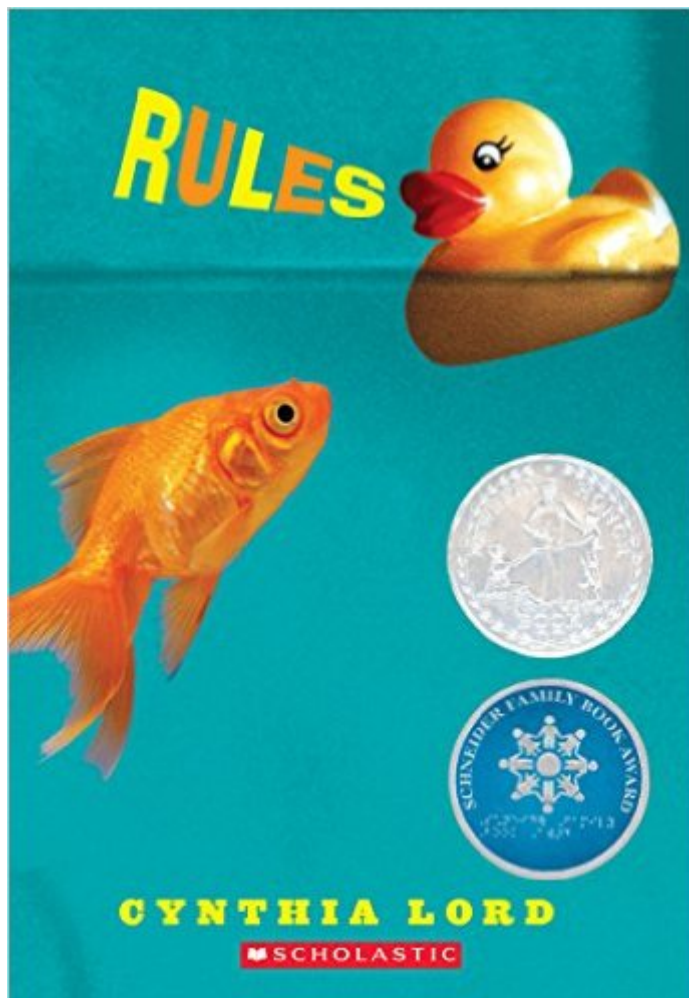




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Rules



Synopsis

This 2007 Newbery Honor Book is a humorous and heartwarming debut about feeling different and finding acceptance. Now in After Words paperback! 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 next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal?

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 469 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #3,275 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Special Needs #26 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Siblings #87 in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > General

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Grade 4-7-Twelve-year-old Catherine has conflicting feelings about her younger brother, David, who is autistic. While she loves him, she is also embarrassed by his behavior and feels neglected by their parents. In an effort to keep life on an even keel, Catherine creates rules for him (It's okay to hug Mom but not the clerk at the video store). Each chapter title is also a rule, and lots more are interspersed throughout the book. When Kristi moves in next door, Catherine hopes that the girl will become a friend, but is anxious about her reaction to David. Then Catherine meets and befriends

Jason, a nonverbal paraplegic who uses a book of pictures to communicate, she begins to understand that normal is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to define. Rules of behavior are less important than acceptance of others. Catherine is an endearing narrator who tells her story with both humor and heartbreak. Her love for her brother is as real as are her frustrations with him. Lord has candidly captured the delicate dynamics in a family that revolves around a child's disability. Set in coastal Maine, this sensitive story is about being different, feeling different, and finding acceptance. A lovely, warm read, and a great discussion starter.-Connie Tyrrell Burns, Mahoney Middle School, South Portland, ME Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Gr. 4-7. "No toys in the fish tank" is one of many rules that 12-year-old Catherine shares with her autistic younger brother, David, to help him understand his world. Lots of the rules are practical. Others are more subtle and shed light on issues in Catherine's own life. Torn between love for her brother and impatience with the responsibilities and embarrassment he brings, she strives to be on her parents' radar and to establish an identity of her own. At her brother's clinic, Catherine befriends a wheelchair-bound boy, Jason, who talks by pointing at word cards in a communication notebook. Her drawing skills and additional vocabulary cards--including "whatever" (which prompts Jason to roll his eyes at his mother)--enliven his speech. The details of autistic behavior are handled well, as are depictions of relationships: Catherine experiences some of the same unease with Jason that others do in the presence of her brother. In the end, Jason helps Catherine see that her rules may really be excuses, opening the way for her to look at things differently. A heartwarming first novel. Cindy Dobrez Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

We create rules as a way to manage our time, personalities, and behaviors. We make rules in order to control our lives and give order to the world around us. Rules let us agree on a common way of acting, of certain expectations being met, and of certain boundaries not being crossed. Rules tell us how to live. Following rules and finding our place in the world is central to Cynthia Lord's *Rules*, a powerful young adult novel about a fifth grade girl, Catherine, and her autistic brother, David. Along the way they befriend a non-verbal, wheelchair-bound boy named Jason, who, despite his physical limitations, helps set Catherine free of her self-imposed and restrictive rules. After all, rules are meant to be broken. Catherine wishes her brother's autism would simply disappear, that he'd just wake up "normal" one day. But

in case that doesn't happen, she's compiling a list of rules so that at least he'll know how the world works, and I won't have to keep explaining things.

Catherine gives voice to the siblings of special needs individuals everywhere when she notes: "Everyone expects a tiny bit from him and a huge lot from me." Later, Catherine talks honestly with her father. "I have to matter, too. As much as work and your garden, and even as much as David. I need you, too." Catherine ponders the nature of her brother's disability. As the father of a son with autism I found her insights packed an emotional wallop. (Note: Cynthia Lord is the mother of boy with autism.) "How can his outside look so normal and his inside be so broken? Like an apple, red perfect on the outside, but mushy brown at the first bite." Catherine struggles with being both embarrassed by her brother and protective of him in equal measure. She hates when people treat her brother like he's invisible. It makes me mad, because it's mean and it makes me invisible, too.

Two of Catherine's most simple rules are the most profound. There are flaws in all of us—not just those with special needs. And We all try to do the best we can to fit in, but things don't always end up the way we intend. There are quite a few laughs here, and a few weepy emotional moments, too. Some of the most profound highlight the differences in Catherine and David's mental capacities. At one point both kids get a chance to make a wish. Catherine says: I wish everyone had the same chances. Because it stinks a big one that they don't. What about you? David wishes for grape soda. Cynthia Lord plays it straight in *Rules*, and doesn't overdo it on the sentimentality. The result is an engaging read filled with light and love. A couple of Lord's rules are bound to stick with you after the novel's close: Sometimes you've gotta work with what you've got. And Looking closer can make something beautiful.

-30-

Of all of the rules 12 year old Catherine makes for her little brother, David, "sometimes you've gotta work with what you've got" is quite fitting when it comes to describing what it is like to have someone in your life born with a disability. Cynthia Lord enables the reader of her book, *Rules*, to come to understand what it is like to grow up with someone with autism. The character David shows many of the classic symptoms of autism including sensory sensitivity, functional echolalia, obsession with certain interests, and lack of social interaction skills. In the story, one of the other key characters is a 15 year old boy named Jason Morehouse. Jason has a physical disability which restricts him to a wheel chair and an apparent voice disability which limits his communication to pointing at words in a communication book. While I am not certain what specific category this

low-incidence disability might fall under, it is captured in the book in as respectful and accurate a manner as David's autism. When Catherine's family brings David to occupational therapy she befriends Jason through her artistic talent when she offers to make and illustrate more words for his communication book. The main conflict in the story arises when Kristi, a girl Catherine desperately wants to be friends with, urges Catherine to invite Jason to a community dance. Catherine is scared to tell Kristi about Jason's disability because of what others might think of her. This specific conflict concerning Jason mirrors the overall conflict concerning her brother David. Catherine dislikes the way the world sees her brother and Jason but does not want to be seen as having a problem either. "The rest of the world isn't like the clinic. Other places, people stare. Or they hurry away, and I know what they're thinking. 'Oh, isn't that too bad.' or 'What's wrong with that kid?' ... I get so sick of it" (Lord, 179). Catherine's feelings and fears are perfectly valid. The story is very accurate when it comes to the negative reactions Catherine describes, but it also does a good job portraying the positive reactions as well. At one point Catherine takes Jason in his wheel chair out to the parking lot to "run". Pushing him as fast as she can, in that moment she doesn't care what anybody thinks of her or how she looks. When they stop and look around, many people are smiling and even cheering them on. When Catherine's brother comes with her to Jason's birthday party, Jason's family understands and accepts David warmly. In the positive and negative reactions of society described here, and in the way the individuals with disabilities are represented, *Rules* is accurate and fair. Not only will I use this book to give my students a compassionate perspective of what life is like for their classmates with disabilities, but also how life is for peers related to disabled persons.

This book helped me have compassion for everyone involved with a physically or mentally challenged family member. I hope I said that "correctly" and won't offend anyone:) The narrator was funny and honest and it was realistically written. Good Y/A book, not preachy, just real. Good character development. Not as amazing as *Wonder* but very good.

As a mom of a 10 year old daughter and a 4 year old autistic son, this book really hit home. I am debating giving it to my daughter to read, or waiting a few years. It has some raw and strong emotions and I am not sure if she is ready yet to explore them. Or maybe I am not ready to explore them yet. At this point my daughter does not show shame or embarrassment regarding her brother's challenges - and I am not sure it is wise to give her ideas. I also fear that being a drama-loving pre teen she would use moments from the book (such as the one when the main character confronts a workaholic dad) in real life, with dramatic flair. It's for the same reason that I don't read *Mo*

Williams' Pigeon books to my pre-schooler. Bad ideas by naughty characters have a way of sticking. This book needed to be written, and I am grateful that it was. It would have been nice to have a chapter with David's point of view but siblings need books too. It is true that siblings, often the strongest allies and supporters of special needs people, do not get featured in novels enough.

No Toys in the Fish Tank should have been the title of this book. David just wants some attention from his sister, but Catherine needs some time to herself, and with her new friend, Kris. And to complicate matters, along comes Jason who reminds Catherine of how embarrassed she feels when she is out with David....of how people look at him... and don't look at him.

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