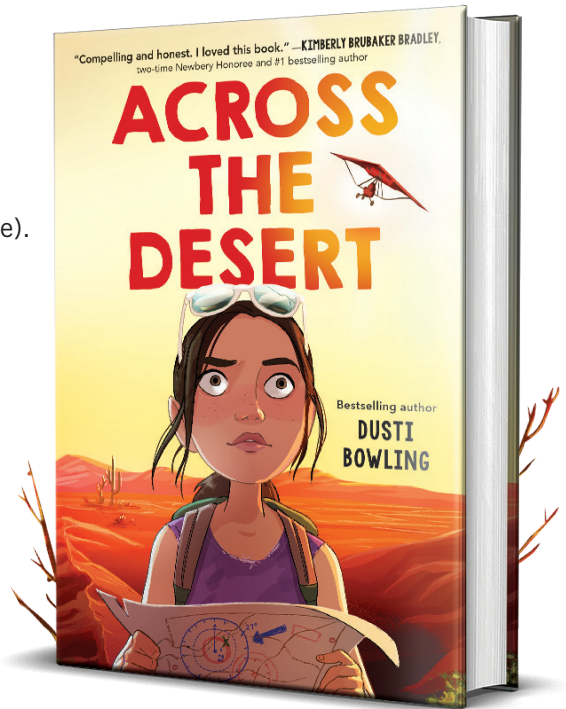


ACROSS THE DESERT

BOOK CLUB GUIDE

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. **MAPMAKING.** Jolene is a cartographer—someone who creates maps—and she makes a map of where Addie flies, and then uses it to help save her. Create your own map of either a real or imaginary place. Include a title, scale (showing what distance equals what measurement on your map), legend (an explanation of your map's symbols), and compass rose (for directional reference).
2. **MAP READING.** Get a map of Arizona—whether online, in an atlas, or folded—and follow Jolene's journey from Phoenix to Quartzsite to Alamo Lake State Park. Now get a map of your home state and choose a location to which you would like to travel. How would you get there? Would you take a car, a bus, a train, or something else? Figure out how long you would need to make the trip and how much it would cost.
3. **PAPER AIRPLANES.** Addie takes to the air in her ultralight! Grab paper and watch some YouTube instructional videos on how to make different paper airplanes. Pick two favorites to create on your own and race them!



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jolene observes, “It’s pretty cool to discover something, even something small. Even if I’m not the first person to discover it” (p. 4). Why is the act of discovery so exciting? What is something that you discovered this year?
2. Jolene gets frustrated when adults won’t listen to her. Why do you think grown-ups sometimes dismiss kids or don’t believe them?
3. Why does Jolene try to hide the truth about her mom’s addiction to painkillers? Is she protecting her mom, herself, or both?
4. Marty offers the advice, “Keeping secrets doesn’t always help people. Sometimes you need to tell the truth to help them” (p. 90). When should you keep a secret, and when should you tell it?
5. In one of her Blipstream messages, Addie says, “I belong in the sky” (p. 168). Where do you most feel like you belong?
6. The novel moves across Arizona, from the city of Phoenix, to the small town of Quartzsite, to the desert of Alamo Lake—and back again. If you live in Arizona or have visited any of these sites, how do you feel reading about places that you have experienced? If you haven’t been to them, how does the author help you imagine Arizona?
7. Marty doesn’t believe anyone is actually lost in the desert, yet she helps Jolene anyway. Why?
8. Mrs. Peterson says, “Sometimes telling your story is the best thing you can do to help someone” (p. 264). Why might someone not want to tell their story? How can finding the courage to tell your story help other people? How can it help you?
9. Why does it matter that Jolene’s mom looks directly at Jolene when she says at group therapy, “I’m an opioid addict” (p. 295)?
10. What three words would you use to describe Jolene? How do you think Jolene would describe herself? How do her big adventure and new friendships change how she sees herself?
11. In her author’s note, Dusti Bowling shares why she wrote this novel and how you, her reader, inspire her. Why does being seen by others who have had similar experiences matter? How is Jolene truly seen by Marty?