

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Anastasia, Absolutely

by  
Lois Lowry

### Book Information

Lois Lowry, Anastasia, Absolutely  
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119 Pages  
Book Level: 4.7  
Interest Level: MG

Thirteen-year-old Anastasia Krupnick has more adventures as she tries to deal with a new dog, her school values class, and a personal moral dilemma.

**Award:** Misc./Other

**Topics:** Adventure, Crime; Animals, Dogs; Community Life, Ethics/Morality; Community Life, School; Humor/Funny, Funny; Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship; Popular Groupings, Middle Grades Popular Authors/Starred Reviews; Read Now with Power Up Recommended Lists, Do the Right Thing: Integrity; Series, Anastasia

### Main Characters

Anastasia Krupnik a thirteen-year-old eighth grader, who has trouble making decisions

Katherine Krupnik Anastasia's mother, who illustrates children's books

Meredith, Daphne and Sonja Anastasia's best friends

Mr. Francisco Anastasia's Values teacher, who is handsome and understanding

Myron Krupnik Anastasia's father, who teaches English at Harvard

Sam Anastasia's three-year-old brother

Sleuth the Krupniks' new dog

### Vocabulary

**asinine** absurd

**haughty** proud

**hypothetical** suppositional; uncertain

**ignited** set afire

**transvestitism** the desire to adopt the dress and behavior typical of the opposite sex

### Synopsis

Anastasia Krupnik is a thirteen-year-old girl who is in eighth grade. She lives with her parents, Myron and Katherine, and her three-year-old brother, Sam. Anastasia's teacher, Mr. Francisco, has just started teaching a Values class to the eighth graders. Prior to the class, students read the hypothetical questions assigned for the day and write down how they would respond. Then, in a class discussion, they talk about the situations and exchange ideas. The students quickly learn that there are many things to consider when making their decisions about what to do.

Meanwhile, the Krupniks have agreed to take in a homeless dog, whom Anastasia names Sleuth. Anastasia has agreed to walk, feed, and care for the dog, and although it means getting up early, she finds she enjoys most of the tasks.

On the dog's first morning with the family, Anastasia decides to mail a package for her mother while walking Sleuth. Anastasia cleans up after Sleuth, mails the package, and completes the walk. However, she begins to get the feeling that something is "just not right," and finally realizes she put the wrong package in the mailbox!

Anastasia agonizes over what to do. It was an accident, but she fears going to jail for tampering with the mail. She wonders how she can admit to doing something so embarrassing, but knows she should take responsibility for her actions. She finally admits to what she did and discovers that, not only is she not going to jail, she can actually help the police solve the mystery of who is putting bombs in mailboxes!

### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

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#### Initial Understanding

Why was Anastasia's mother having trouble completing the illustrations for the book?

*She couldn't see Sleuth's expression; Sleuth's hair was too long; Sleuth reminded her of a mop.*

#### Literary Analysis

How do we know Anastasia is a responsible teenager?

*She baby-sits her brother, takes care of the dog, helps out without having to be asked (as when she changes the litter box for Sam), completes her homework assignments on time, etc.*

#### Inferential Comprehension

What did Anastasia learn from her Values class?

*Many things have to be considered when making a decision; everything is not always "black and white."*

#### Constructing Meaning

By the end of the book, what had Anastasia realized about her parents?

*They would always be there for her; they wanted her to trust them; they were proud of her.*

### Teachable Skills

**Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors** In this story, Anastasia had promised her parents she would clean up after the dog when she took him for a walk. Her parents may have insisted on this for many reasons (they wanted to be good neighbors, they wanted to promote sanitary habits, their city had an ordinance requiring it ...). Almost all cities and towns have ordinances about pets. These ordinances cover things like mandatory rabies shots, a limit on the number of pets per home, leash laws, etc. Have the students research the laws that apply to their city, town, village, etc., and write a report on what they discover.

**Making Inferences** When Anastasia walks

Sleuth, she encounters many people. She reacts to them based on her interpretation of their expressions, words, and actions. For instance, when she sees the man looking at her as she cleans up after Sleuth and mails the package, she thinks he finds the dog disgusting. Expressions do give us a clue to what people are feeling, but they can easily be misinterpreted. Have the students find a picture of a face in a magazine or newspaper. Ask them to look at the picture and write down what they think the person is feeling. Now have them look at the picture again. What is another possible reason for the expression? You can also have the students exchange pictures and do the same thing with the other picture. Do both students come up with the same answers?

**Understanding Sequence** When the story ends, Anastasia is having her picture taken, she is proud of herself for doing the right thing, and the police have a suspect in the mailbox bombings. However, we don't know how Anastasia's classmates react to her picture in the paper, if she finds it easier to do the right thing the next time she is faced with a tough decision, if the police arrest the one responsible for the bombings, etc. Have the students write an outline for a sequel to this book. Remind them to have the beginning of their sequel mesh with the end of *Anastasia, Absolutely*.

**Responding to Literature** There are several situations from Anastasia's Values class included in the book. Choose one of the Values questions and have the students write their answer to the question. How do they feel, for instance, when they initially read the first question about killing the groundhog? Do their feelings change after they continue reading and/or think more about the question? Have a class discussion about their answers. What feelings does the question raise? What thoughts do they have about the subject? Are they able to identify what has influenced them to have those thoughts and feelings?