

Using
Angels in the Snow
in the classroom:

Wenda Young takes the reader through the emotional life of a young woman, and the landscape of Japan, with powerful imagery and unforgettable insight.

- Ever since she was seven, Nicky MacNeil has wanted to find out why her mother left home. When she is almost fifteen and visits her mother in Japan, Nicky has the opportunity to ask her why she left. Ask the class why they think it is so hard for Nicky to ask her mother this important question.
- What do they think about Nicky's mother's reason for leaving her husband and daughter?
- Many kids have to deal with the separation and divorce of their parents. Does the class think that Nicky's emotions and reactions are similar to those of most kids when that happens?
- Mrs. Angelo, an elderly woman whom Nicky meets during her flight to Japan, tells Nicky that expectations are "very tricky things. It's better not to have them." Yet, "often we don't even know we have them." Before Nicky went to Japan, what expectations do students think she might have had about her mother and about Japan? Did these expectations prove to be true or not?
- What expectations about people and places have people in the class had? If things turned out differently than they expected, how did they feel?
- Nicky gets to know four very different guys-Kip, who moves into the apartment next door; Jason, the cute guy who suddenly starts paying attention to her; Nate, who is twenty-four, and makes her feel grown-up, too; and Hideki, the Japanese youth who has a lot to learn about Canadian girls. How well does the class think Nicky handles her relationship with each? What does she learn from her experiences with each?
- Nicky's mother Joanna is thirty-seven. Nate Garrison is twenty-four. What does the class think about their relationship?
- What has Nicky learned by the end of the book: (a) about her father? (b) about Katherine? (c) about her mother? (d) about Nate? (e) about herself?
- Ask students whether they liked any characters in the book a lot. Why? Did they dislike any characters in the book? Why?
- Was there any character that was both liked and disliked? What did people like and dislike?
- Ask which character(s) in the book the class understood best? Why could they understand that character (or characters) so well?
- Nicky visited two cities in the Japan Alps – Matsumoto and Nagano. If students could go to the places Nicky visited for just two days, what would they choose to see and do there? Remember, there is only enough time to visit two different places each day.
- If the class could meet one character in the book, who would they want it to be? What would they say to that character, and what would they like to do with that character?