

Teen All Iowa Reads Program Resources

The 2022 All Iowa Reads selection for teens is *What I Carry* by Jennifer Longo.

About the Book

For readers of Robin Benway's *Far From the Tree*, a powerful and heartwarming look at a teen girl about to age out of the foster care system.

Growing up in foster care, Muir has lived in many houses. And if she's learned one thing, it is to **Pack. Light.** Carry only what fits in a suitcase.

Toothbrush? Yes.

Socks? Yes.

Emotional attachment to friends? foster families? a boyfriend? Nope!

There's no room for any additional **baggage**.

Muir has just one year left before she ages out of the system. One year before she's free. One year to avoid anything—or anyone—that could get in her way.

Then she meets Francine. And Kira. **And Sean.**

And everything changes.

Book Discussion Questions

1. What emotions did this book evoke in you while reading? What do you think the author did to successfully evoke these feelings?
2. Were you immediately sucked in by the story or did it take you a little to get invested?
3. Could you relate to any of the characters in this book? Who and why?
4. Would you want to be friends with Muir, Francine, Kira, or Sean?
5. Could you see this book being made into a film? If so, who would you cast?
6. Did you notice any specific symbolism the author used in the novel?
7. If you changed the setting of this novel, would the story remain the same, or change?
8. Any lines or quotes that stuck with you?
9. What is the soundtrack to this novel? Do you know any songs that fit with the story?
10. Are you looking forward to reading other books by this author?

About Author Jennifer Longo

Jennifer Longo holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Acting from San Francisco State University and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Writing For Theatre from Humboldt State University. She is a two-time *Irene Ryan Best Actor Award* recipient and a *Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Best Full Length Script* honoree for her play, **FROZEN**. After years of acting, playwriting, working as a literary assistant at San Francisco's Magic Theatre and an elementary school librarian, Jennifer told the occasional story at San Francisco's *Porch Light* Storytelling Series and decided at last to face her fear of prose and actually write some. Her debut novel, **SIX FEET OVER IT** (Random House Books 2014) received starred reviews from *Kirkus* and *The Bulletin*, was selected as a 2015 *Washington State Book Award* finalist, a *VOYA Perfect Ten*, and an *Indies Introduce New Voices* title. Jen's second novel, **UP TO THIS POINTE** (Random House Books 2016) was selected as an *Indies Next* title, 2017 *Washington State Book Award* finalist, shortlisted for the *YALSA 2017 Best Fiction Young Adult* list and received starred reviews from *The Bulletin* and *Shelf Awareness*. **WHAT I CARRY** (Random House



Books 2020) is a *KIRKUS Best of 2020 YA* title, a *Chicago Public Library 2020 Best of YA Title*, an *Indies Next Winter 2020* title and received starred reviews from *Kirkus*, *Publisher's Weekly*, and *BookPage*. A California native and San Francisco transplant, Jennifer now lives with her husband and daughter on an island near Seattle, Washington. Her every hour is consumed by writing, running, walking her dogs, chatting with her daughter about the superiority of BIPOC Woman Authors on the podcast [Damned Scribbling Women](#), and reading her way down her ridiculously long holds list at the library. Find photos of Jen's dogs, daily calls to smash the patriarchy, and other fun jazz on Instagram & Twitter [@JenLiaLongo](#).

Reviews and Interviews

Reviews and interviews with Jennifer Longo and other information about *What I Carry*:

- “The power of relationship—both those experienced and those denied—is expertly explored throughout this novel with nuance and humanity... An exceptional addition to the coming-of-age canon.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review
- “Dubbed not only a necessary book — [but] a charming, honest, and hopeful one by A Heart in a Body in the World author Deb Caletti, Longo's *What I Carry* centers on Muiriel, a self-described "foundling" approaching her 18th birthday in the foster-care system. She has become an expert at moving, because she's bounced around to nearly two dozen foster homes. With her emancipation from the system on the horizon, Muiriel just needs to keep herself out of trouble until her birthday. But when her home city of Seattle can't place her anywhere, Muiriel is shipped off to a remote island in the Puget Sound, where she finds people who complicate, and may heal, her personal philosophy against attachments. And she may find a home at last.” - BUSTLE
- “Longo (Up to this Pointe), a foster and adoptive parent, wrote the book for her adopted daughter, who wanted a “hopeful, happy” tale; she provides it—and the book, well-written and heartfelt, is a pleasure.” —*Publisher's Weekly*, starred review
- “A beautifully realized tale of a teen’s search for her place in the world.” *BookPage*, starred review

Find Copies of *What I Carry* to Borrow

Find out which Iowa libraries have copies of *What I Carry* to borrow, or find out how to request sets for discussion groups.

Find in Iowa Libraries:

- [Locate Iowa libraries](#) that have copies to lend.

Find on Bridges: Iowa's eLibrary:

- [Borrow the audiobook](#)
- [Borrow the ebook](#)

Multiple Copies for Discussion Groups:

- **For individuals:** To request a discussion group book set, contact your local public library to arrange access.
- **For libraries:** Each of the six District Offices for the State Library offers copies for libraries to borrow. [Contact your local district office](#) to reserve a set.