

YHBA Novel Resource

Julia's Kitchen

By: Brenda A. Ferber

Farrar Straus Giroux, New York

2006

About the Author

AUTHOR'S HOMEPAGE:



<http://brendaferber.com/brenda.php>

Brenda Ferber grew up in Highland Park, Illinois, the third of four children. Her dad is a doctor, and her mom is an artist. Even though her family had its share of fights, she thought it was the greatest family in the world. She always felt loved and knew she could accomplish whatever she set her mind to. Brenda's mom says she was a natural born leader, but her brother and sisters say she liked to boss people around. Guess it goes to show you how important point-of-view can be!

In elementary school Brenda discovered Judy Blume's books. She was astonished by how they seemed to be written about her! Judy captured her heart and soul in the pages of her books. Brenda decided right then to become a children's book author.

As a teen, Brenda's dreams of becoming an author drifted away. She focused her energy instead on fitting in with the crowd. Who had time to write stories when there were parties, sleepovers, homework, report cards, permanent records, SATs, and such? And an even bigger question: Who was she to think she had the talent to become an author? Her confidence had gone into hiding.

Thankfully, Brenda rediscovered her confidence and happiness at the University of Michigan, even though she kept her author dream safely filed under, "outlandish childhood aspirations that will only come true if all the planets align properly, I find a four leaf clover, and a guardian angel puts in a good word for me." Brenda loved everything about college, from the classes, to the people to the football team. She made life-long friends, and best of all, she met Alan, a cute, smart, funny guy who eventually became her husband!

Brenda started out writing stories that were accepted by *Ladybug* magazine. She also wrote several picture book manuscripts that collected 130 rejection letters over the course of three years! She immersed herself in children's fiction at her library. Wow! What amazing authors she found...Kate DiCamillo, Sharon Creech, Patricia MacLachlan, Linda Sue Park, Jack Gantos, Lois Lowry... Brenda wanted to do what they did. She wanted to write novels that could touch a child's heart and soul. Eventually she found the courage to try.

Brenda worked on JULIA'S KITCHEN for a year and a half while her kids were in school. She had no idea if anyone outside of her family or her critique group would like it, but she submitted it to the Sydney Taylor Manuscript Competition, and it won! And then, joy of joys, Farrar Straus & Giroux decided to publish it! **JULIA'S KITCHEN** received rave reviews, and Brenda soon sold her next novel, **JEMMA HARTMAN, CAMPER EXTRAORDINAIRE** (due out in April, 2009) and a picture book, **THE YUCKIEST, STINKIEST, BEST VALENTINE'S DAY EVER** (to be published by Harcourt in 2011).



Brenda doesn't know much about planets, clovers, or guardian angels, but she feels like the luckiest person in the world. She has a healthy, loving family, and she's made her childhood dream come true. What more could a person want?

PUBLISHED WORK:

Jemma Hartman, Camper Extraordinaire, Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2009

Julia's Kitchen, Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2006

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS:

Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year

Children's Crown Collection (National Christian Schools Association)

Sydney Taylor Award

VOYA Top Shelf Fiction for Middle School Readers

Alabama Children's Choice Book Award Master List

Indiana Young Hoosier Award Master List

Iowa Children's Choice Award Master List

Kansas William Allen White Award Master List

Young Hoosier Book Award, 2009-2010, 4-6 Nominee

Annotation

In this story, eleven-year-old Cara Segel struggles to find a way to deal with her emotions and to reach out to her grieving father when her mother and younger sister are killed in a house fire. The fire takes place while Cara is out of the house staying at a friend's house. Cara was close to her mother and often helped her with her catering business, Julia's Kitchen. Cara regularly assisted with baking her mother's famous cookies.

After her mother's death, Cara questions her father as to why he was the only survivor. She also questions God's role in her life. Along the way, her father refuses to talk to Cara about the tragedy and her best friend, Marlee, becomes tired of hearing about Cara's struggles. Cara finally comes to realize, she would have to rely on herself in order to heal and move on. She does so in continuing her mother's business. As she does this, her father and best friend, Marlee, come to support her with the business.

This book was an interesting and easy read. The author does a good job with her descriptiveness of characters and events. Great appreciation is given for the understanding of the Jewish terms. The glossary listing in the back of the book makes this easier. There is a concern the book won't initially be of interest to young readers due to the depressed nature of it. The issue of death and loss is not a common interest in young intermediate readers and not a subject of choice. Julia's Kitchen is a good book to use in lessons dealing with grief and the Jewish faith. It was an enjoyable and easy read.

Genre

Realistic Fiction

Point of View

The person telling the story is Cara. The story is in first person.

Theme

There are many themes in this novel: Grief, Jewish Life, Cookery, and Relationships. The overall theme is learning to deal with grief. The book title *Julian's Kitchen* is a clever name. To me it describes the conflict resolution. By Cara continuing her mother's business, Julia's Kitchen, she is able to heal from the tragedy of her mother's death.

Conflict

There are many conflicts in this novel: Cara vs. her father, Cara vs. her best friend, Marlee, and Cara vs. God. The overall conflict is the one Cara has with herself in trying to learn to heal and move on from a tragedy that has hit her family.

Conflict Resolution

The conflict is resolved when Cara finally realizes she will have to rely on herself in order to heal and move on. She does so in continuing her mother's business and by giving to charity.

Characters

Cara Segel – Main character, 11 years old, self-sufficient, eager

Dad – Cara's father, depressed

Marlee – 11 years old, Cara's best friend, energetic, supportive

Mom/Julia – Cara's mother, kind, baker

Janie – Cara's little sister, athletic, tom-boy

Mrs. Rosen – Marlee's mother, helpful

Nana and Papa – Cara's father's parents who live in Chicago

Bubbe and Zayde – Cara's mother's parents who live in Florida, loving, free-spirit

Roz Tallman – Julia's best friend from California, eccentric

Justin Wittenberg – Janie's best friend, athletic

Mr. Witteberg – Justin's dad

Max – Marlee's older brother, immature

Mrs. Block – School social worker, kind, understanding

Mr. Temly – Cara's teacher

Miss Woloshin – Janie's teacher

Mr. Snyder – Grocery store clerk, helpful

Rabbi Newlin – Segel's family rabbi

Renee – Woman who ordered the first basket of cookies from Cara

Chief Peterson – Fire Department chief

Thunder – Stray cat that looks like Sport, the family cat that died in the house fire

Setting

Modern day Chicago area

Interest level and reading level

IL – 10 years and up

RL – 3.9

Booktalk

What if you woke up one morning to what you think to be an ordinary day and then you discover your house caught on fire and your mother and little sister had died? What if you were only 11 years old when this happened? Instead of planning for a day of scrapbooking with her best friend, Cara Segal is taken to her grandparent's house for mourning. Join her as she faces this devastation. Can she ever get her father to tell her the truth about the night of the house fire and about how he escaped without Cara's mother and sister? Will Cara and her father ever be close? Marlee, Cara's best friend, seems to have no more sympathy for Cara. Will she lose her best friend too? Cara questions her religious beliefs now. Will her faith be restored? See how Cara learns to deal with a terrible tragedy.

Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

Pre-reading: Do you ever worry about things that may or may not happen? How do you deal with the worry; pray, talk to a friend or family member, stay busy, nothing?

Post-reading: What do you think Cara expects to see at the hospital?

Chapter 2

Pre-reading: Traditions are beliefs or customs taught by one generation to the next. What kind of traditions does your family practice?

Post-reading: During Shiva what are some traditions Jewish families do?

Chapter 3

Pre-reading: If your house was to burn down and there was one thing that could be saved, what would it be?

Post-reading: Grief, which can be defined as a great sadness or deep sorrow, is very difficult to overcome. After reading the first chapters, what do you think is the impact of the fire on Cara and her father?

Chapter 4

Pre-reading: When Shiva ends, what do you think the family will do?

Post-reading: If you were Cara would you want to go back to the burnt house? Do you think she really sees a cat or is it Storm's ghost?

Chapter 5

Pre-reading: How do you think Cara will do when she returns to school?

Post-reading: Do you think Marlee had a feeling Cara would try and skip school? Why did she pick her up? How do you think Cara feels about getting Janie's things from her teacher?

Chapter 6

Pre-reading: In this chapter, do you think Cara will find out what happens the night of the fire from her father?

Post-reading: What are some things Cara does to try to help her relationship with her dad? What is the name of the market Cara frequents for groceries? What does Cara miss about Shabbat dinners?

Chapter 7

Pre-reading: Do you think Cara will want to bake something for the Valentine's Day bake sale with Marlee? Why or why not?

Post-reading: At this point, Cara and her father have a struggling relationship. Why do you think Cara wants to call her dad when she gets burned?

Chapter 8

Pre-reading: In her grief, Cara questions the role of God in her life. Using some of Cara's own questions (such as the ones on p. 97), discuss her feelings toward God in the aftermath of the fire.

Post-reading: Cara cannot seem to alleviate her grief. As a result, her friendship with Marlee becomes strained. Is there anything that the girls could have done earlier to avoid the temporary break in their friendship?

Chapter 9

Pre-reading: Do you think it was a good idea for Cara to pretend she was her Mother when a call comes in for a cookie basket? Do you think she'll fill the order?

Post-reading: Why does Cara think she needs to keep the Julia's Kitchen project hidden from her dad?

Chapter 10

Pre-reading: Do you think Cara is doing the right thing by continuing with filling the basket order?

Post-reading: How do you think she feels about Roz's gift?

Chapter 11

Pre-reading: Do you think Cara's dad will find out about the business Cara is doing? How do you think he will react? Do you think he'll make her quit the business?

Post-reading: Were you correct in Cara's dad's reaction to the business? Do you think Cara will feel better now she knows what happened in the fire?

Chapter 12

Pre-reading: What do you think Cara will do with the money she has saved from the business? Do you think she'll ever eat dessert again?

Post-reading: How do you feel about what Cara did with her saved money? Would you have looked in the burnt house? Do you think Cara's dad will be happy that Cara fixed challah for Shabbat?

Language/Vocabulary

Synagogue pg 11: Jewish place of worship

Keriah pg 18: the act of ripping a garment or back ribbon as a sign of grief

Eulogy pg 21: a speech or writing in praise of a person or thing, especially one recently deceased or retired

Shiva pg 23: seven day mourning period when friends and family visit and comfort mourners

Kugel pg 25: casserole dish or baked dessert

Challah pg 38: braided bread eaten on Shabbat and other holidays

Shabbat pg 38: Jewish Sabbath, or day of rest and worship

Queasy pg 49: nauseated: feeling ill in the stomach, as if on the point of vomiting

Bat Mitzvah pg 52: at age 12, Jewish girls are considered mature enough to be responsible for fulfilling religious law

Encounter pg 57: come up against something

Clenching pg 63: contract: to contract, or cause a muscle to contract, suddenly, often as a result of sudden tension or emotion

Exasperated pg 67: worsen: to make an unpleasant condition or feeling worse

Mezuzah pg 74: Case affixed to the right side of the doorways of Jewish homes

Bar Mitzvah pg 80: at age 13, Jewish boys are considered mature enough to be responsible for fulfilling religious law

Kiddush pg 95: prayer said over a cup of wine or grape juice to sanctify Shabbat and other holidays

Indiana Academic Standards

English/Language Arts - 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7; 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7

Science – 3.1, 3.5, 3.6, 4.1, 4.5, 4.6, 5.1, 5.5, 5.6; 6.1, 6.5, 6.6

Math – 3.2, 3.5, 3.6, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7; 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.5, 6.7

Social Studies – 3.1, 3.3; 4.1, 4.3; 5.1, 5.3; 6.1, 6.3

Anticipation Statements

BEFORE <u>Agree</u>	BEFORE <u>Disagree</u>	Julia's Kitchen By: Brenda A. Ferber	AFTER <u>Agree</u>	AFTER <u>Disagree</u>
		The Jewish community practices Shiva when a family member dies.		
		It helps to talk to a grown up when you're grieving over a death of a family member.		
		It is sometimes okay to hide things from your parents as long as the thing you're hiding is not harmful to yourself or others.		
		Worrying about things that may or may not happen is a good use of time.		
		It is ok to go back into a burning building as long as you are trying to save someone or a pet.		
		One way to spend quality time with your mother/grandmother/sister is to bake with her.		

Read-Aloud

Chapter 1, page 4 (middle of page at "The phone rang..." and page 5 – Cara has spent the night with her best friend, Marlee. It is the next morning and they are sitting at the kitchen table waiting for Marlee's mother to finish making their pancakes. As breakfast is just getting started, the telephone rings. It's when Cara gets the news that something awful has happened, but she's not quite sure how awful.

This passage was chosen because it is the very beginning of the story and it starts off with a bang. Right away the reader is introduced to the tragedy that surrounds this story. You can almost feel Cara's anxiety as you read this passage.

Chapter 8, page 94 – Cara and Marlee get into a fight which sends them into days without speaking to one another. Marlee admits that she is tired of Cara's sulking and not doing anything to move on from the tragedy. Cara's feelings are hurt and she feels betrayed by her friend for not continuing to support her during these hard times.

This passage was chosen because everyone enjoys a good fight. It's humorous in its own way and it is easy to side with each of the young girls.

Read-Alike

If you liked *Julia's Kitchen*, you may also like...

Umbrella Summer by Lisa Graff: After her brother Jared dies, ten-year-old Annie worries about the hidden dangers of everything, from bug bites to bicycle riding, until she is befriended by a new neighbor who is grieving her own loss.

Fair Has Nothing To Do With It by Cynthia Cotton: When Michael's beloved grandfather dies, he has a hard time admitting how much it hurts and allowing himself to trust anyone again.

The Reminder by Ronee Mychal: A teenaged girl who hears her dead mother's voice makes a startling discovery after breaking into her father's industrial robotics lab and finding his latest secret project: a lifelike replica of her mother's head that looks, talks, moves, and even smiles just like her mother.

The Giant by Claire Ewart: As the seasons pass on the family farm after her mother's death, a young girl searches for the giant that her mother said would look after her.

Her Mother's Face by Roddy Doyle: Siobhán and her father continue to feel sad in the years following the death of Siobhán's mother, until Siobhán follows the advice of a mysterious woman.

While You Were Out by Judith Irvin Kuns: Returning to school after the summer in which her best friend Tim died of cancer, eleven-year-old Penelope finds her life complicated by the fact that her father has become the school janitor.

Across the Curriculum

SCIENCE & MATH

Activity:

In groups, students will make cookies. Since there are no ovens available in most classrooms, the recipes will be for “no bake” cookies/treats. The idea is to work well as a team and to have fun.

Supplies:

Recipes for “no bake” cookies – see attached recipes

Ingredients

Baking supplies/tools

Indiana Academic Standards:

Science – 3.1, 3.5, 3.6; 4.1, 4.5, 4.6; 5.1, 5.5, 5.6; 6.1, 6.5, 6.5

English/Language Arts – 3.1, 3.2; 4.1, 4.2; 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

Math -3.2, 3.5, 3.6; 4.2, 4.5, 4.6; 5.2, 5.5, 5.6, 6.2, 6.5, 6.6

Across the Curriculum (cont.)

SOCIAL STUDIES

Activity: In pairs, students will look up inspirational quotes by famous people and then write an inspirational quote.

Supplies:

Pen/pencil

Paper

Computers and web access

Books about famous people

Indiana Academic Standards

English/Language Arts - 3.1, 3.2; 4.1, 4.2; 5.1, 5.2; 6.1, 6.2

Social Studies – 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

Book Activities

Activity #1 – Customs: Students will study customs of various cultures and religions.

Indiana Academic Standards:

English/Lang. Arts: 3.1, 3.2, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7; 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7; 5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7; 6.1, 6.2, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7

Social Studies: 3.1, 3.3; 4.1, 4.3; 5.1, 5.3; 6.1, 6.3

Procedures:

- 1) Students will be placed in pairs or groups of three.
- 2) From the following list, each group of students will choose a group to study:
Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Jewish religion, Native American culture, Mexican culture, Japanese culture, Chinese culture, French culture, Indian culture
- 3) Students will then research their various areas to learn about different customs each group practices.
- 4) Students will orally present to the class the various beliefs and customs.
- 5) Students will be asked what the most interesting custom they found.
- 6) Students will need to include the region of the world these customs are practiced.

Evaluation:

- 1) Students must list at least 5 customs.
- 2) Each student of the group, must equally report about the customs.
- 3) The oral report cannot be simply reading the custom, but including some interesting facts/activities practiced with each custom.
- 4) Students will show on a map or tell the class in what area of the world do these customs take place.

Book Activities (cont.)

Activity #2 – Writing a letter: Students will write a letter to a friend who just lost a parent or sibling.

Indiana Academic Standards:

English/Language Arts: 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7; 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7; 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7

Procedures:

- 1) Individually, students will be asked to write a letter to a friend who has just lost a family member.
- 2) The letter will be to console, offer words of encouragement and support.
- 3) The letter must be hand-written and at least one page.
- 4) Students are encouraged to be creative.
- 5) Students will be asked to share their letters if they choose to do so, by reading aloud to the class.

Evaluation:

- 1) Students will be evaluated on the use of creative words and how consoling they are to their friend.
- 2) Work must be free from grammatical and spelling errors.
- 3) Letter must be neatly hand-written.

Bibliography

All Recipes

<http://allrecipes.com/>

Author's website – Brenda A. Ferber

<http://brendaferber.com/brenda.php>

Booktalks

<http://www.booktalks.org/>

Booktalks Quick and Simple

<http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/>

Bound to Stay Bound

<http://www.btsb.com/index.php>

Ferber, Brenda A. Julia's Kitchen. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2006

Indiana Academic Standards

<http://dc.doe.in.gov/Standards/AcademicStandards/index.shtml>

Indianapolis Marion County Public Library

<http://www.imcpl.org/>

L530 Course Website

<http://www.lesliepreddy.com/YHBA/yhba%20index.htm>

Literature Genre List

<http://www.todaysteacher.com/LiteratureGenreList.htm>

Online Writing Lab

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_evalsource4.html

Publisher's website – Farrar Straus Giroux

<http://us.macmillan.com/FSG.aspx>

Recipe #1 for Across the Curriculum Activity #1

Pudding No-Bake Oatmeal Cookies



Rated: ★★★★★

Submitted By: TIGGER68

Prep Time: 20 Minutes

Cook Time: 10 Minutes

Ready In: 30 Minutes

Servings: 24

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups white sugar

3/4 cup butter

1/2 (12 ounce) can evaporated milk

1 (3.4 ounce) package instant butterscotch pudding mix

3 1/2 cups quick-cooking oats

DIRECTIONS:

1. In 3 quart microwaveable bowl, combine the sugar, butter and evaporated milk. Cook on high power for 2 to 5 minutes, stirring occasionally until the mixture comes to a rapid boil. Allow the mixture to boil undisturbed for 20 to 30 seconds. Remove from heat and stir in the instant pudding and oatmeal. Spoon onto waxed paper lined cookie sheets. Allow to sit at least 15 minutes or until firm.

Recipe #2 for Across the Curriculum Activity #1

No Bake Peanut Butter Cookies II



Rated: ★★★★★

Submitted By: Karla

Photo By: ~TxCin~ILove2Ck

Servings: 48

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup white sugar

1 cup white corn syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 cups peanut butter

4 1/2 cups crisp rice cereal

DIRECTIONS:

1. Cook over medium heat the white sugar and the corn syrup for one minute. Remove from heat and add the vanilla, peanut butter and crispy rice cereal.
2. Drop by teaspoons onto wax paper. The cookies will be slightly soft when done.

Recipe #3 for Across the Curriculum Activity #1

No-Bake Chocolate Cookies



Rated: ★★★★★

Submitted By: Carol Brandon

Prep Time: 10 Minutes

Ready In: 20 Minutes

Cook Time: 10 Minutes

Servings: 36

INGREDIENTS:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2 cups sugar | 1 cup flaked coconut |
| 1/2 cup fat-free milk | 6 tablespoons baking cocoa |
| 1/2 cup butter or stick margarine | 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract |
| 3 cups quick-cooking oats | |

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large saucepan, combine the sugar, milk and butter; bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat.
2. Stir in the oats, coconut, cocoa and vanilla. Working quickly, drop by rounded tablespoonfuls onto waxed paper. Let stand until set, about 1 hour.