

ABOUT

Lynda Mullaly Hunt



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Lynda Mullaly Hunt is the author of *New York Times* bestseller *Fish in a Tree* and Bank Street Best Book *One for the Murphys*. She's a former teacher, and loves visiting teachers and students around the country. She lives in Connecticut with her husband, two children, impetuous beagle, and beagle-loathing cat.

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“Friendship is like boogie boarding. You have to know when to hold on and when to let go.”

—from *SHOUTING AT THE RAIN*



Humans of all ages sometimes hold on to people who aren't kind to them. As a teacher, I saw this over and over again with kids. Girls, especially, after being mistreated by a peer, would respond with, “Well, that wasn't nice but she's my friend.” As a human I understand. We long for connection. It's hard to cut ties with other people. But we must teach kids that they deserve kindness and respect. A friend who falls into a pattern of mistreatment is not a friend. We talk to kids a lot about being kind, but do we tell them to expect it as well?

—LYNDA MULLALY HUNT

PRAISE FOR

Lynda Mullaly Hunt



“Hunt has crafted another gentle, moving tale of love and loss.”

—KIRKUS REVIEWS on *SHOUTING AT THE RAIN*

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“*One for the Murphys* is a story that is at once compassionate, thought-provoking and beautifully told.”

—JACQUELINE WOODSON, National Book Award-winning author of *BROWN GIRL DREAMING*

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★ “Unforgettable and uplifting.”

—SCHOOL LIBRARY CONNECTION, starred review of *FISH IN A TREE*

A *New York Times* Bestseller

FISH IN A TREE

A 2016 Schneider Family Book Award Winner

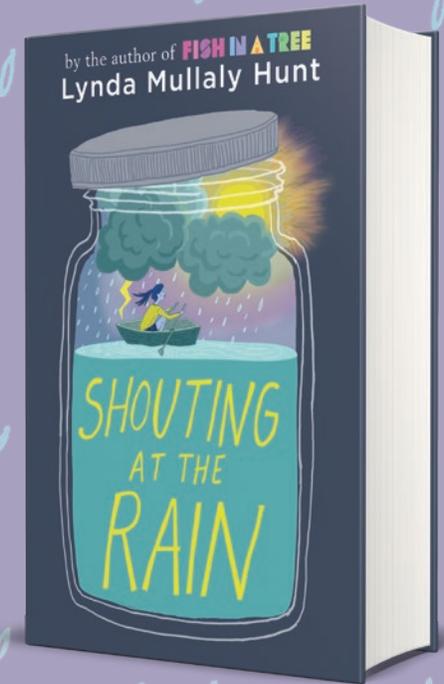
FISH IN A TREE

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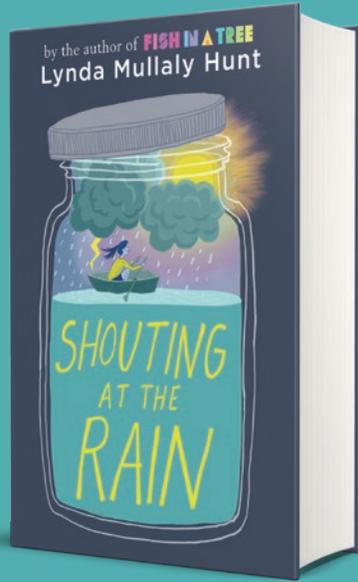
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A Discussion Guide To



From the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Fish in a Tree* comes a compelling story about perspective and learning to love the family you have.



You Don't Have to Weather the Storm Alone.

Delsie loves tracking the weather—lately, though, it seems the squalls are in her own life. She's always lived with her kindhearted grammy, but now she's looking at their life with new eyes and wishing she could have a “regular family.” Delsie observes other changes in the air, too—the most painful being a friend who's outgrown her. Luckily, she has neighbors with strong shoulders to support her, and Ronan, a new friend who is caring and courageous but also troubled by the losses he's endured. As Ronan and Delsie traipse around Cape Cod on their adventures, they both learn what it means to be angry versus sad, broken versus whole, and abandoned versus loved. And that, together, they can weather any storm.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Introduce *Shouting at the Rain* to your students. Make a K/W/L Chart (what they KNOW, what they WANT TO KNOW, what they LEARNED) to use throughout the novel study. Ask them to make predictions about the book, and record those predictions for the class to see and reference throughout the discussion of the book. **Ask students: What do you think shouting at the rain means?** Record those answers to reference later.
2. As the novel opens, a young girl name Delsie is narrating the story, and she makes it clear that she a) doesn't like surprises and b) is an orphan. Explain the difference between causation and correlation. **Then ask your students, do you think those two ideas are correlated or caused by one another? Why/why not?**
3. The author's use of foreshadowing allows her readers to watch out for Brandy's new friend, Tressa. After she is introduced at the beach, Delsie says, “The little voice warns me” (34). **What might the voice say? Have you ever heard a little voice, and did you listen to it? Try to find other examples of foreshadowing in the novel.**
4. Delsie is being raised by her grammy: her birth mother's mother. Delsie doesn't know where her mother is, why she left, or what she is like. She is desperate to hear stories or see pictures of her. **How does she feel when she is reminded of her mother?**
5. Delsie has a fascination with and a vast knowledge of weather patterns and especially loves tracking big storms. **What does this tell us about her?**
6. Throughout the novel, characters' thoughts, opinions, or descriptions are written with figures of speech. **Why do you think the author does this?** Make a list of some of the similes and metaphors, and then come up with a list of your own. Example: “Sometimes Olive makes me feel like a category 5 storm” (76).
7. As Delsie's relationship with Brandy wanes, she recognizes a friend in Ronan. **Do you think one replaced the other? Why or why not?**
8. When asked about his mother, Ronan says she is dead, but Delsie (and the reader) later learn Ronan's mother didn't die, she sent him away. Explain why you think Ronan lied. **Hold a discussion about bending the truth and lying. Is it ever necessary? In what circumstances?**
9. Esme, Delsie's neighbor, is known for her warmth and openness, serving tea from her “Strong Shoulder” jars. What is the significance of the jars in Delsie's story? **Find examples of Delsie's “strength” in the novel, e.g., “We're like Esme's jars—with our strong shoulders” (169).**
10. Throughout the novel, Delsie is dealing with rejection—by her mother, and by one of her closest friends. **How does she deal with it? Does it evolve as she matures throughout the book?**
11. **Explain Grammy's response to Delsie:** “Strength comes in all kinds of forms, you know. I think your momma's strength came in leaving—not in staying” (171).

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Anagram-it!

Create an anagram Instagram for your classroom! Using one of your bulletin boards, post pictures of the following images/people (from magazines/newspapers) in a grid-like pattern with their names underneath. If possible, use pin-up letters so that you can scramble them and try to uncode the author's hidden messages. Here is a list of anagrams that are in the book, with the answers. Try to find more!

Olive Tinselly – I love silently

Brandy Fiester – betrays friend

Delsie McHill – Mellie's child

Katrinka Schofield – It's a hard knock life

Saucepan Lynn – Nancy Paulsen

Shouting at the Rain – that nourishing tea

Bridget Maeve McHill – be calm, deliver might

Henry I. Lasko – is lanky hero

2. Location, location, location

For students unfamiliar with the setting of the novel, show your students on a map where Cape Cod is, and explain how “the Cape,” as Delsie refers to it, is a geographic cape extending into the Atlantic Ocean. The region is part of Massachusetts, known historically for its maritime character and busy summer tourist season, is also home to many commercial fishermen (like Henry and Grandpa Joseph). Provide a few starting ideas for students to research—the history of the area, industries the area is known for (tourism, fishing, farming)—and ask them to come up with a short report to provide deeper insight into *Shouting at the Rain*.

3. Dear Mom

Ask students to assume the voice of Delsie and write a letter to Mellie (Delsie's mother). They can write whatever they feel—small anecdotes about their day, or bigger picture questions and answers.

4. Bully for you!

Tressa's treatment of Delsie comes across as a way to put herself (and Brandy) above her and her grandmother. She bullies her based on her clothes, her home, her interests, and her other friends. Hold a group discussion about the way to treat people—friends, peers, classmates, adults, and younger kids. Consider hiring a counselor, therapist or social worker to facilitate the discussion so that your students understand the gravity of the issue.



5. Support me

At the end of the novel, Delsie realizes she has everything and everyone she needs in Grammy, Henry & Esme, Olive, Ronan, and Aimee and Michael. But as she is struggling with her identity at the beginning of the novel, what kind of support group or organization might she have benefited from? In small teams, have students brainstorm social support groups for kids like Delsie. What services could other kids provide for one another? How could they connect, and how often? What would the company/organization be called? Have each team present their idea to the class.