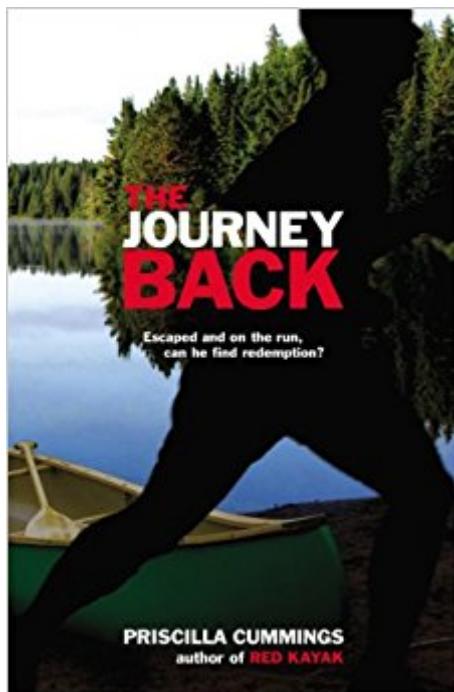


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# The Journey Back



## Synopsis

A teenage boy faces his past and seeks redemption in the gripping companion book to *Red Kayak*. Nine months in a juvenile detention facility was the punishment for his crime. After just a month he makes a bold escape that nearly kills him and soon an angry fourteen-year-old Digger is on the run. When injuries stop him, Digger hides at a riverside campground, where he befriends a young boy and a girl his own age. New friends, a job caring for rescued horses, and risking his life to save another make Digger realize that the journey back is not just about getting home. But he comes to terms with his troubled past and face what he's really running from?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up-Michael "Digger" Griswald, from *The Red Kayak* (Dutton, 2004), takes center stage here. After his 14th birthday, he escapes from the Cliffside Youth Detention Center, where he has been incarcerated for his role in a young boy's death, and heads home to protect his mother and young siblings from his abusive father. After stealing a tractor trailer and driving to the C&O Canal towpath, the angry teen takes a bike, food, and a canoe to continue his journey. However, his progress is hindered when he injures his ankle and gets a bad case of poison ivy. A stray dog becomes his companion and he happens upon third-grader Luke and teenager Nora. They take him to a campground home, where he hides out with Luke and his father. The incorporation of the poverty seen in the campground provides a glimpse into a life in America. Digger gets a job and grows closer to Luke and develops feelings for Nora. He also processes his anger issues and he gains a

stronger sense of self and accountability for his actions. While the tied-up loose ends, didactic nature of the plot, and clean language might induce eye-rolling from discerning readers, the book's life lessons have merits. Cummings focuses on "if/then" and TOP (think of the other person) thinking. She incorporates these life skills into the story through memories, contemplation, and a white laminated card of Cliffside rules that Digger carries. -Adrienne L. Strock, Maricopa County Library District, AZ (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Fourteen-year-old Digger schemes about bolting from Cliffside Youth Detention Center so he can get home to protect his mother and siblings from his dad's rage. (He is in there for a caper that went tragically wrong—see Cummings' *Red Kayak*, 2004.) From his jaw-dropping escape in a garbage truck to the commandeering of a semi and other thefts along his desperate trek, Digger careens through the Maryland countryside. Hiding out in a campground, he meets an interesting community of folks living on the edge who enrich—and sometimes crowd—the story with lively subplots. Thanks to a new connection with a girl named Norah, Digger spends time caring for rescued horses and begins envisioning himself in a better light. While the thoughtful riffs on morality can get a bit overdone and a couple of farmhands are needlessly stereotyped, this high-action journey has suspense to spare, and the continual near misses will keep readers cheering for Digger. Technically a sequel, this works just fine on its own. Grades 7-10. --Anne O'Malley --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

THE JOURNEY BACK is the story of Digger Griswald. He's on the run after escaping a youth detention center where he is serving time for the death of a young boy, the result of a prank gone awry. Digger wants to get home to help protect his mother and siblings from his abusive father. In this, the follow-up novel to RED KAYAK, author Priscilla Cummings tracks Digger's escape path through rural Maryland as he faces one obstacle after another. An exciting read for young adults, Cummings tells a suspenseful tale filled with hard lessons and tender moments. Yes, a coming of age story, but one with emotional twists and turns that will keep your mind wondering what's next and your heart pounding for a young boy searching for inner peace. THE JOURNEY BACK is a great emotional trek—but even better if you precede it with RED KAYAK.

I think I liked this one more than Cummings' first book although this one is the sequel to Red Kayak.

There is no need to read the first one, though. Digger comes across as real, and the reader watches his transformation from a selfish angry young man to someone who really does face his responsibility.

This book stands alone, but having read Red Kayak, my middle school class was thrilled to find this book. They loved the action and the suspense. I liked the fact that, again, Ms. Cummings shows clearly how small choices lead to big consequences. I think that Red Kayak and The Journey Back should be required reading for all middle school boys.

I teach middle school English. As a class we read The Red Kayak. My students loved that book, then we realized that there was a sequel, "The Journey Back". We also read this novel as a class. I have never read a book that has kept the attention of ALL of my students like this book. It is thoughtful, well written and about topics that are meaningful and thought provoking.

I read the red kayak before and I enjoyed it and when I read this one I liked it even more I gave this five stars because the book drags you in to the story although one the it didn't have a lot of a mystery like the first one but I still enjoy it I think this book is for everyone I love this book a like this series I can't wait to read the next book I hope this is helpful

Great book, great lesson learned! I'm not sure it was as appropriate as "The Red Kayak" that I read to my fifth graders. I understand that some of the language/content might have been necessary to keep the characters "true" and believable, however I ended up editing some of it out.

I live in Maryland. I can picture the places in the story. In addition to connecting to the setting, I think this is an action packed story of one young man's journey to finding himself. It's an excellent read for middle school kids. It is a sequel.

Recently read this book with my 7th grade class. An excellent sequel to the Red Kayak. There were parts in the book that actually made me cry. This book starts off right where the other one leaves off. My kids were so excited to find out what happened to the characters and enjoyed the book as much as I did.

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