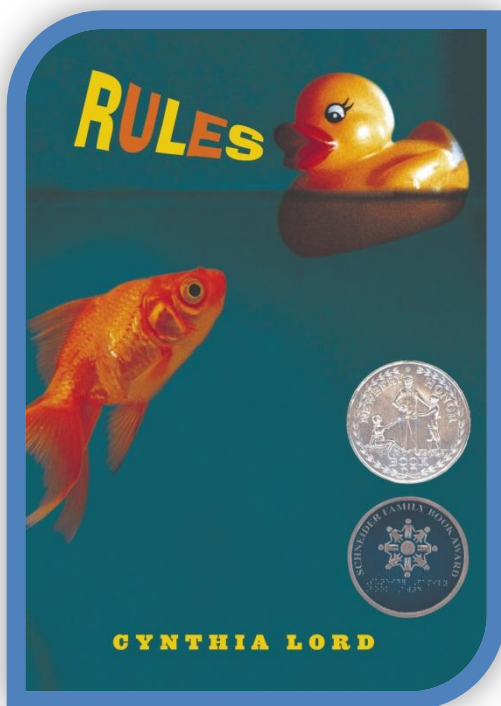




# Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

**About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide:** This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



## Rules

Cynthia Lord (Author)

ISBN: 978-0439443838

Publisher: Scholastic

Year Published: 2008

Age Range: 8–12

## Book Themes

People with Disabilities, Empathy, Friendship, Bullying

## About the Book

Twelve year old Catherine just wants a “normal” life, which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She’s spent years trying to teach David the rules—from “a peach is not a funny looking apple” to “keep your pants on in public”—in order to head off David’s embarrassing behaviors. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising, new sort-of friend, and Kristi, the potential next door friend she’s always wished for, it’s her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down.

## Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book aloud or children read it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What was the overall message of the book?
- How would you describe Catherine's personality and how did she change over the course of the book?
- Have you ever had complicated feelings about a friend or sibling the way Catherine does about her brother David?
- What were some of your favorite rules from the book?
- If you had to make up rules like the ones in the book, what would some of your rules be?
- How did Catherine try to understand what Jason was going through? In what ways do you do that with your friends, classmates and/or family members?
- What do you think about Catherine and Kristi's relationship? Why do you think Kristi felt bad that Catherine didn't tell her about Jason? Have you ever had similar feelings?
- How does Catherine help Jason grow and how does Jason help Catherine grow?
- Why do you think Catherine is uncomfortable with other people in her life knowing about her friendship with Jason? Have you ever felt that way about a friend? How did you deal with it?
- What did you learn about people with disabilities that you didn't know before?

## Talking Points

Below are some important considerations to highlight in order to make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

### 1. People with Disabilities

The book explores people with disabilities through the characters of David (who is autistic) and Jason (who is in a wheelchair and cannot speak). With your child, reflect on the disabilities discussed in the book through the characters of David and Jason and discuss people you know who have a disability. Find out what questions your child may have about disabilities and together discuss [suggested language for people with disabilities](#). Define **disability** as a mental or physical condition that affects a person's movements, senses or activities. Using the book, discuss the feelings expressed and situations faced by Jason and David as well as Catherine's reflections on her interactions with them. Adults sometimes tell children not to notice or pay attention to a person's disability. It is important to convey that bias and discrimination against people who are disabled is wrong but noticing their disability is understandable and a part of who they are. You can also talk with your child about the extent to which their school is welcoming and accessible for people with disabilities and what they think is needed to make it better.

### 2. Being an Ally

There are several situations in the book when someone is being an ally and also times when someone is not being an ally. Ask your child if they know what it means to be an ally and define **ally**

as someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied or the target of prejudice. Then, ask your child to give an example about a time someone was an ally in the book (e.g. when Catherine confronted Ryan about teasing her brother, when Catherine got to know Jason instead of judging him) and explain that there are many ways [to be an ally](#) including: not participating in bullying, supporting targets, telling the aggressor to stop, telling a trusted adult, getting to know people and being an ally online. Together, reflect upon times and situations in which someone has been an ally to them and when they have been an ally to someone. Modeling how to be an ally is critical; therefore, both show and tell your child about times you have been an ally and someone has been an ally to you.

### 3. Empathy

Empathy is an important part and central theme of the book. Catherine writes rules for her brother David because as she says, “David doesn’t learn from watching other people, so I have to teach him everything” and with Jason, who can only communicate using the words in his Communication Book, Catherine reflects, “I wonder how that’d feel, to have to wait for someone to make a word before I could use it.” Point out these reflections when discussing the book and explain that Catherine is trying to understand how someone else feels; this helps her feel more connected to the person and compassionate about who they are. Show your child that empathy is something you value by asking questions about the book that reflects upon how someone feels in a given situation. Model empathy by reflecting on how people feel, asking questions and articulating the ways in which you try to understand another person’s feelings and point of view.

### Other Books You May Like

*Because of Mr. Terupt* by Rob Buyea, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/because-of-mr-terupt.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/because-of-mr-terupt.html)

*El Deafo* by Cece Bell, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/el-deafo.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/el-deafo.html)

*The Wild Book* by Margarita Engle, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/the-wild-book.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/the-wild-book.html)

*Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/wonder.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/wonder.html)

### ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on disabilities and identity-based bullying.

#### Curriculum Resources

“Equal Treatment, Equal Access: Raising Awareness about People with Disabilities and Their Struggle for Equal Rights,” *Curriculum Connections*, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/equal-treatment-equal-access.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/equal-treatment-equal-access.html).

“Identity-Based Bullying,” *Current Events Classroom*, [www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/identity-based-bullying.pdf](http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/identity-based-bullying.pdf).

#### Print Material

Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability

[www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/communication-guidelines-relating-to-ability.pdf](http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/communication-guidelines-relating-to-ability.pdf)

This resource explains the difference between the terms “disability” and “handicap” and offers

suggestions on how to appropriately communicate with others in conversations related to ability.

Suggested Language for People with Disabilities

[www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/suggested-language-for-people-with-disabilities.pdf](http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/suggested-language-for-people-with-disabilities.pdf)

Provides suggested wording and language when referring to people with disabilities.

Be An Ally: Six Simple Ways

[www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Be-an-Ally-Six-Ways-online-version.pdf](http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Be-an-Ally-Six-Ways-online-version.pdf)

This resource provides simple things youth can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying.

### Websites

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html)

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying

[www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/definitions-related-to-bias-injustice-bullying.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/definitions-related-to-bias-injustice-bullying.html)

A listing of terms and definitions relating to bias, diversity, bullying and social justice concepts written for elementary-age children.

### Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Ability, Disability and Ableism, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/ability-disability.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/ability-disability.html)

Bullying Awareness and Prevention, [www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/bullying.html](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/bullying.html)