

Reader's Guide  
For  
*Up and Down the Scratchy Mountains*  
OR  
*The Search for a Suitable Princess*  
by  
Laurel Snyder  
A Debut Middle Grade Novel

About the Book

This is the tale of Lucy (a milkmaid), and her best friend Wynston (who happens to be a prince, though that's not really his fault). Until recently, they spent their days together, romping through berry patches, and teasing each other mercilessly. But now Wynston is getting older, and King Desmond insists he devote every second to the overly-complicated process of princess-finding, which is known in the Bewilderness as Queening.

Her feelings hurt, Lucy (by law an *unsuitable* match for the prince) sets out to find her long-lost mother, on the Scratchy Mountains, accompanied only by a sniffly prairie dog and an obstinate young cow. Of course, when Wynston discovers that Lucy is gone, he tears after her, and their adventure begins.

Told in a classic whimsical style, with snippets of song and a good dose of humor, *Up and Down the Scratchy Mountains* will inspire kids to laugh, sing, and question the world in all the right ways.

About the Author

Laurel Snyder is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and a commentator for NPR's *All Things Considered*. She has written for *Salon.com*, *The Utne Reader*, and many other publications. Laurel is also the author of a picture book, *Inside the Slidy Diner*, and several collections for grownups. A native of Baltimore, she now lives with her family in Atlanta, and online at <http://laurelsnyder.com>.

Discussion Questions

1. If you could live in Torrent or Thistle, which would you choose? Why? How are they different? Are there any ways in which they're the same?
2. Would you rather travel with Lucy or Wynston for company? Why? What would be fun about it? What would be a pain?
3. What do you think happens to Willy after he gets home to Torrent?
4. Have you ever been in a situation where breaking a rule was the right thing to do?
5. Can you think of anyone in history who broke the rules in a good way? (Rosa Parks, George Washington, Mohandas Gandhi, etc)

### Activity: Unsuitable Crowns

By the end of the book, we understand that although Lucy isn't a "suitable" princess, she *is* smart, resourceful, and strong-willed. All of which will make her a good queen. This leads easily to a discussion about conventional roles identity.

1. Have students brainstorm a list of roles/titles. You might begin with "doctor, parent, teacher, basketball player, friend" to get them going.
2. Have each student choose a role.
3. Now have each student make a paper crown with *their* role written on it.
4. Ask them to describe their role to the class. These should be "suitable" traits. What does a doctor *look* like? (male? Old?) What do we *assume* about a good friend? (same age? lives nearby?) Have them write these things on the crown.
5. Now have them flip the crown over and make a list of opposites. Answers will make kids laugh (Short basketball player? Rockstar mom?) For real fun, have them *draw* the second version of each role.

### Secondary Activity:

Have students brainstorm about historical figures who have accomplished great things for which society deemed them "unsuitable" and discuss how their unsuitability made them powerful and perfect. Rosa Parks? Queen Elizabeth? Elvis Presley? How many can you come up with?