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## About the Book

Margo is a troubled schoolgirl. After the death of her father, she's on her way to a new boarding school in a new city. Moon is a salesman. He makes his living traveling through a series of interconnected worlds on a network of barely used train lines. They never should have met. But when Margo suddenly appears on Moon's train, their fates become inextricably linked. If Margo wants to survive, she has to pass as a traveling salesman, too—except it's not that easy.

Move north on the train line and time speeds up, a day passing in mere hours. Move south and time slows down—a day can last several weeks. Slow worlds are the richest ones: you live longer, your youth lasting decades. Fast worlds are sharp, cruel, and don't have time for pleasantries. Death is frequent. Salesmen die young of skipshock—if they're not shot down by the Southern Guard first. As Margo moves between worlds and her attachment to Moon intensifies, she feels her youth start to slip between her fingers. But is Moon everything he seems? Is Margo?

Told through the eyes of both naive Margo and desperate Moon, the unforgettable realm of *Skipshock* will shake the way you think about love, time, and the fabric of the universe.

## Instructional Standards

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the instructional standards for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.

## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the structure of the novel. How is telling Margo's and Moon's stories in alternating chapters an effective way of revealing and developing their characters? Explain why Margo's story is told in third person and Moon's is told in first person. The book is divided into four parts. Discuss why the last part is titled "Home."
2. Explain the concept of skipshock. How does it affect the human body? Why do salesmen "blame almost anything on skipshock" (page 215)?
3. Discuss how Moon, a salesman, meets Margo. What is her first impression of him? Explain what he means when he says, "She scooped me up" (page 4). Why is he so attracted to this stranger?
4. How did Margo change after her father died? What is mysterious about his death? Debate whether Margo's mother knows what happened to her husband. Why isn't she honest with Margo? Discuss why Margo's mother sends her away to boarding school.
5. Who are the Pigs? Why are they so hated? What role do they play in the novel?
6. Who are the salesmen, and what is their role in their world? Explain what Moon means by "When you become a salesman you quickly discern the difference between The Rules and The Law" (page 18). What are The Rules for salesmen? Who established The Law? In what way does Moon break The Rules? How does this lead to breaking The Law?
7. Describe Vesna's boarding house. Why does Moon say the "kitchen is the engine room" (page 26)? What is significant about the attic room?
8. At what point does Margo realize that she isn't in her world? What is her reaction to the strange world that she is in now? Discuss her struggle to understand the meaning of "different worlds."
9. How does Vesna sense that Margo is valuable? What are the clues? When does Moon realize Margo's value?
10. What is Semper? What is the Southern Guard's relationship with Semper? How do they instill fear in those like Moon?
11. What is PACT and its purpose? Who is Taiyo? Discuss his "godlike" worship of PACT. Alder PACT is the most powerful chapter in the North. Why are its members so sure that Margo can help them stop the war? At what point does she realize she is a weapon?
12. Taiyo says that war is beginning. Explain his statement to Margo, "And whoever gets you, wins" (page 74). Does this lead to Margo understanding why she is in this world and why she is valuable to them?



13. Discuss what happens to make Margo question Moon's motive. Why does she say that Moon and Vesna were "disparate on a soul level" (page 58)? When does Margo begin trusting Moon? Trace their relationship as it moves from strangers to friendship to romance.
14. Explain what Yaz means by "what makes you a great salesman won't always make you a great person" and contrast that with what "makes the strong parts of you weak, and the weak parts of you strong" (page 207). Discuss Moon's strong and weak parts. Do these parts change after he meets Margo?
15. Discuss the symbolism of the silver seeds and the watch. How will the watch be used to seal the North?
16. Why does Moon think that he and Margo can save the world by going to Khaise? Compare New Davia to Khaise.
17. Who are the Lunati? Discuss Lunati magic. What makes Moon think that Margo's father was Lunati?
18. Describe the reunion between Margo and her father.
19. Discuss the ending of the book.



## About Caroline O'Donoghue

**Caroline O'Donoghue** is the *New York Times* best-selling author of the Gifts fantasy trilogy, including *All Our Hidden Gifts*, which has been published in more than twenty territories around the world, *The Gifts That Bind Us*, and *Every Gift a Curse*, all illustrated by Stefanie Caponi. She is also the author of an adult novel, *The Rachel Incident*, which NPR, *Time*, and LitHub all named on their best books of the year lists. She has written for the *London Times* and the *Guardian* and is the host of an award-winning podcast, *Sentimental Garbage*. She was born in Ireland and lives in London.



These questions were prepared by Pat Scales, a retired school librarian and independent consultant in Greenville, South Carolina.