

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussions, library programs, or classroom activities.

Meet Mindy McGinnis, the Ohio-based author of twelve (and counting) compelling, thought-provoking teen novels.

Select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading *Heroine*.

Discover websites, readalikes, and other resources to explore topics and themes in depth.

Heroine

By Mindy McGinnis



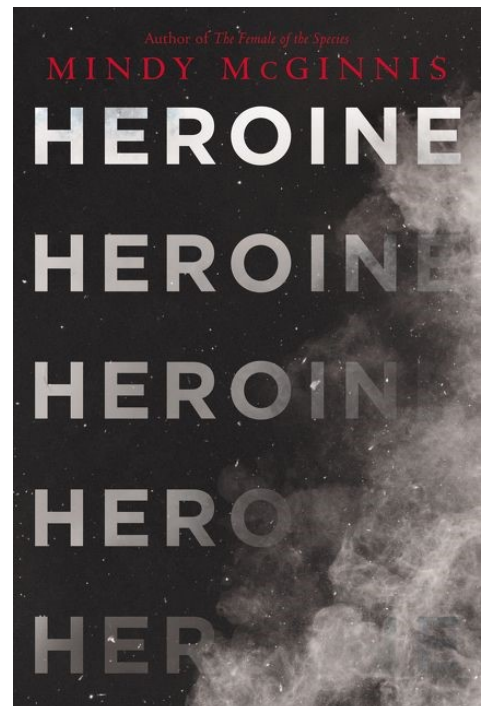
About the Book

When a car crash sidelines Mickey just before softball season, she has to find a way to hold on to her spot as the catcher for a team expected to make a historic tournament run. Behind the plate is the only place she's ever felt comfortable, and the painkillers she's been prescribed can help her get there.

The pills do more than take away pain; they make her feel good.

With a new circle of friends—fellow injured athletes, others with just time to kill—Mickey finds peaceful acceptance, and people with whom words come easily, even if it is just the pills loosening her tongue. But as the pressure to be Mickey Catalan heightens, her need increases, and it becomes less about pain and more about want, something that could send her spiraling out of control.

Edgar Award-winning author Mindy McGinnis lays bare an honest exploration of the opioid crisis through the eyes of one girl, a visceral and necessary story about addiction, family, friendship, and hope.



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Book Details

Heroine by Mindy McGinnis.
HarperCollins, 2020. ISBN 9780062847201. 418 pages. Ages 14 and up.
Leveled reading: 900 Lexile. ATOS book level: 5.7. AR Pts: 13.0
www.harpercollins.com/products/heroine-mindy-mcginnis

Available as an ebook and digital audiobook through the Ohio Digital Library:
ohiodigitallibrary.com



Author photo and biography courtesy HarperCollins; used with permission.

“Every time I pop a pill I’m doing it so that Mom has a kid she can be proud of…”

I’m not taking Oxy because it makes me feel good. I’m taking it for other people.”

About the Author

Mindy McGinnis is the author of ***Not a Drop to Drink*** and its companion, ***In a Handful of Dust***, as well as ***This Darkness Mine***, ***The Female of the Species***, ***Given to the Sea***, ***Heroine***, and the Edgar Award–winning novel ***A Madness So Discreet***. See a list of all of Mindy’s books:

www.mindymcginnis.com/young-adult-books. ***Not a Drop to Drink*** and ***The Female of the Species*** are previous Choose to Read Ohio selections. A graduate of Otterbein University with a BA in English literature and religion, Mindy lives and works in her hometown in central Ohio.

Author Resources

Mindy McGinnis’s official website
mindymcginnis.com

Author page on HarperCollins website
www.harpercollins.com/blogs/authors/mindy-mcginnis

Writer Writer Pants on Fire
www.mindymcginnis.com/blog
Mindy McGinnis’s blog for and about writers.

Writer Writer Pants on Fire podcast
www.mindymcginnis.com/podcast
Mindy has been blogging since 2011 and began podcasting in 2017.

Biography from the Ohio Center for the Book
<https://ohiocenterforthebook.org/2017/10/13/mcginnis-mindy/>

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:
See www.mindymcginnis.com/educators or contact Mindy through her website: www.mindymcginnis.com/contact

Go Further

Mindy McGinnis has inspired many young writers to write about realistic topics and to write truthfully for a teen audience. These resources, including Mindy’s own story of becoming a writer, will inspire you to explore your own creative writing ideas.

Mindy’s Success Story
querytracker.net/success/mindy_mcginnis.php

7 Tips for Teen Writers
youtu.be/gcm0YR-piVs
Writing tips from author Mel TorreFranca, who published the book ***Leaving Wishville*** at age 17.

The Importance of Writing Realistically for Teens
twowritingteachers.org/2017/05/16/watson

More on the last page!

Talk About It

Topics to share when discussing **Heroine** with teens.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Other Learning Standards, such as Social and Emotional Learning: Responsible Decision Making (HS) may also apply, as may Health Education curricula at the high school level. Discussion questions and educational activities for **Heroine** align with Learning Standards for Grades 9-12.

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, education.ohio.gov. From the Topics dropdown menu, click on "Learning in Ohio."

Spoiler warning! Some discussion questions refer to key elements in the book. Do not read if you do not want to find out what happens.

Mickey feels a hole in her life because she's adopted. In what ways does she realize this (more) after her accident?

How does Mickey's addiction begin? At what point does she realize that she needs the pills?

How is Mickey taught at an early age, mostly by her grandpa, to manage pain? In what ways has she been taught to take care of her body as an athlete? Mickey views the Oxy as allowing her to push herself. Do the pills allow this, or are they just masking the pain? Is the medication ever helpful or healing?

Edith steps into Mickey's life when she's most in pain and eventually becomes her drug dealer. What stereotypes does Edith break about what/who a drug dealer is? Does buying from Edith make it "easier" for Mickey to rationalize buying pills?

Mickey spends most of the book coming up with excuses for why she continues to use. What rationalizations does she make for using Oxy, and then heroin? What expectations or pressures does Mickey feel, both as a daughter and as an athlete? How does the role of star athlete/local celebrity affect Luther and Mickey in their addictions?

Discuss the ways that the car accident weighs on Mickey—does Carolina blame her for the accident? Does her boyfriend Aaron blame her? Does she blame herself?

Mickey says that using drugs makes her good at hiding things. What is she hiding, both literally and emotionally? How does Mickey's dad's new family add to her stress? What coping mechanisms and ways of hiding does Mickey use to keep her habit going?

Mickey describes using heroin as finding her mother. What feelings does heroin provide or replace for Mickey? Are Edith and Josie really her family?

When she first uses heroin, does it sound attractive? Scary? How does the reader's view of Mickey's drug use change as the book progresses? Mickey says that using heroin is "too easy." Is it? How does Mickey's addiction change when she goes from using Oxy to using heroin?

How/why does Mickey use Patrick to rationalize her friends overdosing? How do her friends' deaths affect her at first? How does Mickey come to terms with her role in their deaths?

As the book ends, do you think Mickey will be okay? Will she stay clean? Will she go to college? Will she reach her career goal of being a gym teacher? Will she and Caroline ever be friends again? Does the book have a hopeful ending?

Go Further (continued)

Mickey's status as a student athlete puts extra pressure on her to perform and to be a leader in her community. This status causes her to put pressure on herself physically and mentally. Why do communities place this pressure on athletes? What complications could arise from putting teens in the position of being star athletes? Check out the Kids Health website for information on dealing with stress in sports.

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/sports-pressure.html>

Would anything have changed for Mickey if her school participated in mandatory drug testing? Would her coach, teammates, and parents have been able to offer her help sooner, or would drug testing have ended her career? Do you think athletes should be drug tested if they participate in high school sports? Research drug testing and drug use by high school athletes using online resources available to students through INFOhio (infohio.org) and to all Ohio residents through Ohio Web Library (ohioweblibrary.org).

Mickey has body image issues—she feels taller, bulkier, and more awkward than other young women around her. She compares herself not only to her fellow softball teammates, but also to Josie, who is petite, popular, and physically attractive. How could Mickey have improved her self-image? Use INFOhio or Ohio Web Library to research strategies for developing a healthy body image.

Explore More

Here are some useful—and potentially life-saving—resources regarding addiction.

American Addiction Centers offers vital information about how to spot signs of opiate addiction and how to seek help and treatment.

americanaddictioncenters.org/oxycodone/signs-of-abuse

The **Partnership to End Addiction** website outlines the risks of heroin addiction and describes signs to look for, especially in young adults who are using.

drugfree.org/drugs/drug-heroin

The **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**, or SAMHSA, operates a 24/7 hotline for crisis care. Dial or text 988 for assistance.

www.samhsa.gov

Check It Out

*Recommended for readers of **Heroine** and fans of Mindy McGinnis.*

The Serpent King by Jeff Zentner

Shout by Laurie Halse Anderson

Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds

We Were Liars by E. Lockhart

Bone Gap by Laura Ruby

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits:
library.ohio.gov/ctro.

Toolkit created by Kimberly Greenfield Karshner, Lorain County Community College, August 2022. Links and other information are accurate at the time of publication.