Discussion Guide



The Butterfly Cage
Rachel Zemach

Uruly Voices
2023
386 pages
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Ears and Hearing

Summary

In a series of short, distinctive chapters, Zemach shares her personal Deafhood journey, poignant scenes from the classroom, shocking individualized education meetings and their impact, and the larger political and historical picture surrounding Deaf education.

Questions

1. While reading the book, what surprised you? Was there a place in the book that made you laugh out loud? What part? Was there a part of the book that made you experience other emotions? What part and why?
2. What is audism? Give some examples of audism from the book. Can you think of ways in which audism may have affected your thinking, at any time in your life?
3. What did you learn about cochlear implants from this book? Why might hearing parents who do not have connections to the Deaf Community be at a disadvantage when it comes to making medical decisions for their Deaf kids? In what ways are these parents vulnerable, and why?
4. The author references that persons who hear frequently assume that “hard of hearing” people or those who speak and seem to function well in hearing environments, are “better off” and better equipped to “fit into the hearing world” than those who are profoundly Deaf, non-speaking, fluent in ASL and part of the Deaf community. Did you feel that way originally? After reading *The Butterfly Cage*, what do you think now? Are speaking privileges always a good thing, or are there any times they, or the “hard of hearing” label, can backfire (for either adults or children?)
5. Each chapter begins with a quote. What is your favorite quote and why do you think it was chosen for the book?
6. Do you feel the author held back in her depictions of what she experienced and witnessed happening on the job? Or do you think she showed things in their full reality? How common do you think the issues described in the book are in public schools?
7. Describe any new insights after reading *The Butterfly Cage*? Who do you think might benefit from reading?

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