

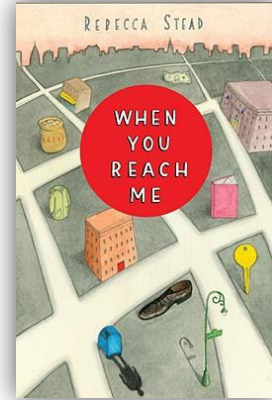
Title: When You Reach Me

Author: Rebecca Stead

Grade Level: 4th Grade

SUMMARY

Mysterious notes begin appearing that accurately predict the future. Miranda, a sixth-grader, is trying to uncover the significance of these cryptic notes as well as identify the author. A series of seemingly unrelated events occur—the temporary ending of friendships, the beginnings of others, the reading of *A Wrinkle in Time*, the ranting of a homeless man, and the near death of Sol, Miranda's best friend. Miranda is struggling to make sense of it all. You and your family will recognize yourselves in the characters of this book, as well as find the story emotional and gripping. Rebecca Stead earned the Newbery Award for this book, and it is easy to see why.



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:

- map (pg. 2)
- froze (pg. 17)
- gestured (pg. 82)
- concepts (pg. 48)
- proposal (pg. 90)
- rasped (pg. 97)
- mystified (pg. 105)
- justification (pg. 105)
- symbolize (pg. 125)
- blood (pg. 129)
- economy (pg. 148)

You might use questions like:

In the book, what does the word map mean? Where might you use the word in speaking and writing?

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. The characters in this story are connected through many subtle complexities. As you begin the story, note the relationships between characters. How do they change and



evolve? When you finish the story, talk about the evolution of these relationships. What surprised you most? What do you think Stead is saying about relationships?

2. Miranda's relationship with nearly every major character in this story teaches her at least one important lesson. List each of these characters and the lessons she learned.
3. Reread *The Winner's Circle*, the chapter beginning on page 39, where the premise of the game, *The \$20,000 Pyramid*, is explained. The game is about categories. Scan some of the chapter titles. How do these titles relate to the game? Talk about this relationship. Dig back through the chapters with category titles and find the connections between the category and the events in the chapter.
4. On page 4, Richard tells Miranda, "Keys are power." Talk about all of the references to keys found throughout the story. Then, discuss what this might mean. Why do you think Stead included this scene at the beginning of the novel?
5. "And for almost a minute, I understood everything. When that veil isn't hanging down right in front of a person's face, a minute is long enough to realize a lot of things." This figurative reference to a veil is a thread found throughout the story. What might it mean? Discuss and connect it to the pivotal moment on page 188.
6. After finishing the book, return to page 149 and reread the scene where Miranda is telling Belle about *A Wrinkle in Time*. After hearing about the character Meg saving her brother she says, "Well, it's simple to love someone, but it's hard to know when you need to say it out loud." Talk about this quote. How do this snippet from *A Wrinkle in Time* and the quote from Belle connect to the story of *When You Reach Me*?

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

A major component of this story is the many references made to Madeline L'Engle's novel, *A Wrinkle in Time*. This book would easily pique the interest of your child. Consider reading it prior to *When You Reach Me*. L'Engle, like Stead, won the Newbery Award for her book—both are excellent. Once both have been read, go back through *When You Reach Me*, find all of the references, and discuss their relationship and importance to the story.

Locate episodes of *The \$20,000 Pyramid* online. Watch them together to understand the game premise and its connection to the story.

1. As you read, use a New York City map to find the locations of the events in the story. This will provide a reference for the story setting, which might be especially helpful for readers who are not familiar with this iconic city.