

Rain Reign

By Ann M. Martin

Life is not always easy for Rose Howard: she has a diagnosis of high functioning autism, a father who's not sensitive to her needs, and classmates who often tease her. However, with her best friend Rain, who happens to be a dog with a "very smart nose," and an Uncle that truly understands and loves her, Rose is able to face almost any obstacle in her way. Which is good, because a huge challenge in the shape of a giant hurricane is headed in her direction and about to wreak havoc on Rose's town and her life. Now, Rose must find the strength to find her dog Rain (reign) who was let out during the storm and was possibly washed away in raging waters.

With her love of homophones - her own name happens to be one (Rose, rows) - and the power of prime numbers, Rose is a character that makes every reader root for her. Her story will teach you about bravery, friendship and the unique characteristics that help each of us triumph over adversity and come out on top.

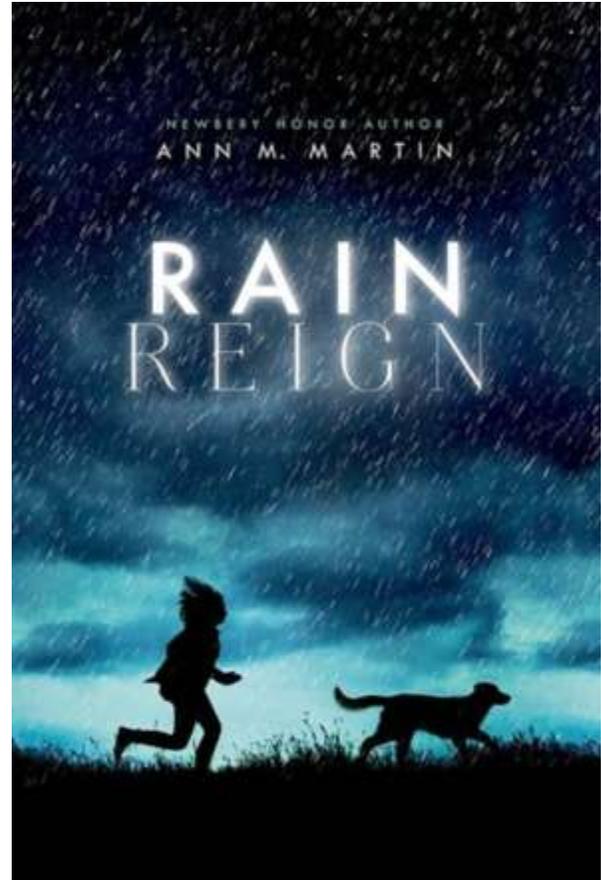
About the Author

Ann M. Martin has been writing juvenile fiction for over 35 years. Some of her most popular works include *The Baby Sitters Club* series, *Ten Rules for Living with My Sister*, and *The Missy Piggie Wiggle* series written with Annie Parnell. Her novel *A Corner of the Universe*, won the Newbery Honor award in 2003.

She was inspired to write *Rain Reign* in 2011 while experiencing the aftermath of Hurricane Irene, which struck the area of Upstate New York where she lives.

Getting Started

You can find *Rain Reign* at your local or school library, or at local or online bookstores. It's also available as an ebook.



While You're Reading

Every good story is full of captivating characters, timeless and timely themes, significant settings, pivotal plot points, and vivid vocabulary that combine to engage our brains and our hearts. In this section of the website, you will find activities that invite you to dig deeper into each of these literary elements for a better understanding and enjoyment of the book.

To aid your investigation, save our "Writing While You Read" guide (see pages 18 and 19), with helpful tips on keeping a reading journal and annotating a book while you read.

Respond to the following prompts in your reading journal as you read (or re-read!) Parts 1-3 of *Rain Reign*.



- The key way a writer helps his or her readers connect with a story is through its characters. Which qualities, behaviors, and choices do you think make some characters more appealing than others? To help you answer this question with specific evidence from the book, use the Character Grid you'll find on pages 20 and 21 below (and you can make extra copies of page 20 if you need them). Tuck it inside your book, and, each time you meet a new character, take a minute to jot down the name and your initial observations about him or her on your Character Grid. Be sure to revisit your Grid every few chapters or so, too! There may be more ideas you want to add as you get to know each character better.

- A literary device is a tool that writers use to help readers understand ideas more clearly or deeply. One device that many authors use in literature is a "flashback". Flashbacks are interruptions in the plot of the story that take us to an event that has happened before the story begins. In Chapter 4 Rose tells us, "Now I am going to go back in time to report on my father's childhood some more" (22).
 - Why do you think that the author uses a flashback at this point in the story?
 - What does the flashback help us understand about Rose's father?
 - What does it help us understand about Rose and Uncle Weldon?
 - If you were writing your own story about a time in your life, what flashbacks might you need to include so that the reader could understand you better?
- It is important as readers that we pay close attention to dialogue and the words that characters say to each other. However, it is also very important to pay close attention to how an author describes a character's body

language. Silent interactions between characters can give the reader important information about thoughts and feeling that a character might have. Many of the characters (including Rain) have interesting reactions to Rose's father.

Give at least three examples from the text of an interaction between a character and Rose's father that communicates their thoughts and feelings. Include the description of the interaction and your interpretation of the character's thoughts and feelings about Rose's father based on that description.

- Rose interrupts Josh when he is sharing his writing with the class (41-42) because he breaks a grammar rule. Rose's teacher asks her not to interrupt and Mrs. Leibler suggests "you might think about telling him something positive first..."
 - Do you agree with her advice?
 - How could Rose have given the feedback to Josh in a different way?

- As the storm gets closer to land, Rose seems to get more and more worried. While her father says "...the people on the Weather Channel just like to make a fuss so that everyone will watch their show" (74), both characters begin preparing for the storm. We know that Rose behaves differently than her family and peers when she becomes stressed about situations.
 - What are some indications that Rose is nervous before the storm? Give examples of some of her behaviors (67-87).
 - What about an approaching storm might be more difficult for Rose to deal with than it is for her classmates or family?

- Symbolism is a type of figurative language that authors use to make the reader find more meaning and feeling in their writing. In the story, Rose repeatedly mentions that the driveway that bridged their yard to the main road has been washed out. "We are stuck on our property. Even after the water recedes, the stream will still be there, with no driveway bridging it" (89).



What do you think the bridge being washed out represents in the story?

Respond to the following prompts in your Reading Journal as you read (or re-read) Parts 4-5 of *Rain Reign*:

- When Rose finally returns to school after the hurricane, she shares with her class that Rain is missing. As she talks with her classmates, she sees "Mrs. Kushel and Mrs. Leibler glance at each other... It's some kind of conversation" (131).
 - What are the teachers communicating to each other?
 - Why do you think they do this silently, instead of saying their thoughts out loud?

- After Rose's father loses his job, he gets in an argument with Uncle Weldon. As Rose watches them she says her father is "...yelling with his hands, instead of his voice" (146).
 - What does this mean?
 - Why would the author include this in the book?
 - What does she want you to understand about the father?

- Various characters in the story tell Rose how brave she is for searching for Rain's original owners.
 - Do you think this is a brave act?
 - What does bravery mean to you?
 - Overall, do you believe Rose is brave?
 - What examples show that she does or does not have courage?

- When Parvani shares a new set of homonyms that Rose already knows, Rose thinks "... this is a time for the feeling of friendliness. Since a friend would probably not say, 'I already thought of that,' I grin at Parvani and exclaim, 'That's a great one!'" (185).
 - What does it mean to be a friend?
 - Give examples of friendship in the novel.
 - What does the novel say about the importance of friendship?

- As her father drives her to her Uncle Weldon's house (p. 214) Rose says, "The air in the truck now is like the tuning fork, vibrating."
 - What do you think Rose means by this?
 - Why do you think Rose's father won't tell her why they are going to Uncle Weldon's?

- At the beginning of the story, Rose has very few friends in the class. However, as the story progresses Rose seems to be connecting more with her classmates.
 - What are some examples from the story that show Rose's connections to her classmates?
 - How has Rose changed to make these connections possible?

- Use a Venn Diagram (see pages 22-23 below) to compare and contrast how Rose's father and Uncle Weldon treat and interact with Rose.

- Point of view in literature is the way a story is narrated that a writer uses to let to reader experience the plot of the story. In the case of Rain Reign, the novel is told in first person point of view. This means that we are able to hear the events of the story directly from Rose's perspective.
 - How would the story be different if the story was told in third-person point of view by a narrator outside of the story?
 - How would your understanding of Rose's character be different if she wasn't the one telling the story?

Getting to the Root



English is a living language. It changes and grows all the time. One of the best ways to understand the history of the English language and to unlock the meanings of unfamiliar words is to learn Latin and Greek word parts. As you study biology, you will learn more and more of these word parts, and once you know them, you will begin to recognize them in all kinds of words—and you'll find that your knowledge of those word parts will help you decipher the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Roots are the "base" of plants, and Latin and Greek roots form the base of many English words. For example, the Latin root *audi* means "to hear." How many modern English words can you think of that include the root *audi*?

Next, take a look at each word part below. Beside each part is a word from *Rain Reign* containing that word part. You can find the word in context on the page number in parentheses.

- **homo** – **homonym** (4)
- **tract** – **contraction** (18)
- **rupt** – **interrupt** (41)
- **form** – **informative** (73)
- **tempor** – **temporary** (101)
- **ject** – **inject** (155)
- **spect** – **perspective** (199)
- **honor** – **honorable** (200)

1. Can you determine the meaning of the root from your knowledge of the word beside it?
2. If not, think of other words that you know that also contain that root. What do those words have in common? Based on that common element, can you figure out the meaning of the root?
3. If you're still stumped, check out this [list of Latin and Greek roots](#).
4. Now that you know the meaning of the root, how many words can you generate that use the root?
5. Once you understand the meaning of the root, you'll find that even your understanding and appreciation of familiar words will deepen and grow when you think about how that root works in those words.

Words, Words, Words

Rain Reign is full of great words. Below is a list of some of the words from the book that may be unfamiliar to you, along with the page number on which each word appears in the story. Be sure to follow the steps below for other words in the book that are new to you.

- colloquialism (5)
- pique (17)
- directional (37)
- epic (63, 68)
- proportions (63,68)
- faintly (69)
- sarcasm (75)
- mockery (75)
- hurtling (89)
- slope (97)
- indefinitely (99)
- uncertainty (99)
- condemned (101)
- sanitary (108)
- guise (115)
- microchip (154)
- raze (185)

Before you look these words up in a dictionary—or ask someone what they mean—try working through the following steps:

1. Generate a list of other words that share one or more of the same word parts. What do the words on the list have in common? Are there any clues from those commonalities that you can use to help figure out the meaning of the unknown word? Hint: Some word parts—as they appear in English words—have multiple meanings as we look back at the Latin and Greek, in part because of changes that have occurred in the words over the years. For example, does the "ped-" in "pedestrian" mean the same thing as the "ped" in "pediatrician"? Where there is possible confusion, or when you don't see familiar word parts, context clues (see step 2) are extremely important.
2. Go back and reread the word in its context. This context includes the sentence in which you find the word, but you should also read one or two sentences both before and after the appearance of the word. What context clues do you find that might unlock the meaning of the word for you?
3. Make your best guess at the meaning of the word.
4. Look up the definition in [a dictionary](#). Be sure to also look for information about the word's origin. This information will often contain the Latin or Greek word from which the word is derived.
5. How close was your guess?

Explore

Our world is full of connections—between people, places, and events. In this section of the website, you will find activities that uncover some important connections—in meteorology, animal science, language, and math — between *Rain Reign* and our world.

Hurricanes: Fierce, Fascinating Forces of Nature



In the novel, the fictional Hurricane Susan is a strong storm that not only alters the land it hits, but also changes Rose's life forever. Hurricanes, like many natural disasters, strongly affect the lives of people. However, scientifically they are fascinating forces of nature. Check out the resources below to learn more about what hurricanes are and how they are formed.

Activities

- [Watch a video on basic facts about hurricanes.](#)
- [Read more about hurricanes and take a quiz on what you've learned about hurricanes so far. \(Quiz is at the bottom of the page\).](#)
- [Hurricane Simulation](#)- create a hurricane by exploring the relationship between sea surface temperatures and hurricane strength.
- If you are completing these activities during hurricane season, you can try tracking a hurricane. Print this [hurricane-tracking map](#) and go to the [National Hurricane Center](#) to view the path of a hurricane and chart it on your map.
- [Learn more about a career in meteorology.](#)

Based on what you've learned why do you think it's important to track hurricanes? How does where you live affect how you feel about these powerful storms?

Animals' Amazing Senses

Rose often mentions Rain's sense of smell. She explains that "All dogs have smart noses, but Rain's must have been especially smart. I think of the day she followed me through the hallways at school... Her nose had to sort through the smells of dozens of kids and teachers, and choose just mine to track"(95.) Her classmate Parvani thinks Rose is lucky to have a dog with such a smart nose. Let's find out more about what makes dogs like Rain have such smart noses!

Activities

- Watch this [TED ED video](#) about a dog's sense of smell. You can also take a [quiz](#) on what you've learned and/or [explore additional resources](#).
- Check out these [5 dog nose facts you probably didn't know](#).
- [Learn how a dog's nose works](#).
- Learn about other animals and their amazing senses from this [article](#) and this [list](#).
- [Now that you know how a dog's sense of smell works, learn more about how a human's does](#).
- [Play a game](#) to test your knowledge of human and animal senses (you need Flash to access this game).



Reflection Questions

- Based on what you've learned, how would a dog's powerful sense of smell help them in the wild?
- How does this sense help make it possible for dogs to help humans?
- What are examples in the novel of how Rain's sense of smell helped Rose?
- After looking at the heightened senses of other animals, what "super sense" do you wish you had?
- What would you do with this extra sense?

Having Fun with Idioms

The morning that Rose realizes Rain is lost, she can't eat her breakfast and instead looks out the front door searching for Rain. Her father says, "A watched pot never boils" (95). Later when Rose asks to use a bucket instead of going to the bathroom outside, her father responds, "Knock yourself out." (108). In both cases, Rose has difficulty understanding what her father means. He is using idioms, a type of figurative language in which the phrase means something different than the literal definitions of each word in the phrase. You have probably heard many similar phrases in your own life, especially if you read one of our earlier book club selections, *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Check out the links below to learn more about idioms.

Activities

- [Read this humorous article to learn more about idioms](#).

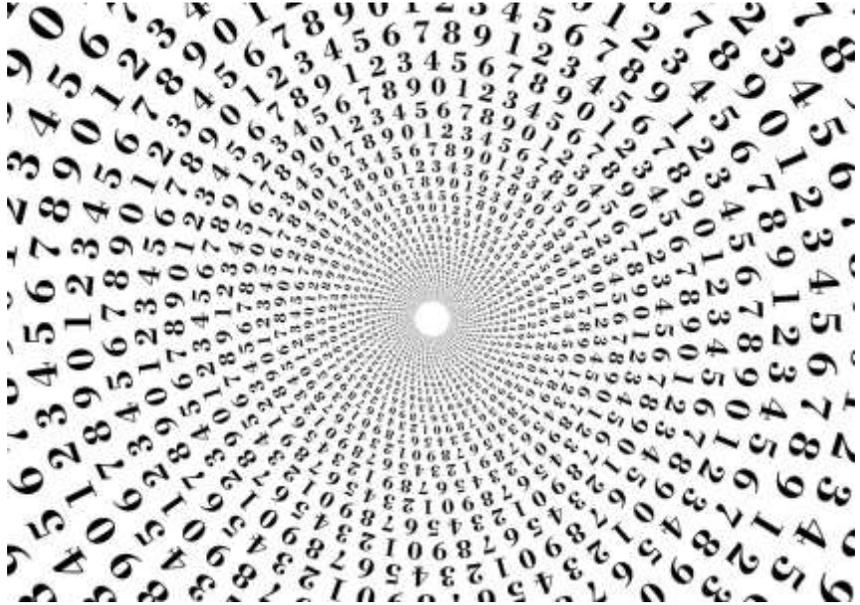
- [Learn the definitions of various idioms - they're organized by topics.](#)
- [This list of idioms gives their meanings and example sentences for each idiom.](#)
- [Test your knowledge on idioms and their meanings with this interactive quiz.](#) (You need Flash to access this quiz.)
- Have you ever wondered how idioms got their meanings. Click [here](#) and [here](#) to check out the origins of various idioms.
- Draw a literal picture of an idiom and write a story about the idiom. [See examples here.](#) Click on one of the idioms at the bottom of the page to see examples of drawings for a specific idiom.

Reflect on the idioms you've learned and think about idioms you've heard in your daily life. Make a list of idioms that you've heard or read in your life. Why do you think we use idioms in conversation? How do they help us communicate ideas or feelings?



A Primer on Prime Numbers

When Rose gets anxious or upset, she often begins reciting prime numbers. She likes to add up the numbers of people's names and determine if the total is a prime number. She tells her Uncle Weldon, "...if you assign numbers to the letters in "Weldon"-- like 23 for W because it's the 23rd letter in the alphabet, and 5 for E, and 12 for L, and 4 for D, and 15 for O, and 14 for N-- The numbers add up to 73. Guess what 73 is?" Uncle Weldon responds, "A prime number?" Rose is so excited and tells him "that is as special as a homonym" (32,33). Find out more about the mathematical phenomena of prime numbers and why Rose finds them so fascinating.



Activities

- [Learn the definition of prime numbers and watch a short video about these numbers.](#)
- [This article explains why prime numbers are so important.](#)
- [Read about the history of Greek mathematician Eratosthenes, who found a way to discover all the prime numbers up to a specific integer.](#)
- [Print out this activity to create your own sieve of Eratosthenes.](#)
- Learn [more interesting facts about prime numbers.](#)
- [Learn about fascinating pairs called twin primes.](#)
- Be like Rose and create a list of your family member's names then add up the letters (A=1, Z=26) in their names. Use [the list of prime numbers up to 1000](#) to determine which, if any, are prime numbers.

Now that you have learned more about prime numbers, why do you think Rose was so interested in them? Based on what you've learned, what is most interesting to you about prime numbers?

Create

An important part of learning is having the chance to produce something of your own. Here you will find engaging projects that connect with the novel and that allow your creative abilities to shine.

Write a Review



Have you ever stood in a library or bookstore and had no idea what book you wanted to read next? How did you choose? Did someone help you by suggesting a book that you might like? Others' opinions of books can often help us decide if we want to read a particular text. A book review is one way for readers to share their thoughts about a book they've read.

Your task is to create a book review of *Rain Reign* that encourages others to read the book. Your review could be a video, slide show, or a poster

advertisement. Make sure to include the following elements in your review.

- The book's title and author, and the cover of the book for your audience
- An explanation of what type of reader will enjoy your book
- A short summary of the book - but do NOT give away the ending; entice a reader to pick your book up!
- Three key elements that make this book really stand out!
- A description of your favorite scene:
 - Select a tiny excerpt of the book that reveals something enticing about your book.
 - State the page number where a reader would find the excerpt.
 - If you're creating a video, use a good read-aloud voice.
- A statement telling what you think the author's message is to readers of this book.

Your product should show evidence of accuracy, as well as thoughtful work that will make others want to read the book. Sell the book!

If you enjoy this activity, ask a parent or other trusted adult to help you go to a site like [DOGObooks](http://DOGObooks.com) and post your review of *Rain Reign*. You could also create reviews for other books you have read.

A Human-Interest Newscast

After deciding to look for Rain's original owners, Mrs. Kushel suggests "Instead of placing an ad in the paper, maybe someone could write an article. An article would get a lot of attention, certainly more attention than a little ad" (181).

She invites her friend Shelia Pearlman who is a journalist for the local paper, the Hatford Herald, to interview Rose and write an article about the search for Rain's original owners.

Imagine you are a reporter on the Weather Channel who reads Mrs. Pearlman's article in the Hatford Herald and decides to feature Rose's story on the channel. You want to create a newscast that highlights the personal effect that hurricanes have on the communities they hit. View an [example of a human-interest news report](#).

Before you record your human-interest story, you will need to write a short script for yourself. Use this [resource](#) to help you come up with ideas. Be sure to include:

- an engaging lede - first sentence of a news story that summarizes key points of the story and captures the audience's attention;
- a short synopsis of who Rose is and why she is looking for the owners of Rain;
- how Hurricane Susan fits into Rose's and Rain's story; and
- a plea for the audience to help if they have any information on how to reach the Hendersons.



After you have recorded your special interest newscast, ask a parent or other trusted adult to help you share your video with family and friends. It's always a great idea to ask the people who view your video for constructive feedback that might help you improve videos like this one in the future.

If you are interested in a career in broadcast journalism, you can find more information [here](#).

An Animal Article (and Ad)



In Chapter 8 of the novel, Mrs. Kushel tells the class, “I have an assignment that will be fun for you. You’re going to write a composition about a pet” (40). Many of the students are excited, but some like Flo don’t have a pet to write about. Mrs. Kushel encourages these students to create an imaginary pet that they wish they had. This leads to Flo writing a humorous piece about her imaginary “chickapoo.” Writing about something that we care about or something we wish we had can help readers understand more about us. For example, how we spend our time with our pet and care for our pet can give others insight into what we value as individuals.

Write a composition about your own pet, or be like Flo and create an imaginary pet. In your composition be sure to include:

- the name of your pet;
- what type of animal your pet is;
- a physical description of your pet;
- what you like or don’t like about your pet;
- how you got your pet;
- the special senses your pet has - use resources from the Animals' Amazing Senses Explore activity (above) to help; and
- the activities you do with your pet.

Now imagine that you have lost your pet, like Rose loses Rain. Create a missing poster that you could put up around your neighborhood as you search for your pet. Read over [tip #5 on this list](#) to help you design your poster. Make sure to include a drawing of your pet, a clear description of the animal, and information on how the person who finds your pet can contact you.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Because this is a fun, imaginary project, you can make up contact information, but remember that you should **never share** your personal information, like your address or telephone number, with strangers or in a public way without a parent or guardian’s knowledge and permission.

Reflect & Connect Prompts

In Duke TIP's online Book Club, the "Reflect & Connect" prompts provide an opportunity for students to share their ideas about the book with other Duke TIP students. You may choose to record your responses to these questions in your Reading Journal, or you can use them to talk about the book with friends or classmates who have also read it.

Conversation Starters

Rose has difficulty talking to her classmates and doesn't seem to have many friends at the start of the book. She states, "Some of the things I get teased about are following the rules and always talking about homonyms" (5). These topics don't seem very interesting to her peers and often annoy them. On page 6, Mrs. Leibler tries to help Rose by having her write a list of conversation starters that she can use when talking with the other students.

- Do you think this is a good list? Why or why not?
- What items on the list would you add or take away?
- What might a conversation between you and Rose look like if you were one of her lunch buddies? Would the conversation be successful? Why or why not?

The Consequences of Rule Following

Rule following is a common idea throughout the story. Rose feels it is always important to follow rules, and she often informs others when they break a rule. This is what causes her to get kicked off the bus in Chapter 7.

- Do you think that her behavior should have caused her to lose her bus privileges? Why or why not?
- What rule did she break to receive this consequence?
- Think about the role(s) that rules play. Why and when are rules useful? Why and when might they be problematic?
- Write a list of rules for Rose advising her on what she could do to avoid getting in trouble like this again. You can title the list "What to do when you observe someone breaking a rule." Use Rose's list of homonym rules on page 17 and 18 to give you an idea of how to organize the list.

Diagnosis

Rose explains her heightened sense of sound saying "I hear lots of things I'm not supposed to hear, and lots of things nobody else is able to hear, because my hearing is very acute, which is a part of my diagnosis of high-functioning autism" (39), and Rose uses this same description in several other parts of the book as well.

- Why do you think the author has Rose tell us, as readers, about her "diagnosis of high-functioning autism"?
- How would your perception of Rose be different if the author had Rose refer to herself – or had others in the story label her – as "autistic" or "having autism" instead of having a "diagnosis of high-functioning autism"?
- It can be easy to use labels based on a single characteristic – anything from a person's ability in sports to the way a person talks or dresses to the color of a person's skin – to define individuals or groups of people.

Think about some of the labels that you have heard or may have even used yourself. How can such labels limit our ability to understand other people and their experiences and perspectives?

Where You Live

As the hurricane approaches, Rose begins looking closely at a map to see how close the storm is getting to her hometown. "I wonder how many miles Hatford is from the Atlantic Ocean. I need to see a map, but I don't want to turn on the Weather Channel again" (71). Location becomes very important to Rose; in Chapter 15, "Where We Live", Rose describes the location of her home in step-by-step, specific detail.

- Why do you think that the exact location of her house is so important to her?
- How does Rose's description of the location help you as a reader? Why do you think the author includes this section?
- Give a similar description of where you live. Use Rose's example on pages 72 and 73 to help you. As you're writing your description, remember to **apply smart, safe digital-learning skills** – do **not** include your city or street address in your description.

Important Choices

Rose is desperate to find Rain and spends many weeks methodically searching for her. However, after discovering that Rain is microchipped and that her original owners may be looking for her, Rose decides to find them. She tells her Uncle Weldon "I think we need to look for the Hendersons... Rain's real owners. It's only right. And only fair. Rules are Rules" (173).

- What would you have done in Rose's situation? Would you have kept Rain as long as you could have or would you have searched for her original owners?
- What do you think Rose means by rules are rules? What rule could she be referring to?

Rules vs. Mistakes

Throughout the story we have learned how important rules are to Rose. At the beginning of the story, Mrs. Kushel says, "Making a mistake is accidental. Breaking a rule is deliberate" (1). Later in the story, when Rose finds out how the Hendersons lost Rain she describes it as an accident (197).

- Explain why you agree or disagree with Mrs. Kushel's description of the difference between mistakes and breaking rules?
- When Rose's father loses Rain, is it a mistake or does he break a rule? Why do you think this?

Danger

When Rose's father finds out that Rose is planning to give Rain back to the Hendersons, he gets very angry. Rain tries to protect Rose and her father attacks Rain. He threatens Rose so that she won't tell anyone about what happened. "'If you say one word to Weldon, to Mrs. Kushel--' His gaze drifts to Rain..." (193).

- Rose doesn't tell anyone. Why do you think she makes this choice?

- What would you have done in her situation?

Changing Perspectives

At the end of the story, Rose shares that one thing she likes about homonyms is that “Most of them seem unrelated... but a few make lovely connections if you’re open to changing your perspective when you think about them” (222). Rose’s perspectives seem to have changed from the beginning of the book, especially about her mother and about the Hendersons. As she learns new information, she is able to think about things differently. She no longer thinks the Hendersons were irresponsible, and she now understands why her mother “left” her.

- Has there been a time when your perspective has changed about something? What caused you to think differently?
- Why is it important to keep an open mind and look for connections between things?

Keep Reading

A few thoughts on books and reading...

"When I have a little money, I buy books; and if I have any left, I buy food and clothes."—
Erasmus

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."—Dr. Seuss

"Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read."—Groucho Marx



What's next?

We hope that you enjoyed reading *Rain Reign*, by Ann M. Martin. Check your email for information about our next book club selection. In the meantime, if you are looking for a new best friend—and aren't inside a dog—here are some books you might enjoy. Don't forget to use the tips from "Writing While You Read" (see pages 17 and 18) to deepen your enjoyment and understanding of these books too.

- *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*, by Robert C. O'Brien
- *Rasco and the Rats of NIMH*, by Jane Leslie Conly
- *All Four Stars*, by Tara Dairman
- *The Stars of Summer*, by Tara Dairman (sequel to *All Four Stars*)
- *The Tell-Tale Start* and other books in "The Misadventures of Edgar & Allan Poe" series by Gordon McAlpine
- *Masterminds*, by Gordon Korman
- *My Near-Death Adventures*, by Alison DeCamp
- *The Scavengers*, by Michael Perry
- *A Single Shard*, by Linda Sue Park
- *The Island of Dr. Libris*, by Chris Grabenstein
- *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library*, by Chris Grabenstein
- *The Lost Kingdom*, by Matthew J. Kirby
- *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*, by Kate DiCamillo
- *The House of Power*, by Patrick Carman
- *Rivers of Fire*, by Patrick Carman
- *The Dark Planet*, by Patrick Carman
- *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster
- *Navigating Early*, by Clare Vanderpool
- *The Apothecary*, by Maile Meloy
- *The Apprentices*, by Maile Meloy (sequel to *The Apothecary*)
- *The City of Ember*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The People of Sparks*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Prophet of Yonwood*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Diamond of Darkhold*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Mysterious Benedict Society*, by Trenton Lee Stewart
- *Chasing Vermeer*, by Blue Balliett
- *The Lightning Thief*, by Rick Riordan
- *Fever 1793*, by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick



Writing While You Read

Have you ever read every word on a page, and turned every page, but when you finished reading, you couldn't remember anything that you had read? If so, you're not alone! Reading can be relaxing, but sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that reading is passive, when it should be active. This doesn't mean you need to run while reading – that might not be a good idea. Writing as you read, however, makes reading active. This process involves some effort, but the payoff for that effort is a deeper understanding and greater enjoyment of the books that you read.

Two strategies for being an active reader are keeping a reading journal and annotating your books.

How do I keep a reading journal?

Below are some suggestions of things that you might write in your reading journal. Experiment with them. You may find that one strategy works really well for you, while others don't work at all. There's really not a right or wrong way to keep a reading journal, as long as you use it as a place to explore your thoughts, reactions, and questions as you read.

What Do I Write?

Write a brief summary, in your own words, at the end of each chapter or section. Include the main ideas or concepts of the chapter, major events in the plot, and any new information that you learn in the chapter.

Do you meet a new character? If so, what is the character like? How do you know? What are the reasons behind what that character says and does? How is the character like other characters in the book? How is the character different? Does this new character remind you of characters you've read about in other books?

Does the setting change? If so, how does the new setting compare and contrast with the previous one? Why does the setting change?

Create your own title for the chapter. If the book includes chapter titles, you might write about why the author has chosen that particular title for the chapter. How does it relate to the main ideas or concepts, major events, and character action in the chapter?

Respond to the chapter. What is the most interesting thing in the chapter? What did you learn that you didn't know before? Do you agree or disagree with the choices the author is making about plot and character? Why or why not? What do you think is going to happen next? How can you connect what is happening in the book to other things you've read? To other things you know? To your own experience?

Identify words that you don't know. Some of these words may just be new to you; others may be jargon, terminology that is used in a particular field or academic discipline. Look these words up in a dictionary, write down their definitions in your notebook, and be sure you understand their meanings and how the author is using them. Often these words are some of the most important in the reading.

Make note of passages where you are confused and/or have questions, and be sure to include a page number. Once you finish the chapter, you can return to the passages. Perhaps further reading clarified the confusion. If not, you know exactly which points in the text to further research or to ask questions about.

Write down striking or unusual use of language. Often writers use particular words, expressions, or sentences in ways that we wouldn't have thought to use them, and the effect can really jump off the page at us. If you come across a passage that seems really cool to you, write it down in your reading journal.



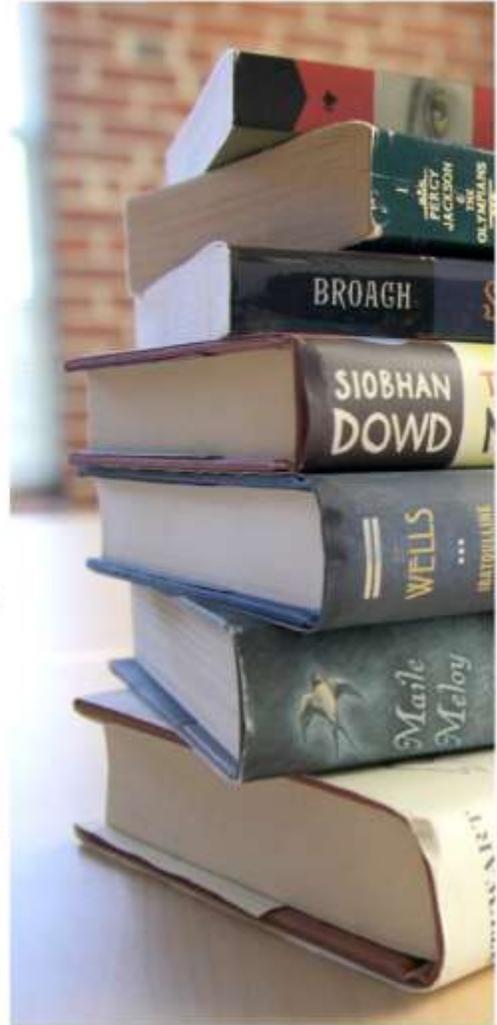
Throughout the online book club activities, you will find activities that are specifically labeled "Reading Journal." When you see that label, read the writing prompt, and respond to it in your reading journal. These prompts will usually ask you to write about a personal connection to what you've been reading. For example, a journal prompt might ask you to write about a time when you found yourself in a situation that is similar to a situation of one of the characters in the book.

To Write or To Type, That is the Question!

Your reading journal doesn't have to be a hard-copy, hand-written one, but there are some advantages to using an old-fashioned journal:

- The physical act of writing promotes a stronger memory for new words, phrases, and strategies you will be learning
- The hard copy notebook can evolve into a collage, a scrapbook, even a work of art that represents your creative, messy, overflowing mind!

How and where you keep a reading journal is much less important than actually doing it! So find an old notebook that may be buried in your desk, ask mom or dad if you can buy an inexpensive composition book, or create a new folder on your home computer and get started!!



How do I annotate a book?

As the word suggests, annotating a book involves making notes or other types of marks that help you focus on particular words or passages that seem important, are often repeated, relate to other things you've read, or simply interest you as a reader. An active reader annotates a text by doing any or all of the following:

UNDERLINING

Specific words that convey significant events or elements of the story's characters, plot or theme

VERTICAL LINE ALONG THE MARGIN

This helps the reader quickly find an important passage underlined, or to highlight a paragraph or other section too long to underline.

* ASTERISK/STAR/DOODLE ☆

Placed in the margin, this device is reserved for the most important, special ideas, events or elements of the book. There would be no more than a dozen of these in the entire book; by flipping through, one could easily find once again the most significant passages in the text.

4. NUMBERS

Placing numbers in the margin can help count a set of related points or ideas the author is listing.

P.#32 PAGE NUMBERS

Often indicated by "p. #" or "Cf. #" next to the number, this indicates an idea or element is connected to another on different page of the book, and should be considered together.

CIRCLES

These serve the same function as underlining key words or phrases, but may be reserved for the **BIGGEST** ideas or facts in the book.

Of course, all of these strategies involve marking in the book. So if you're planning on annotating your book, we recommend that you have your own copy – librarians take a very dim view of writing in books that belong to the media center/library!



Names, Places, & Faces...Oh, My!

Keeping Track with a Character Grid

When reading a new book, it can be helpful to keep track of the characters you meet and what you think about them. This Character Grid is one way to do just that!

Characters in books (or movies!) are often very like people you meet every day in real life. You may notice the way a character dresses, talks, thinks, behaves, or makes new friends. As you record your ongoing thoughts here, remember that some characters will change and grow depending on what happens to them—or whom they meet—as the story progresses. These are called **dynamic** characters. On the other hand, some characters stay the same no matter what happens to them. These are called **static** characters. Whether a character is willing to change and grow can affect the kind of person he or she turns out to be in the end, and it can also influence how we, as readers, feel about that character.

For example, Marlin, from the movie *Finding Nemo*, starts out as an overprotective dad who doesn't believe his son Nemo should try new things because he might get hurt. As the movie progresses, though, Marlin makes new friends, like Crush and Dory, who help him learn to guide and encourage his son without keeping him from experiencing the fun life has to offer. By the end of the movie, Marlin has changed his way of thinking about how to be a "good" dad. This not only makes him a dynamic character but also makes us like him better and want him to succeed as a parent. (If Marlin had not changed his ways, we might have ended up being frustrated by him.)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Tuck this Character Grid into your book or Reading Journal. Then, each time you meet a new character in the book, take a moment to write down his or her name on the grid and answer the "As You Are Reading" questions. (If you run out of writing room, feel free to create your own grid or answer these questions in your Reading Journal!)
2. Once you have finished the book, go back through your grid and answer the "After You Have Finished the Book" questions. As a way of wrapping up, consider: With which character(s) did you connect most strongly? What does this tell you about yourself?

| Character's Name | As You Are Reading... | | After You Have Finished the Book... | |
|------------------|--|--|---|---|
| | Where/When do you meet this character? | Describe this character's appearance and behavior. | What stands out to you about this character's name, behavior, or choices? | Why is this character important to the story overall? |
| | | | Is this character static or dynamic ? What evidence from the book tells you so? | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

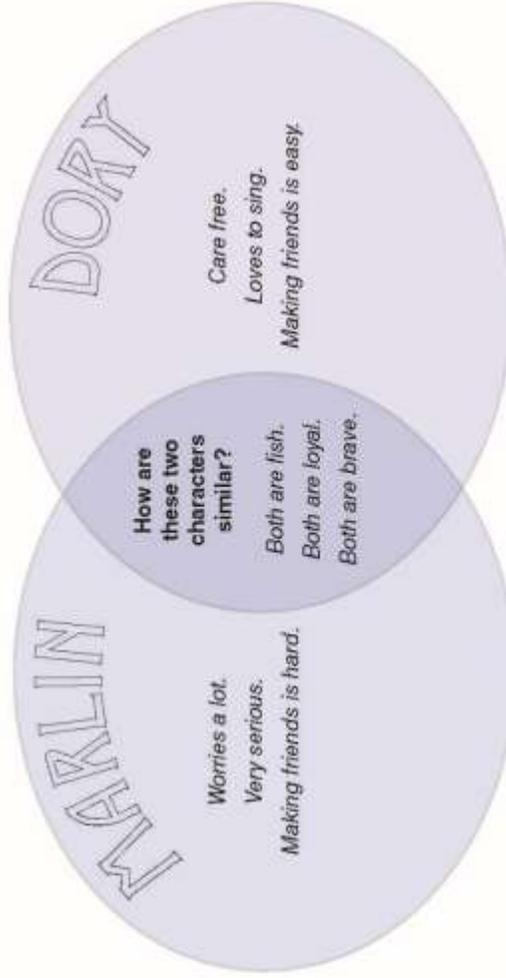


Finding Common Ground

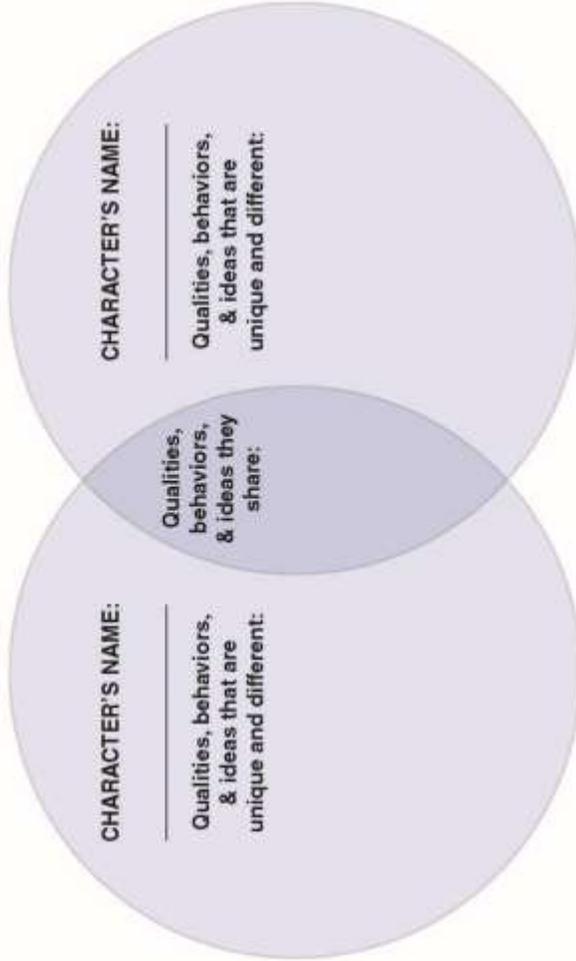
Side-By-Side Comparison with a Venn Diagram

Creating a Venn Diagram can help you visualize and make sense of the similarities and differences between two or more things. For example, as you are reading a book, you could use a Venn Diagram to compare key characters, places, or events.

A basic Venn Diagram is made up of two, partially overlapping circles. Let's say you wanted to compare two characters. In the outer part of each circle, you would write one character's name and list the qualities, behaviors, and ideas that make him or her unique and different. In the space where the circles overlap, write down characteristics the characters share. If we were comparing Marlin and Dory, from the movie *Finding Nemo*, here is how our Venn Diagram might look. (If you've seen this movie, try adding some observations of your own!):



Now you are ready to draw your own Venn Diagram in your Reading Journal! To get started, try something like this:



If you want to compare more than two characters, places, or events, simply add additional circles to your Venn Diagram. Be creative! Just pay attention to the places where your circles overlap and look for similarities there. Here are some other possibilities:

