

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Rules

by
Cynthia Lord

Book Information

Cynthia Lord, Rules
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200 Pages
Book Level: 3.9
Interest Level: MG

Frustrated at life with an autistic brother, twelve-year-old Catherine longs for a normal existence, but her world is further complicated by a friendship with a teenage boy in a wheelchair.

Award: ALA Notable/Best Books; Newbery Honor; Schneider Family Award; Skipping Stones Honor Award

Topics: Disabilities, Physical; Diseases/Disorders, Autism; Family Life, Brothers; Family Life, Growing Up; Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship; Recommended Reading, Crown/Lamplighter Nominee

Main Characters

Catherine a twelve-year-old girl

Dad Catherine and David's father, who is often late to do things with David

David Catherine's eight-year-old brother, who has autism

Jason Morehouse a teenage boy who is confined to a wheelchair and uses a communication book

Kristi Peterson Catherine's new next-door neighbor, who is also twelve years old

Mom Catherine and David's mother, who works from home and often asks Catherine to babysit

Mrs. Morehouse Jason's mother

Ryan Deschaine a neighbor boy who teases David

Vocabulary

blank empty; free or void of markings; unmarked; clean; having no expression

clients customers; people who hire the services of another; people who pay for goods or services; citizens under the protection of an influential person

cringe to draw oneself together or shrink back, usually in fear or pain; to recoil in disgust; to cower; to flinch

crooked out of shape; not straight; bent from a normal position

fluttering flapping using short, quick strokes; flying or moving quickly or with quick, light movements; waving; beating rapidly

kneeling resting on the bendable middle parts of the legs

murky dark and gloomy; cloudy; unclear; muddy

phrases short strings of words; sequences of words that relate single thoughts but do not form sentences; grammatical units; expressions

slats narrow, thin strips of wood

therapist one who helps others recover from or deal with illnesses, injuries, or disabilities; one whose job is to help others deal with emotional problems; one who manages or administers treatment for illnesses or disabilities

Synopsis

Catherine writes down rules for her autistic brother, David, at the back of her sketchbook to help him understand how the world works and how to behave in it. Catherine often helps out with David while her father works long hours and her mother works in her home office. It's summer vacation and Catherine is looking forward to meeting her new next-door neighbor and having a chance to do things without David.

Catherine likes to go to the clinic where David works with an occupational therapist because this gives her some time alone with her mom. In the waiting room at the clinic, Catherine meets and becomes friends with Jason, for whom she makes and decorates cards for his communication book.

Kristi, the new neighbor, turns out to be not quite the friend Catherine had hoped for as she is often away for weekends with her father, is not as adventurous as Catherine would like, and befriends Ryan, a classmate whom Catherine dislikes because he teases David.

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As the new friends interact, Catherine confronts her feelings about the special needs of both David and Jason. She learns she cannot control the world with her rules and that sometimes she needs to break them.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Inferential Comprehension

The author sets off Catherine's rules as chapter titles and also with a special font in the text. Read some of the rules. Do you think the rules help David?

There are instances where David seems to use the rules as reminders, as a sort of comfort, and as a way to get attention. Students might discuss whether Catherine writes the rules for David or for herself.

Constructing Meaning

Catherine feels that her parents expect a lot of her and not nearly as much of David. Do Catherine's parents expect too much of her?

There are many times in the story where Catherine is asked or volunteers to help her parents with David. Students should support their opinions about whether this happens too often with examples from the text.

Teachable Skills

Understanding the Author's Craft

Extending Meaning

Comparing and Contrasting

Recognizing Feelings