



Teaching the Book

All Catherine wants is a normal life—but is that possible with a brother who has autism and parents who only think of his disability? This sensitive yet humorous book is the recipient of many awards including a Newbery Honor Medal. *Rules* provides great discussion starters for upper elementary students about friendship, compassion, and the challenges of disabilities. Activities engage students in math, art, and technology projects, as well as writing a book review with their own star rating.

Theme Focus: Friendship, Compassion

Comprehension Focus: Make Inferences

Language Focus: Words with Emotion

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cynthia Lord grew up as a shy, daydreaming child in rural New Hampshire. She and her sister collaborated on writing songs, swimming in the nearby lake, and collecting toads. After college, Cynthia became a teacher, even teaching for a while in a one-room schoolhouse.

As her children grew older, Cynthia returned to writing fiction, and her debut novel, *Rules*, was recognized as a Newbery Honor book. In her second novel, *Touch Blue*, eleven-year-old Tess is faced with a new foster brother and the threat of losing the island home in Maine that she loves.

Cynthia lives near the ocean in Maine with her husband and their two children. She describes herself as a “children’s book writer, sea glass collector, day-dreamer, and the mother of two teenagers.”

BOOK STATS

Grade Level Equivalent: 4–6

Ages: 9–12

Lexile Measure: 780L

Pages: 24

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Subject/Theme: Friendship, Compassion, Challenges and Different Abilities

Common Core Standards	Reading	Writing	Listening & Speaking	Language
Grade 4	RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.4	W.4.1	SL.4.1	L.4.4, L.4.6
Grade 5	RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3, RL.5.4	W.5.1	SL.5.1	L.5.4, L.5.6
Grade 6	RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.3, RL.6.4	W.6.1	SL.6.1	L.6.4, L.6.6

OVERVIEW

Book Summary

Twelve-year-old Catherine has high hopes for her summer with a new girl moving in next door and a long vacation stretching out in front of her. But, somehow, she can’t seem to escape her responsibilities for David, her younger, autistic brother. She loves David, but he is wearing her patience thin despite her attempts to provide him with the rules that everyone else seems to know but that David has to be taught. They are simple rules like: “You can yell on a playground, but not during dinner,” and “It’s fine to hug Mom, but not the clerk at the video store.”

Life becomes even more complicated when Catherine meets Kristi, the new girl next door, who seems to have the perfectly normal life Catherine has always wanted. While bringing David to occupational therapy with her mother, Catherine meets Jason, a boy her age who is confined to a wheelchair and can not speak. Catherine grows closer to Jason, illustrating words to put in his communication book, while becoming wary of Kristi’s determination to be popular and cool.

As the summer goes on, Catherine finds herself confused by the conflicting demands of her friendships with Kristi and Jason. She begins to wonder if she needs some new rules to live by herself—and finally makes decisions that are all her own.

Get Ready to Read

Pre-Reading Activities

The Rules Tell students that the book they will be reading is titled *Rules*. List the following rules from the book on the whiteboard or chart paper.

- Say “thank you” when someone gives you a present (even if you don’t like it).
- If you want to get away with something, don’t announce it first.
- Sometimes people laugh when they like you. But sometimes they laugh to hurt you.

Ask students which of these rules they were taught. How did they figure out the other rules? Challenge students to give other examples of rules of behavior that they follow with friends and at school.

Preview and Predict Ask students to preview the cover of the book and describe what they see. Then tell them another rule in the book: No toys in the fish tank. Ask them to predict what the rule might mean.



STORIA ENRICHMENTS

This Storia e-book has the following enrichments to enhance students’ comprehension of the book.

- Word Twister (2)
- Who Said It?
- Word Scramble (2)
- Do You Know?



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Ask students to think about this question as they read and be ready to answer it when they’ve finished the book. Write the question on chart paper or have students record it in their reading journals.

Why do you think rules are so important to Catherine?

RULES FOR DAVID

- Chew with your mouth closed.
- Say “thank you” when someone gives you a present (even if you don’t like it).
- If someone says “hi,” you say “hi” back.
- When you want to get out of answering something, distract the questioner with another question.
- Not everything worth keeping has to be useful.
- If the bathroom door is closed, knock (especially if Catherine has a friend over!).
- Sometimes people laugh when they like you. But sometimes they laugh to hurt you.
- No toys in the fish tank.

Vocabulary

Words With Emotion Explain to students that *Rules* contains many words that hint at how a character is feeling without directly describing the feeling. These words have either a positive or a negative shade of meaning called a connotation. Ask students to watch for the following words as they read the book. Encourage them to look for clues in the text to figure out the meaning and then check the dictionary definitions and write them on the vocabulary cards.

Use **Resource #1: Vocabulary Cards** on page 7 and distribute copies to students.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| shriek (p. 3) | irritate (p. 55) |
| fidget (p. 18) | soothe (p. 64) |
| mimic (p. 30) | relieve (p. 83) |
| grimace (p. 43) | startle (p. 118) |

As You Read

Reading the Book

Modeled Reading Read aloud the first chapter of the book, asking students to follow along. Then prompt students to ask questions about what you just read; for example: Why does David behave the way he does? How does Catherine feel about him? Which of Catherine's rules for David do you think is the best?

Independent Reading Assign students to read *Rules* independently. Remind them to keep the Big Question in mind as they read.

Comprehension Focus

Make Inferences The author of *Rules* doesn't always explain everything that is going on in the story. You have to figure out how a character feels or why he or she does something by putting together hints in the story by using both hints from the story and your own past experiences. This is called making inferences.

Use the graphic organizer on **Resource #2: Make Inferences** to model for students how to make inferences. Project the page on a whiteboard or pass out copies to students.

Model: On pages 2–3, Catherine describes how David behaves at the video store. “Dad says, ‘No one cares, Catherine. Don’t be so sensitive,’ but he’s wrong. People do care.” What can I learn by making inferences about these words? Well, I can guess that David isn’t like most kids because of how he acts. And it sounds like her dad isn’t being very understanding of Catherine’s feelings. And I can also guess that it’s really Catherine who cares, because she’s probably embarrassed by David’s actions. The author hasn’t told me any of those things directly, but I can use the text clues and my own experience to guess that they are true.

Have students fill in the rest of the organizer with inferences based on text clues and their own experiences. Discuss students’ answers and ask them to give evidence to support them.

After You Read

Questions to Discuss

Lead students in a discussion of these focus story elements.

1. Friendship Why do you think Catherine chooses Jason as a friend over Kristi at the end of the book? Do you think she made the right choice? (*Answers will vary.*)

2. Make Inferences Why do you think Catherine’s parents treat her the way they do? How does it make Catherine feel? Do you think that may change? (*Sample answer: They don’t think much about Catherine’s needs, just David’s. It makes Catherine feel resentful.*)

3. Words With Emotion What words does Catherine add to Jason’s communication book? How do these words make him feel? (*Sample answers: gross, awesome; he feels more like a normal kid and happy*)

WORDS TO KNOW

Words With Emotion

Ask students to refer to the definitions they wrote on their vocabulary cards to answer the following questions. Then ask them to describe the emotion they attach to the word.

1. What would make you **shriek**?
2. Name something that would make you **fidget**.
3. Why would someone **mimic** another person?
4. Why might someone **grimace**?
5. What things **irritate** you?
6. How can you **soothe** a pet?
7. How can you **relieve** a headache?
8. Is it nice to **startle** someone?

Questions to Share

Encourage students to share their responses with a partner or small group.

1. Text to Self How did you feel about David at the beginning of the book? Did your feelings about him change by the end of the book? How did your feelings about Jason change as you got to know him better?

2. Text to World What are some of the social rules that kids in your school follow—even if the rules are never spoken? Do you think the rules are fair or unfair?

3. Text to Text Compare the young characters in *Rules* with characters from other books, movies, or TV shows. Who is like Catherine? Like Kristi? Like Ryan? Like Jason?

Extension Activities

Reading/Writing Connection

Rating Rules Cynthia Lord's award-winning book is an introspective story that appeals to some students

more than others. Challenge students to write a review of the book, giving it a rating from one to four stars. First, have each student create a rating system using stars, deciding what—for them—makes a four-star book as opposed to a one-star book. Then ask students to rate the book according to their own criteria and write an argument essay that explains their rating. Emphasize that every opinion is legitimate as long as it is supported by reasoning and evidence.

Don't forget the



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Give each student an opportunity to answer the big question. Encourage students to support their answers with details and evidence from the text. Remind them that there is no one right answer.

Why do you think rules are so important to Catherine?

Content Area Connections

Technology Sports and Disabilities Encourage students to research the ways in which technology helps wounded war veterans and other disabled athletes participate in events like marathons. Suggest that they learn more about Achilles International, which provides racing wheelchairs for wounded veterans, or Oscar Pistorious, a Paralympic contender who runs on a bionic leg.

Arts Drawing Words Catherine illustrates the words she adds to Jason's book. She asks herself, "What does awesome look like?" Challenge students to choose a word like *gross*, *awesome*, *cruel*, *cool*, *embarrassed*, or another descriptive word; ask themselves what it looks like; and then illustrate the word. Encourage students to display and compare their drawings.

Social Studies Equal Access With Catherine's help, Jason gets a motorized wheelchair and takes it for a run. Explain to students that communities have a legal responsibility to provide equal access for disabled persons. Suggest that they plan a route around their community for someone like Jason who is in a wheelchair. What barriers would he

encounter? What helpful things like ramps and automatic doors are in community buildings?

Language Arts Frog and Toad Throughout the book, Catherine and David talk to each other using Arnold Lobel's words from *Frog and Toad are Friends*. Provide a copy of the book and encourage interested students to keep Catherine and David in mind as they read it. Have students discuss these questions after reading: What does the book teach about friendship? Why do you think it is David's favorite book?

BIG ACTIVITY

The Rulebook Reread Catherine's thoughts about rules on page 10. Then assign students to create their own rulebook about some aspect of their life—in school, at home, on a sports team or other activity, or with friends. Guide students to write the same kind of rules that Catherine made up for David—rules that everyone except David understands, even though they weren't taught them. Make copies of the **Big Activity: The Rulebook** and distribute it to students. Read the directions and answer any questions to clarify the activity.

Name: _____ Date: _____

BIG ACTIVITY: The Rulebook

Some rules are written down . . . and some aren't. Write a rulebook for some part of your life . . . school, brothers or sisters, sports, activities, or friends. Use Catherine's rules as a model.

These are the rules for _____ .

Rule #1:

Rule #2:

Rule #3:

Rule #4:

Rule #5:

READ MORE AND LEARN MORE

Use these books and other resources to expand your students' study of the book or theme.

Theme Connections



War Horse

Michael Morpurgo

Ages: 10–14

Lexile Level: 1090L

Guided Reading Level: Z

Grades: 5–8

Pages: 192

Joey is a handsome red bay horse who lives on a farm in the English countryside with his thirteen-year-old master, Albert. All is well until war comes to Europe. Albert's father sells Joey to the British Army, and the horse is shipped to the battlefields of World War I. Soon, he is surrounded by the sight of wounded and dying horses and men. Joey is certain that someday he will return to England—that is, until he is captured by the enemy. Will he ever make it back to the farm and Albert? **Available as a Stora e-book**



The Clockwork Three

Matthew J. Kirby

Ages: 10–15

Lexile Level: 680L

Grades: 5–9

Pages: 400

Giuseppe is an orphaned street musician from Italy; Hannah is a softhearted, strong-willed girl from the tenements; Frederick is a talented and intense clockmaker's apprentice. Together, the three discover that they have phenomenal power when they team up as friends, and that they can overcome even the deepest of fears. This dark drama about kids making their way together through perilous times will inspire young readers to face their own challenges. **Available as a Stora e-book**



Esperanza Rising

Pam Muñoz Ryan

Ages: 10–13

Lexile Level: 750L

Guided Reading Level: V

Grades: 5–7

Pages: 304

When Esperanza and Mama are forced to flee from their wealthy life in Mexico during the 1930s, they end up in a farm labor camp in California. There, they must confront the challenges of hard work and the Great Depression. Eventually, Esperanza relinquishes her hold on the past and embraces a future full of family and community. This award-winning novel is coming-of-age fiction at its best.

Available as a Stora e-book



Deep Down Popular

Phoebe Stone

Ages: 10–13

Lexile Level: 960L

Grades: 5–7

Pages: 288

Jessie Lou Ferguson has been in love with Conrad Parker Smith for a very long time—since second grade, in fact. But over the years, his popularity has soared while hers has dropped below sea level. Fate, however, sometimes plays surprising tricks. Conrad, the star athlete, hurts his leg and needs help getting around. Jessie Lou is assigned to help him travel to and from school. Will the two be able to rise above the stereotypes they've become?

Available as a Stora e-book



Operation Yes

Sara Lewis Holmes

Ages: 9–12

Lexile Level: 730L

Grades: 4–7

Pages: 128

When the unusual Miss Loupe shows up to teach sixth grade, she also wants to teach the kids drama and improvisation. The kids soon learn that Miss Loupe's seemingly kooky ideas are actually pretty helpful in dealing with the stresses of living on a military base. The compelling characters in this touching story offer a realistic glimpse into the lives of active-duty military families.

Available as a Stora e-book



If Only

Carole Gethner

Ages: 11–14

Lexile Level: 810L

Grades: 5–9

Pages: 336

In the summer before Corinna starts eighth grade, her mother suddenly dies of cancer. Corinna finds it hard to just go on with the life she had before without her mother beside her. Then she makes a surprising discovery: her mother's diary. Corinna's sadness turns to anger and confusion as she realizes that her mother kept many secrets from her. But if she is going to move on and grow up, she'll have to make peace with her mother's death—and with her own life. **Available as a Stora e-book**

Go to <http://teacher.scholastic.com/ereading-resources/> to find PDF versions of the Stora teacher guides and links to purchase the related books.

shriek

fidget

mimic

grimace

irritate

soothe

relieve

startle

Resource #2: Make Inferences

Name: _____ Date: _____

Make inferences based on clues in the text and your own experiences or knowledge. Write in your own example of a text clue for #4.

TEXT	INFERENCE
1. Dad says, "No one cares, Catherine. Don't be so sensitive," but he's wrong. People do care. (p. 3)	What does this tell you about Catherine's father? About Catherine?
2. My door creaks open a couple inches. A brown eye peeks through the crack. David never remembers to knock. . . . "No toys in the fish tank," he says. . . . And in the fish tank, one of my old Barbie dolls sits on the gravel. (p. 55)	What do you think David really means? What does he want from Catherine?
3. Grabbing my sketchbook, I flip to a blank page and write words, bearing down so hard the letters cut into the page. 'Unfair.' 'Cruel.' 'Hate.' 'Ruined.' 'Murky.' 'Tease.' 'Embarrassed.' (p. 111)	Why is Catherine writing these words? What is she feeling?
4.	