



The Landing: 10th Anniversary Edition

Written by John Ibbitson

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Ages 12-14

Will Ben ever escape the Landing? The hardscrabble farm on the shores of Lake Muskoka can't generate a living, so Ben's Uncle Henry sells goods and gas to cottagers from the dock known as Cooks Landing. It had never been much of a living and since the Depression hit, it's even less. Ben's thinking a lot these days, and it's making him miserable. He's thinking about how unfair it is that his uncle only cares about work. He's thinking about what he really wants to do: play the violin. These days, he's lucky to snatch the odd bit of practice between chores, playing to the chickens in the henhouse. A new job fixing up the grand old cottage on nearby Pine Island seems, at first, to be just one more thing to keep Ben away from his violin. After he meets the island's owner, Ben changes his mind. Ruth Chapman is a cultured and wealthy woman from New York who introduces Ben to an unfamiliar, liberating world. After Ben plays his violin for Ruth and her admiring friends, it only makes him more desperate to flee. Then, during a stormy night on Lake Muskoka, everything changes.

Reading Levels

Guided Reading: Z

Guided Reading Grade Level: 7 and up

Lexile Level: 1020L

Accelerated Reader Interest Level: MG

Accelerated Reader Reading Level: 5.8

Praise for *The Landing*

"This novel, like Lake Muskoka, is deep. Character-driven, suspenseful, and historically accurate, it is both realistic and symbolic. In this respect, it is like The Great Gatsby, in which Gatsby, a vivid, complex personality, represents the American dream, and Jack London's The Call of the Wild, in which Buck, a realistic German Shepherd, represents the working class." — CM Magazine

"The Landing is geared toward young adults, but just as easily belongs to the Canadian coming-of-age genre occupied by the likes of Alice Munro and Margaret Laurence." — The Globe and Mail

"John Ibbitson's writing, spare and powerful throughout, soars when he captures the power of music." — Canadian Children's Book News

Author Biography

John Ibbitson's career as a journalist spans more than three decades, two of them at *The Globe and Mail*, which he joined in 1999. He has served as the paper's Queen's Park bureau chief, Washington bureau chief and Ottawa bureau chief, becoming Chief Political Writer in 2012 and Writer at Large in 2015.

John writes columns and features that focus on Canadian and American politics and global demographic trends. He is the author of more than a dozen books, including *The Landing* (winner of the Governor General's Literary Award for children's literature and the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People), *The Big Shift* (with Darrell Bricker) and *Stephen Harper* (winner of the 2015 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for political writing).

In February 2019, McClelland & Stewart in Canada, Crown in the United States, and Little, Brown and Company in the United Kingdom will publish *Empty Planet: The Shock of Global Population Decline*, co-authored with Darrell Bricker. *Empty Planet* is also being translated into Chinese, Spanish, Japanese and Korean.

John's work has been nominated for the National Newspaper Award, the Donner Prize, the B.C. National Book Award, the Trillium Book Award and the City of Toronto Book Award, among others.

The Landing Discussion Questions

1. Water imagery is used throughout the novel and first appears when Ben goes to his first concert. How is the water imagery tied into Ben's reaction to the music?
2. What has influenced Ben's views of a woman's role and how does Ruth challenge his perception of gender roles?
3. Setting plays a large role in the development of the story in *The Landing*. On page 103, Ben remarks that "this place was beautiful, yes, but it was also a trap." Can you explain what Ben means by this statement and can you think of other examples where this might be true today?
4. *The Landing* is seen as a coming-of-age story since it focuses on the time when a young person's impression of the world changes and they gain maturity and lose a little of the naiveté of childhood. What other books have you read that could be called the same and what criteria must a book have to be categorized as such?
5. Ben's life at the Landing and the world he glimpses through Ruth's life at Pine Island contrast each other greatly. Find examples of the differences between their two ways of life.
6. Besides Ruth, the majority of people Ben knows in town suffer from poverty due to the Depression. We see various people dealing with their unhappiness through alcoholism, such as Jed. Ben uses his love of music as an outlet for his unhappiness. How does the violin help him cope with life's difficulties? How do you think that Ben's feelings about his life would change if he didn't have the violin?
7. On page 107, Ben remarks that "His life belonged to others, everyone's life did." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Do you think that Uncle Henry, Ben's mother or Ruth Chapman would agree with this?

8. What was your first impression of Uncle Henry and did it change as the novel progressed?
9. Offhandedly, Uncle Henry remarks that "We don't have a choice. We never do." (page 136). What evidence is there in the book that no one has a choice over their fate? What evidence is there that they do?
10. Two historical events, the Great Depression and the sinking of the *Waome*, are explored in the novel. What did you learn about both events that you did not know before reading *The Landing*?
11. At the very end of the book, Ben says that "The Landing for Henry was like the violin for Ben. But Henry could never love the thing he was chained to." (page 154). What things are other characters chained to and do these things have a negative or positive impact on their lives?
12. Letting go becomes a theme of the novel at the end. What must Ben let go of as he moves into the future?

Historical Links

[Steamer Waome: A Muskoka Tragedy](#)

[Waome](#)

Songs Mentioned

[Chaconne by Bach](#)

[Peekaboo Waltz](#)

[The Crooked Stovepipe](#)

[St. Anne's Reel](#)

[Maple Sugar](#)

[When the Moon Comes over the Mountain](#)

[By the Light of the Silvery Moon](#)

[Flow Gently, Sweet Afton](#)

[Ragtime Annie](#)

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