

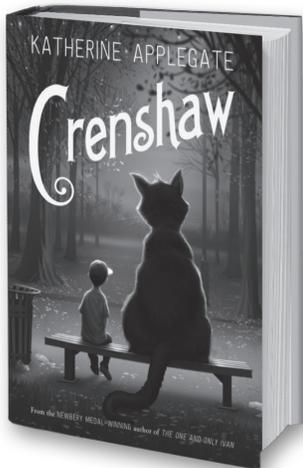
FOR
USE WITH
COMMON CORE
STATE
STANDARDS

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO *Crenshaw*

BY KATHERINE APPEGATE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katherine Applegate is the author of the bestselling *Animorphs* series, and the novels *Home of the Brave* and *The One and Only Ivan*, winner of the 2013 Newbery Medal. She lives with her husband, author Michael Grant, and their two children in Northern California.



ABOUT THE BOOK

In her first novel since winning the Newbery Medal, Katherine Applegate delivers an unforgettable and magical story about family, friendship, and resilience.

Jackson and his family have fallen on hard times. There's no more money for rent. And not much for food, either. His parents, his little sister, and their dog may have to live in their minivan. Again.

Crenshaw is a cat. He's large, he's outspoken, and he's imaginary. He has come back into Jackson's life to help him. But is an imaginary friend enough to save this family from losing everything?

Beloved author Katherine Applegate proves in unexpected ways that friends matter, whether real or imaginary

TO ATTAIN SPECIFIC COMMON CORE GRADE-LEVEL STANDARDS FOR THEIR CLASSROOM AND STUDENTS, TEACHERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ADAPT THE ACTIVITIES LISTED IN THIS GUIDE TO THEIR CLASSES' NEEDS. YOU KNOW YOUR KIDS BEST!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss Jackson's statement: "Stories are lies, when you get right down to it. And I don't like being lied to." (p. 9) Why doesn't Jackson like made-up stories? Why is it so important for him to have a logical explanation for everything that happens?
2. When are the times in Jackson's life that Crenshaw appears? Which events occur that create a need for Jackson to have Crenshaw in his life? Discuss Jackson's comment about the name Crenshaw: "It felt like a blank piece of paper before you draw on it." (p. 27)
3. Why does Jackson feel different from the other members of his family? Describe scenes in the story where Jackson feels separate from them. Identify times in the story when Jackson realizes how important his family is to him.
4. Compare Crenshaw and Aretha in the way they behave. Can Aretha see Crenshaw the way Jackson can? Does she sense whenever he is around, or does Jackson imagine that she does?
5. What is the difference between Jackson's reaction to Crenshaw when he appeared the first time and when he appears now? Why does Jackson keep telling him to leave? What is he afraid of when Crenshaw is there? What does Crenshaw mean when he says: "Imaginary friends don't come of their own volition. We are invited." (p. 76)
6. When did Crenshaw go away in Jackson's life earlier? Why has he never told Marisol about Crenshaw and about his family's problems? Why does he tell her now?
7. Discuss the theme of friendship in this book. How did Jackson and Marisol become friends? What are the experiences and beliefs that they have in common? What are their differences? How does their friendship help each of them?
8. Why does Jackson steal the dog cookie? How does he feel about the few times that he has stolen from a store? Why does he feel worse about lying than stealing? What makes him ask Crenshaw: "Are you my conscience?" (p. 196)
9. Discuss the theme of magic in this story. What is the meaning of "magic" in the context of Jackson's life? Why did he want to reveal how the magician's tricks worked at school? Discuss Marisol's comment: "Just enjoy the magic while you can, okay?" (p. 160)
10. Jackson sometimes feels as if he is the most grown-up member of his family. Identify times in the story when he does appear to act more grown-up than his parents. Identify places in the story when his parents are in charge of the situation.

CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3

ACTIVITIES

THE POWER OF WORDS

Jackson wants to grow up to be a scientist. He enjoys learning new facts and using exact words for every observation. Some of the words your students find in this book may be unfamiliar. Have students use a dictionary to discover the meanings of these words:

curmudgeon	keepsake	volition	optimist	pessimist	observant
volition	gratuity	paleontologist	conscience	poseurs	altruist

Assign different students to use one of these words in a sentence and explain its meaning to the rest of the class.

CCSS: RL.4.4

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Jackson and Robin’s parents are both musicians, and music is very important to them; in fact, they named their children after the companies that made their guitars. They especially like the music of guitarist

B. B. King and singer Aretha Franklin. Listen to recordings of both of these performers in class, and have students discuss in a group how the music makes them feel, and why they think these performers were so important to the parents.

CCSS: RL.4.1; SL.4.4; SL.4.5

KEEPSAKES

Jackson and Robin have to choose special possessions to put in their “keepsake bags” before the family has a yard sale. Have each student make a list of things that were most important to the children in the story and state why they believe each object was special? Then have each student make a list of the things he or she would put in a keepsake bag at home or at school and explain why these things are special.

CCSS: RL.4.3; W.4.2

THE POWER OF STORY

Read to the class the two books that Jackson and Robin put in their “keepsake bags”: *A Hole Is To Dig* by Ruth Krauss and *The House on East 88th Street* by Bernard Waber. Discuss the importance of each of these books to Jackson and Robin and why they would want to keep them. Why does Jackson have his book in the keepsake bag even though he says he has outgrown it? How do the themes in each of these books relate to the personalities of each of the children? Write a paragraph about your favorite book or books and why those stories are meaningful to you.

CCSS: RL.4.1; RL.4.3; W.4.1

THE IMPORTANCE OF NAMES

Crenshaw is a name that Jackson makes up. Everyone in his family is named for someone, or something, else. Have the students discuss the importance of a name. Why is it important for Jackson to give Crenshaw a completely made-up name that isn’t related to anything else in his life? Ask students to think about how the names of people in their family are connected. Have them either write a paragraph on the origin of their own name or on a name they would make up for a pet or an imaginary friend.

CCSS: RL.4.3; RL.4.4; W.4.3

About the Author of this Guide

Discussion Guide prepared by Connie Rockman, Youth Literature Consultant and Editor of the 8th, 9th, and 10th Books of Junior Book of Authors and Illustrators (H. W. Wilson/Salem Press).

FOR A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS USED IN THIS GUIDE,
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