

Across the Desert by Dusti Bowling

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Jolene loves watching *The Desert Aviator*, a livestream of twelve-year-old “Addie Earhart” flying her ultralight plane and exploring the desert. Addie finds a new friend through her chats with Jolene, her biggest and only fan.

Jolene dreams of becoming an explorer, too, and of escaping her troubles at home, where she has to hide her mother’s opioid addiction.

Then it all goes wrong: Addie’s engine abruptly stops, and Jolene watches in helpless horror as the ultralight crashes and the video goes dark. With no one to turn to for help and only a hand drawn map and a stolen cell phone to rely on, Joelene must find a way to save the Desert Aviator.

Discussion, revision & competition-like questions for this book are below.

Reading Rivalry Is Not a test!

Note the Reading Rivalry questions are tools used to discuss the book(s) and topics the students read.

The intent of RR is to foster a love of reading, introduce the students to books they may not otherwise choose, provide opportunities to work as a team and have fun!

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- 1. What did Joelene watch at the library?**
Addie “Earhart,” The Desert Aviator online.
- 2. What does Addie fly?**
An ultralight trike – a glider with three wheels and a propeller.
- 3. What happened before Joelene’s mom had a drug addiction?**
Joelene and her mom got in a car crash.
- 4. What feeling does Joelene always get?**
The car crash feeling.
- 5. Joelene figured out where Addie flies, where?**
The Alamo Lakes area, in Arizona.
- 6. What did Marie Tharp map?**
Marie Tharp mapped the ocean floor.
- 7. What did Kira Shingareva map?**
Kira Shingareva mapped the moon.
- 8. Who was the first woman to drive across the Sahara?**
Eva Dickson.
- 9. What is drawing maps called?**
Cartography.
- 10. What things does Joelene take with her on her journey?**
(i) Her map of Alamo Lake, (ii) her mom’s phone & charger, (iii) a gallon of tap water, (iv) saltine crackers, (v) a can of sardines, (vi) a stale loaf of bread, (vii) her mom’s cracked sunglasses, (viii) a spiral notebook, (ix) some rubber bands, (x) a pencil (xi) her mother’s credit cards and (xii) a backpack.
- 11. What vehicle does Jolene first ride in and who does she meet?**
The city bus, she meets Marty who is 17.
- 12. Who was Addie’s favorite pilot?**
Bessie Coleman.
- 13. Where does Jolene hide the motor-bike (has a flat-tire)?**
In some bushes under a sign that says, "YOU'RE NOW BEYOND HOPE."

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14. What gives Joelene some comfort in the dark desert?

The stars.

15. Where does Marty find Jolene after she ran away from Quartzsite?

On a bench at the abandoned gas station in Wenden.

16. What did Marty fill with water?

A salsa jar.

17. What would Joelene like to see in Paris and in Africa?

The Louvre & the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The Sahara Desert in Africa.

18. In the Flipside Café the lady thinks the two girls are sisters-

a. What "name" does Marty give to Jolene? Bertha

b. What "name" does Jolene give to Marty? Olga.

19. According to Joanie Cash (the first commercial woman commercial pilot), what is more important than money?

To have heart.

20. Why does Marty draw a line half-way through that water jug?

To show that when they drink down the line, that is when they must turn around.

21. What does Addie draw on Jolene's map?

An unsteady line from the mine, through the desert on the other side from where they came from, back to the Flipside Cafe. An easier route back to the café with no hills.

22. Why does Addie write down her mom's name, phone number, and address?

In case she loses consciousness, Jolene and Marty can tell people information.

23. What do Jolene and Marty make to carry Addie with from the ultralight?

A stretcher.

24. Who comes to pick up Jolene and Marty from the Flipside Cafe?

Marty's parents.

25. How did Lucy, Marty's sister, die?

She overdosed on heroin.

26. What did Marty's mom start?

A charity called Lucy's Hope.

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27. What surprise did Joanie Cash have for Jolene?

Jolene got to fly in Joanie's plane.

Discussion questions

1. What is your favorite thing about the book?
2. It is cool to discover something new, even if it is small. What did you discover this year?
3. On page 90 Addie says, "I belong in the sky". Where do you belong?
4. Where would you like to travel to?
5. On page 264 Mrs. Peterson says, "Sometimes telling your story is the best thing you can do to help someone". Why?
6. Is there a difference between being realistic and being negative?
7. What three words would you use to describe Joelene?
8. "It takes courage to show people your tears." Discuss.