

***Superstar* Teacher Resources**

Created by Mandy Davis (the author) and Debby Davis (a master teacher and the author's mom)



Start with a short Book Talk and get your students excited about reading *Superstar*!

Ten-year-old Lester Musselbaum loves science and space and Superman. He loves that his mom is his teacher, and that they live together, just the two of them, in a little house out in the country. (It's the perfect place for watching meteor showers!) But soon, everything starts changing. Lester's mom gets a job at the local library and Lester has to enter public school for the first time as a fifth grader. But school *at* school is nothing like school at home. It's too loud, his teacher keeps changing the schedule, and the kids won't stop picking on him. Lester just wants everything to go back to the way it was. At least that's what he *thinks* he wants. Until he hears about the science fair...

Lester is definitely going to make you laugh and might even make you cry. Either way—you're going to love him.

Discussion Questions

We've created these questions to help you facilitate book discussions with your students. We hope they will deepen each student's reading experience, challenge students to think in new ways, and help foster excitement, not just for *Superstar*, but for reading in general.

In addition to the chapter-specific questions that follow, here are some additional teaching ideas that can be used throughout the entire story discussion.

Where Do the Answers Come From

When answering questions about a story, our answers come from many places including both the text itself and from our own understanding of the world. It's important to help students differentiate between answers found in the text and conclusions they draw based on their own experience (inferences). One way to do this is to have the students locate the words, sentences, or paragraphs that support their claims. If students return to the text and don't find the actual answers but instead find clues that point them toward their conclusion, then this conclusion is an inference.

Considering Feelings and Emotions

When reading a story, there are three different questions you can use to help guide students to consider feelings and emotions.

- How is the character feeling?
- How do the events of the story make you feel as a reader?
- How would you feel if you were that character?

Each question is just as important as the next, and authors consider all three when writing a story. It can be an interesting exercise to answer each of these questions for a certain chapter or event, and then to compare and contrast the answers. Many times, we as readers can be feeling something completely different than the characters we're reading about.

A Book as a Character Study

This book is Lester's story. We watch him grow and change throughout the entire book. Many of the discussion questions deal with Lester's character. Here are some additional character study questions you could ask at any point during the story.

- How does Lester feel at the beginning of this chapter? At the end?
- Why do you think he feels that way?
- What did he learn in this chapter?
- Did Lester change in any way in this chapter, or do you sense a change coming?
- Have you ever been in Lester's situation? What did you learn?

These questions can also be adapted to use for other characters as well.

Discussion Questions, Chapter by Chapter

The Meteor Shower (p. 1-5)

- The first sentence of the book is: "It's hard to sleep in shoes." Why do you think the author began the book with this sentence?
- In this short first chapter, what have you already learned about Lester and his family?

The Morning After (p. 6-10)

- On page 7, when the author says, "Something moves in the way back part of my brain," what do you think she means?
- Why does Lester's mom get so upset when she sees the double superstar?
- This chapter has a flashback, which means we go back in time and relive a moment from Lester's past. Identify the setting (where and when the events took place) for the flashback. Why do you think the author chose to use a flashback here instead of just letting Lester tell about what happened?

Chocolate Chip Pancakes with Whipped Cream on Top (p. 11-14)

- How do you think Lester's mom feels about getting her new job?
- Does she think Lester will be excited to go to school? Why or why not?
- How do you think Lester will feel about going to school?

Away (p. 15-19)

- Reread page 15 aloud. What's happening that causes Lester to feel like this? Have you ever felt the way Lester does? What happened that caused you to feel that way?
- Why does Lester run away from the diner?
- Why does Mom need to get a job?

Quarry Elementary School (p. 20-25)

- What kind of impression do you think Lester made on the school secretary?
- What kind of impression do you think Mrs. Raines (Lester's new teacher) made on Lester?

Research (p. 26-31)

- In the short time we've known him, what do we learn about the boy doing math in the library?
- How do you think the boy in the library would describe Lester?
- How does this chapter make you feel about Lester going to school? Do you think school will be like his research tells him it's going to be?

First Day of School (p. 32-40)

- A lot of bad things happen to Lester in this chapter. Name some of them. Are there any good things that happen?
- Why is Lester confused by Mrs. Raines in the hallway?
- Why does Lester think he should keep Abby's card safe?

Hungry (p. 41-47)

- What makes Lester drop his lunch tray?
- How did Lester find his favorite place in the whole school?
- You could say that something good (finding his favorite spot) came out of a bad situation (his experience in the cafeteria). Has something like this ever happened to you?
- What does the author do to make you feel Lester's hunger? Have you ever been that hungry?

- When the lady from the front office says that Mr. Marmel will probably call Lester's mom, she smiles a little. Lester smiles a little, too. Do you think they are smiling for the same reason? Why or why not?

Mr. Marmel (p. 48-51)

- What kind of a kid does Mr. Marmel think Lester is? Why does Mr. Marmel think this? Do you think Mr. Marmel is right?
- There is a turning point in this chapter when Mr. Marmel starts to change how he treats Lester. What did Lester do that caused this change in Mr. Marmel's behavior?

Math Test (p. 52-58)

- Lester gets Superman back from Mrs. Raines, which is good, but immediately something bad happens. What happens and how does this make you feel?
- What does Mom do to try to fix Lester's problems of being so hungry and having to eat in the noisy cafeteria? Do you think these solutions will work?

School. Again. (p. 59-62)

- Lester finds out something about school that gives him hope. What is it? Why is he so excited about it?

Earplugs (p. 63-67)

- Do the earplugs turn out to be a good idea? Why or why not?
- How did Abby "stand up" for Lester?
- How does Abby feel when Ricky calls her *Abby Double-Chin*? Why do you think Ricky calls her this?
- Why do you think Lester didn't defend Abby when Ricky called her a name even though she just defended Lester?

Science!!!!!! (p. 68-73)

- Why does Lester run to the library again?
- Mr. Marmel tells Lester to "march yourself straight to my office." What does Mr. Marmel mean? What does Lester think he means?
- On page 72, Lester does some things to keep his brain from "bursting into a million pieces." What does he do? Why do you think this helps him?

Waiting (p. 74-76)

- On page 75, Lester's mom tells Mr. Marmel that Lester has "always been kind of literal." What do you think she means by this?
- Why does Lester think he'll be good at following the ten rules?

The Rules (p. 77-80)

- What is Mom so excited about in this chapter?
- Why is Lester worried about following *Rule 5*? How do Mom and Lester solve the problem together?

Abby's House (p. 81-84)

- What did you learn about Abby in this chapter?
- Why is Lester so excited about Abby's trophy?

A Question (p. 85-92)

- The name of this chapter is "A Question." Why do you think the author chose this name?
- Why does Lester think his mom will say no to his science fair idea?

Permission (p.93-97)

- On page 95, when Lester's mom says, "Anything but flying," how does this make you feel?
- Why does Lester's mom not want him to do the airplane experiment?

Promise (p. 98-99)

- Do you think Lester will be able to keep his promise about not becoming an astronaut?

Planning (p. 100-107)

- What does Lester want to talk about during recess? What does Abby want to talk about? Do you think Lester is being a good friend?
- How does Abby feel about her dad being gone?

Perfect Day (p. 108-114)

- How do you feel about Ricky and what he did to Lester's Superman?
- How would you describe Ricky? Can you find other places in the book that support what you think?
- At first, Mr. Marmel refuses to take Lester to retrieve Superman. What changes his mind?

The Mower (p. 115-116)

- Why is Superman so important to Lester?
- How might Lester's life change now that Superman is gone?

The Opposite of Perfect (p. 117-121)

- Who do you think Mr. Jacobsen is? What is his job at the school?
- Lester doesn't want to talk about why he sometimes runs away. How does Mr. Jacobsen get Lester to start a conversation about it?
- Even *talking* about running away makes Lester feel stressed. How can you tell?

Wind (p. 122-126)

- Who do you think Ms. Larkin is?
- Why is Lester so concerned that Abby is absent?

Abby Returns (p. 127-131)

- Reread page 129. Why does Abby get so upset with Lester?
- What has Abby been so worried about?

The Baby (p. 132-138)

- Why did Lester and his mom dress up and go to a gala when he was five?
- Two things have happened that make Abby feel relieved. What are they?

A Perfect Saturday (p. 139-142)

- How does Lester feel about Charlie? How do you know?
- How does Lester's reaction to Charlie make *you* feel?

The Experiment (p. 143-152)

- Why doesn't Mom want Lester to climb the slide? Does this remind you of any other places in the book where she's scared for Lester to do something?
- Would you want to have a friend like Abby? Why or why not?
- Lester's hypothesis is wrong. Why is he so happy anyway?

Monday (p. 153-156)

- Would you want to be friends with Mona?
- Do you think Mona will affect Lester and Abby's friendship? If so, in what way?

Art (p. 157-161)

- How does Ricky get the idea to give Lester the nickname *Mussel-BUM*?
- Why do you think Ricky is so mean to Lester?

Mona (p. 162-165)

- Have you learned anything new about Mona in this chapter? Does this new information change how you feel about her? If so, in what way?
- Why do you think Abby doesn't want Lester to be there with her and Mona? How is Abby feeling?

Science Fair Board (p. 166-172)

- Mom shares some exciting news in this chapter. What is it?
- Mom also gets upset with Lester. Why? Has anyone else in the book been upset with Lester for a similar reason?
- Sometimes a mistake can make something even better—like having space left for Lester's airplanes on his science fair board. Has a mistake ever helped you? Describe your experience.

The Science Fair (p. 173-182)

- When does Lester discover there's something wrong with his board? How many ways does he try to fix it? What are they?
- How does the judge feel about Lester's experiment? How do you know?
- If you had been the judge, would you have disqualified Lester's experiment because Abby launched his airplanes? Why or why not?

Winner (p. 183-186)

- Why do you think Mom goes into school with Lester?
- Why is Miss Dimuro (the art teacher) in Lester's classroom?
- Do you think Lester won the science fair?

The Envelope (p. 187-191)

- Should Lester open the envelope? Would *you* open it?
- What do you think is inside the envelope?

The Slide (p. 192-194)

- How does Lester get stuck in the slide?
- How do you think Lester feels at the end of this chapter? How would you feel?

Stuck (p. 195-197)

- Sometimes in books, authors put their characters in situations that mirror how that character is feeling. In this chapter, Lester is actually stuck in the slide. In what ways might Lester be *feeling* stuck as well?

Facing the Music (p. 198-202)

- When does Lester learn what *face the music* means? How do you know he now understands the meaning of this phrase?
- Why do you think Lester's mom is angry that the school gave the packet directly to Lester? Why do you think she's angry that he read it?
- Were you surprised that Lester won the science fair? How did it make you feel?

The Packet (p. 203-206)

- Why do you think Mom keeps her closet locked?
- Why do you think Mom put the packet in the filing cabinet in her closet?
- Lester has many unanswered questions in this chapter. What are his questions and what are some possible answers?
- While many bad things happened, there are also positive things that happened to Lester and his mom today. What are they?
- An *emotional rollercoaster* is a time when your emotions go up and down, just like a rollercoaster. Explain how these last few chapters have been an emotional rollercoaster for Lester.

A Giant Castle (p. 207-212)

- Why do you think Mom keeps doing fun activities with Lester instead of telling him about the packet?
- Describe each school situation that's hard for Lester. What new rule will help him with each one?
- How does Mom explain "autism spectrum disorder" to Lester?

Trophy (p. 213-220)

- What causes Lester to think he should thank Abby in front of the class? How do you think it made Abby feel when he thanked her? How do you know?
- Go back and reread the last paragraph on page 36 through the fourth full paragraph on page 38. How does Mrs. Raines treat Lester differently this time than she did on the first day of school? Why do you think she treats him differently?

Mr. Jacobsen (p. 221-226)

- How does Mr. Jacobsen explain *autism* to Lester? How does it make Lester feel? How does it make you feel?
- If a student receives a packet like Lester's, do think that student should get to know what's in the packet? Should their parents tell them? Why or why not?

The Color Wheel (p. 227-234)

- What does Ricky tell Lester about kids who go to Mr. Jacobsen's room? Why does this make Miss Dimuro send Ricky to the principal?
- How does it make you feel when Miss Dimuro cries? Why?
- What warning does Michael Z give to Lester?
- What top-secret information did Michael Z tell Lester that might make Ricky stop being mean to him?
- Do you think Lester will find his *thing*? What do you think it will be?

Swings (p. 235-240)

- Lester needs to find his *thing*, and he needs to find it fast. What advice would you give him to help him find it?
- What do you think Ricky would have done to Lester if Mrs. Raines had not walked out into the hall? Support your answer with information about how Ricky has acted in the past.
- On page 240, Lester mentions a book that reminds him of his mom's closet. Do you know what book he's talking about? (This is one of the author's favorite books!)
- What secret do you think is inside the trunk in Mom's closet?

The Trunk (p. 241-249)

- What did Lester learn about his dad when he and his mom went through the trunk?
- Why do you think Lester's mom decided to tell Lester about his dad—even though it made her sad?
- Why doesn't Mom let Lester see his dad's medal?

Helmet (p. 250-253)

- Michael Z tells Lester a lot of things about Lester's *weirdness* that make Lester think Michael Z isn't his friend anymore. What does Michael Z also say that makes Lester feel better?
- What does Michael Z tell Lester to think about when trying to find his *thing*? What suggestion does he make?

Recess (p. 254-262)

- Why do you think Abby tells Lester her idea about the astronaut costume?
- Lester ends up being a pretty good kicker. This could be his *thing*. Why isn't he happy or excited about it?

Library (p. 263-267)

- What do you think of Miss Jamie, the librarian? Can you describe her character in a single word or phrase?
- What makes the book *The Science of Sport* so perfect for Lester?

Practice (p. 268-272)

- How do you feel when Lester misses his first kick?
- How do you feel when he actually kicks the ball?
- Would you like to have a friend like Michael Z? Why or why not?

Kicking Data (p. 273-276)

- How does Lester use science to be a better kicker?
- Lester did another science experiment earlier in the book. Think back to that experiment. Can you find any similarities between that one and this kickball experiment?

The Medium-Arc Rule (p. 277-283)

- Lester tries to help Ricky by giving him kicking advice. Why does this make Ricky so mad?
- Lester is figuring out that people are not like science experiments. What does he mean by this?
- How does Mrs. Raines know Lester needs to go to Mr. Jacobsen's room?

Break (p. 284-287)

- What is Ricky so afraid of when he realizes that Lester is in Mr. Jacobsen's room?
- What is Lester's new problem—that is *not* Ricky?

Shoes (p. 288-293)

- Do you think shoes can make you play a sport better?
- In what ways are these shoes perfect for Lester?
- How is the overall mood of this chapter different from the previous few chapters? As a reader, how does this change of mood make you feel?

Footprints (p. 294-297)

- Why does Lester call meteors *superstars*? Find the section of this chapter that explains why.
- How did you feel when Mom and Lester don't see a superstar?

Superstars (p. 298-301)

- How does Lester feel about all the attention he's getting with his new shoes?
- In this chapter, Mona and Lester are competing for something (even though they don't know it). What do you think they're competing for? Who do you think wins and why?

The Kickball Game (p. 302-313)

- Why does Ricky finally call Lester by his real name? What does he want Lester to do?
- Lester knows how to kick a homerun but chooses not to. Why? If you had been Lester, what would you have done?
- Every moment and experience we have with another person affects our relationship with them. When Lester lets Ricky make the winning kick, how do you think this will affect their relationship?
- How do the events on page 313 make you feel? Read that page aloud and try to put everything you're feeling into the words as you say them.

Costume (p. 314-15)

- Lester's mom says, "I think it's time for a new memory now." What does she mean by this?

Trick-or-Treating (p. 316-320)

- Why do you think Ricky tells Lester about the house with the full-size candy bars?
- Lester usually hates nicknames. Why does Lester like the new nickname Ricky gives him?
- Abby does something for Lester in the last moments of the book that Mom doesn't do for Lester in the first chapter. What is it that Abby does? How does this make you feel?

End-of-Book Activities

Acknowledgements

At the end of the book, the author has an *acknowledgements* section to thank the people who helped her during her book-writing journey. If Lester was going to write acknowledgements for his first-few-months-of-school journey, who would he thank? What would he thank them for?

You probably wouldn't think to include Ricky or Mona in Lester's acknowledgements. But if the author were doing this activity, she definitely would! In what ways did these two characters (who caused so much trouble for Lester) also help him?

Coming Full Circle

Many books are like circles. The characters end up in a similar place to where they started, but they find themselves different in some way. Reread the first and last chapters again. What is similar about these chapters? What is different? How has Lester changed?

How would the book have been different if the author had chosen to end the story with the kickball game chapter? Would the still book feel whole? Would anything be missing?

A Note from the Author

With so much amazing children's literature out there, I'm honored that you chose *Superstar* to share with your students. I hope this resource was helpful to you and inspired many meaningful classroom discussions.

Thank you!
Mandy Davis