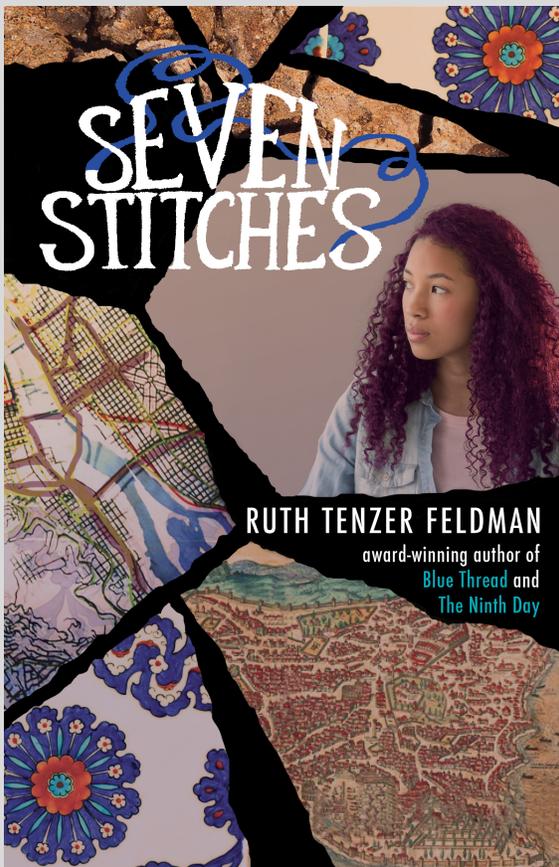


Seven Stitches Teacher's Guide



SEVEN STITCHES by Ruth Tenzer Feldman

Grade Level: Sixth–Tenth

Genres:

- Young Adult
- Historical Fiction
- Time Travel
- Survival Stories

Topics:

- Cultural Awareness
- Family Ties
- Homelessness
- Grief Management
- Natural Disaster Awareness

SEVEN STITCHES

By Ruth Tenzer Feldman

Book Description

It's been a year since the Big One—the Cascadia subduction zone earthquake—devastated Portland. While Meryem Zarfati's injuries have healed and her neighborhood is rebuilding, her mother is still missing. Refusing to give up hope, Meryem continues to search for her mother even as she learns to live without her in a changed Portland and honor her Jewish and Vietnamese heritage. After she receives a magical prayer shawl handed down from her maternal grandmother, a mysterious stranger appears, and Meryem is called to save a young girl living in slavery—in sixteenth-century Istanbul. The third companion in the Oregon Book Award-winning Blue Thread series explores how we recover—and rebuild—after the worst has happened.

About the Author

Ruth Tenzer Feldman is the author of three young adult novels: *Seven Stitches*, *The Ninth Day*, and *Blue Thread*, winner of the Leslies Bradshaw Award for Young Adult Literature and listed by the American Library Association as one of the best feminist books for young readers. Ruth has written ten nonfiction books for children and young adults, including *The Fall of Constantinople*, and numerous articles in science and history. She lives in Portland, Oregon.

Overview

An ambitious story that blends speculative and historical fiction with a dose of magic, *Seven Stitches* is the companion to Feldman's previous YA novels *Blue Thread* and *The Ninth Day*. Each of these books centers around a different generation of a West Coast Jewish family. All three generations are united by a magical family heirloom—a prayer shawl embroidered with a blue thread that gives the bearer the ability to time travel. From its seamless approach to multiculturalism to its civic-minded protagonist, this book lends itself well to student discussion and engagement. This guide includes questions and activities centered around five topics: cultural awareness, homelessness, family ties, grief management, and disaster awareness (including the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake).

Cultural Awareness

Middle School: Create a chart comparing the cultural communities (e.g., Middle Eastern, Jewish, Vietnamese, sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire, Pacific Northwest) discussed in *Seven Stitches*. How are they different? How are they the same?

High School: Even though *Seven Stitches* is set in both the future and the past, how does it relate to what is going on today? What aspects of these time periods can we use in our present-day cultural communities? What can we learn from history?

Homelessness

Middle School: Think about Calantha Corps and how they work to protect the homeless population in Portland. What measures are taken in *Seven Stitches* to help this population? What measures are taken in present-day? What can we learn from Bandon and Calantha Corps' efforts?

High School: What are tangible efforts we as a community can take to protect and assist the homeless population in our communities? Either individually or in a group, utilize governmental, nonprofit, and ground-level organizations and efforts (and ideas in *Seven Stitches*) to formulate a concrete action plan.

Family Ties

Middle School: Describe the relationship between Meryem and Jessa. Is there anyone in your life with whom you have a similar relationship? How is their relationship different from a typical mother-daughter relationship (and how is it the same)?

High School: Family extends far beyond a bloodline. Using characters found in *Seven Stitches*, describe Meryem's "family" and formulate your own definition for what it means to share family ties. How does Meryem's unique family connect to your own family? If it does not, analyze the reason for these differences.

Grief Management & Coping Skills

Middle School: Have you ever experienced loss? How did you respond? How can you relate to Meryem's experience (and if you can't, why is that)?

High School: Grief is often defined by five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. How does Meryem work through and manage each of these stages? Which stage do you think is most important? Are there any stages that Meryem seems to avoid or not work through? Why do you think that is?

Natural Disaster Awareness

Middle School: As a class, and using *Seven Stitches* as a guide, come up with a group disaster preparedness checklist. Think of the before, during, and after phases when creating the plan. *See Appendix A for a sample checklist.*

High School: In what ways does Meryem's community prepare for and respond to the earthquake? What organizations in our present-day communities do this work?

High School: Create your own disaster preparedness plan. How does it differ from the plan in *Seven Stitches*? If you were in a governmental position, what would you focus on when responding to a natural disaster like The Big One? What factors do you think contribute to lack of action?

For more information about earthquake preparedness, teachers and students can access the Oregon Resilience Plan online. The executive summary is located here:
www.oregon.gov/OMD/OEM/osspace/docs/Oregon_Resilience_Plan_Executive_Summary_Final.pdf

Appendix A: How to Survive “The Big One”

An Earthquake Preparedness Checklist

BEFORE: Prepare

- Secure items that might fall and cause injuries (e.g., bookshelves, light fixtures, mirrors).
- Practice how to “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” by participating in a ShakeOut.org drill.
- Store critical supplies and documents.
- Plan how you will communicate with family.

DURING: Survive

- DROP down onto your hands and knees so the earthquake does not knock you down.
- COVER your head and neck with your arms to protect yourself from falling debris. If you are in danger of falling objects and can move safely, crawl to a safer place or seek cover.
- HOLD ON to any sturdy covering so you can move with it until the shaking stops.

AFTER: Recover

- If you are in a damaged building and there is a safe way out through the debris, go to an open space outside, away from damaged areas.
- If trapped, do not move about or kick the dust.
- If you have a cell phone, call or text for help.
- Tap on a pipe or wall or use a whistle, if you have one, so that rescuers can locate you.
- Once safe, monitor local news reports (e.g., radio, TV, social media, cell phone text alerts) for emergency information and instructions.

Information obtained from the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management.

Appendix B: *Seven Stitches* Family Tree

Names in blue have traveled with Serakh. Bolded names in black are direct descendants who have not traveled. Non-bolded names in black are married into the family or non-direct descendants.

