

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Iggie's House

by

### Judy Blume

### Book Information

Judy Blume, Iggie's House  
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Book Level: 3.5  
Interest Level: MG

When Grove Street gets its first black family, Winnie is a welcoming party of one. The plot contains racial slurs.

**Topics:** Interpersonal Relationships, Neighbors;  
READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback  
Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades  
1-3; Social Issues, Prejudice

### Main Characters

Aunt Myrna Winnie's aunt who occasionally takes Winnie swimming at the Swim Club  
Big Red Winnie's softball acquaintance who has a reputation for being tough on new kids  
Clarice Landon Mrs. Landon's immaculate little girl, who follows her mother's example  
Dorothy Landon Winnie's neighbor who tries to make the Garbers leave the neighborhood  
Fred Landon Dorothy Landon's husband, who follows his wife's lead in everything  
Glenn Garber the Garbers' sixth-grade son, who tries to keep peace between Winnie and Herbie  
Helen Barringer Winnie's mother, who does not agree with Winnie's crusades  
Herbie Garber the Garbers' fifth-grade son, who is frequently offended by Winnie  
Iggie Winnie's best friend, who moved to Tokyo  
Matthew Barringer Winnie's ninth-grade brother, who is away at camp  
Mr. Frank G. Berger Winnie's former swimming teacher, who signs her petition at the Swim Club and says he is proud of her  
Mr. Garber the father of the Garber children; he refuses to move after working hard to get his new job

Mrs. Garber the mother of the Garber children; she is ready to give in to Mrs. Landon's campaign to make them move  
Paul Barringer Winnie's father, who is unsure how to react to the Garbers but refuses to support Mrs. Landon's actions  
Tina Garber the youngest Garber child, who seems used to being coddled  
Winifred Bates Barringer (Winnie) the eleven-year-old girl who befriends the Garber children; she is upset by her parents' ambivalent response to their new neighbors

### Vocabulary

**cause** an idea or belief that people are willing to promote and defend  
**ghetto** an area of a city where a minority group lives  
**hurled** threw very hard  
**immaculate** spotless or totally clean  
**petition** a paper that people sign to make a forceful request  
**pleaded** begged  
**stow away** to hide on a boat or other vehicle to get somewhere without paying for the ride

### Synopsis

Eleven-year-old Winnie Barringer is saddened because her best friend Iggie has just moved to Tokyo. She watches from her window to see who is moving into Iggie's former house, until her mother demands that she eat lunch. Annoyed, Winnie grabs an apple, runs to Iggie's house, and discovers that the new family is African-American. She rushes home to tell her mother the news. That night Winnie starts a letter to Iggie but decides to finish it the next day.

The following morning Winnie visits the new family. She meets the children: Glenn, Herbie, and Tina Garber. As she is trying to make friends with the Garber children, she accidentally offends Herbie by asking if the Garbers are from Africa. Glenn informs her they are from Detroit. In an effort to get a conversation going, Winnie blunders again by

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asking if their father looted stores during the Detroit riots as she had seen on television. Changing tactics, Winnie invites them to the park. When Herbie tells Winnie that his family is getting a dog that night, Winnie quickly latches onto the safe topic of dogs.

After lunch Winnie takes the Garber children to the park. She tricks Big Red, the boy in charge of the softball game, into letting the Garbers play by telling Big Red that the Garbers are from Africa. All seems to be going well until the children pass the Landon house on their way home. Winnie warns the Garber children that Mrs. Landon and her daughter Clarice are awful, but Tina invites Clarice to play anyway. Clarice appalls Winnie by saying that her mother does not let her play with "colored kids."

That evening Winnie is trying to write to Iggie again when Mrs. Landon arrives to ask Winnie's parents to sign a petition. Winnie overhears that the petition is being circulated to let the Garbers know they are not wanted. Winnie is disappointed when her parents actually say they will think about signing Mrs. Landon's petition.

The following morning Winnie's breakfast is interrupted by a dog barking. Winnie finds the Garbers outside her house with their new dog, Woozie. When Woozie runs onto the Landons' property, Winnie has to retrieve the dog because the Garbers are afraid. The next morning Herbie tells Winnie that Mrs. Landon presented his family with the petition. He says his father asked Mrs. Landon to leave their house. Winnie lightens the mood by offering to show the Garber children Iggie's tree house. The children are in the tree house watching the neighborhood with binoculars when Herbie spots Mrs. Landon putting a sign on the Garbers' lawn. When they climb down, the children discover that the sign demands that the Garbers leave the neighborhood. Mr. Garber breaks the sign, and Winnie runs home sobbing.

When Winnie's mother wants to know what is wrong, Winnie tells her about the sign and her fear that the Garbers will hate her because she is white.

Mrs. Barringer dismisses Winnie's concern and asks Winnie to think things through before she adopts a cause. She offends Winnie when she compares Winnie and her causes, such as the Freedom for Turtles Club, to Mrs. Landon and her campaigns. Furthermore, Winnie's mother refuses to help the Garbers because she feels it is not her business. Mrs. Barringer suddenly remembers that Aunt Myrna called earlier to invite Winnie to go swimming at Aunt Myrna's swim club. Winnie refuses to go until she decides to circulate her own petition at the Swim Club asking people to state their feelings regarding "colored people."

At the Swim Club Winnie first shows her petition to her former swimming teacher, Mr. Berger, who signs it but explains that he cannot sum up his feelings by merely checking a box. He does tell her he is proud of her. Winnie then dares to ask Mrs. Landon, who is also at the pool, to sign her petition. When Mrs. Landon becomes upset by the document, Winnie decides to leave the pool and go home. She immediately visits the Garbers. Glenn says his mother wants to move, but his father refuses. Herbie accuses Winnie of establishing a friendship with the Garbers solely to say she has black friends. Winnie slaps him and runs home.

After dinner Mrs. Landon comes to complain about Winnie's petition, but Mr. Barringer defends Winnie. Mrs. Landon informs him that her family is moving, and she suggests that the Barringers move "before it's too late." Mr. Barringer shouts that he will not be scared into selling his house. Winnie is proud of her father until the next morning, when he tells her that her mother wants to move and implies that he is considering it.

Winnie decides to run away to Tokyo to live with Iggie if this happens and visits the Garbers to explain the situation to them. Winnie takes the Garbers to the park for a picnic. She learns that the Garber family is determined to stay. They spend a pleasant day together with only a few altercations between Winnie and Herbie. That night after dinner, Mrs. Barringer tells Winnie that moving is too much trouble. Winnie realizes she no longer has a reason

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to run away to Tokyo, but she is frustrated that her parents still refuse to get involved. Sometime later she finally finishes her letter to Iggie; reflecting on events of the past several days, Winnie realizes that she does not know as much as she thought she did.

### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

#### Initial Understanding

How does Mrs. Barringer feel about people who are "crusaders"?

*Mrs. Barringer seems to have mixed feelings on this matter. For instance, she admires the work that Mrs. Landon has accomplished in the community, possibly because Mrs. Landon has chosen "safe" causes like education to champion. However, Mrs. Barringer makes it clear that she does not want to be a crusader because it involves too much trouble and effort; she may also avoid crusading because it requires the social risk of taking an unpopular stance. She discourages Winnie's involvement in "causes" by saying that Winnie is impulsive and uninformed. Finally, while Mrs. Barringer rejects some of Mrs. Landon's tactics, she does not necessarily reject Mrs. Landon's opposition to racial integration.*

#### Literary Analysis

This story has more than one major conflict, or problem. How does the plot in this story shift from one problem to another? Are these problems resolved?

*At the beginning of the story, Winnie's biggest problem is that her best friend has moved away. This continues to be a subplot of the book as Winnie struggles to deal with difficult issues without Iggie's advice. The problem of the book then focuses on how Winnie can win the friendship of the Garber children, who are not certain they can trust Winnie. This, too, remains part of the plot throughout the book, but two more problems arise at the same time: Mrs. Landon begins her efforts to make the Garbers move, and Winnie realizes that her parents may not believe the things she thought they believed. These four problems are interwoven in the plot and often affect one another. The only problem that is resolved is Mrs. Landon's objection to an integrated neighborhood; she decides to move. Winnie's problem with earning the trust of the Garber children improves, but she still has conflicts with Herbie. The other two problems, Iggie's absence and her parents' beliefs, are unresolved. It is unlikely that Iggie will return; likewise, it is similarly unlikely that Winnie's parents will adopt Winnie's views.*

#### Inferential Comprehension

Why is Mrs. Landon so upset when the Barringers do not support her actions against the Garbers?

*In the first place, the Barringers have always supported Mrs. Landon's causes in the past, so she probably expects that they will do what they have always done. Second, Mrs. Landon is so sure that she is right that she does not respect the opinion of anyone who may disagree with her. Finally, Mrs. Landon is the kind of person who uses intimidation to get people to do what she wants. Her behavior toward the Barringers is partially an attempt to bully them into supporting her even if they do not fully believe what she believes.*

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### Constructing Meaning

This book was first published in 1970. Do you think that racial relations have improved in recent years?

*Student answers may vary, depending on their experiences. Some may feel today's world is different because people are more informed and tolerant of cultural differences. They may point out that laws have been created to address the rights of all people. Other students may feel that more information and exposure to different cultures do not necessarily change how people think or behave.*

### Teachable Skills

**Understanding Hist/Cultural Factors** Winnie upsets Herbie Garber by mentioning the looting that took place during riots in Detroit. Have the students read about these riots and analyze how living during the time of the riots influences the actions or statements of some of the characters in this book.

**Describing Actions or Events** Winnie starts to write a letter to Iggie several times and then stops because she is too emotional about her topic. Have the students choose one of these letters and complete Winnie's account of the event mentioned in the letter.

**Responding to Literature** Winnie is disappointed when her parents do not respond to Mrs. Landon the way she wants them to. Assign students to write about a time they were surprised or disappointed by how their parents acted. Have students include what they expected of their parents and how their parents' behavior differed from that expectation.

**Comparing and Contrasting** Have the students make a chart comparing and contrasting Winnie, Mrs. Barringer, and Mrs. Landon. Have the students include attitudes as well as behavior.