

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Define *family*. Then discuss how family means different things to different people. Instruct students to write an essay about the basic characteristics of a family.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.

## QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Explain the purpose of the prologue. What does "The Sound of Corn" reveal about Bea's father's relationship with Uncle Frank? Bea says that she will tell a story about "a different me." Explain how this foreshadows her growth as a person.

Discuss how time spent at the lake cabin changes after Bea's parents' divorce. What makes Bea miss her mom? Her relationship with her cousin Angelica is changing. Debate whether this is simply because the girls are growing up. How is their relationship different at the end of the novel?

How does Bea describe her relationship with her parents? Discuss how Bea has a different set of rules in each home. What might Bea say are the pros and cons of living in two places? Why is it sometimes confusing? Discuss whether this arrangement is to accommodate Bea or her parents.

Love is a central theme in the novel. Bea says that her mom and dad still love each other. How is their love different from when they were married? Explain how their love for each other makes their divorce easier for Bea. Describe the love between Bea's dad

and Jesse. How does Bea accept their love? Bea's dad and Jesse both tried to suppress their sexual orientation when they were growing up. Compare how their families feel about their homosexuality. What does their relationship say about the importance of being who you are?

Bea thought she was doing the right thing when she secretly sent a wedding invitation to Mission, Jesse's brother. At what point does she realize she made a mistake? Mission does show up, and causes a scene at the wedding. How do Bea's dad and Jesse manage to make the day a joyful time, despite Mission's behavior?

Why do Bea's parents send her to a counselor? She is a little uncomfortable with Miriam, the counselor, in the beginning. At what point does Bea begin to trust her? Bea is a worrier. What does she worry about? How does Miriam help Bea cope with her worrying? What other important things does Bea learn from Miriam? Discuss whether Bea needs Miriam by the end of the novel.

Bea tells us, "Dad says I wear my heart on my sleeve." (p. 32) Explain what he means. Cite examples from the novel that support his assessment. Miriam tells Bea, "Feelings are sometimes like big dogs. . . . Sometimes they drag you around a little." (p. 36) What feelings drag Bea around? How does she learn to manage her feelings?

Bea is very excited that Jesse has a daughter her age. Discuss why Miriam encourages Bea to think about how it might feel for Sonia when she comes to New York for the

first time. Sonia is homesick while in New York. Why does this make Bea feel like a failure as a sister? Describe the moment when Bea is homesick for her mom, who lives in the same city. (p. 72) Discuss whether this helps her understand Sonia.

Cite evidence that Bea's paternal grandfather was a good father. Discuss why her father wants to share with Bea the tapes of his father reading books aloud. There is one tape where Bea's dad sings "You Are My Sunshine." How is this scene significant to the overarching theme of the book? Why was Bea unwilling to share this tape with Sonia?

Bea asks Angus what it's like having a sister. He answers, "It's like there's someone else in my boat. Someone I don't have to explain things to." (p. 136) What is Angus referring to when he says "my boat"? Bea desperately wants to be a sister to Sonia. How are their boats different? What do they have in common? Angus says, "[My sister] doesn't know what it's like to be me, but she knows a lot of reasons why I am me." (p. 137) How does this statement help Bea understand the role of siblings?

Forgiveness is another theme in the novel. Miriam tells Bea, "Everyone but you forgives you." (p. 191) Discuss what Bea learns about forgiveness from the following characters: Angus, Lizette, Angelica, Mom, Dad, Jesse, Sheila, and Miriam.

Bea's mom has an expression, "And then worse met worst." (p. 187) Discuss moments when Bea feels that this expression applies to her. How does everyone experience this in their lives? How does Bea overcome her worst moments? What might readers learn from her experiences?

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 4-7.1, 4-7.3; Craft & Structure RL. 4-7.4, 4-7.6; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 4-7.1, 4-7.3; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Bea has to be reminded to "think two steps ahead." (p. 41) Discuss times when Bea doesn't think before she acts. Ask students to write a short paper that proposes a possible outcome to one of these incidents if Bea had followed the advice.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.3; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.

Ask students to write a paper that interprets the following simile: "I thought how my life with Mom and Dad was like a room with two big windows and two different moons." (p. 94)

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2, L. 4-7.5; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.

Ask students to write a paragraph that explains the dedication: "For every kid who sees two moons."

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.

Jesse says, "If you think about it, Bea, life is like a trip. A very long one. And what matters most is the people you travel with." (p. 209) Ask students to write a paper that describes Bea's trip so far. Include a discussion of her travel companions.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2, L. 4-7.5; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.

Bea has a green spiral notebook that lists "The Things That Will Not Change" after her parents' divorce. Ask students to write a brief paper that discusses at least one thing that does change and Bea's acceptance of that change.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 4-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.

Bea's mom makes doing chores fun by have a "working dance party." Divide the class into small groups and assign them a household chore. Ask them to choreograph a dance for the chore and set it to appropriate music. Then have them write a description of the dance for a performance called "Household Chores."

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 4-7.4.

After a bat is found in their apartment, Bea and her mom have to get a series of rabies shots. Ask students to find out about rabies: how it is transmitted, its symptoms, and the medical care required to treat it. Create a brochure about rabies that Dr. Thomas might give to Bea to help understand why she needs the shots.

The following website is helpful: [cdc.gov/rabies/index.html](http://cdc.gov/rabies/index.html).

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 4-7.2, Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 4-7.7, 4-7.9; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 4-7.1; Knowledge of Language L. 4-7.3.



# The List of Things That Will Not Change

## Educators' Guide

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Bea is eight years old when her parents call a family meeting and tell her they are getting a divorce. Some things in her life will be different, but there are things that will never change. One of those things is that her parents love her, and each other. Another thing that doesn't change is that Bea is a worrier. Her parents feel that with the guidance of a counselor, Bea can learn coping skills. Now, at age ten, Bea learns that her dad is marrying his boyfriend, Jesse. She is excited because she really likes Jesse and he has a daughter, Sonia, which means Bea will now have the sister she has always wanted. Bea lives in New York and Sonia in California, but as the wedding day approaches, they learn that they each have the best of two worlds. Along the way, Bea learns a lot about family, love, and acceptance.



Grades 3–7  
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Photo credit: Joanne Dugan

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

REBECCA STEAD is the author of *When You Reach Me*, which was a *New York Times* bestseller and winner of the Newbery Medal and the *Boston Globe–Horn Book Award* for Fiction, and *Liar & Spy*, which was also a *New York Times* bestseller, won the *Guardian Prize for Children's Fiction*, and was on multiple state master and best of the year lists. Rebecca also wrote *Goodbye Stranger*, a *Boston Globe–Horn Book Honor Book* for Fiction and a *New York Times* bestseller, and *First Light*, which was nominated for many state awards. She lives in New York City with her family. Visit her online at [rebeccasteadbooks.com](http://rebeccasteadbooks.com) and on Twitter at @rebstead.

### VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE

The vocabulary in the novel isn't difficult, but students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them, using clues from the context. Such words may include: *humiliating* (p. 44), *fundamental* (p. 69), *garnish* (p. 99), *calligraphy* (p. 106), and *karma* (p. 200).

Correlates to Common Core State Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 4-7.4.

### INTERNET RESOURCES

[kidshealth.org/en/kids/eczema.html](http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/eczema.html)

Information about eczema

[cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/index.html](http://cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/index.html)

Childhood mental disorders, symptoms, and treatments

[aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Children%20with%20Lesbian,%20Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-Parents-92.aspx](http://aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children%20with%20Lesbian,%20Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-Parents-92.aspx)

Facts about children living in LGBTQ households

### PRAISE FOR THE LIST OF THINGS THAT WILL NOT CHANGE

★ “Difficulties with spelling, the pleasures of gummy bears, the pain of eczema, the ability to sense adult tension—we are fully present with Bea, in the rich, crisply rendered details and in her distinctive voice.” —*The Horn Book*, starred review

★ “Bea’s interactions with her loving community convey particularly well-drawn dynamics that support themes of building resilience and savoring joy; together, these insightful moments layer into an affecting story of significant middle grade change.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “An emotional character journey from a middle-grade master.” —*Booklist*, starred review

★ “Uplifting without sentimentality, timely not trendy, and utterly engaging.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

This guide was prepared by Pat Scales, children's literacy consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.



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Author of the Newbery Medal Winner WHEN YOU REACH ME

**REBECCA STEAD**

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