Extra Credit
by
Andrew Clements

**Teacher’s Edition**

---

*Extra Credit*
By Andrew Clements  
Illustrated by Mark Elliott  
Published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing  
Copyright © 2009 by Andrew Clements  
ISBN: 978-1-4169-4929-9

---

JLG Reading Guide  
ISBN: 978-0-98235-067-6  
Copyright © 2009  
Junior Library Guild  
7858 Industrial Parkway  
Plain City, OH 43064  
www.juniorlibraryguild.com
About JLG Guides

Junior Library Guild selects the best new hardcover children’s and YA books being published in the U.S. and makes them available to libraries and schools, often before the books are available from anyone else. Timeliness and value mark the mission of JLG: to be the librarian’s partner. But how can JLG help librarians be partners with classroom teachers?

With JLG Guides.

JLG Guides are activity and reading guides written by people with experience in both children’s and educational publishing—in fact, many of them are former librarians or teachers. The JLG Guides are made up of activity guides for younger readers (grades K–3) and reading guides for older readers (grades 4–12), with some overlap occurring in grades 3 and 4. All guides are written with national and state standards as guidelines. Activity guides focus on providing activities that support specific reading standards; reading guides support various standards (reading, language arts, social studies, science, etc.), depending on the genre and topic of the book itself.

JLG Guides can be used both for whole class instruction and for individual students. Pages are reproducible for classroom use only, and a teacher’s edition accompanies most JLG Guides.

Research indicates that using authentic literature in the classroom helps improve students’ interest level and reading skills. You can trust JLG to provide the very best in new-release books, and now to enhance those selections by giving your school the tools to use those books in the classroom.

And in case you think we forgot the librarians, be sure to check out the Library Applications page, shown on the table of contents in each guide.

From all of us at Junior Library Guild, we wish you and your students good reading and great learning . . . with JLG Selections and JG Guides.
Extra Credit
by Andrew Clements

JLG Guide written by Karen Sandoval

Table of Contents

About the Author ........................................................................................................ 3
Building Background .................................................................................................. 4
Prereading Activities .................................................................................................. 5
Chapter by Chapter

Chapters 1–4.............................................................................................................. 7
Chapters 5–8................................................................................................................ 11
Chapters 9–11 ............................................................................................................ 13
Chapters 12–14 ......................................................................................................... 16
Chapters 15–18 .......................................................................................................... 19
Chapters 19–21 .......................................................................................................... 22
Wrap-up ...................................................................................................................... 24
Library Applications ................................................................................................... 26
Afghanistan Fact Sheet ............................................................................................... 28
Afghanistan Map ........................................................................................................ 29
Prefix and Suffix Cards ............................................................................................... 30
Suggestions for Further Reading ................................................................................. 31
Correlations to National Standards ........................................................................... 32

A school may reproduce copies of the pages in this book for use in its classrooms or library. Any other reproduction is strictly prohibited.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be transmitted, stored, or recorded in any form without written permission from the publisher. For permissions questions, contact Junior Library Guild.

Copyright © 2009 by Junior Library Guild/Media Source, Inc.
About the Author

Andrew Clements says that as a child he didn’t think about being a writer, but he did love to read. During his summers at a cabin, there was no television, phone, or computer, so he had plenty of time for outdoor activities during the day and time for reading at night. He also watched the people around him and thought about what they might be thinking and feeling.

Mr. Clements credits a high-school English teacher with making him work hard at writing for the first time. The teacher praised a poem he wrote and said he should get it published. In college, his professors praised his writing ability, but Mr. Clements still felt like writing was hard work.

After graduating from college, Mr. Clements taught in the public schools north of Chicago. The students, teachers, and parents he got to know during his seven years as a teacher provided an endless supply of ideas for characters and storylines.

Mr. Clements likes to stay connected to real-life kids. He explains, “For many years now, when talking to a large group of kids, I have asked a simple survey question: ‘Raise a hand if you personally own at least two books.’ Almost all the hands go up. Then I ask, ‘How about five books? Ten? Thirty? Fifty?’”

The hands continue to stay up even as the number of books increases and that continues to amaze him. But his question has a deeper point. “Next I say, ‘Imagine a similar group of kids in Afghanistan today, taking the same survey. Would as many hands go up? Why?’ This had led to some great discussions.”

These discussions have led to Extra Credit, which explores what an American student and an Afghan student have to say to one another, showing that thoughtful questions often inspire thoughtful answers.

When kids ask him how he’s been able to write so many books, he has a simple answer: one word at a time.
Building Background

Current Events
Before beginning the novel, explain that the story is set in the present day in both the United States and in Afghanistan. Ask students what they know anything about Afghanistan, such why thousands of U.S. troops are currently serving in that country. Use the following facts to give students some background information about the country and its troubled history.

★ Afghanistan is one of the least-developed countries in the world. Many of the people are farmers who use old-fashioned tools and methods. Some people are nomads who move from place to place with herds of sheep or goats.
★ People in rural areas live in homes made of sun-dried mud bricks. People in cities live in homes and apartments made of baked bricks and concrete.
★ The Soviet Union tried to occupy Afghanistan. The war lasted from 1979 to 1989.
★ A radical Islamic group, the Taliban, came to power in the 1990s.
★ In 2001, the U.S. joined with anti-Taliban forces to overthrow the Taliban regime. This began an intense period of fighting, including air strikes.
★ In December 2004, Hamid Karzai became the first president of Afghanistan following a democratic election.

Have students create a K-W-L Chart. Model how to divide a piece of paper into three columns and label the columns. Ask students to record what they already know about Afghanistan in the first column. Have them list questions they have about Afghanistan in the second column. As students read the novel, they should record what they learn in the third column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information about Afghanistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What I Know</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a poor country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There has been a lot of fighting there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. troops serve there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Prereading Activities**

**Opening Summary: Making Predictions**

Abby Carson’s teachers tell her she will fail the sixth grade. She received a warning earlier in the year and promised to make changes, but she never did. If she does not do all her homework, get at least a *B* on all her tests and quizzes and complete an extra-credit project, she will have to repeat sixth grade. Abby doesn’t like doing her schoolwork. She would rather be outside, exploring the woods and building a tree house instead of solving math problems and reading books.

Make predictions based on evidence from this summary and/or from your prior knowledge or personal experiences.

1. How do you predict Abby will react to her teachers’ conditions for passing the sixth grade?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possible prediction: I think Abby will be upset because she will feel like she can’t do it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on what evidence?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She doesn’t like to do her schoolwork and she is already behind.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Do you think Abby will have to repeat the sixth grade?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possible prediction: Yes, I think she will have to repeat the sixth grade.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Based on what evidence?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It says she has to get a <em>B</em> on every quiz and test. That is hard to do. It also says she was warned about her grades, but she didn’t work harder to improve them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Set a purpose for reading based on your predictions above.

   **Possible purpose:** I want to find out if Abby is able to do all three things to pass sixth grade.

---

Copyright © 2009 by Junior Library Guild/Media Source, Inc.
Keep a Response Journal

This thought-provoking novel raises many intriguing issues. Have students create and keep a double-entry response journal as they read. Explain that a response journal will allow students to identify and respond to passages they find interesting in the text. Use the following example as a model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage from Text</th>
<th>My Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really, the only problem Abby had with school was all that schoolwork. She didn’t like it and she never had. (pages 16–17)</td>
<td>I feel like this sometimes, too. Going to school is fun, but sometimes there is too much work and I feel overwhelmed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Show students how to divide a notebook page into two columns. In the left column, they will record short passages from the novel that they find interesting. In the right column, they will record their response to the passage, including their personal thoughts, questions, and reactions, as well as any connections they make between the novel and themselves, other texts, or the world.

Encourage students to write at least one journal entry for each chapter. Have students review their journal entries after they finish the novel. Have them draw on the material in their response journal during the wrap-up activities on pages 24–25.
Before You Read
Introducing Vocabulary
Define each of the words, paying attention to the part of
speech indicated. Use a dictionary, if necessary. Then complete
each sentence with the correct word.

councillor (n.) a member of a group who gives advice to a leader

courteous (adj.) polite, respectful

headman (n.) the leader of a decision-making group

rappelling (v.) using rope and other tools to descend down a mountain

village (n.) a small group of houses that forms a community

1. The people in this ____ village ____ have no electricity or running water.

2. The mayor asked each ____ councillor ____ to give him advice about the plan.

3. It is not ____ courteous ____ to chew your food with your mouth open.

4. The climbers ____ rappelling ____ down the mountain use special gear.

5. The people respect the ____ headman ____ for his wise and fair decisions.

After You Read
Drawing Conclusions
1. When you draw conclusions, you use information in the text to make a
reasonable decision about something. What conclusions can you draw
about Akbar Khan and his role as the headman of Sadeed's village? Give
evidence from the text to support your response.

   Possible response: Akbar Khan is a fair leader. He lets people with ____
different viewpoints express their opinions. He wants to do what is best ____
for his village, and he honors his people's traditions.
2. At first, Sadeed felt proud to be called to the meeting at Akbar Khan’s house. How did his feeling change? Why did it change?

   He felt disappointed. He thought he had been chosen for a special ______ honor, but his teacher wants him to respond to an American girl’s letter._____
   He considered the task inappropriate for a boy.____________________

Understanding Genre
Realistic Fiction
1. How can you tell when a story is fiction? What makes it realistic fiction?

   A story is fiction if it is not true. It is realistic fiction if it could happen.____

2. What makes this novel realistic fiction? Give 2 or 3 examples.

   Possible responses: It is about two students. It shows a girl in her gym____
   class. It shows a boy and his sister at home. It is about people who could____
   be going through the same or similar things.____________________

Getting to Know the Characters
The two main characters, Abby and Sadeed, are both students, but they are very different. Use the Venn diagram to compare and contrast these characters. Include specific information from the text.
Responding to the Story

1. In the first chapter, the author describes the meeting at Akbar Khan’s home. What does the author want us to learn about life and customs in Afghanistan?

   Important decisions are made by the headman of the village and his councillors. People are concerned with being proper and honoring their traditions. They don’t consider it proper for a boy to write to a girl.

2. How does Akbar find a way for the village to respond to the letter in a way that is courteous and honors the people’s traditional beliefs?

   Akbar decides that Sadeed’s sister will write the letter and Sadeed will help her.

3. At the beginning of Chapter 2, why do you think the author gives a long, detailed description of Abby climbing the rock wall?

   Answers will vary but they should reflect something about how the description shows Abby’s intensity and determination and shows how she can work hard when she is doing something she enjoys.

4. Reread Abby’s conversation with her parents on pages 23–26. Why are both Abby and her parents to blame for Abby’s problems at school?

   Abby neglected her schoolwork. She didn’t make changes and work harder as she promised she would. Abby’s parents were not checking to make sure she was doing her homework.

5. Do you think it’s realistic to believe Abby can make the changes she needs in order to be promoted to seventh grade? Explain your answer.

   Answers will vary but should be supported with an explanation.
Making Connections
1. Abby's teachers allow her to do extra credit to help raise her grade. Do you think it is fair for teachers to offer students extra credit? Give reasons to support your opinion.

   Answers will vary but should include an opinion about the issue and reasons to support it.

2. Think about yourself as a student. Are you more like Abby or Sadeed? Give examples to support your response.

   Answers will vary but should include personal examples.

---

Physical Education and Health Connection

Rock climbing is a thrilling but dangerous activity. Climbers must wear protective gear, such as a helmet, and use safety equipment. What equipment do you use during athletic and other outdoor activities? Explain the importance of using safety equipment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Reason for Equipment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before You Read
Introducing Vocabulary
When you come across an unfamiliar word, sometimes the sentence or paragraph it is in gives you context clues about its meaning. For example, as you read this passage from page 61, look for clues to the meaning of *bazaar*.

He loved the bazaar best from late spring through the fall, when the whole market area would be packed . . . with vendors selling from pushcarts, from small wagons, from baskets, or from cloths spread out over the ground.

**Answer:** I think a *bazaar* is __________ a marketplace __________ because __________ the passage says it is a place where people sell things. __________

Use context clues to define the following words. Use a dictionary if you are unable to figure out the meaning from the book text.

1. kebab (page 61) *food made of pieces of meat and vegetables grilled on a stick*
2. haggling (page 62) *arguing so as to come to an agreement about a price*
3. camouflage (page 69) *coloration that helps hide something in its surroundings*

Making Predictions
1. Sadeed lives in a small village near the mountains. What do you think his school is like?

   **Possible prediction:** The school is small and there are not very many ______ students.

2. How do you think Sadeed will feel about helping his sister write a letter to a girl in America?

   **Possible prediction:** Sadeed won’t like it because he thinks the task is foolish. But he’ll do a good job because he wants to represent his village.
After You Read

Checking Predictions
Reread your predictions. Were they confirmed? What did you learn about Sadeed’s school?

Possible response: I was right about the size of the school! Sadeed’s school only has one room. I learned there is only one teacher and more than one hundred students.

Making Inferences
When you make an inference, you use observations, prior knowledge, and details from the text to make connections and develop ideas. What inferences can you make about these examples from the text?


   Possible inference: Najeeb was teasing Sadeed because the teacher called him aside. Sadeed was angered by Najeeb’s comments.

2. On pages 51–52, Sadeed is puzzled by Abby’s photograph and calls her a “spider girl.”

   Possible inference: Sadeed has never seen a rock-climbing wall. He does not know that in America some people climb rocks or mountains for fun.

3. Abby does some Internet research and makes her own bow and arrows.

   Possible inference: Abby is resourceful. She can accomplish a task when it’s something that interests her.

4. On pages 72–73, Abby tells her dad she wants to stay out in the woods, but she rushes home instead.

   Possible inference: Abby is excited about receiving a letter from her pen pal. She is eager to find out what the letter says.
Chapter by Chapter
Questions for Chapters 9–11
Pages 74–103

Before You Read
Making Predictions
Sadeed gave his teacher two letters, the one Amira dictated and one Sadeed wrote on his own. Which letter do you think the teacher will send? Give reasons for your prediction.

I predict: Possible prediction: The teacher sent Amira’s letter. Based on what evidence? It would not be appropriate for a boy to write to a girl. The teacher said that Sadeed would help Amira write the letters, not write them himself.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Explain how close your prediction was to what really happens in the story.

Answers will vary.

Mastering Vocabulary
Using Context Clues
Use context clues to determine the meanings of conceited and superb in this passage from the letter on page 76.

But he is not conceited. He is quite a nice fellow. And he is superb at flying kites. He has won many of the kite fights.

1. I think conceited means _______ rude or not nice _______ because in the next sentence Amira says that Sadeed is nice.

2. think superb means _______ really good or skilled _______ because Amira says Sadeed has won many kite fights.

Copyright © 2009 by Junior Library Guild/Media Source, Inc.
Getting to Know the Characters: Sadeed
1. Pages 74–78 feature Sadeed’s letter. What does it tell you about him?

   **Possible response:** He is a very talented writer and artist. He writes ______ poems and draws pictures. ________________________________

2. At Sadeed’s school, his sister gets all the attention because of Abby’s letter. What do you learn about Sadeed from his behavior?

   **Possible response:** Sadeed is jealous because Amira is getting credit for the letter he wrote so carefully. ________________________________

Responding to the Story
1. Why do you think Abby’s second letter is so different than her first one?

   **Possible response:** When Abby read Sadeed’s letter, she could tell he had put a lot of time, effort, and thought into it. Abby felt ashamed of her ______ first letter and wanted her second letter to be as good as his had been. ______

2. How do the letters enhance the story? Why do you think the author chose to include the actual letters rather than just have the characters summarize what the letters say?

   **Possible response:** The letters let readers hear the characters express their own thoughts and feelings. The letters sound like letters real kids might ______ write. Including the letters is more interesting because they let the ______ readers hear each character’s unique voice and personality. ________________________________

Making Connections
1. In his letter, Sadeed mentions a time when his village experienced shootings and booms. What do you think it would be like to live in a place where there is fighting and violence?

   **Answers will vary.** ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________
2. How is Sadeed’s relationship with his sister similar to the relationship between siblings you have or know?

   Possible response: Sadeed and Amira get mad at each other, fight, and tease each other. I do the same things with my younger brother.

3. Abby is bored by the flat land of Illinois and fascinated by the mountains of Afghanistan. What do you dislike about the place where you live? What types of places would you like to visit? Why?

   Responses will vary.

---

**Social Studies Connection**

Sadeed’s letter mentions that he competes in kite fights. In Afghanistan, kite flying, or *gudiparan bazi*, is a popular pastime. But Afghans were not always free to pursue kite flying and many other activities. Under the Taliban regime, kite flying was banned because it was deemed un-Islamic. Afghan girls were not allowed to go to school or have dolls. Boys and girls could not play together, watch television, or listen to music. The fall of the Taliban meant Afghans could once again freely pursue their leisure activities.

Have students discuss what it might be like to live in a country where they cannot play games, watch television, or listen to music. Ask them what basic freedoms people should be entitled to and why they should have them.
Before You Read
Making Predictions
At the end of Chapter 11, Sadeed handed two envelopes to the bus driver. What do you think was in the second envelope? Give reasons to support your prediction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict:</th>
<th>Based on what evidence?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possible prediction: I think it is a letter Sadeed wrote to Abby.</td>
<td>Sadeed wants Abby to know he is the one who is really writing the letters. He is jealous that Amira is getting credit for his work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Explain how close your prediction was to what really happens in the story.

Answers will vary.

Analyzing the Writing
Abby and Sadeed make many statements in their letters. Some of these statements are facts that can be proved, while others are opinions, or expressions of personal beliefs. Read each statement below and identify each as a fact or an opinion.

(p. 112) “Amira is not really writing letters to you, not on her own.” ___ fact ___

(p. 114) “I think it is a fine thing that you are learning to write words in Dari.” ___ opinion ___

(p. 115) Sadeed's uncle calls men who climb mountains “crazy.” ___ opinion ___

(p. 126) Abby calls Sadeed's drawings “great.” ___ opinion ___

(p. 127) “And you can use two Prusik knots with loops for going up or down a rope . . .” ___ fact ___
Responding to the Story

1. Why do you think Sadeed felt it was important to tell Abby the truth about the letters?

   Possible response: Sadeed wanted to be able to communicate directly with Abby. He is an honest person who wants to do things the proper way.

2. How do Sadeed’s and Abby’s views about mountains differ?

   Possible response: Sadeed views mountains as dangerous. He says that people in his village can be killed by ice or snow from the mountains.
   Abby knows climbing can be dangerous, but mountains fascinate her and she wants to explore them. She says she likes the idea that climbing takes her higher and higher.

3. How has Sadeed’s attitude about writing the letters changed? How can you tell?

   Possible response: At first Sadeed was insulted at the thought of doing what he considered a foolish and improper task. Now he enjoys communicating with another person in a different part of the world. His latest letter shows the thought and care he took to write it.

Social Studies Connection

In her letter on page 126, Abby mentions a group of British climbers who met with disaster in the Himalayas.

Discuss with students places on Earth or beyond that modern-day explorers are investigating. Guide students to discuss what makes people take such risks with their lives.
Making Connections
1. In his letter on page 115, Sadeed describes the difficulties of life in his village near the mountains. What would you find most difficult about living in Sadeed’s village? Why?

      Responses will vary but should include reasons for support.

2. Sadeed describes the books he likes to read. Tell about one of your favorite books. What do you like about it?

      Responses will vary but should include information about a specific book and reasons why the student likes it.

3. Why do you think people like to climb mountains, even though it can be dangerous?

      Possible response: People enjoy climbing mountains because it is a ______ physical challenge. They want to explore places they don’t see in their ______ everyday lives.

Vocabulary Studies: Word Detectives
Remind students that they can use their knowledge of prefixes and suffixes to help them figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words. Use words from the book to teach the prefixes and suffixes below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Prefix/Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Word Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rethink (p. 110)</td>
<td>re-</td>
<td>again</td>
<td>to think again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improper (p. 117)</td>
<td>im-</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>not proper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lifeless (p. 111)</td>
<td>-less</td>
<td>without</td>
<td>without life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beautiful (p. 116)</td>
<td>-ful</td>
<td>full of</td>
<td>marked by beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dangerous (p. 122)</td>
<td>-ous</td>
<td>full of</td>
<td>full of danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honorable (p. 122)</td>
<td>-able</td>
<td>capable of being</td>
<td>capable of honor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Give each pair of students a copy of the Prefix and Suffix Cards (page 30). Have students cut apart the cards. Model how to combine the prefix card re with the word card read to create the word reread. Have partners combine their cards to create words with prefixes and suffixes. Ask them to record each word they make and define it. Then have partners share their word lists with the class. Which pair made the most words?
Chapter by Chapter
Chapters 15–18
Pages 131–157

Before You Read
Making Predictions
Sadeed wrote and sent his own letter to Abby. How do you think people in his village would react if they knew this?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict:</th>
<th>Based on what evidence?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possible prediction: I think the people might get upset and say Sadeed should not write any more letters.</td>
<td>Sadeed said his village was traditional, so people might think he was doing something improper.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Explain how close your prediction was to what really happens in the story.

Answers will vary.

Responding to the Story
1. How does the author show readers that the pen-pal project is dangerous for Sadeed?
   
   Possible response: The author shows a stranger threatening Sadeed because he has an envelope with American stamps on it. We find out that a boy was killed for having American money.

2. Sadeed’s teacher, Mahmood, and village councillor Hassan represent two different Afghan viewpoints. Which one do you agree with? Support your answer with reasons and details from the text.
   
   Possible response: I agree with Mahmood because he has a more modern attitude. He wants to get away from the old, traditional habits and improve his students’ education.
3. How does Abby show cleverness in her letter?

Possible response: Abby puts clues in her letter to show Sadeed that she is addressing him rather than Amira. She mentions a boyfriend, but she is really referring to Sadeed.

**Cause and Effect**
A *cause* is something that makes something else happen. An *effect* is what happened as a result of the cause. Read the causes and effects below that come from what happens in the story and complete the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cause</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effect</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abby’s letter includes the word <em>boyfriend</em> in several places.</td>
<td>Sadeed whispers as he reads the letter so his mother won’t hear this word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby puts soil from her farm inside the envelope with her letter.</td>
<td>Sadeed and Amira make a farm field on a piece of paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A stranger threatens Sadeed on his way home from school.</td>
<td>Sadeed puts his arm around Amira’s shoulders as he walks her through the village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A parent complains to the school about Abby’s pen pal display.</td>
<td>Abby’s teacher removes the Afghan flag from the bulletin board display.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Making Connections**
1. Do you think the village leaders were right to make Sadeed stop writing to Abby? Give reasons to support your response.

Possible response: Yes, I think they were right. Some people might hurt or even kill Sadeed if they found out about the letters.

2. Teachers play an important role in the lives of Abby and Sadeed. Tell how a teacher has made an impact on you.

Responses will vary.

Responses will vary.
3. What dangers do you face in your life? How do they compare to the dangers Sadeed faces?

Possible response: The dangers in my life are getting very sick or injured.

These dangers do not seem as serious as the ones Sadeed faces. Sadeed could be killed by a bomb or by someone who is angered is he writing to an American girl.

---

**Technology Connection**

In her letter on page 149, Abby mentions using the computer program Google Earth to learn more about Sadeed’s village, Bahar-Lan. If possible, have students use this Internet site to learn about their own local region. Ask them to identify their region’s geographical features, such as deserts, mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, and oceans.

Have students discuss what role technology plays in their everyday lives. How does technology make our lives easier? Are there any disadvantages to relying so heavily on technology?

Students may discuss their use of computers, cell phones, and household appliances. Technology has made our lives easier. For example, we can communicate with people all over the world almost instantly. Some students might say that people are not connecting face-to-face as much anymore because of technology.
Chapter by Chapter
Chapters 19–21
Pages 158–183

Before You Read
Making Predictions
Sadeed will only write one more letter to Abby. How do you think Abby will react to finding out it is the last letter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict:</th>
<th>Based on what evidence?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possible prediction: I think Abby will be sad, confused, and disappointed.</td>
<td>She enjoyed reading Sadeed's letters and learning about him and his country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Explain how close your prediction was to what really happens in the story.

Answers will vary.

Responding to the Story
1. How do you think the pen-pal project changed Sadeed and Abby?

   Possible response: Sadeed learned that it could be fun and interesting to communicate with a girl and an American. Abby began by treating the project as work she had to do. Later, she enjoyed sharing her thoughts with Sadeed and learning about life in Afghanistan and the mountains near his village.
2. During her presentation, Abby explains that her pen pal could no longer write letters because not everyone in Afghanistan likes America. Why do you think the author made this point?

Possible response: The author did this to show that in some parts of the world some people do not see us the way we see ourselves and that it can be dangerous to be pro-American.

Making Connections
1. Abby is disappointed when her letter exchange ends. She tried to forget about the project. How do you deal with disappointment?

Responses will vary.

2. Sadeed treasures Abby’s letters and the soil she sent. What things do you treasure? Why?

Responses will vary.

Literature Connection

Childhood Memories
During their exchange of letters, Abby and Sadeed both mention they enjoyed reading Frog and Toad books as children. What books do you remember liking when you were younger? What did you like about these books?

Work with your classmates to have a time when you all bring in a favorite childhood book and talk about what you remember about it.
Wrap-up

Thinking About the Novel
Read this passage from Abby’s class presentation on page 166:

I don’t think I learned that much. I learned that the kids there are mostly like us, with the same kinds of feelings and everything. . . . Because everybody talks all the time about how people are pretty much the same. And I think that’s true.

1. Do you agree that Abby didn’t learn that much from the pen pal project? Why?
   
   Answers will vary.

2. Do you agree that people all over the world are “pretty much the same”? Why or why not?
   
   Answers will vary.

Thinking About the Genre
Realistic Fiction
1. Does this story seem realistic to you? Why or why not?

   Most will think this story could happen. The characters are like people we know. They way they act and deal with their problems is realistic.

2. Why are the main characters believable and interesting?

   Possible response: Abby and Sadeed talk and act like real kids. The things they say in their letters reveal their unique thoughts, feelings, and personalities.
Thinking About the Story Elements

1. Use the diagram below to graph the plot of Extra Credit.

- **Introduction** Abby must complete a pen-pal project to earn extra credit. She is failing the sixth grade and may have to repeat it.
- **Rising Action** Abby exchanges letters with Sadeed, a boy in Afghanistan. With each new exchange, the students become more interested in learning about life in each other's country.
- **Climax** Sadeed is threatened by a man who finds he has a letter from an American girl. A parent complains about the inclusion of the Afghanistan flag in Abby's classroom display.
- **Falling Action** The headman of Sadeed's village ends the letter exchange. Amira and Sadeed each write one more letter to Abby.
- **Resolution** Abby is sad the pen-pal project must end, but Sadeed's last letter inspires her to see her life through a different set of eyes. Abby passes the sixth grade and will be in junior high in the fall.

2. What is the theme of this book? What lesson does the author want readers to remember?

Possible responses: It can be rewarding and thought-provoking to learn about people who do not share your culture and customs. Even people with very different lifestyles and beliefs have things in common.
Library Applications

Informational Bulletin Board Display
In the book, Abby creates a classroom bulletin-board display that features the pen-pal letters she sends and receives. She also puts up a map of Afghanistan, a picture of the country’s flag, and Sadeed's drawings.

Have students use the Internet to locate images that depict Afghanistan, including its people and culture. As a group, generate a list of possible topics for the display. Discuss with students how to find and evaluate Web sites that contain relevant and appropriate content.

Once students have printed out their images, have them write a caption for each one. Students can use a word-processing program to type and print their captions. Use the pictures and captions to create an informational bulletin-board display. As students read the novel, invite them to add other information to the display.

International Pen Pals
After students read the novel, they may be interested in becoming a pen pal with someone from another country. Discuss with students the benefits of being and having a pen pal. Ask them which countries they want to learn more about. Guide students to carefully research pen-pal organizations. Be sure students get parental permission before they join any organization.

Give students tips on writing their first letter. Remind them of the letters in the novel. What made Sadeed’s letters so interesting and informative? Discuss what kind of personal information would be appropriate for a pen-pal letter. Remind students to include some questions for their pen pal. Their questions should be somewhat general since they don’t yet know who their pen pal is or where he or she lives.

Display a world map and label the places where students’ pen pals live. Post copies of letters students send and receive.
Library Applications

Current Events
Tell students that in February 2009, President Barack Obama requested that 17,000 more U.S. troops be sent to Afghanistan. Have students use newspapers, magazines, and the Internet to research current information about America’s efforts in Afghanistan. Ask them to find news articles that answer questions such as the following:

- Why did the President request that more troops be sent to Afghanistan?
- What responsibilities do U.S. troops have in Afghanistan?
- How are U.S. troops helping to train Afghani soldiers?
- What threats do our soldiers face in Afghanistan?
- How many U.S. troops are currently deployed there?

Have students update a bulletin board display with the most current info each week.

Health Connection

Point out that the citizens of a country at war are affected just as much as those who are engaged in the actual fighting. Have students investigate how ongoing warfare contributes to people’s health problems. Offer students a list of topics to research that are common mental and physical health issues faced by those who live in a war zone, as well as those who live back home. These could include the following:

**Mental health issues**
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Severe depression
- Chronic anxiety
- Suicide

**Physical health issues**
- Physical disabilities
- Malnourishment and starvation
- Disease
- Heart and blood pressure problems
**Afghanistan Fact Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area (in square miles)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (in millions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Languages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colors of the Flag</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital’s Location (Latitude/Longitude)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit of Currency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest mountain range</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief exports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List two interesting facts you learned about Afghanistan during your research.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Check the resources you used to complete this fact sheet.

- [ ] encyclopedia(s)
- [ ] Web site(s)
- [ ] atlas
- [ ] nonfiction book(s)
- [ ] almanac
- [ ] atlas
- [ ] other

Which resource was most helpful? Why? ________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Afghanistan Map
## Prefix and Suffix Cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>re-</td>
<td>im-</td>
<td>-less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ful</td>
<td>-ous</td>
<td>-able</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read</td>
<td>count</td>
<td>patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care</td>
<td>harm</td>
<td>joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfect</td>
<td>hope</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>point</td>
<td>depend</td>
<td>humor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suggestions for Further Reading

Other books by Andrew Clements:


Other multicultural novels:

Choi, Sook Nyul. Year of Impossible Goodbyes. Yearling, 1993. (Korea)
(Peru)
(Afghanistan)
(Afghanistan)
Laird, Elizabeth and Sonia Nimr. A Little Piece of Ground. Haymarket
Books, 2006. (Palestine)
(Brazil)
### Correlations to National Standards

#### For Grades 5–8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Standard Number</th>
<th>Standard Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.1</td>
<td>Reading for Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.2</td>
<td>Reading for Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.3</td>
<td>Evaluation Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.4</td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.5</td>
<td>Communication Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.6</td>
<td>Applying Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.7</td>
<td>Evaluating Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.8</td>
<td>Developing Research Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.9</td>
<td>Multicultural Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.10</td>
<td>Applying Non-English Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.11</td>
<td>Participating in Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K-12.12</td>
<td>Applying Language Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education &amp; Health</td>
<td>NPH.K-12.3</td>
<td>Physical Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education &amp; Health</td>
<td>NPH.K-12.5</td>
<td>Responsible Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education &amp; Health</td>
<td>NPH.K-12.7</td>
<td>Understanding Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education &amp; Health</td>
<td>NPH-H.5-8.4</td>
<td>Health Influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences: Civics</td>
<td>NSS.C.5-8.4</td>
<td>Other Nations and World Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>NSS.G.K-12.1</td>
<td>The World in Spatial Terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>NSS.G.K-12.2</td>
<td>Places and Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>NSS.G.K-12.5</td>
<td>Environment and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>NT.K-12.1</td>
<td>Basic Operations and Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>NT.K-12.2</td>
<td>Social, Ethical, and Human Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>NT.K-12.3</td>
<td>Technology Productivity Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>NT.K-12.4</td>
<td>Technology Communications Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>NT.K-12.5</td>
<td>Technology Research Tools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>