

## Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Absolutely Normal Chaos* by Sharon Creech.

1. Briefly explain why Mary Lou is keeping a summer journal. How does she begin her journal?
2. Name two words Mary Lou is told she uses too often. How does she find new words to use to replace these old words?
3. What does Mary Lou find while snooping in Carl Ray's room? Whose initials are on one of these items?
4. Why do the snapping turtles in the swimming hole remind Mary Lou of Mr. Furtz?
5. What does GGP stand for? How does Mary Lou feel when she learns Beth Ann is "under consideration" for membership in this club?
6. What does Carl Ray receive from Mr. Furtz? Why is Carl Ray reluctant to tell his family in West Virginia about this gift?
7. Imagine you are a member of the Finney household and Carl Ray has just come to stay. What would you do or say to Carl Ray to make him feel welcome in your home?
8. In her July 2<sup>nd</sup> journal entry, Mary Lou writes, "My muse has abandoned me." What do you think she means by this? Be sure to include what you learned about muses on page 61 in your answer.
9. Which character in the story would you most like to have as a friend? Explain your choice using examples from the text in your answer.
10. Choose one character from the story you just read and one character from the *Odyssey*. What do the characters you have chosen have in common? How are they different?
11. Reread Mary Lou's description on page 119 of her classroom discussion about the meaning of the Robert Frost poem. Based on the information in Mary Lou's journal entry, what do you think the woods in the poem represent?
12. Imagine you are Mary Lou and your sister Maggie has just told you something negative about Beth Ann's boyfriend, Derek. What would you do with this information? Would you tell Beth Ann? What would you say to Maggie?

13. How does Mary Lou feel about Carl Ray when he first comes to Ohio? How do her feelings change after her trip to West Virginia?
14. Did you enjoy Mary Lou's journal entries about the *Odyssey*? Why or why not? Why do you think the author chose to include this book in her story? Be specific, using evidence from the text to support your argument.
15. At the end of the story, Carl Ray decides to return to West Virginia. Do you support this decision? What decision would you have made? Be sure to discuss Mr. Furtz's gift to Carl Ray in your answer.

*Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-9; Analysis: 10-11; Synthesis: 12-13; Evaluation: 14-15*

### **Activities**

1. Imagine you are Mary Lou Finney and one year has passed since the end of the story. Create a new entry for your journal. What is happening in your life? Have you heard from Carl Ray? Is Alex still calling you? What book are you reading now?
2. Reread Mary Lou's list of characters from the *Odyssey* on page 63 and choose one character from the list. Use reference books to learn more about the character you have chosen. Write a short biography of this character including one important thing he or she is said to have done in Greek mythology.
3. Create a collage of important objects from Mary Lou's diary. Cut out images from magazines that remind you of these objects and arrange them with glue on a piece of paper. Leave space near each image to briefly explain why the object shown is important in the story.

**Author's Web Site:** [www.sharoncreech.com](http://www.sharoncreech.com)

### **Other Books by This Author:**

*Heartbeat*, Joanna Cotler, 2004  
*Love That Dog*, HarperTrophy, 2003  
*Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*, Joanna Cotler, 2003  
*Ruby Holler*, Harper Trophy, 2003  
*The Wanderer*, Harper Trophy, 2002  
*Bloomability*, Harper Trophy, 1999  
*Chasing Redbird*, Harper Trophy, 1998  
*Pleasing the Ghost*, Harper Trophy, 1997

