

Missing Mike

About the book:

He's a rescue, a mutt. Maybe there's a little golden retriever in him, although he's not exactly pretty. He's had a run-in with coyotes and he's missing an eye. But Mike is eleven-year-old Cara Donovan's dog, and they love each other absolutely. Usually her pet follows Cara everywhere, but on the day the family first smells smoke in the air, Mike becomes anxious. Pine Grove is in the path of a wildfire, and the family is ordered to evacuate. In the ensuing chaos, Mike runs off. And then the unthinkable happens; there is no time to search for Mike. They are forced to leave him behind.

Shocked and devastated, Cara watches helplessly as the family drives through a nightmare, with burning debris falling from the sky and wild animals fleeing for their lives. Once in the city far from the burn zone, the Donovans are housed with a volunteer host family. Jewel, the hosts' daughter, is nice, but Cara can only think about what she may have lost. What will happen if nothing is left? But as she reflects on what "home" means to her, Cara knows only one thing. She is *not* going to lose Mike. She will do what it takes to find him, even if it means going back to Pine Grove on her own.



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Juvenile Fiction Ages 8–12

Suggested Activities:

In the news. Collect news stories of recent/current natural disasters and pinpoint the locations on a national or world map, or print out a map of current wildfires or evacuation areas. Have students create a news story focusing on the “helpers” – the volunteers at evacuation centers, firefighters, rescue workers, medical personnel, staff at animal shelters, etc. (***current events, computer skills, writing***)

Just in case. Have students think about what they'd put in their own just-in-case backpack of necessities and treasures. Have them draw a backpack, then “fill it” by creating a collage of their items and gluing it onto the pack. (***empathy, art***) Alternatively, have them create a crossword puzzle using their list of items.

The meaning of home. Before reading *Missing Mike*, brainstorm with students to create a list of words for home. After reading, see what words they can add to the list. Have students choose their own words for home and write either a personal journal entry or a poem for sharing. (***reading comprehension, personal reflection, creative writing***)

Pets. Poll students to collect data about the types of pets they have (or would choose to have). Have students create a bar graph or pie chart to display the data. (***stats/math***)