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Things to Know About *Out of My Mind*

Why Your Young Reader Might Love This Book

- The main character is someone worth rooting for. Readers get to know her, they get to understand her challenges, and they want her to succeed.
- Young readers may respond to the concept of having ideas that you can't yet express and abilities that you aren't yet able to show.
- The school-age children are very authentic. They talk and act like actual fifth graders.

Why You Might Love that Your Young Reader Is Reading this Book

- This book is full of social-emotional lessons. It can inspire great conversations about the following:
 - what we can learn about ourselves
 - how others may see us differently than we see ourselves
 - how right and wrong are not always simple and easy to distinguish
 - how we can approach life's challenges
 - how we can learn from life's setbacks.
- This book is highly rated and recommended by teachers and parents. It overwhelmingly receives 5-star customer reviews on book-selling websites.

What Concerns Parents Might Have

Out of My Mind is generally appropriate for most upper elementary to middle school readers. However, here are some potential red flags to be aware of in *Out of My Mind*. (Note: This section contains a spoiler if you are planning to read this along with your young reader.)

Language:

- The main character uses the word "retarded" as a term to refer to someone who has limited mental abilities. Mean kids use this same word to refer to the main character. (Chapter 4 and throughout)
- An old Styrofoam snowman is described as looking like a "drunk" that has to lean against a wall to hold itself up. (Chapter 5)
- The main character describes herself and the other special needs kids as the "dumb kids" when talking about how people in the school look at them. (Chapter 5)
- The main character uses the word "stupid" to describe things. (throughout)

Situations:

- There is conflict near the end, and things do not turn out as planned for the main character. This can be seen as a positive or a negative, depending on personal preference. (Chapter 28 and beyond)
- There is a terrible accident, and a small child is accidentally run over by a car driven by her distracted and overwhelmed mother. It is a shocking development, especially because of who is involved in the accident; and for a while, we don't know if the child will survive. The child ends up being okay, and we are told that she will fully recover from her injuries. (Chapter 30)

Discussion Prompts #3: All Included

The middle section of the novel focuses on Melody's school life and new people she meets in that setting.

Notes: Readers will need to have read up through Chapter 14 to be able to talk about these events and ideas from the novel. If preferred, answers can be written on a copy of the "Writing Template" (page 9 of this guide).

1

In Chapter 11, Melody begins to attend inclusion classes.

- What are inclusion classes?
- What is Melody doing when she gets in trouble in class for the first time? Why is she so pleased when this happens?

2

In Chapter 13, there is a scene about a family trip to an aquarium.

- Name two school-age kids who are in this scene. Tell what they do, say, or think during this scene at the aquarium.
- Name two adults who are in this scene. Tell what they do or say during this scene at the aquarium.

3

After seeing Rose's new laptop, Melody dreams of her perfect computer. What are some things that her perfect computer would need to do?

4

The Novel and You: What do you think it would be like to be in the situation that Rose was in at the aquarium? Do you think Rose did or did not handle the situation well? What could she have done differently or better? What do you think you might have done differently or better?

Answer Key for Discussion Prompts #3

Page 16 Answers

1. Inclusion classes are classes in which the special-needs students from Melody's class join in with the "regular" classes in the school.

Melody makes friends with a student named Rose in her music class. While the class is listening to jazz, Melody tries to communicate to Rose that she does not like jazz. Rose agrees, and they both laugh about it. The teacher catches them laughing and puts her finger to her lips to tell them to be quiet. Melody is so excited to be caught doing something so "normal" as having a conversation with a friend.

2. The school-age children in this scene are Rose, Claire, Molly, and Melody.
 - Rose is at the aquarium with Melody's family. She is having fun, but then she feels awkward when she sees Claire and Molly there. She knows they make fun of Melody and they will probably make fun of her for being there with Melody. She tries to strike a balance between being nice to Melody and not getting made fun of by Claire and Molly.
 - Claire is the leader of the mean girls. She takes the lead in making fun of Melody. She asks Rose why she is there with Melody's family. She makes it clear that is not something she approves of.
 - Molly is the follower. She sticks with Claire and tries to impress her. She joins in on making fun of Melody.
 - Melody is having a great time with Rose and her family. She sees the way Rose acts around Claire and Molly, and this makes her question if Rose really likes being around her.

The adults in this scene are Melody's mom, Melody's dad, and Mrs. V.

- Melody's mom is angry when she sees the way Claire and Molly laugh at Melody. She balls her fists in anger, and she wants to go confront them.
 - Melody's dad is calm and stops his wife from confronting Claire and Molly. He says that they are children and they should work it out amongst themselves.
 - Mrs. V confronts Claire. Mrs. V is strong and tough. She points out that Claire has braces on her teeth and that her parents bought her those to fix a problem that she had. She tells Claire that she should be thankful that only her teeth needed fixing like that; some people have a lot more that doesn't work as it should.
3. Melody's perfect computer would do many things:
 - It would talk. It would help her communicate and speak so that everyone could understand what she was thinking.
 - It would connect to her wheelchair.
 - It would have large keys that were easy for Melody to push with her thumbs.

Activity #2: Character Confusion

In Chapter 16, Melody shows her classmates what the Medi-Talker can do, and also what she's been able to do all along. Her classmates have many different reactions, and they probably have different feelings about what they are seeing and hearing.

One person who speaks up is Claire. She says that something never occurred to her until that day. Solve the code below. To help, you are given two filled-in letters and two clues.

Clues: The letter "A" is the 1st letter of the alphabet. The letter "Y" is the 25th.

What never occurred to Claire?

"

40	16	2	40		26	10	24	30	8	50	
		A								Y	
16	2	8		40	16	30	42	14	16	40	38
		A									A
18	28		16	10	36		16	10	2	8	

"

The teacher replies to Claire in a way that Melody appreciates. Complete these sentence starters to show how you might reply to Claire to help her grow as a person.

1. I understand that you could have thought this because _____

2. Now that you know you were wrong about Melody, _____

3. A lesson you could learn from this is _____



Activity #3: After Thoughts

In Chapter 28, the Whiz Kids team rushes to make a flight, leaving Melody behind. They then do poorly in the competition. From what we know about these characters, we can imagine what they might honestly say or think about what happened.

For each imaginary quote below, circle which character would have said or thought it. Explain your answer.

1. "I feel terrible about what happened. Melody is nice to everyone, and we let her down. I let her down. She's my friend, and I should have invited her to that breakfast on the day of the flight. I don't know why that was so hard for me to do. I made the wrong choice."

Which character would have said or thought this? **Claire** **Connor** **Rose** **Mr. Dimming**

Why do you think this sounds like the character you chose? _____

2. "We didn't win, and that's just what happened. I don't know why everyone is making such a big fuss about Melody. It wasn't our fault the weather was bad and the flight was cancelled. We were able to make it onto that flight, so why wasn't she? The answer is obvious, but no one wants to say it out loud."

Which character would have said or thought this? **Claire** **Connor** **Rose** **Mr. Dimming**

Why do you think this sounds like the character you chose? _____

3. "Things really happened so fast. I had to keep track of so many things and make sure that everyone in our breakfast group made it onto the plane. I wish we could have gotten word to Melody, but it was too late at that point. We really could have used Melody's help at that competition!"

Which character would have said or thought this? **Claire** **Connor** **Rose** **Mr. Dimming**

Why do you think this sounds like the character you chose? _____

4. "That was bad on all of us. Melody is a great member of the team, and we missed her. I'm awesome at trivia, but I can't win a team competition all by myself! In all seriousness, we messed up. Melody should get an apology."

Which character would have said or thought this? **Claire** **Connor** **Rose** **Mr. Dimming**

Why do you think this sounds like the character you chose? _____
