

## **Chapter 13 Sometimes people don't answer because they didn't hear you. Other times it's because they don't want to hear you.**

### **Setting: Dad's Garden**

Cynthia Lord added this chapter last when she was writing the book because she wanted to explore not only Catherine's conflict but Dad's perspective. Catherine remembers longingly of times when Dad was playful with her. He played happy games like "Guess Who?" Dad is in his garden today, lovingly admiring his tomatoes. Catherine looks at a tomato with an artist's eye. "People usually think tomatoes are red, but they're more red-orange with yellow-orange streaks." Catherine gets her courage up and proposes that she and Dad do something special together. He smiles a "worn out smile that doesn't light his eyes." They are interrupted because it's time to take David to the video store. She walks away, turning to check to see if Dad's watching to see her go.

### ***Think about/ Talk about/ Write about:***

- *Catherine's Feelings:* How many words can the class brainstorm to describe how Catherine feels as she stares at the back of Dad's head? Use a thesaurus to expand and enrich discussion.
- *Art:* Have children make a simple drawing of a fruit or vegetable, paying close attention to color. Having actual pieces of fruit to draw would be good. Use crayons or colored pencils.

## **Chapter 14 No Toys in the Fish Tank**

### **Setting: Catherine's House**

Catherine's heart jumps when she sees the minivan in the driveway next door on Monday morning. Then when the phone rings she says, "I wait two more rings so it won't seem like I was waiting for the phone." The girls decide to go swimming at the pond. As Catherine waits for Kristi to come over, she takes care when she gets dressed, discarding a couple of bathing suits, choosing the green one that is "swimmable, but not ugly." She takes time to put on cherry lip gloss, and decides to wear her hair loose. There is a typical rather wild scene with David as he is eating his cereal in the kitchen just before Kristi arrives. To Catherine's dismay, Kristi notices, laughing, "There's a duck in your fish tank." Catherine ignores the remark, fakes a smile and says, "Come on. Let's go" On the way over to the pond to swim, Catherine wonders if Kristi would rather be with Ryan. Was she second choice? Kristi is unsure that she is going to like swimming in a pond. When she learns there is muck on the bottom, her "knuckles turn white as she holds her braid." She relaxes a bit and they have a conversation. Kristi talks to Catherine about how she feels "split down the middle" living partly with her mom and partly with her dad. Catherine truly understands this feeling, but her rule for herself is "When someone is upset, it's not a good time to bring up your own problems." She hears the sadness in Kristi's voice, and is reminded of a story about wishing called, *The Fisherman and His Wife*. The girls speak of wishes. Kristi wishes her parents would get back together and be happy. Catherine's "always wish" is to find the broken places inside David's head so that all his autism would be "wiped clean." Just then Ryan appears, waving from the shore. In their conversation Ryan reminds Kristi to ask Catherine about coming to the dance. Catherine hesitates, "I don't know who to ask." "I don't dance." "Ask Jason," Kristi suggests. Catherine opens her mouth to

answer, but “Ryan’s smirk makes me close it.” On the walk home Catherine agrees to think about it. She has not told Kristi that Jason is in a wheelchair. In her sketchbook she tries to draw her ankles as she has seen them in the [water](#) at the pond, distorted. They don’t look warped and interesting, they look broken. She writes words: GUILTY.COMPLICATED. HIDDEN. WEAK .

**Think about/ Talk about/ Write about:**

- Read Aloud The Fisherman and His Wife. Folk tales usually have a moral. What is the moral of this one? Talk about the difference between a “moral” and a “theme” in the two different genres, folk tales and realistic fiction. Folk tales traditionally “teach a lesson.” In fiction we learn about ourselves from characters and conflict. (See activity under Language Arts: Wishes and Dreams)
- Reflect about wishes. Many children, and adults as well, know the feeling of being “split down the middle.” There are many different ways to feel pulled in two directions.

**Chapter 15 Solving one problem can create another.**

**Setting: The clinic/ the parking lot**

Jason has a new motorized wheelchair. He wants to go for a walk in the parking lot. Catherine feels a great responsibility to be careful. Jason taps WATER. Catherine rather gingerly takes him to the waterfront Jason is delighted. MORE THAN AWESOME. All the while Catherine can’t help but notice the “soft-eyed pity looks” as passersby meet them on their way. She overhears comments such as, “Was that boy in an accident?” Jason taps CATHERINE PRETTY TODAY. Embarrassed, Catherine recalls her rule, “When things get confusing, make a joke.” She replies, “I’m a dork.” Jason invites Catherine to his birthday party on Saturday. It’s the same day as the dance. She is relieved. “It solves everything...almost.”

**Think about/ Talk about/ Write about:**

- The descriptions of public reaction to a handicap are touching and thought provoking. This is a good chapter to read aloud. Be sure students find exact words in the text to support their comments.
- Activity under Social Students: Every child has a right to an education

**Chapter 16 No dancing unless I’m alone in my room or it’s pitch black dark.**

**Setting: Kristi’s house**

Kristi calls, asking Catherine to help with posters for the dance. Still withholding the fact that Jason is in a wheelchair, Catherine tells Kristi that she is invited to Jason’s birthday party on Saturday, but she will help with posters anyway. They decide to work at Kristi’s house. While making posters Catherine lets Kristi know of her “no dancing” rule. David bursts in and Kristi asks him to dance. When David dances, it’s “from his heart, all inside out.” Upset and thinking that Kristi is making fun of David, Catherine stops the music. David leaves for the video store. The girls finish the posters, “hardly talking.”

**Think about/ Talk about/ Write about:**

- See Green Marker lesson plan under Language Arts. This activity is interesting in that the green marker is a metaphor for a troubled friendship.

**Chapter 17 Not everything worth keeping has to be useful.****Setting: Elliot's Antiques, the clinic**

Anticipating Jason's birthday Catherine goes to Elliot's Antiques looking for a guitar. The owner is open to bargaining, and agrees to sell her the guitar for what money she has. Catherine hides the guitar in the car and goes into the clinic with some new words for Jason. The words help her remember the good part of the walk: SEAGULL. WARF. SAILBOAT. BENCH. TOGETHER. Jason invites David to the party. Jason looks at his card TOGETHER where Catherine has drawn two people. WHERE? WHEELCHAIR? Jason, frowning, wants the wheelchair in the picture. Catherine takes the card back. "But I don't know what to write."

**Think about/ Talk about/ Write about:**

- Talk about Jason's feelings. Take the class on a totally quiet 10 minute walk outdoors, asking them to pay attention to sky, trees, and natural objects. Ask them to "take a picture" in their minds of what they noticed. Come inside and without talking make communication cards which represent what each noticed and remembers. Ask the children to take the cards home and share with family when asked, "How was your day?" or "What did you do in school today?" Or, they can have conversations in small groups using the words. A variation is to have them draw one thing they notice while outside, as Catherine does in her sketchbook.
- See empathy activity "A Day in Someone Else's Life" under Language Arts

**Chapter 17 Pantless brothers are not my problem****Setting: Jason's house**

Catherine makes rules for David who is coming to Jason's birthday party a little later. Jason's older brother Matt answers the door. She looks for, but doesn't see Jason. "Catherine's here," calls Jason's mother. Catherine lets Jason know that she has another special present. She taps: SECRET. OPEN PRESENT TOGETHER. She has now drawn herself and Jason in his wheelchair as Jason wished on the friend card. Jason smiles and invites her into his room. He opens his present. PERFECT. GUITAR There is a keyboard in the room. Jason plays a simple song, "sparse and haunting." MY OWN MUSIC. Guests sing Happy Birthday. It is time for David to come, and he eats his chocolate cake according to the rules, making only a few crumbs. Jason asks Catherine to go to the dance with him. Catherine makes her excuse quoting her dancing rule. RULE. STUPID. EXCUSE, says Jason. Catherine says, "Sorry gotta go."

## **Chapter 19 Some people think they know who you are, but they don't really.**

### **Setting: Home from the party**

On the way home Catherine's mom sees that Catherine is upset. Catherine admits her feelings of embarrassment about going to the dance with Jason. Her mom assures her that just because other people think something doesn't make it true. "I'm sorry, Frog," says David. Catherine wishes Melissa were here to listen to her feelings. She knows Melissa would not judge her. David cries, really coming unglued because his tape is all unwound and twisted. "I'm sorry, Toad," whispers Catherine. Catherine calls Jason but he won't come to the phone. She asks Mrs. Morehouse to tell him that she really wants him to come to the dance. She gave her the details. Next she called Dad. "You need to stop on the way home and buy a new cassette recorder and a new tape of *Frog and Toad are Friends*. David counted 23 cars before Dad got home. Catherine takes David's hand. "Come on. I am going to a dance."

## **Chapter 20 Late doesn't mean not coming.**

### **Setting: The Dance**

Dad has brought Catherine and David to the dance but is unhappy that Catherine has asked him to leave work and do this. Unsure about whether Jason is coming, Catherine says, "I have never felt so alone in my life." In tears, she says to Dad, "I know what David needs...but I have to matter, too. I need you too," He answers, "You matter." Dad holds her and promises to stay until she knows if Jason is coming. Dad pays admission and they all go in. David is entranced with the lights, his fingers flickering at his side "as fast as moth wings." "Make a wish, Frog," says David. Catherine answers, "I wish everyone had the same chances." And to David she says, "What did you wish for?" "Grape soda," he answers. Catherine slips him a dollar. "Wish granted, Toad."

### **Think about/ Talk about/ Write about:**

- How does Catherine's wish that "everyone had the same chances" relate to the important theme of differences in this story?

## **Chapter 21 A real conversation takes two people.**

### **Setting: The dance**

Worry "twines" in Catherine's chest. She does a little magical thinking. "Jason will come when the minute hand is on 6." Soon she sees the outline of a wheel chair by the door. Mrs. Morehouse leaves Jason with Catherine. She doesn't know what to say; fortunately she has with her some words: COMPLICATED (She explains how it has always hurt her when people stare at David.) HIDDEN (The real truth is that "I was scared Kristi might think of me, not you.") WEAK (You are a good friend and I've been weak.") Kristi and Ryan appear; Catherine introduces them to Jason. Catherine admits, "I should have told you the truth." "I'll see you around," says Kristi as she and Ryan leave. Jason does not want the last card which is GUILTY. He taps, BREAK DANCE RULE. She follows him to the dance floor. Jason lifts his arms joining the dancers. "I lift my hands and reach for the ceiling, the sky, the stars. And I dance."

### **Think about/ Talk about/ Write about**

- The magic theme appears again in this chapter. Students may share stories of their own magical thinking. Who has ever wished? Who has had a wish come true? Is it a good thing to make wishes? Catherine also speaks of hope in various places in the book. Are wishes and hopes similar? Notice Catherine wished for grape soda for David. Can you remember wishing something for another person? This is a good chapter to read aloud. How do we feel when we read the last sentence?

## **Chapter 22 If you need to borrow words, Arnold Lobel wrote some good ones.**

### **Setting: Catherine and David's house**

There is no light at Kristi's house. Catherine makes plans to go to the clinic without carrying words this time so that she can wait for Jason to ask. A tiny knock at her door and David announces, "No toys in the fish tank." There is a wizard in the fish tank with one big foot in the front door of the castle. Catherine laughs. "I am laughing at you, Frog because you look funny in your bathing suit." "Of course I do," said David. Catherine understands that her mother wants David to have his own words, but for now it matters that she and David "share something small and special." She sees their faces, side by side, reflected in the glass. "I let that be enough."

### **Think about/ Talk about/ Write about:**

- The ending clarifies the importance of the Frog and Toad motif. The fact that Catherine can appreciate how David is calmed by the story and by her taking part in it is indeed special. Students may compare this brother/sister relationship to the friendship of Frog and Toad. They may wish to talk about their own friendships.