

Ida B: . . . and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World Study Guide

Ida B: . . . and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World by Katherine Hannigan

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Plot Summary

"Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan tells the story of a young girl from Canada who was very happy with her life until her mother became ill. This event changed her world and she had to come to terms with relationship changes and life back in the school room away from nature.

Ida B. was very happy with her life. She stayed home with her mother, father, and her two pets, a cat and dog). Since she was home-schooled, she was able to embrace her own schedule, nature, and fun. Ida B. Was all about enjoying life. When her work was done, she would run out the door to explore. She would draw and talk with the brook and the trees. One day they warned her that something bad was headed her way, but she didn't know what they meant.

A few days later, things began to change in a household. Her parents were quieter than usual and Mama had an appointment with a doctor. They discovered that Mama had cancer. After she had surgery, she had to have treatments, and they made her very tired and ill. The house was unusually quiet.

One day, Ida B.'s father had a serious talk with her. He told her that they would have to sell part of the orchard to pay the medical bills. He also told her that because of his workload and her mother's illness, she would have to go back to school. This greatly distressed Ida B. and she could feel her heart turn into a rock. She decided not to show love to her parents, to hate school, and she even became angry at her friends in nature.

When she went back to school, Ida B. Discovered that it was very different from her previous school experience. Ms. Washington was a kind, loving teacher, and her classroom was filled with warm happiness. The students were nice as well. Still, Ida B. hardened her heart to it all, and tried to keep everyone away from her. She also tried to stay away from her parents as much as possible. When a family started building a house on the land her family had to sell, Ida B. tried to get rid of them by making signs to scare them off.

The signs didn't work. Ida B. discovered that the family moving in included a girl from her class named Claire. Both Claire and her little brother thought the signs were funny and it made Ida B. mad so she yelled at them until they cried. Claire told her that she was mean.

Back in school, Ida B. kept waiting for Claire to retaliate for her meanness. When the girl didn't, Ida B. began to realize that Claire might be right and it made her feel horrible. She apologized to Claire and her brother and then went to the orchard and apologized to her friends in nature. At school, she began to interact with the other children. At home, she reconnected with her parents, accepting their love for her, and showing her love back.



Chapters 1-6

Chapters 1-6 Summary

"Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan tells the story of a young girl from Canada who was very happy with her life until her mother became ill. It changed her world and she had to come to terms with relationship changes and life back in the schoolroom, away from nature.

Chapter 1 started out with a perfect day for Ida B. She was helping her parents do dishes after dinner, and she couldn't wait and play when she was finished. She tried to make the task go quickly, and her dad encouraged her to slow down. Ida B. tried to express to him the importance of hurrying up because, in her opinion, "There is never enough time for fun." They finished the job, and she and her dog Rufus went outdoors.

In Chapter 2, on the way out of the house, Ida B. grabbed a pencil and paper so she could make some drawings. She also brought along some string so that she could tie sticks together and send a note down the brook on a raft. She had done this before, but didn't hear back from people often. There were only two occasions when she was contacted. One was from a man who called and told her parents and told them that she was sending out notes with her name and address on them, and they might want to discourage that. Another time, a teacher from the next town over found one of her notes and had her class send back information about Canada.

As she walked through the Apple Orchard on her way to the brook, she called out to the trees by name. She called them Beulah, Charlie, and Pastel. She sat under a tree she called Henry VIII and began working on a drawing. The drawing showed the orchard after harvest. It had bushels of apples under the trees, Lulu the cat, Rufus the dog, Mama, Daddy, and Ida B. sitting under the trees eating apple pie.

As she was drawing, she suddenly realized that the trees hadn't responded to her. Generally they did, by saying "hi", and "hey their." When she greeted them again, Viola asked her how she was doing that day. Ida B. asked what was wrong with them and why they were so quiet.

They said they heard a rumor that something bad was going to come her way. The trees told her to take care of herself. She left to go have fun somewhere else. When she got to the brook, she asked if the brook had heard that something bad was going to come her way. The brook avoided the question. Ida B. hiked up to the old tree at the top of the hill, and she asked what was going on. It was a while before she got her answer. The old tree told her that hard times were coming. Nothing horrible happened that day or the next, and she began to believe that the trees didn't know what they were talking about.

In Chapter 3, Ida B. didn't get into trouble too often. She remembered two times when she really did get in trouble, though. Once she had made a huge home in the living



room for her cat. Another time she invented a soap mask so she wouldn't have to continuously wash her face. She had a reaction to it and had to go to the doctor's office. Her parents are very concerned until she told them about the soap mask.

In Chapter 4, some evenings when the work was done, Daddy would invite Ida B. and Rufus on a walk. They would always have good talks on these walks. On this night, something was different. Daddy caught her attention, and she knew it was serious. He told her that someday the land would be hers. He reminded her that she was a caretaker of the earth, and it should be left better than when she found it. Ida B. told her father about some of her favorite times in the orchard. She told him that she thought that the earth took care of them as well. He agreed.

In Chapter 5, every morning Ida B. ate hot rolled oats with raisins and milk for breakfast—even in the summer. She had a hard time waking up, and didn't really want to think about what she should eat for breakfast. Every day at lunch, she had peanut butter on bread, milk, and an apple. By lunchtime, she was wide awake had a list of things she wanted to do so she didn't really want to think about she had to eat for lunch. She wanted to get on with the day. During dinner, her parents would talk with her about the day and slip in some educational questions. They did this because she was homeschooled.

In the morning, she would get up and help her parents the chores, then she would learn math and science with her mother. In the afternoon, her father would read with her, and they would write stories. They also talked about nature. Ida B. didn't have to ride squished on the school bus. Her mother would make her take the test every year, and every year she did a great job on the test. She got to stay where she wanted—hanging around with her parents, her pets, and nature. It was an ideal life for her.

In Chapter 6, Ida B. went to school for two weeks and she was six years old. She was in Ms. Myers kindergarten class at Ernest B. Lawson Elementary School. The teacher wouldn't call her by her real name, insisting on her just Ida. She looked out the window at nature and started feeling like she was getting squeezed inside. She wanted to leave, but she had promised her mother that she would be good and follow directions. There were fun things in the room, but they weren't allowed to play with them until the right time. And it never seem to be the right time.

By the time she met her mother in the parking lot after school, she wasn't her normal happy self. She told her mother that there were too many rules and that there wasn't enough time for fun. Her mother encouraged her to try it again the next day. She agreed to try going to kindergarten again, but she had bad feelings about it.

Chapters 1-6 Analysis

Chapter 1 is very short and only two pages long. However, it sets the tone for the novel beautifully. It shows clearly that Ida B. is a fun-loving young girl with a zest for life. She gets along well with her parents, and they have a very happy family life. The reader



sees that she has a strong love of nature since she can't wait to finish her chores so she can have some fun outside.

In Chapter 2, the reader discovers that Ida B. is creative and inquisitive. She has little tolerance for life without some fun. The girl has a unique connection with nature. By giving the trees names, the author helps the reader connect to nature as well. The verbal tone of the different parts of nature bring them to life—the slow-talking, gentle trees that have personalities like humans, and the babbling brook who won't give a straight answer. The trees give Ida B. a message that foreshadows trouble to come.

Chapter 3 highlights a bit more about Ida B. Her name is important to her, and she sometimes gets in trouble. One time something she did led to her parents bringing her to see the doctor. They understood what she did, and she wasn't in too much trouble, but they warned her about the expenses involved in going to a doctor.

In Chapter 4, Ida B.'s connection to the earth is passed to her from her father. This is shown as they go out together on a walk. He has a deep respect for nature and focuses more on caring for it than owning it. Ida B. Agrees but points out that the relationship isn't one-sided. Nature cares for humans as well. She has a true connection to the land. The girl also has a true connection to her father and loves to spend time with him.

In Chapter 5, the choices Ida B. makes regarding her meals offer more insight into her nature. She is too busy to think about food. She just wants to focus on living and having fun. This chapter introduces the fact that she is home-schooled and it shows that she loves it. It also shows that her parents are serious about her education and make sure she is getting educated properly.

Chapter 6 tells the reader why Ida B. was home-schooled. She tried school when she was in kindergarten, and it was a horrible experience for her. The teacher didn't connect with her or understand her, and she felt her freedom sucked out of her. Out of love and respect for her mother, she decided to continue trying to make school work.



Chapters 7-12

Chapters 7-12 Summary

In Chapter 7, things didn't get better in school. They got worse. Ida B. felt worse every day, but she didn't want to complain. Still her sadness showed physically, and she became droopy. Mama decided that she was going to go to see what school was like so she visited for a day. This made Ida B. feel better. School seemed to have the same effect on Mama.

The next day, Mama said she and Daddy wanted to talk with Ida B. about school. They told her that they were going to teach her at home. Mother warned her that it wouldn't be easy, and there would be lots of learning just like regular school—with tests and all. This was how she ended out being home-schooled for four years. Everything was finer than fine, and she thought she would never have to go back to the regular school.

In Chapter 8, Ida B. was not very active or alert in the morning, but her parents were. Three days after the trees told her that trouble was headed her way, Ida B. was awake, but her parents were not flittering around as usual. Daddy asked Mama if she was going to call the doctor to make an appointment that day. Ida B. asked what was going on, and they told her not to worry.

In Chapter 9, Mama had cancer. At first, Ida B. thought her mother would just go to the doctor and get it taken out. It wasn't that easy. She went to the doctor to have it taken out, and they found out that it was in other places as well. Mama was very tired when she came home. Ida B. tried to entertain her, but her mother was too tired to do much of anything. She asked her mother if she was going to die, and her mother told her that she would always be with her.

Mama's hair began to fall out, and Ida B. collected it and kept it under her pillow in a bag. The house was unusually quiet after the treatments. Sometimes Daddy and Ida B. would sit close together in a chair and whisper to each other and read stories. That was about the only time anything good happened in the house. Things were horrible after Mama had a treatment, then she would start to get better again. She would start eating and asking Ida B. school questions. By then, three weeks would be up, and Mama would have to go back again for another treatment.

In Chapter 10, in August, Ida B. felt so badly that she left the house to go talk with the old tree again. She missed the way her life used to be. The tree told her that everything would be all right. She asked the tree what it meant by all right, but the tree didn't answer.

A few nights later, at dinner, Daddy told Ida B. that Mama was going to get new medicine for treatment so she wouldn't feel so horrible after the treatments. This made Ida B. very happy, and she went outside to talk with the brook. The brook didn't respond



to her. She talked louder, and the brook still didn't say anything. When she was about to leave, the brook talked to her and told her that it wasn't over yet.

In Chapter 11, on one day in September, Daddy told Ida B. that he had to sell part of the orchard since they needed money to pay the hospital bills. She asked what they were going to do with the land, and he thought maybe they would build houses. That was the part of the orchard where Alice, Harry, Bernice and Jaques Cousteau lived, and she couldn't imagine their being cut down. She was sobbing and yelling, and she asked her father if they could figure out some other solution for getting money.

Her father told her that there was something else. He couldn't take care of the farm on his own and teach her. Her mother was too tired to do anything so Ida B. had to go back to school beginning Monday. He knew it was hard for her, but it was how it was going to be. Ida B. was in shock. She told him that Mama wouldn't agree to it, but her father responded that Mama agreed that that was what they needed to do.

Everything went dark in Ida B.'s world. She realized her father was calling out to her. He tried to reassure her, telling her everything would be all right. She begged for him not to send her back to school. Her dad shouted at her, surprising everyone. He calmed down, told her that that was the way it was going to be, and walked out of the barn.

In Chapter 12, after her father left, Ida B. curled up in a ball and cried. As she did so, she felt her heart turn into a rock. She determined to go back to school, but she wouldn't like it. She also determined that she wouldn't like the people who bought the land, and she also wouldn't like her parents.

She went up on the hill and sarcastically thanked the tree for the hope it offered her the other day then she kicked it. She called it a stupid old tree.

Chapters 7-12 Analysis

In Chapter 7, things didn't get any better, and Ida B. felt as if she was losing more of herself every day. Still, she tried not to complain. When her mother took time to visit the school, she saw what her daughter was dealing with. Her parents talked together and came up with a plan for her schooling at home. Ida B. was so happy she was scared to trust what was happening when her parents told her their plan. Everything was so perfect that she didn't brace herself for the possibility that things might go wrong. She later said that was a mistake. This was more foreshadowing of trouble to come.

In Chapter 8, Ida B. was very connected with nature and she equated herself to a snake in the morning while she compared her parents to birds. Before this point in the book, there were several allusions to the fact that something bad was going to happen. In this chapter, Ida B. found out that something was going on with her mother.

Her parents were quieter than usual, and they talked about making a doctor appointment for Mama. They didn't want to share their worry with their daughter and



tried to act as if everything was fine. Ida B. had the realization that when you think everything is going fine, you had better brace yourself for hardship.

In Chapter 9, the household changed drastically after they discovered that Mama had cancer. Everything became quiet, and Mama was too weak to spend much time with Ida B. When she lost her hair, Ida B. kept a hold of it as a symbol of her old life. In spite of the illness, and even though times were tough, there was obvious love in the household between the parents and between the parents and Ida B.

In Chapter 10, Ida B. used to go out and enjoy nature for fun. Now she started going out for solace. The old tree gave her a message of hope, and when she went home, her parents told her that they were going to try new plan so Mama wouldn't feel so sick. Ida B. was starting to learn that when things were well, one shouldn't forget to prepare for bad. The brook, usually so lively and talkative, gave her a message that there was more bad to come.

In Chapter 11, Ida B. had her world completely ripped apart. The main conflict in the book arises here as Ida B. learned that some of her beloved land and nature was going to be sold, and she had to go back to school. Although her parents loved and nurtured her, they had to do what was best for the situation, and she had a hard time comprehending it all.

In Chapter 12, Ida B. changed drastically. She turned from a fun-loving, adorable and free-spirited girl to a lonely girl with a bitter heart. She even turned against the nature that she loved so much due to her emotional pain.



Chapters 13-18

Chapters 13-18 Summary

In Chapter 13, Ida B. set out her clothes for school next day. Everything she had was completely black. Her mother came into her room to talk with her and ran her fingers through Ida B.'s hair, but the girl forced herself not to respond. She felt something wet on her pajama top and looked up to find her mother crying. This made Ida B. feel sad as well, and she fought back her own tears. Even though she decided not to like her mother anymore, it was hard not to feel sad with her.

In Chapter 14, Ida B. went out to the bus stop early the next day so she wouldn't have to talk to her parents. It was a rainy, windy day, and she felt very ornery. She tried to look as mean as possible as she boarded the bus and found a seat where she could sit by herself. At school, she went to the office to find out where she should go. She was sent to Ms. Washington's class.

In Chapter 15, she stopped in the doorway of her classroom and assessed the situation. The room was filled with happy sounds, bright windows, pictures, real books, and a pretty rug, but she hardened her heart against it all. A woman came to her, greeted her and introduced her to the class. She had the other students introduce themselves and say something about themselves then asked Ida B. if that was her real name or if she had a nickname that she preferred to use. Ida B. said that she was just Ida. The teacher asked if there was anything she wanted to share about herself, and she was tempted to say that she hated school and anything that went along with it, but she just told the teacher that she had nothing to say.

Nobody picked on her all day and she had no trouble with the schoolwork. At recess, a girl named Claire asked her she wanted to play with the other children, but she declined. Ms. Washington came over to her and sat down behind her, asking her how it was going. She asked if there was anything Ida B. want to talk about. The girl said no. The teacher said that when Ida B. was ready to talk, she would listen. She sat there for a minute then went inside.

In Chapter 16, when the bus dropped Ida B. off at her house in the afternoon, the bus driver hollered that he would see her tomorrow. It reminded her of her situation and filled her up with anger once again. She hadn't thought about what she would do when she got home. She knew her mother would want to talk. She wanted to avoid her mother and came up with a plan to politely evade her.

Her parents called to her from the kitchen, and when she went in, they insisted on talking with her. They asked how her day went, and she said it was okay. She asked if she could be excused, and her father tried to stop her, but her mother said let the girl go. She escaped to her room.



In Chapter 17, at dinner a few weeks later, Daddy mentioned that they sold the lots to a family. The new family was going to keep some of the trees.

That Saturday they began clearing part of the orchard and digging the foundation for the house. It made Ida B. feel sick. Ever since she went back to school, she was filled with unhappiness. After she finished her homework, eating, and chores, she would sit in a chair and do nothing. She avoided the orchard because she didn't want to hear the trees were whispering about their friends getting cut down.

Now she decided that she had a mission. She made signs and drawings made to scare off the people who bought the land. Once she had about 40 signs completed, she took them to the building site of the new house and posted them. She collected insects and other things people might find disgusting to leave in their house. That way, they wouldn't want to stay.

In Chapter 18, at school, Ms. Washington would come over to Ida B. every day at recess and ask her if there was anything she wanted to talk about. It was getting more difficult to say no. After lunch, the teacher would read to the class, and it made Ida B.'s heart feel good. She appreciated the books her teacher chose to read, and sometimes the woman would stop by her desk and put a book on it, whispering that she thought Ida B. might enjoy it. Ida B. would read the book at home, and she would like it, but she wouldn't tell the teacher. Ida B. practiced reading out loud like her teacher did, and she loved how the words rolled off her tongue.

One day in school, Ms. Washington asked Ida B. for help. She needed Ida B. to help Ronnie learn his times tables. Ida B. meant to tell her "no" but instead found herself agreeing to do it.

Chapters 13-18 Analysis

The focus of Chapter 13 was mourning. Ida B. prepared for school by covering herself in black. She was also deliberately killing her relationship with her mother, who was reaching out to her. Both of them were having a hard time with the separation, but Ida B. Wouldn't give in. She felt completely betrayed.

In Chapter 14, as Ida B. waited for the school bus, the weather symbolized the trauma she was experiencing. In contrast to the bleakness of the weather, the bus driver and children on the bus were friendly. She fended off any friendliness by clinging to her anger. The same held true when she got to the school and went to the office to find out where her classroom was. Even though she was angry and negative, Ida B. was only treated with kindness.

In Chapter 15, the fourth grade classroom was completely different from the kindergarten classroom. Even in her negative state, Ida B. was struck by the warmth and friendliness of the classroom. The teacher wasn't like anything she ever expected, and Ida B. didn't know how to deal with that. When the teacher asked her if she had a nickname, she showed that she viewed herself as a new person by insisting that her



name was simply Ida. She did her best to turn her teacher's attention away, but the woman was understanding and gently offered support in a way that Ida B. couldn't reject.

In Chapter 16, Ida B. braced herself for dealing with her mother once she got home, but found herself dealing with both parents. Her father was upset with her behavior, but her mother seemed to be understanding. They reached out to her, trying to get her to talk about her day, but she didn't want to converse with them. She escaped from them by going to her room.

In Chapter 17, the land that was supposed to belong to Ida B. was now officially sold, and people were going to build a house on it. Her parents tried to talk to her and make the best out of the situation by pointing out some positive aspects such as the fact that some of the trees were going to remain, and there was a possibility of children moving in.

Ida B. did not want to listen to them. She felt as if she'd betrayed nature. When she went to orchard, she could hear the trees complaining, and she dreaded the day when they would outright accuse her of allowing the events that happened. Just as she escaped to her room to avoid her parents, she avoided the orchard by going to the mountain when she went outside. Her sadness switched from apathy to proactive planning as she focused her energy on keeping the new people away.

In Chapter 18, at school, Ida B. did her best to remain cold and unresponsive, but she was beginning to instinctively respond to her teacher's kindness. The woman patiently and gently began to draw her out and make her feel some of the love she was missing.



Chapters 19-24

Chapters 19-24 Summary

In Chapter 19, Ronnie was the fastest runner in the fourth grade. He was also very friendly. He was not good at math. Still, he kept trying to answer questions correctly, and Ida B. had respect for his efforts. She knew he was embarrassed about getting help and tried to make math fun for him. She challenged him to a game in math and equated the math exercises to practicing for a race.

They started with the basics and then he began to get better. She could tell he was practicing at home. The two children played for quarters, and they would have a running race at the end of the day. Ida B. always won the quarters in the math but lost them in the running race so everything was even. She didn't want other kids to know she was friendly with Ronnie so they would only race when no-one was looking.

In Chapter 20, one day after lunch the teacher told the class that she couldn't read to them because her voice was too tired. Half the class looked very sad. The students started begging her to read, and the teacher suggested that they have a guest reader just for the day. The children agreed, and the teacher asked Ida to read to the class since she knew Ida had already read the book.

Ida felt frozen until the teacher stepped up and whispered that she really needed her help. She couldn't say "no" so she went up to the front of the room to get ready to read. Her legs were shaking, and her stomach was flipping as she thought about everyone looking at her and listening to her. Still, she found herself drawn to the story. At first she was too quiet and then she was too loud. Nobody laughed at her. As she started reading, she forgot about everyone in the classroom and became part of the story until the chapter was over. As she walked back to her desk, Ronnie told her that she did a good job. She felt a warm glow within her that wouldn't go away even on the bus ride home.

In Chapter 21, every day Mama and Daddy would ask Ida B. how school was that day. Every day she would tell them that it was okay. When they asked what she did, she would give the basic facts but nothing more. After a while, they stopped asking her what she did. This day was different. She wanted to share the happiness she felt about the day. Still, she wanted to stick to her plan of not letting her parents know she was happy so she tried telling Rufus and Lulu about her day. She was still excited by the time she had to go down to dinner. Trying to avoid her parents, she asked if she could be excused from the table since she wasn't hungry. Her parents told her to eat a bit.

She told them that she read a book out loud to her class that day. Her mom asked her questions about the experience, and Ida B. told her that it made her feel good. She looked at her mother for the first time in a long time. She discovered her mother looking deep inside her as well, and she realized the good part of her mother was still in there.



Her heart reminded her not to get too connected. She excused herself, but felt extremely lonely.

In Chapter 22, on Saturday, Ida B. saw a strange car come down the road and head to the building site. She saw a family get out and realize that the girl in the family was Claire from her class. Claire and her brother were exploring and laughing. They saw her signs, and Claire said they were jokes that were supposed to be funny. This made Ida B. very angry. She jumped out from where she was watching them and told them to get out. The little boy started to cry.

Claire recognized Ida and reached out to her, but Ida B. was too angry to accept her gesture of friendship. She yelled at them to get off the land, and the boy ran away. Claire told her that she was mean. As she walked away, Ida B. felt a little bit bad, but her heart told her not to show any weakness.

In Chapter 23, Ida B. went to dinner that night ready for battle. She was determined to protect the land and had a speech prepared for her parents. Before she could begin, her mom mentioned that she and Daddy had something to talk with her about. They said that the south field had been lying fallow for a while, and Ida B. could plant apple trees there if she wanted. That part of the orchard would belong to her.

She told them that nothing could make up for everything that happened the past year. Yelling at them, she questioned how she could know that they wouldn't sell her land anyway. Her father became angry then controlled his temper. He said that since Mama had gotten sick, sometimes he had been angry and other times he had been sad. None of them liked what was going on, but being miserable wouldn't help. Ida B. knew that they were reaching out to her with love, but she was too hurt to accept the love. She went up to her room and shut the door.

In Chapter 24, as she went to school on Monday, Ida B. prepared herself for Claire's revenge. She tried to think of all the horrible things Claire might do to her and braced herself. Nothing happened all morning. She was so preoccupied that when Ronnie stopped by and asked if she wanted to play dodgeball, she forgot to whisper her answer to him and said it out loud. Claire didn't do anything to her in the afternoon, either.

By the end of the week, Ida B. was getting exhausted as she waited for her punishment. She wanted Claire to retaliate, proving that she deserved some foul treatment. The girl didn't cooperate.

Chapters 19-24 Analysis

In Chapter 19, instead of focusing on the way she is hurting, Ida B. was encouraged to help someone else who was struggling in an area she was strong in. Even though she was forcing her heart to be hard, the author showed that she still had a soft side as she interacted with Ronnie. When she tutored him in math, she was able to bring her creativity to the forefront. She was helping him, and didn't seem to be aware of the fact



that she was getting help herself. She was in a situation where she was learning to interact with another student and have some fun, even though she wouldn't admit it.

In Chapter 20, the teacher helped Ida B. in very subtle ways. She picked up on the girl's love of books and used that to reach out to her and make her feel more comfortable in the classroom. Then she helped Ida B. become connected with other students by asking her to tutor Ronnie. Now, she had a new plan. She tapped into Ida's reading strength by stating that her voice wasn't working and asking Ida for help with the reading. For the first time since she began attending the school, Ida B. couldn't let her negative attitude toward the school overwhelm the good she felt in the classroom.

Chapter 21 focused on the struggle Ida B. had internally as she tried to keep herself separate from parents she loved. She had such a good experience in the classroom, she really wanted to share it with them. Still, her sense of betrayal was still more overwhelming than her feelings of love. She showed signs of her internal battle in the way that she ended up sharing part of her day with her parents but then had to leave. Instead of making herself feel better, she ended up making things worse.

In Chapter 22, when the new people came to check out the new property, Ida B. spied on them from a tree. Their happiness only made Ida B. feel worse. Their ignorance regarding the pain that led to their happiness made Ida B. even more upset. She physically confronted them, scaring them and making them cry. The fun-loving, creative girl from the beginning of the story had turned into a mean spirited caricature who didn't want anyone to have fun. When Claire told her how mean she was, there was a part of her that wasn't happy about the meanness, which showed signs of hope.

In Chapter 23, Ida B. was in a fighting mood, and she prepared to confront her parents. Before she had a chance to state her arguments, they offered her a gift. She rejected their kindness by lashing out, deliberately trying to hurt them. Her father was angry, but her mother was understanding, and her kindness reached in to a hard part of Ida B. and softened her a bit. It took some effort to become hard once again, but even after she left her parents, she felt worse rather than better.

In Chapter 24, Ida B. was getting so used to meanness that she expected others to be mean as well. She hardened herself, waiting for a reaction from Claire that never came.



Chapters 25-32

Chapters 25-32 Summary

In Chapter 25, Ida B. began to wonder if Claire really wasn't evil. She also wondered if maybe Claire was right, and she was simply mean. She tried to ignore the thoughts, but they kept coming back to her.

In class, the teacher decided that having a guest reader was a good idea and she gave the other kids turns to read as well. Ida B. liked that idea because that meant that she would have a turn every once in a while. She decided that when the teacher asked her to read, she would casually agree. At least, her mouth would agree. Her brain still thought about Claire, though. Ida B. felt that when somebody read a good story, people might see the good in them. If she read, Claire would know the real truth. Because of this, when the teacher asked her if she wanted to read, she said that she couldn't because she didn't feel well.

In Chapter 26, on Wednesday, Ms. W. sat down next to her and asked her if there was anything she wanted to talk about just as she always did. She stayed there for a few extra minutes, like usual, Ida asked her teacher if she had ever done anything that seemed right at the time, then later it seemed wrong. The teacher said she had done that.

Ida B. continued asking questions based on her situation with Claire without mentioning the real details. She just asked questions, and the teacher said she had done something very much like that. This made Ida B. feel better, and she asked her teacher what she had done about her situation. The teacher said that she just had to say "I'm sorry."

In Chapter 27, Ida B. began to make plans for apologizing to Claire. She also prepared herself for Claire's reaction. Ida B. hoped to find Claire alone, and she decided to apologize sometime when they were both in the bathroom together.

In Chapter 28, there weren't many chances for Ida B. to go to the lavatory when Claire did. She hadn't realized it was going to be so difficult. After several days of trying, she realized she was missing all her chances. Near the end of the day, several days into her attempts, she had to go to the bathroom badly. When she came out, Claire was waiting for her. Claire asked why she had been following her all week. Claire thought Ida B. was going to do something mean to her again and told her to just leave her alone. Ida B. had made things worse.

In Chapter 29, on Saturday morning, Ida B. was sitting on her front porch feeling miserable. She saw a car go up the new drive and leave. Ida B. walked onto the land that belonged to Claire's family. She saw Claire, Claire's mother, and her brother planting little bushes.



Ida B. walked up to Claire and apologized for scaring them. She also apologized to Claire's little brother and told him she would never do that again. Nobody really responded to her, and she turned around to go back to her house. She already felt better as she crossed the property line.

In Chapter 30, apologizing to Claire was a good start and made her feel better, but she realized that there was more she had to do. Ida B. walked out to the orchard and apologized to the trees for not protecting their friends. At first, they didn't respond. She shared everything that had happened with them and how she felt about it all. They welcomed her back. The trees began talking and said they missed her as well. She left the orchard feeling even better.

After leaving the trees, she went to talk with the brook then headed up to the old tree at the top of the mountain. She apologized for being rude and disrespectful. She waited a while and heard the tree begin to hum. Everything was all right.

In Chapter 31, at recess on Monday, the teacher asked Ida B. if there was anything she wanted to talk about. She answered that there wasn't, but her eyes showed that everything was all right. Ronnie asked Ida if she wanted to play dodgeball, and this time she joined the other children.

In Chapter 32, after dinner on Friday night, Mama started talking with Ida B. She said she wanted to hear the story that her daughter read at school. Ida B. agreed to do it. Daddy came in from the barn and said it was a nice night out. He invited Ida B. to go for a walk. They hadn't done that in a long time. She invited Mama, too, but Mama was too tired. On the walk, Daddy and Ida B. reconnected. They didn't have to verbalize, but as they walked together Ida B. knew that everything was all right.

Chapters 25-32 Analysis

In Chapter 25, Claire's kindness was really the beginning of serious change in Ida B. It made her really look inside herself, and she didn't like what she was seeing. It made her feel so badly, she couldn't even focus on things she loved such as reading out loud.

In Chapter 26, Ms. W. Continued trying to help Ida B. in her own quiet way. Her patience paid off when Ida B. finally opened up to her and asked for advice. The questions and answers were abstract, but poignant, and she helped Ida B. realize that she had to apologize if she was in the wrong. She did this without judgement. Ida B. felt better about everything when she knew she wasn't the only person ever to go through a tough time like this.

In Chapter 27, saying sorry wasn't easy, and Ida B. discovered that she couldn't set up a good scenario for it easily. She knew she had to apologize, but she also knew her apology might be rejected so she braced herself for that response.

In Chapter 28, Ida B. had just about given up hope about finding a time to apologize to Claire when Claire hunted her down. The situation was so confusing that Ida B. only



made things worse. Throughout the book, Ida B.'s parents and others had been reaching out to her, and she pushed them away. This time, she was the one reaching out, and Claire was asking her to leave her alone.

In Chapter 29, Ida B. Finally had a chance to apologize not only to Claire but to the little brother as well.

In Chapter 30, the apology to Claire started a chain reaction of fixing things as Claire went to the trees then on to the brook and the old tree on the mountain. They forgave and accepted her. With the old tree, she could feel the stability and love.

In Chapter 31, at school, Ida showed that she had changed by interacting with others. It made everyone happier.

In Chapter 32, the final change occurred between Ida B. and her parents. She let her mother become part of her life once again. When Ida B.'s father reached out to her, she responded. Just like her communications with the old tree, words weren't necessary. They could feel all that needed to be said. They had made it through the tough time, and by the time the book ended, Ida B. was at peace with her parents and with nature. They would all watch out for each other and she knew it.



Characters

Ida B.

This is a young girl with a real passion for life and nature. Her main interest is having fun. She lives with her mother, father, and two pets, a cat and a dog. She tried to go to school when she was young, but felt too stifled so she is home-schooled as the book begins. She enjoys drawing and talking about nature and reading. She is very creative.

Ida is smart and works hard so she can be free to go outside to draw and talk with the trees and brook and other parts of nature. Life is perfect for her until her mother becomes ill and she has to go back to the regular school. It's a difficult transition for her, but she learns to appreciate others and understand that regular school isn't so horrible after all.

Daddy

Also known as Evan, Daddy is a very important character in Ida B.'s life. He reads to her and talks with her when he teaches her. They go on walks together, and he talks with her seriously about the land. They share a love of the land and nature. He doesn't like to view the land as a possession. Instead, he feels as if he is a caretaker of the land. That's why he's willing to work hard to care for it. He shows love for his family when he sells part of the land, even though Ida B. doesn't see it that way. When she lashes out, it hurts him, but he understands.

Mama

This is the person Ida B. was named after. She truly understands Ida B., but their world falls apart after she becomes ill with cancer.

Claire

This is a classmate Ida B. is mean to. The child is not mean back, and Ida B. feels badly about it.

Ms. Myers

This was Ida B.'s kindergarten teacher. She did not identify with Ida B. and viewed the girl as a trouble-maker.



Ms. Washington

This was Ida B.'s fourth grad teacher. She understood what Ida B. was going through and gave her space to come to terms with what she had to deal with.

Brook

Naturally bubbly and talkative, this was unusually quiet one day. Then it told Ida B. that the trouble wasn't over yet.

Viola

This was a tree who like to talk with Ida B. It warned her that a storm was coming.

Lulu

This was Ida B.'s cat. It was the only family member unaffected by the illness.

Rufus

This was Ida B.'s dog who walked with her, had fun with her, and sometimes stayed with Mama.

Ronnie

This was a boy in Ida B.'s class. She helped him with his math, and they became friends.

Paulie T

This was a mean tree that Ida B. referred to as a punk.



Objects/Places

Home

This is a farm with lots of land that Ida B. loves. It's a place filled with love.

Orchard

This is where Ida B. goes to have fun. It's filled with apple trees and Ida B. likes to go there to talk with nature and draw.

Bus

This is something that Ida B. hates. It makes her feel squished and takes her to a place she doesn't want to go to.

Kindergarten Classroom

This is an orderly room where fun things can only be accessed at certain times. Ida B. doesn't like it here.

Fourth Grade Classroom

This is a pleasant, busy place that Ida B. is determined to dislike. It's where she learns that she loves reading out loud.

Apples

Ida B. loves these. She has them with her lunch every day.

Cancer

Ida B.'s world changes when her mother gets this. The treatments are very hard on her family.

Soap

Ida B. uses this in a concoction that irritates her so she has to go to a doctor.



Hair

Mama loses this, and Ida B. collected it and put it under her pillow.

Bag of Assorted Things

This is a collection for Not Yet Determined Plans. Ida B. keeps it under her pillow.

Signs

These are what Ida B. made to put up so she could scare the new neighbors away. They thought they were jokes.

Reading

This is what Ida B. loved to do, and she had to do it in front of the class. She lost herself in it.



Themes

Life is About Fun

Ida B. thinks takes the idea of having fun very seriously. When her dad tries to get her to slow down, she tells him how important it is to get tasks done so that fun can happen. This is such a key theme in this book that it's part of the title. Ida B. finds that playing with her cat and dog is fun. She also finds fun as she draws and talks with the trees and brook. She reaches out to others, trying to learn more about the world. This is shown when she makes rafts and sends them down the brook. She asks people to respond to her, but when the responses are boring (in her opinion), she tries to bring more fun to them in a fun follow-up thank you note.

When she was in kindergarten, Ida B. had a very hard time dealing with school. Her classroom had fun things in it, but she wasn't allowed to play with them until the "right time." Instead, she found herself trapped in a room, gazing at the outdoors she longed to join. It made her feel stifled. That was why her parents decided to home-school her. The home-schooling worked well for them all for a while, then trouble hit.

Ida B.'s idyllic world becomes not-so-fun when her mother became ill. Everything in her world was turned upside-down. Thanks to a patient teacher, understanding classmates and caring parents, Ida B. learned that one can still find fun and good things around even when times are tough.

Changes in Education

When Ida B. Was young, she went to kindergarten in a regular school. It was a horrible experience for her, and she felt as if she was shrinking inside. She tried to obey the rules, but it was very hard for her, and she couldn't understand why there wasn't any fun. She became so quiet and withdrawn that her mother came to school to visit for a day, and she had a similar reaction. After talking with the father, they decided to home-school Ida B.

Ida B. Loved being home-schooled. She still had to work hard, learning things and taking tests, but she also had freedom. She was surrounded by people, pets, and things she loved. When her work was finished, she could go outside and enjoy some fun.

After her mother became ill, her parents couldn't teach her properly so Ida B. had to go back to school. This was a traumatizing experience for her, and she was determined to hate it. Her teacher understood her, and gave her the space to get used to her new situation. She encouraged Ida B. To try things, but didn't force her.

Gradually, Ida realized there were some things about school that she appreciated. She loved to read out loud to the class, and she discovered she was good at it. She also learned that she could help other students, and that they were kind to her.



Dealing With Hardship

Ida B. seems to have the perfect life. She is loved and secure in her existence. When she tries to go to kindergarten, her secure world is thrown off a bit. In a new situation without as much freedom as she is used to, she feels as if she is shriveling inside. Ida B. doesn't rebel. She respects her mother's wishes to try to make it work, and she does her best to respect the teacher, but it doesn't work very well. Her mother comes to her rescue and after checking out the school situation herself, decides to educate Ida B. At home.

After several years of home-schooling, the trees she loves so much give Ida B. a warning that things are going to change. Her mother becomes very ill and it changes important facets of Ida B.'s life. Her father has to sell some of the land that they both love so dearly to help pay the medical bills. Ida B. learns that she has to go back to school. This time, she doesn't deal with hardship well. She is older now, and instead of doing her best to deal with the situation, she hardens her heart. Ida B. comes up with a plan to hate school and not show love to her parents or the people who are going to live on the land they have to sell. She even becomes angry with the trees who foretold the tough times ahead. It's only through patience, understanding, and the love of those around her that Ida B. finds her way through the tough times and learns that life can be fun once again.



Style

Point of View

This story is told from a first-person subjective point-of-view. It's told from the viewpoint of Ida B. Since it is subjective, the readers gain insight into Ida B.'s thought processes and reactions to events surrounding her. For instance, when her kindergarten teacher calls her Ida, she says that she only raised her hand part-way in response since the teacher didn't use her full name.

While the story is generally told in a linear manner, there are flashbacks to previous times such as her kindergarten experiences. She also comments on the fact that she had to go back to school before the reader discovers that her mother is ill. This suggests that the story is written from Ida B.'s point-of-view after all the events occurred.

Setting

This story takes place on a farm. This is important because it shows that Ida B. is used to isolated areas. She is also deeply connected to nature, as is her father. This makes things all the more agonizing for her when the family has to sell some of the land. By this point, the reader sees her connection to each tree, and it feels as if the father is selling off a family member.

School life is very different from home-school life. The reader sees the harshness of her kindergarten room contrasted with the fun, love, nurturing education she receives at home. This makes going back to school especially harsh, but then the readers sees a different sort of school environment in which teacher bridges the school and home setting in her nurturing classroom.

Language and Meaning

"Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan is a book for school-age children, and it's vocabulary reflects this. The language and sentence structure are simple yet engaging. The author stands out in her words usage as she taps into the nuances of common childhood thinking and behavior. For example, when she is angry with her father, the author doesn't simply state that Ida B. was mad and wanted to lash out at her father. Instead, she wrote:

"No, Daddy! Just no!" I yelled, and I crossed my arms and shook my head back and forth with my eyes closed, my pigtails snapping in the air like whips. I was hoping one of them might give Daddy a good, sharp flick.

Structure

"Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan consists of a cover, a title page and 32 chapters that are labeled only by number. These are followed by Acknowledgements and a section about the author then praise for the book, a copyright and a note about the publisher. The chapters vary in length running between two and ten pages on average.

Quotes

And staring right into his eyeballs I told him, "There is never enough time for fun."
Chapter 1, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 3.

"We heard a rumor that something bad's headed your way, Ida B."
Chapter 2, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 10.

That tree lets you know things, those things go into your heart, then they find their way up to your head, and once they get there they turn into words.
Chapter 2, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 14.

"But I want you to remember this: We don't own the earth. We are the earth's caretakers, Ida B." Here he took another one of those deep breaths. "I'm grateful we have this land and grateful that you'll have it, too. But we don't own it. We take care of it and all of the things on it. And when we're done with it, it should be left better than we found it."
Chapter 4, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 29.

There was a quiet in that kitchen I'd never heard before, like the whole world had stopped. And I knew that if I went outside right then, there would be no wind, the plants would have stopped growing, and the sun would be frozen in the sky.
Chapter 8, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 61.

We walked so lightly on the floors. I don't know if we were trying not to wake Mama or trying not to wake the cancer.
Chapter 9, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 69.

Then, when no one was paying any mind, I'd go into my room, close the door, sit on the floor behind my bed, and cry and cry—for Mama and Daddy and me, and for all the love that seemed wasted because it couldn't fix Mama.
Chapter 9, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 71.

I couldn't see anything except blackness, or hear anything except a kind of ringing, and all I felt was emptiness everywhere around me. I don't
Chapter 11, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 82.



But I knew I was right because here's the thing: how do you run and play when you feel like there are bricks of the heaviest sadness weighing down every part of your body?
Chapter 15, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 107.

My rock-hard heart swelled up a little bit, even though I didn't want it to.
Chapter 19, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 136.

My cold, hard heart was in top form, and it was not taking prisoners, including sick ones, tired ones, or overburdened ones, in particular.
Chapter 23, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 172.

She sat there beside me, both of us looking out, blinking every once in a while, and I let what she said to me settle into my heart. After a couple of minutes, a peace rolled out from that place into every part of me, so even my head felt light and a tiny bit dizzy.
Chapter 26, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 204.

But sometimes, when you haven't talked with a friend for a while, even if it's strange and stiff and you don't quite know what to say, it can still feel better than ever.
Chapter 30, "Ida B...And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World" by Katherine Hannigan p. 227.



Topics for Discussion

Describe Ida B. at the beginning of the book and compare that to Ida B. when she goes back to school.

What was Ida B.'s education like when her parents were her teachers?

How did Ida B. have fun with nature?

The trees told Ida B. that a storm was coming. What was the storm?

Compare Ida B.'s kindergarten experience to her fourth grade experience. How were the teachers different? How did she respond to them?

What was unique about Claire and the way she treated Ida B.?

How does Ida B.'s relationship with her parents change and evolve throughout the novel?