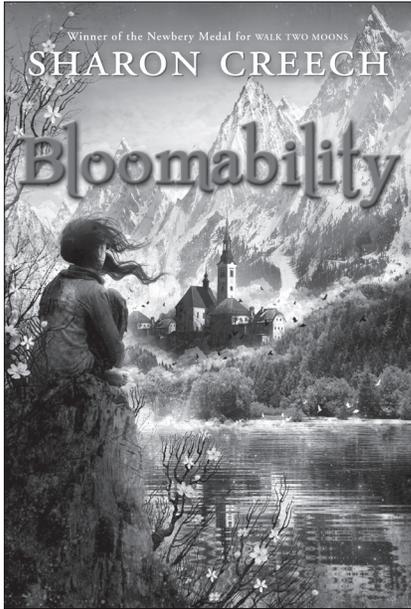


BLOOMABILITY



Setting the Scene

Domenica Santolina Doone, also known as Dinnie, is used to traveling from state to state every time her father finds a new “opportunity.” But when she has an opportunity of her own—to go with her aunt and uncle to an American school in the Italian-speaking town of Lugano, Switzerland—she’s not very happy about it. Once in Lugano, Dinnie struggles with homesickness, fears being forgotten by her family, and questions who she really is. But with the help of her new international friends, Dinnie comes to love her beautiful surroundings and focus on the positive, learning to embrace this new opportunity.

Before Reading

Have students examine the rendering of Domenica’s map of Lugano in the front of the book. What hints does the map offer about what will follow? Next, draw their attention to the quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Nature” that precedes the Contents page: “I become a transparent eyeball.” Ask students to think about what this quote might mean.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Dinnie refer to her time with her parents as her “first life” and her time in Switzerland as her “second life”? If her “third life” begins at the end of the book, how do you think it would differ from the first two?
2. Dinnie observes that both Lila and Guthrie have very strong personalities, and worries about whether she is as interesting as they are. Toward the end of the book, she is surprised when Guthrie calls her interesting. Why does he think this? Do you think Dinnie is interesting? Why or why not?
3. What appeals to Dinnie about struggling? How does she use being “full of struggles” to help her deal with her new life in Switzerland (p. 107)?
4. To Dinnie, Switzerland is a strange and unfamiliar place that grows to feel comfortable. What similarities does she discover between Switzerland and her various homes in America? What differences? How do both the similarities and differences help Dinnie appreciate her experiences there?
5. After Guthrie is rescued from the avalanche, Dinnie has a dream that her bubble is gone (pp. 228–29). What does that signify to Dinnie? How do the preceding events lead up to this revelation?
6. Explain the contrasting perspectives of Lila and Guthrie, taking into consideration Guthrie’s story of the two prisoners. How does Dinnie’s personality complement theirs?
7. Discuss Uncle Max’s graduation speech about variety (p. 250). How do variety and acceptance at the international school affect Dinnie? How is it different from her previous experiences? Consider Stella’s advice on moving to a new place and fitting in, such as “expect the worst” and “dress plain the first day” (p. 78). How does it make Dinnie feel about herself?
8. Dinnie observes that “for all our differences in nationality, in language, in culture, and in personality, we were all more alike than not” (p. 256). Explain what she means by this. Why is it so important to Dinnie to have a sense of belonging?
9. How do Dinnie’s dreams illustrate her concerns and thoughts? Select some examples to discuss.
10. By the end of the book, Dinnie resolves that she no longer feels like a stranger, even while moving from place to place. Like a snail, she carries her home on her back. What does she discover about the notion of home? How do her experiences in Switzerland lead her to that conclusion (p. 261)?

