

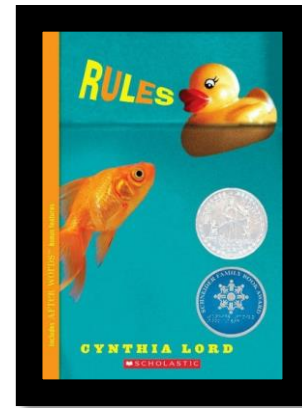
Title: Rules

Author: Cynthia Lord

Grade Level: 5th Grade

SUMMARY

Catherine has one phrase to describe her upcoming summer: "STINKS A BIG ONE!" Her best friend Melissa is gone all summer and she has to watch her brother, David, all the time. Things change quickly when Catherine gets a new neighbor: a cool, fashionable girl her age, named Kristi. Catherine really hopes they'll be friends. In the meantime, she strikes up a friendship with Jason, a boy with physical disabilities. Catherine worries that Kristi and other kids won't like her because of her brother's behavior or her friendship with Jason. In the end, she learns an invaluable lesson on what true friendship means. As you read this book together, your family will have rich conversations about friendships, self-acceptance, and finding your place in the world.



QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- downcast (pg. 21)
- grimaces (pg. 43)
- imitation (pg. 78)
- gingerly (pg. 98)
- murky (pg. 116)
- plastered (pg. 137)
- lingering (pg. 172)

You might use a question like:

Catherine creates a card for Jason to use the word "murky," explaining that she uses it to describe a feeling. How does her description of this word help you understand what she means?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

1. Flip through the pages of the book and talk about how the author structures the story. How does the author separate the sections of the book? As you read each section, talk with your child about why the author chose its title. How do the events in the chapter connect with the rule?

2. On pg. 89 Catherine says, "But the best part of being at a friend's house is I can be just me and put the sister part of me down." What does Catherine mean when she says this? How is Catherine's role as a big sister different than other kids with younger siblings? As a family, talk about how Catherine feels and responds to her responsibilities for David.
3. How does Catherine and Jason's friendship change in the book? With your child, reread the scene where Catherine first meets Jason (starting on page 18) and compare their interaction with the scene at the dance on pages 193-197. What is their relationship like at the end of the story? Talk about the events that led to this. As a family, look for words and actions throughout the book that tear the two apart and those that make their friendship stronger.
4. Ask your child who is telling the story. Follow up with: why do you think the author chose to have Catherine narrate this story? How does this influence the way the story is told? As you read the book, ask your child to describe Catherine's point of view of the situation. How do you think a different character would describe what's happening? For example, on page 79, Kristi visits Catherine's house for the first time. What is Catherine thinking and feeling during this scene? How do you think Kristi would describe the scene?
5. *Rules* addresses many topics including disabilities, friendship, family relationships, and growing up. As a family, talk about what the author's message is about each of these topics. For example, what lesson can we learn about friendship from reading this book?

EXTRA ACTIVITIES:

1. As a family, take the time to talk about autism. Perhaps your child already knows about it or knows someone who is autistic. Look it up online and see what you can find out about it. You can start with places like the National Autism Association and Autism Society of America, which have great information on the disorder. After looking up some information, think about what you learned. What new information did you learn? Did you learn something you didn't know before? How does this information help you understand something about the book, *Rules*?
2. Navigating friendships can be really challenging in the 5th grade! Many other authors have written stories about these challenges. As a family, read another story that talks about similar themes. After reading the book, compare the two books. How do the authors address topics like friendship or diversity? How are the characters' experiences similar or different to Catherine's experiences in *Rules*?

Here are a few possible books you can get into:

- *Wonder* by RJ Palacio
- *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli
- *There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom* by Louis Sachar
- *One Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes