

DEAR CANADA

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Where the River Takes Me

The Hudson's Bay Diary of Jenna Sinclair

By Julie Lawson

1. What is Jenna writing in and when did she start writing? What is her goal for her diary?
2. Nokum compares Jenna to a “squirrel.” How does her writing—both the events and people she describes and the way she writes about them—reflect this characterization?
3. Why does mail delivery take so long in Jenna's world? When, where and from whom does Jenna receive her first letter from home? What news does it bring, and what impact does it have on her?
4. Why is Jenna's appearance criticized by the other school girls? Why is it important to “look English”? How do you think the girls' opinions may have been shaped by life within the Hudson's Bay Company?
5. In the story, there are several instances of theft. Do you think the punishments given to the thieves are fair, or harsh? What does this say about the value of material possessions in Jenna's world? How much do you think Alex's and Davie's actions were influenced by growing up among HBC traders?
6. The night that Jenna shares Lucy's sorrows begins a change in her relationship with her schoolmates. Based on what Jenna records in her diary, what would you say are some of the ingredients of friendship?
7. Writing about the attack on the Songhee beach, Jenna asks, “We were going to war over a cow?” How would you answer this question? Who, if anyone, do you think was at fault in this instance? What actions or attitudes might have avoided the crisis?
8. At one point, Jenna compares the sea and a river: one going in and out but always in the same place, the other leading you onward. What does her preference (and the title of the book) say about her character, dreams and actions? How does this relate to her definition of adventure, and how does that definition change over the course of the book? Do you agree with her new definition?