and evolve through the story? Who helps her?

How does Indie Lee Chickory's personal growth and development through the story influence other characters in the book?

Culminating Activity/Final Assessment:

There are four choices for culminating writing pieces for *Tracing Stars* that will demonstrate students' understanding of the essential questions and the CCSS Reading Standards. Educators could choose one piece to focus on as an entire class, or students could be given a choice in how they demonstrate their learning. Also, for educators looking to address more of the CCSS Speaking and Listening Standards, there are several opportunities to incorporate these into the culminating activity.

- Indie Lee Chickory growth through the story is aided by several different characters (Owen, Sloth, Bebe, The Lobster Monty Cola, etc...). Explain how Indie grows through the book. What character do you think helped her to grow the most? Support your answer with specific details from the text. (CCSS 5.W.1)
- As Indie Lee Chickory grows and develops through the story, she impacts the other characters around her (Owen, Bebe, Sloth, The Lobster Monty Cola, etc...). Explain how Indie grows through the book. What character do you think Indie impacts the most through her personal growth? Support your answer with specific details from the text. (CCSS 5.W.1)
- *Tracing Stars* ends with, "Here with Sloth, Bebe, Owen and Monty, I *am* better. With the souls who understand me. I'm the best Indie Lee Chickory I can be" (p. 233). Write the next chapter of the book: Indie returns to school in the fall and is still an outsider to other students in her class. How does she use what she has learned about herself over the summer to continue to be "the best Indie Lee Chickory [she] can be"? (CCSS 5.W.3)
- Think about a time in your life when you have grown as a person and learned to accept yourself for who you are. Who has helped you to learn this? Write your own story about personal growth and development. Be sure to include the characters who helped you become the best *you* that you can be. (CCSS 5.W.3)

Extension opportunity: Research other colors of lobsters and the frequency of their occurrence. (CCSS 5.W.7)

Reading Activities

Chapter 1-4:

Vocabulary:

Cul-de-sac

Crustacean

Outcropping

Patrol

Saunter

Questions:

1. In the first chapter, we meet Indie and Bebe. Describe each of them.
2. Think about the setting of the novel: What kind of place is Plumtown? Where do you think it is located? How do you know?
3. What is unusual about the Lobster Monty Cola?
4. Describe the sequence of events that begins when Indie discovers the Lobster Monty Cola in her backpack before recess.
5. Why does Indie describe Monty as a “bull’s-eye” at the end of Chapter 4?

Chapter 5-7

Vocabulary:

Achievement

Choreography

Constellation

Questions:

1. What does Indie wish on Pisces for? What do you think she hopes that will mean?
2. How has Indie and Bebe’s relationship changed as the girls have gotten older? Why do you think it has changed?
3. Indie flashes back on a memory of she and Bebe. How do you think the memory would be different if we heard it from Bebe’s perspective? How do you think this event affected Bebe?
4. What does Indie decide to do after seeing Bebe at the theater? How does this relate to her plan to be a better Indie Lee Chickory?
5. Two major conflicts are becoming central to the book. What are they? How do you know that these are going to be the central conflicts in the story?

Chapters 8-12

Vocabulary:

Attuned

Patent

Persuasion

Subculture

Questions:

1. Describe Sloth and Owen using at least five adjectives for each character.
2. How does Bebe react when Indie first tells her that she is going to be helping in the scene shop? How does her reaction change after dinner?
3. Who does Indie meet when she goes looking for Monty? What do they decide to do together?
4. Why do you think Bebe is so determined to get Kelsey to accept her?

Chapters 13-16

Vocabulary:

Detour

Illusion

Jargon

Questions:

1. What is *Owen's Book of Logic and Reason*? What does Owen use it for?
2. When they are in the tree house, Indie notes that Owen is "about as opposite from Bebe as you can get" (p. 97). Why does she make this observation? Compare and contrast Owen and Bebe using at least five details from the book so far.
3. Summarize the story of Indie's Pa catching the Lobster Monty Cola.
4. What is Owen's plan for recapturing Monty?

Chapters 17-19

Vocabulary:

Indicative

Salvage

Vellum

Questions:

1. What happens when Kelsey asks Indie if she knows Owen? Why do you think she responds the way she does? What do you think you would have done in the same situation?
2. How does Owen react when he sees his parents? What can you infer about his relationship with his parents from his reaction?

Chapters 20-22

Vocabulary:

Discreet

Oppose

Vintage

Questions:

1. How do Indie and Owen move the boat ends?
2. What problem is foreshadowed for Indie and Owen after they move the boat and head home? What do you think is going to happen?
3. Earlier, Indie wished on Pisces that she could be a better Indie Lee Chickory. In the flashback in Chapter 22, Bebe wishes for perfection. How are these two wishes different? How do these wishes reflect the differences that we see in Indie and Bebe's characters?

Chapters 23-25

Vocabulary:

Aviator

Satchel

Suspicious

Questions:

1. How does Sloth try to help Indie the day after moving the boat? What does this make Indie realize?
2. What do Indie and Owen overhear from Kelsey and Bebe in the costume shop? How does it make Indie feel?
3. How does Indie react when they run into Officer Gallson? Why does Bebe think she responds that way?

Chapters 26-29

Vocabulary:

Affirmative

Dilute

Incriminating

Questions:

1. Owen asks Indie about what Bebe said in the costume shop. How does Indie respond? Why does she respond that way? Do you think her reasoning for responding that way was right or not? Explain.
2. Indie and Owen manage to work together to elude Officer Gallson on the beach. Rewrite the episode of escape from Owen's perspective, starting when he turns back to get his book from the tree house.
3. What happens when Bebe and Indie arrive at the theater the next day? How does Bebe react? How does Indie react? How would you react?
4. Why does Indie say no when Bebe invites her to go look at the stars? How is this a change from the beginning of the book?

Chapters 30-33

Vocabulary:

Executable

Inform

Menacing

Questions:

1. What does Owen wish for during the meteor shower? Is his wish more similar to Indie's wish to be a better Indie Lee Chickory or to Bebe's wish for perfection? Why do you think this? How are all of their wishes similar to each other?
2. What does Indie discover about Bebe's sleeping habits when she is sneaking back into the house?
3. What happens during lunch? How does Indie react?
4. How would the lunch scene feel different to a reader if it was told from the perspective of a different character? Rewrite the scene from either the perspective of Bebe or Owen. Make sure to include their feelings and reactions.

Chapters 34-36

Vocabulary:

Collide

Tolerate

Questions:

1. Have you ever made a decision that has made you feel sick about the consequences? Describe the situation. What would you have done differently if you could do it all over again?
2. When Indie thinks about her wish to be a better Indie Lee Chickory, she decides that “Even though [she] might not be the fish freak of Plumtown anymore, [she] hate[s] [her]self a lot worse than when [she] was” (p. 199). Why?
3. What is Indie planning to do when she sees Owen at the tree house? What happens to ruin those plans?

Chapters 37-40

Vocabulary:

Eccentric

Regenerate

Unique

Questions:

1. At the end of Chapter 37, Indie makes one more wish on a shooting star. What does she wish for?
2. What does Indie do to help Owen see that he is not a disappointment or an embarrassment? What does she learn about herself because of this?
3. What changes do you see in Indie, Owen, and Bebe at the end of the book? How did they each help each other change through the story?
4. How are the two main conflicts in the novel resolved at the end of the book? How do Indie’s choices throughout the book result in these resolutions?

Erin’s extra classroom, book group and club activities:

- 1) *Garlic Ginger Mussels Recipe*
- 2) *Inventor’s Workshop*
- 3) *Book of Logic and Reason Group Stats (Team Appreciation Project)*
- 4) *Dream Tree House*

Garlic Ginger Mussels Recipe

On P. 176 Indie says, *When I get home, Mom must be thinking it's a pretty special night because she's got garlic ginger mussels in the frying pan and a baguette coming out of the oven.*

A big bowl of steaming mussels and some crusty bread is one of Indie's favorite meals! Let's make it!

Questions: Has anyone ever had mussels before? What are mussels? Can anyone name the class and phylum (A: class: Bivalvia, phylum: mollusca)? Have you cooked before? What are some basic safety tips we should discuss before we get started? Are we all familiar with the measurements in the recipe?

~~~~Chickory and Chips Famous Garlic Ginger Mussels~~~~

Ingredients:

1 tbsp of olive oil
1 pound of mussels
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 thumb sized knuckle of ginger, peeled and grated or minced
1/3 cup chicken or vegetable broth
Pat of butter
Drizzle of sesame oil
Sliced scallions to top
Baguette, homemade or store bought for dunking!

Directions:

Clean and check for dead mussels.* Place olive oil in pan and put over medium high heat. Drop in the garlic and ginger. Cook for about one minute. Add broth and mussels and allow the broth to bubble. Once broth is bubbling, turn burner to medium and cover tightly with lid. Cook for 2-3 minutes or until all of the mussels are OPEN. Take off lid, toss in one pat of butter and shake pan to mix. Take off the heat and drizzle with sesame oil. Sprinkle scallions over the top.

Parse out mussels and broth into bowls. Eating mussels can be very noisy and delicious. And messy. Splay the mussel in half until the empty side cracks off, and use the shell with the meat in it to scoop up extra broth, just like a spoon. Then suck the broth and the mussel from the shell.

* All mussels should be closed before they go into the pan. If one is open, tap it lightly on the counter. Oftentimes, it will close up when you do this. If it does not close, DISCARD that mussel. Furthermore, if after 3 minutes of cooking, there are mussels that stay closed, do not pry those open and eat them. Just discard and eat the open ones.

Inventor's Workshop

Owen mentions two great innovators in his dialogue with Indie. On P. 89 he explains: *This is a lab book. Scientists use them to document trials and errors of their experiments, only mine has that plus general observations of the universe, important facts and efficient and executable plans...Like Edison. You ever heard of him? Once he was a full time inventor, he kept a notebook as a record of his inventions and activity. He spawned great works from what seemed to be random scribbling. Da Vinci, too. You ever heard of da Vinci??*

In the footsteps of two other great innovators, Owen writes down his own ideas. He thinks of Glassesbook, Leaf Evaporator, Robot Dad. Tree Boat.

Questions: What do you know about Edison? How about da Vinci? If you were an inventor, what would you invent? How would it make your, or another person's, life easier??

Name of Inventor _____

Name of Invention _____

Official Diagram

Date: _____

Book of Logic and Reason Group Stats (Team Appreciation Project)

Throughout the book, Owen keeps his *Book of Logic and Reason*. Within this book he has “stats.” A list of attributes he observes in others. On P. 227 Indie has filled in his book and noted “stats” on Owen.

Owen
Stats:
Kind
Genius
Gentle
Caring
Determined
Nice
Great at ideas, innovations and executable plans.
Deserving
Perfect
Open to new theories
Good at Wishing
Best Friend

Assign each student a peer and have them write down that peer’s “stats.” Everyone should be able to find a few things they really appreciate in another member of the group! They will share this out loud at the end, OR the “stat sheet” can be handed in at the end of class so the teacher or group leader can review them. One alternative is to assign each student three peers (and give the student three different “stat sheets,”). This way at the end of the session, each student goes home with three sheets saying nice things about them.

Stat Sheet	
Name of Peer:	
Stats:	
1)	_____
2)	_____
3)	_____
4)	_____
5)	_____

