



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month: 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 educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Rules

Cynthia Lord (Author)

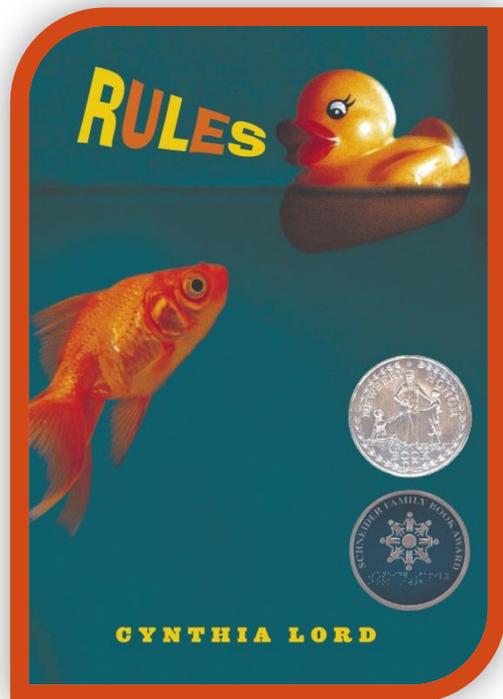
Twelve year old Catherine just wants a “normal” life, which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She’s spent years trying to teach David the rules—from “a peach is not a funny looking apple” to “keep your pants on in public”—in order 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.

ISBN: 978-0439443838

Publisher: Scholastic

Year Published: 2008

Age Range: 8–12



Book Themes

People with Disabilities, Empathy, Friendship, Bullying

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the meanings as they come up in the book. See ADL's [Glossary of Education Terms](#) and [Definitions for Elementary Age Children](#).

- accommodate
- antique
- anxious

- apologize
- assume
- autism
- clinic
- comfort
- complicated
- embarrassing
- independent
- invisible
- occupational therapy
- overreact
- pity
- sarcastic
- selfish
- wheelchair

Discussion Questions

If the students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading in order to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion:

- What is the book about?
- How would you describe Catherine's personality and how does she change throughout the book?
- Why is the title of the book 'Rules'?
- Why does Catherine have rules for her brother, David? How does she connect the rules to her own life throughout the book?
- What rules do you especially like and connect with? Are there any of Catherine's rules you don't agree with?
- Why does Catherine sometimes wish someone would invent a pill for autism?
- Why do you think that drawing is so important to Catherine?
- How would you describe Jason's personality and how does he change throughout the book?
- Why do you think Catherine wanted to help Jason experience what it feels like to run?
- What are some examples of Catherine being empathic in understanding what Jason's life is like?
- What are some of the words that Catherine makes for Jason and why do you think she chose those words?
- What character do you relate to most and why?
- What is the turning point in Catherine and Jason's relationship? How so?
- Why doesn't Catherine want to tell other people about her friendship with Jason? Does this surprise you?
- What does Catherine think of Kristi when they first meet?
- In what ways does Catherine feel like she "is split down the middle" (i.e. in two worlds)?
- Why is Kristi disappointed in the end with Catherine? Did her reaction surprise you?
- What did you learn about people with disabilities from reading this book?
- How did you feel when the book ended?
- What is the overall theme and message of the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with children in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. My Own Rules

Ask students: *Why is the book called Rules? What kind of rules does Catherine create and why does she need them?* Explain that Catherine has a set of rules for her brother David, which are “rules” you often learn as you grow up as you observe other people, but that are not explained to you directly. As Catherine says, “It seems I’ve always known these things.” Ask: *How are these rules different than other ones like the rules in school or at home?* Have students go back through the book and identify such as:

- Sometimes people don’t answer because they didn’t hear you. Other times it’s because they don’t want to hear you.
- If you don’t have the words you need, borrow someone else’s.
- Sometimes people laugh when they like you. But sometimes they laugh to hurt you.

Engage students in a discussion (or have students discuss in pairs or triads) about some of the rules from the book, having them explore whether they agree/disagree with the rule, how they learned the particular rule and how it applies to their life. Then have students create their own rules. Make sure they understand that the rules they will create should be ones that they have learned over time and are often “unwritten” but generally understood. Have each student create three rules and then choose at least one to bring to life—either by illustrating it, making a photo exhibit/video with all the rules or putting them together for a Power Point presentation, with each student making a slide of their rule and an image that illustrates it. As a group, reflect on the process for coming up with their rules and how their identities and/or cultures impact their rules.

2. Reading Response Essays

Diary Entry of Character: Have students write diary entries for one of the main characters such as: Catherine, Jason, David, Ryan, Kristi, Catherine’s mother or father. After selecting their characters, students will write 5–8 diary entries that the character might have kept before, during or after the book’s events. Remind students that the character’s thoughts and feelings are very important in a diary as well as their reaction to the day-to-day events and other activities that take place throughout the book. You may choose to have students engage in pre-writing discussions with a partner about their character in order to get some of their ideas out. After they have completed the assignment, have them share their diary entries with the class and consider creating an online collection of all the diary entries.

Book Review: Have students write a book review of *Rules*. The elements of a book review should include: (1) title, author, genre and theme; (2) personal reflections about the book—how it made you feel, what you learned and your thoughts about it; (3) plot summary—describe what happened without giving away spoilers; (4) characters you loved or disliked and (5) why it is worth reading or not. Consider sharing the reviews on a class blog, use GoodReads for online reviews or make a video of students reading their reviews aloud.

Write the next chapter of the book: Have students discuss what might happen next in the book and write an additional chapter. Remind students how the book ends and ask the following questions: *What do you think happens when Catherine sees Kristi next? How do you think the relationship between Catherine and her brother changes? Do you think Jason and Catherine remain friends and how does their relationship develop? What do you think happens next time Ryan and David interact?*

They will write the next chapter of the book with Catherine as the main character and they can include other characters. Students will write the next chapter with a title which will be a new “rule.”

3. Learn More about People with Disabilities

Engage students in a discussion about people with disabilities. Be sensitive and thoughtful about whether you have students with disabilities in your class, especially “invisible” ones. First ask: *What does it mean to be disabled?* Elicit and define **disability** as a mental or physical condition that affects a person’s movements, senses or activities. Introduce them to some of the [suggested language for people with disabilities](#) and ask them what kind of disabilities they learned about from the book through the characters of Jason and David, exploring the ways each were treated throughout the book. You can explain that Catherine’s brother David has autism and that autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors. For more information, see [Autism Speaks](#).

Expand students’ understanding of disabilities to include learning, mental and cognitive disabilities as well as physical disabilities. Ask students to share examples of disabilities, including hearing impairments/deaf, visual impairments/blind, learning disabilities such as dyslexia, spinal cord injuries and having to be in a wheelchair, loss of limbs (arms and legs) or the ability to use them, etc. Discuss the extent to which their school and community are accessible and welcoming for people with physical, mental and cognitive disabilities and what can be done in the classroom and school to make it more inclusive and accessible.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on anti-bias teaching strategies, people with 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.

“Identity-Based Bullying,” *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/identity-based-bullying.pdf.

“The Sound of Silence in Football: Derrick Coleman,” *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/sound-of-silence-in-football.html.

Print Material

Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability

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

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

Websites

Anti-Bias Education

www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education

Provides training program offerings for pre-K through 12th grade school communities—educators, administrators, youth and families—which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying.

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment.html

Some practices for creating positive, anti-bias environments where respect for diversity is taught, modeled, and experienced firsthand.

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

Being an Ally, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/bullying-books.html?bullying_sub=being-an-ally

Bullying Awareness and Prevention, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/bullying.html