

# Eva's Journey Eva's Holiday Leave it to Eva

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Judi Curtin

## Teaching Guide

By Peter Heaney

### RATIONALE & THEMES

In this series, Judi Curtin has created a contemporary heroine; Eva is feisty, fearless, assertive and capable of finding a solution for every challenge that she encounters.

The three books in the series chart the steepest of learning curves for Eva as she watches her privileged lifestyle disintegrate; the collapse of her father's business forces her family to relocate, Eva to change schools and her lifestyle to change beyond recognition.

When, on impulse, she seeks advice from a dubious fortune teller she's told to 'help others' as a means of helping herself; this points her on the road of seeking causes to champion and people to support.

Initially, her motives are less than philanthropic, but the adjustments she is forced to make and the situations she attempts to rescue, help her to appreciate the selfishness and privilege of the person she once was as, gradually, she comes to enjoy the altruism of helping for its own sake.

Through it all she perseveres with difficult friendships that eventually bring rewards she could never have imagined. She discovers within herself skills, capability and attitude that amaze everyone.

The themes include:

- Friendship
- Loss and adjustment
- Disappointment
- Isolation
- Acceptance
- Positive attitudes
- Coping with change
- Prejudice

### SUMMARIES

Each of the books involves Eva in a voyage of discovery where she is forced to challenge her own attitude to people and situations that previously she would have either ignored or dismissed.

As each challenge unfolds Eva begins to value the substance of her friendships and appreciate that true value and commitment is never superficial.

### Eva's Journey

#### SUMMARY

The first book in the new series introduces Eva – indulged and dismissive of everything outside her privileged environment.

When her father's business collapses as a casualty of the recession, Eva watches in disbelief as her cosy world disintegrates.

The family are forced to move house; Eva transfers from her elite fee paying school and her former lifestyle is now beyond her reach.

Except for Victoria; all her friends reveal themselves as the 'fair weather' type and she has to begin the process of adjusting to a life without the privilege that money buys.

By chance, Eva encounters Madame Margarita, an unlikely wheelchair-bound fortune teller, who predicts that the elusive happiness she seeks to recapture can now only be obtained through helping others. So Eva pursues every opportunity to help others, often with unexpected results.

Her first attempt at helping in her new school causes some embarrassment when she tries to help Ella deal with a bullying teacher, only to discover that the teacher is Ella's dad and his behaviour is really a joke between them.

However, with Dawn, the classroom assistant and Dawn's mother, Eva gets a great result, when, without them realising, she helps them negotiate a life-changing domestic arrangement that leaves them both ecstatic.

But despite her best efforts, life remains the same for Eva and Madame Margarita's mantra 'Help others' keeps echoing in her head.

In school Eva decides to sit with Ruby for the day and is puzzled by her reluctance to engage in any conversation. The next Saturday when Eva goes to the market to buy fruit, she sees Ruby struggling to man a vegetable stall single-handed and decides to help out. Ruby explains that her mum is ill and unable to help so Eva begins to come to the market each Saturday to help: her wit and humour with the customers ensure that everyone is entertained.

Helping out at the market on Saturdays becomes a routine for Eva and when she tries to explain this to Victoria, she realises herself that her motives have now become more generous.

When Ruby invites Eva to come home with her after they have closed the stall, Eva is staggered to discover that Ruby's mum is Madame Margarita.

The initial embarrassment and recriminations collapse in laughter as Ruby's mum thanks Eva for all her help.

Recounting her adventure at home, Eva's dad immediately volunteers to install a surplus stair lift for Ruby's mum.

When Ruby shows her gratitude to Eva for her help by giving her a bracelet that her mum has made Eva has a brainwave.

Persuading Ruby to commission ten more bracelets from her mum, Eva displays them on the stall and soon has them all

sold, presenting the money to a shocked Ruby and so demonstrating a new revenue stream for the stall.

This enterprise quickly develops to the point where Ruby's mum can clear her debt and employ someone to help run the stall.

Ruby will still do the Saturday shift and when Eva makes it clear that she still wants to help out, they both insist on paying her.

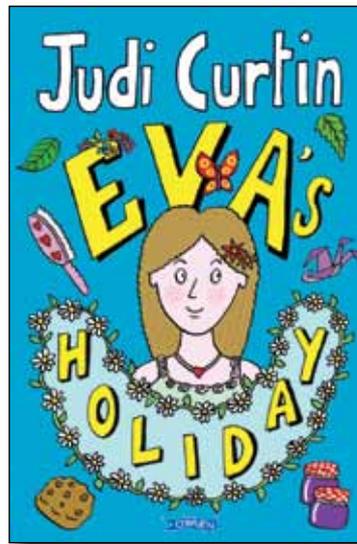
It has been a roller coaster year for Eva, but she has managed it; she discovers in the process that you don't have to be a princess to find happiness.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

Each discussion topic has a page number where you can read a little prompt to help you. Read the page and discuss the question. Try to make your own opinion clear to others and to yourself. Listen to what others say and decide if you then want to change your opinion in any way.

- Pages 23, 29, 42 Why do adults keep bad news from children? Is it right to do this? How can bad news be told to a child?
- Page 60. Why do you think that doing something is better than doing nothing to make you feel better?
- Page 69. Why do people believe in fortune tellers?
- What does this say about them? What do you think?
- Page 154. Should we help when we get the chance?
- What are the benefits? Can you think of any disadvantages?
- Page 157. Mamie was a pest, but was Eva justified in cheating? Do you think it is ever right to cheat?

## Eva's Holiday



### SUMMARY

Eva is dismayed to hear her family's summer holiday plans, and while Ella and Ruby try to find a bright side to the arrangements, they all realise that finding fun and entertainment in a rundown cottage in rural Ireland with only her parents and Joey, the eight-year-old son of the woman who has lent them the cottage, for company will be a challenge.

When they arrive, Eva's worst fears are confirmed and a petulant outburst sees her confined to bed early on the first day. An inauspicious start!

Next morning, Kate from the neighbouring cottage presents herself on the doorstep offering friendship.

She is the very antithesis of Eva in dress and manner. A very reluctant Eva is 'shooed' out of the door by her dad into Kate's company to begin whatever adventure the summer presents.

As Eva had feared, the place is buzzing with inactivity and Kate seems to have an aversion to anything that might be remotely 'cool'.

When they meet two girls from Kate's school, Eva insists on an introduction. Their rude rebuff annoys Eva and when she attempts a second introduction next day by herself, she realises the full extent of their mean bullying and determines to defend Kate.

Eva's mum invites Kate for lunch and between the awkward silences, Kate recalls the tragedy that surrounds her missing parents and explains why she lives alone with her gran.

Afterwards, Kate takes Eva to the 'Island of Dreams' – the special place that she

had shared with her dad – and introduces her to 'Jeremy', her special tree. However when Victoria makes a visit, Eva is determined not to introduce Kate to her and then feels guilty for asking Kate to stay away during Victoria's visit.

As the weeks pass, Eva and Kate's friendship develops and Eva begins to accept Kate's unusual ways and becomes accustomed to the rural routines

Their peace is shattered when they discover that a developer has bought the 'Island of Dreams' and Jeremy is to be chopped down to make way for a holiday home.

Eva rises to the challenge as she and Kate rally the village to save Jeremy from the chainsaw.

Everyone wanted to help, including Lily, who had been so rude to them earlier. Saving Jeremy was now a cause that bound both locals and tourists; even Ruby and her mum lent their support, travelling especially to help.

Standing circling Jeremy; hands locked, they finally confront the developer and his reaction to Eva's determination and eloquence stuns them. He acquiesces and Jeremy is saved.

Just when everything seems to have resolved itself; Eva is shocked by Kate's revelation that she had lied about her father's death; their friendship is in danger of fragmenting.

Eva feels betrayed and upset at Kate's mendacity, refusing to either meet or speak to her. However when Martha, Kate's granny, intervenes, Eva agrees to speak to Kate. As she listens, she begins to see Kate as Kate sees herself and with hugs and tears forgives her.

To finish off the summer, the girls, now counting Lily as a friend, embark on one last adventure: making and selling jam and then using the profits to upgrade Kate's wardrobe status to 'cool' before life for Eva returns to normal at home in the city.

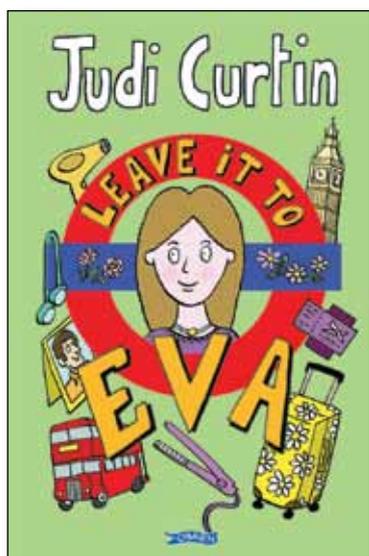
### DISCUSSION POINTS

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- Page 25. Disappointment can provoke rudeness. Is this is a good way to respond? In what other ways can you

- deal with disappointment?
- Page 152. Is life really not fair? Can it be made fairer? How? Is life unfair or is it we who are not fair to each other?
  - Pages 167-169. Why do you think that Kate was so forgiving? What effects can forgiving have on people who have been hurt?
  - Page 190. Why do you think that people feel good about themselves if they are looking good? Is it important to look good to feel good?
  - Page 237. Why do you think that Eva was SO upset when Kate told her about the lie?

## Leave it to Eva



### SUMMARY

Eva is planning to return to Seagrove for the summer and is looking forward to meeting Kate again.

Her excitement escalates when Ruby asks her to accompany her to London, where she has a swimming trial. Their parents have made the arrangements and the girls will stay with Ruby's sister Jenny who lives in London.

Eva's delight is infectious and bubbles over as she reaches the holiday cottage and goes off in search of Kate.

Finding Martha's house deserted and no sign of Kate, Eva meets Lily who confirms her growing unease; she explains that though she enjoyed a certain celebrity status after the previous summer's adventure, in the last few weeks, Kate had become withdrawn again and now she and Martha had disappeared.

Eva decides to try Martha's cottage again and when a hand pulls her into the darkened kitchen she learns that Martha is ill in hospital and because there is no one

to look after her Kate has been living alone in the house with the curtains drawn in order to avoid detection.

Kate is determined to remain independent; she fears that when the social workers discover that she is living alone, they will force her into foster care so she secures a reluctant promise from Eva to keep the secret.

Eva's holiday now assumes a bizarre routine: in the mornings, sitting in a darkened house with Kate and in the afternoon hanging out in the sunshine with Lily.

The stress for Eva to keep everything secret is almost unbearable and when, inevitably, Kate's circumstance is discovered, initially Eva is blamed for the betrayal.

The social worker is persuaded that Kate can stay with Eva's family for the rest of the summer until a suitable foster family is found; Eva and Kate adjust to their new circumstance.

In the confusion, Eva's trip to London has been forgotten. However, now that the time has arrived, Eva's feelings are confused: her friend Kate seems sad beyond help at the thought of being fostered and Eva feels guilty because she is looking forward to the trip.

Before she sets off, Eva arranges a secret trip to Martha's now deserted house in search of something. She has a plan!

London is exciting and each day Ruby seems to do well in the trials. Eva keeps herself busy with her own plan, but is unable to forget Ruby's mum's final words to her to make sure that Ruby does her best.

Eva agrees to accompany Ruby for the final swim trial and is horrified to watch her swim so badly.

In the changing room afterwards, Eva realises the significance of the advice she was given. Ruby had deliberately swum badly as she believed that her disabled mum would be unable to cope if she, Ruby, won the scholarship and had to leave home to live in London.

Eva manages to convince Ruby that her mum expects her to do her best and then persuades Mrs Armitage, the trial organiser, to give Ruby another chance.

When she enters the water for a second time, there is no mistaking Ruby's talent and the cheers from the poolside echo to the rafters.

Ruby is ecstatic when she learns that she

has won the scholarship. They have one last day in London and Eva reveals the purpose of her clandestine visits to the library. She is trying to trace Kate's dad who lives in London, to ask his help to look after Kate until Martha recovers.

With Ruby's sister Jenny taking charge, they locate him only to discover that he has remarried and now has a second family.

Eva is incensed at what she sees as desertion of Kate and vents her feelings to Kate's father, Patrick, before they return to Ireland.

Back home, Kate is completely unaware of Eva's attempt to find her father and is persuaded to give her foster family, the Dalys, a trial.

The last few days of the summer slip quietly by for Eva: Kate has settled comfortably with the Dalys and when she returns to say goodbye to Eva a surprise awaits them both.

Patrick, Kate's dad, appears. He has decided to move his family back from London to support Kate and Martha.

Eva realises that her efforts has produced a result and the story will have a happy ending after all.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

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- Page 6. Kate finds it difficult to accept help. Why do you think that some people are suspicious of accepting help?
- Pages 16 & 20. Eva reluctantly agrees to keep Kate's secret. Do you think this is wise? How would you advise her?
- Page 29. Why did Kate keep the picture of her parents if it upset her so much? What does this say about her?
- Page 40. Eva is sad to leave, but happy at the prospect of getting away. How is it possible to be sad and happy at the same time?
- Pages 63 & 64. Was Patrick entitled to make a new life for himself in London? Are there ties that should never be broken?