

A Reader's Companion to **PARKED**

By Danielle Svetcov

Dear Readers,

Are you stuck at home, right now? Me, too. I can hear the laundry spinning in the dryer and smell overripe bananas piled on the kitchen counter. I'm spending a lot of time looking out the window, too, because I'd really like to go outside and talk to people. But I'm not supposed to. Which is weird. Really weird.



I recommend staring out your front window if you haven't lately. Weird times or not, a window facing the street is usually a decent source of entertainment, especially if you're sick of screens and your eyes need to stretch a little. Look long enough and you might see a new family moving in across the street. That family might have a kid about your age who could become your new best friend. In my book, **PARKED**, that's exactly what happens – but, there's a wrinkle: the new kid across the street is moving into a van...and she doesn't much like it...and she'd rather you not look...

So, here's the basic set-up of **PARKED**:

There are two main characters, a boy and a girl, both 12. It's the summer before they start 7th grade. The girl, Jeanne Ann, has driven out to San Francisco from Chicago with her mom who has a dream of starting her own restaurant and escaping her messy past back in the Windy City (a.k.a. Chicago). The only thing Jeanne Anne and her mom know for sure is that they must live near the Golden Gate Bridge. They want to be inspired by it. So that's where they park their orange van, where land meets sea, practically in the bridge's shadow. They figure it's a temporary waystation – like camping – until Jeanne Ann's mom finds a job and an apartment, and that won't take long, they think...

Enter Cal. Cal lives in a giant house across the street from Jeanne Ann and her mom. He would like to save them from living in their van for all of 7th grade. Cal also has a little bit of a crush on Jeanne Ann. But you guys wouldn't know anything about crushes...

Cal's awkward but valiant, like a knight whose shoes are always untied. He assumes (wrongly) that everyone wants to be saved. Jeanne Ann is wise but prickly – like a goalie who'd rather play *without* the rest of the team. She wants her life to return to normal: school, books, candy from nice librarians, the freedom to bicycle anywhere. She needs a friend, not a babysitter who wants to play hero. Cal doesn't get it; he wants to make her his project. While they dance around each other, Jeanne Ann's food starts to run out and the meter maids start issuing parking tickets she and her mom can't afford. The police threaten to tow the van. If the van is towed, Jeanne Ann will have no place to live...

Even if you haven't read PARKED, I have a few questions for you:

1. Are people living in vans homeless? Why or why not? Here's another way to phrase the question above: what things in your home could you absolutely not live without?
2. If you had to be quarantined in a van instead of a house, what do you think it would feel like?
3. Jeanne Ann and her mom eat a lot of peanut butter. How many small meals can a person get out of a jar of peanut butter – if the jar contains 454 grams of peanut butter and a small meal is 66 grams?
4. In many parts of the country, it's cheaper to park a car and live in it than it is to rent or own a home. True or false: you could afford to buy the square-foot of floor you're sitting on right now, with money in your piggy bank? Research to see if you're right.
5. Cal keeps an eye on the whole neighborhood. He makes some assumptions based on what he sees, and his assumptions are not always right. How many neighbors do you know by name or nickname, right on your block? List them. Have you made assumptions about them?

If you end up reading PARKED, here are a few more questions for you:

6. On page 10, Jeanne Ann's mom says they are moving to San Francisco for "dignity." What does she mean and what prevents her from finding dignity once she arrives? What does dignity mean to you?
7. Why do you think the book is written in two, first-person perspectives?
8. On page 102, you're confronted by a string of French words. They each describe a different kitchen job. What does this scene reveal about Jeanne Ann and Jeanne Ann's mom?
9. If you were a character in PARKED, would you be on the side of the Beautification Committee or Jeanne Ann and Cal? Why?
10. Jeanne Ann regularly refers to the "no-place place." What does she mean?
11. List some of the secrets kept in this book (and who keeps them) and how they affect people and plot.
12. Cal believes he can be a hero to Jeanne Ann. What's complicating his hero's agenda?
13. Sandy made Jeanne Ann think he was just like her? Was that ok? Why?
14. Write the first chapter of the sequel...

I'm at www.daniellesvetcov.com if you'd like to reach me. Keep an eye on your neighborhood, in the meantime. Best, Danielle Svetcov