One for the Murphys

By: Lynda Mullaly Hunt
Publisher: Nancy Paulsen Books
Copyright: 2012
Genre: Realistic fiction
Setting: Present day, in Las Vegas and Connecticut

SUMMARY:
"Be Someone’s Hero". A hero in this story could be the firefighter father; the foster mother; or the social worker who removed Carley from an abusive home. Carley is devastated by her mother’s betrayal and when a beating sends Carley to a foster home, Carley builds walls to protect herself from being hurt again. Yet the love and kindness of the Murphy family and an unexpected friend teach Carley that she can let her walls down and belong somewhere. Can this new life help Carley overcome her own devastating circumstances to become someone else’s hero?

AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:
Hunt is a former teacher and writing coach. She is currently the Director of the SCBWI-NE Whispering Pines Retreat and lives with her husband, two children, a beagle and a beagle-loathing cat.

Write to the Author
“Although the author is unable to answer each letter individually, she will respond with a note to the class and send some bookmarks.” Mail letters to:
Lynda Mullaly Hunt
PO Box 360
East Glastonbury, CT 06025

One for the Murphys Awards
ABA Best New Voices Pick for Fall, 2012.
New Voices in Children’s Literature: The Tassy Walden Award

Book Trailer
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBFUPBw7KLI

Other books written by the author:
Alphabet Soup, will be released in spring, 2014.

Websites and Blogs
http://lyndamullalyhunt.wordpress.com
http://jamerichards.blogspot.com/2010/05/interview-with-nancy-paulsen-
SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:
Girls in Foster Care
* If You Find Me by Murdoch, Emily
* Pictures of Hollis Woods by Patricia Reilly
* Returnable Girl by Pamela Lowell
* Runaway by Wendelin Van Draanen
* What I Call Life by Jill Wolfson
Boys in Foster Care
* Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis
* Heat by Mike Lupica
* Hidden Talents by David Lubar

Discussion Questions:

1. How do the flashbacks to Carley’s life with her mom and Dennis contribute to the story?
2. Why do you think Carley lies to the police when they question her about her mom and Dennis (pg 56-64)?
3. How does Carley’s opinion of Mrs. Murphy change throughout the novel? (provide examples to support your opinion)
4. When Carley skips school and goes to the library, she discovers that Mrs. Murphy has checked out a book entitled *Navigating the World of Adoption*. How does this change her opinion of Mrs. Murphy and the Murphy family?
5. Toni and Carley discuss how sometimes people label you as something you aren’t (pg 98-105). In what ways is this true for characters in the novel?
6. Daniel explains to Carley that the Murphys are not perfect (pg 106-108). Does this change Carley’s opinion of the family? Why or why not?
7. Why do you think Carley does not tell Toni the truth about Mrs. Murphy when Toni sees the note in Carley’s lunch that says “Love, Mrs. M” (pg 110)?
8. Carley says throughout the novel that she wants to feel like someone cares for her for real. Does she overcome this feeling through the course of the novel?
9. How does Carley’s lessons with Daniel playing basketball (pg 140-143) provide more understanding between Carley and Daniel?
10. Mrs. Murphy tells Carley that her mother is at a physical rehab facility to recover from her injuries and she will not be going to prison. She also gives Carley the number to her mom’s room (pg 160-163). How do you think Carley feels to receive this news? Why?
11. When Carley asks Mrs. Murphy if she can call her mom, Mrs. Murphy says no (pg 171-175). Do you think Mrs. Murphy made the right decision? Why?
12. Mrs. Murphy tells Carley the truth about her mother on the night of the accident (pg 194-195). How does this change Carley's opinion of her mother?

13. How does Mrs. Murphy's truth about being in foster care herself change Carley (pg 196-200)?

14. Do you think Carley's mom is right in her decision to move back to Vegas with Carley (pg 201-204)? Why?

15. Carley says that she thinks "the apple can come from the tree, it can land on the ground and roll down a hill and end up in a totally different place" (pg 206). Do you think this is true? Why?


* **Being a Hero:** When Carley arrives, she finds that she must sleep under a sign that reads, "Be someone's hero." At first, she thinks it's a bit of cruel irony. However, the more she learns about the Murphys— and herself—her idea of what being a hero actually is changes. Just about every character in the book can be considered a hero. Use these characters to discuss how ordinary people can do extraordinary things—not only on behalf of others but for themselves as well.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

* **Trees:** References and descriptions of the trees show up from the very beginning. They are metaphors for a family's love.

Trees references from the book:

- In social worker's car—bare branches wave them by.
- Trees stand behind house like guards on watch (and house is brown like soil)
- Wreath with green leaves on the front door (in winter)
- "Be someone's hero" on wooden sign.
- When Carley is upset, she runs to an orchard. Trees as shelter.
- Mrs. Murphy makes her apple pies — fed metaphorically and literally
- Trees outside school
- Tree outside library. Family loves this tree.
- Hangs Jimmy Partin in a tree by his overalls to protect Michael Eric
- Color of the Red Sox hat that Carley is given—green like the trees. She feels likes she belongs to something special.
- Throughout the book, the trees and Carley change together—opening up and blossoming as time goes on.
- The Giving Tree

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a
specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

* Fast forward twelve years into the future. Carley is now twenty five. Write a letter from Carley to Julie Murphy explaining what Carley's life has been like since she left the Murphys. Where is she now and what is she doing? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2b Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

*One for the Murphys* was written in the first person, meaning Carley narrates the story and we see everything from her perspective. Choose a different character in the book and write a chapter for the book that shows what life with Carley is like from his/her perspective. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3a Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

6.RI.3 Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g. through examples or anecdotes) Carley says on the first page that he is unlucky. In what ways is this true and false throughout the novel?

6.RI.3 Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g. through examples or anecdotes) How do Carley's flashbacks to living with her mom and Dennis contribute to the development of the story? In what ways do these flashbacks expand on Carley's behaviors and emotions?

6.RL.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments. Mrs. Murphy says that "it takes strength to face things that scare you." (pg 208). How does Carley grow to face her strengths from the beginning of her story to the conclusion.

6.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. In the story, the Murphys read *The Giving Tree*, which is about unconditional love (pg 180-181). In what ways do Mrs. Murphy, Carley, Carley's mom, and other characters in the novel show unconditional love.

**Challenging Words**
palindrome 3
decipher 12
stellar 16
pathetic 20
psychologist 41
oblivion 47
maniacal 49
villainous 54
karma 56
impede 61
insinuate 63
atrocities 70
poignant 70
mantra 72
doles 72
superficial 74
divvy 77
pathetic 87
eulogies 94
ostracized 104
superficial 105
psychiatrists 115
humiliating 122
abyss 123
phenomenal 138
extraordinaire 140
rotisserie 155
mesmerized 172
excruciating 174
mischievous 200
resurrect 218