

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussions, library programs, or classroom activities.

Meet Ohio author Jennifer Maschari, who is also a middle school science teacher!

Select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading *Things That Surprise You*.

Discover interviews, readalikes, websites, and other resources to explore topics and themes in depth.

Things That Surprise You

By Jennifer Maschari



About the Book

Emily Murphy is about to enter middle school. She's sort of excited...though not nearly as much as her best friend Hazel, who is ready for everything to be new. Emily wishes she and Hazel could just continue on as they always have—being the biggest fans ever of the Unicorn Chronicles, making up dance moves, and getting their regular order at The Slice. But things are changing. At home, Emily and her mom are learning to move on after her parents' divorce. Hardest of all, her beloved sister Mina has been in a treatment facility to deal with her anorexia. Emily is eager to have her back, but anxious about her sister getting sick again.

Hazel is changing too. She has new friends from the field hockey team, and is starting to wear makeup and have crushes on boys. Emily is trying to keep up, but she keeps doing and saying the wrong thing. She wants to be the perfect new Emily. But who is that really?

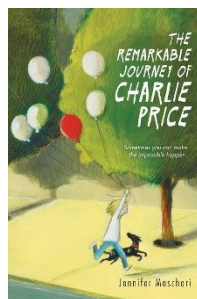


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Book Details

Things That Surprise You by Jennifer Maschari
Balzer + Bray (HarperCollins), 2017. ISBN 9780062438928. 288 pages. Ages 8-12.
Leveled Reading: AR Points 8.0. ATOS Book Level 4.0.
www.harpercollins.com/9780062438928/things-that-surprise-you

Available as an ebook through the Ohio Digital Library: ohiodigitallibrary.com



Don't miss Jennifer Maschari's first middle grade novel, **The Remarkable Journey of Charlie Price** (Balzer + Bray, 2016), a story of grief, friendship, family, and memory, and winner of the 2017 Floyd's Pick Book Award.



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“Maybe this is a thing to know about growing up: There are some things in life you’ve got to hold on to. And there are other things you’ve got to let go.

The key is knowing the difference.”

About the Author

Jennifer Maschari is a classroom teacher who writes books for young readers. She is the author of **The Remarkable Journey of Charlie Price** and **Things That Surprise You**. She is hard at work on her next stand-alone middle grade novel from Balzer+Bray. Jennifer lives in central Ohio with her husband and her two stinky (yet noble) English bulldogs, Oliver and Hank.

Check out Jennifer Maschari's full bio on her website to learn about some of her favorite books, places, and activities: jenmaschari.com/about.

Author Resources

Jennifer Maschari's official website
jenmaschari.com

Jennifer Maschari on “My Writing and Reading Life” from The Children's Book Review
www.thechildrensbookreview.com/weblog/2017/08/my-writing-and-reading-life-jennifer-maschari-author-of-things-that-surprise-you.html

On Writing, Embarrassing Moments in Middle School, and Adorable Bulldogs: Author Jody Casella interviews Jennifer Maschari
www.jodycasella.com/2017/08/on-writing-embarrassing-moments-in.html

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:
See jenmaschari.com/school-visits-events

Talk About It!

Topics to share when discussing **Things That Surprise You** with young readers.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. See examples below. Other Learning Standards such as Social and Emotional: Self Awareness and Social Awareness may also apply. Discussion questions and educational activities for **Things That Surprise You** align with Learning Standards for Grades 3-5.

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, education.ohio.gov. From the Topics dropdown menu, click on “Learning in Ohio.”

Spoiler warning! Some discussion questions refer to key elements in the book. Do not read if you do not want to find out what happens.

- The novel begins in the main character, Emily's, bedroom. Emily is busy crafting a costume when her friend Hazel arrives. What important information about Emily and Hazel is revealed in the first scene in the story? How are the girls alike? How are they different?
- What has changed about Emily's and Hazel's friendship? Why did those changes happen? How does each girl react to the changes?

Talk About It (continued)

- The first day of school can be exciting and scary. What happens during Emily's first day of middle school, and how does she react to the novelty of the people and classes?
- Following the instructions in the "Be the Best You" CD set, Emily makes a chart with two categories: "Emily Before" and "Emily After." How does Emily describe who she is as she enters sixth grade? How does she describe who she wants to be? What does Emily do with this list at the end of the book? In your opinion, is the book more about change, self-acceptance, or both?
- Emily's mother and father are recently divorced, and Emily is still navigating this big change in her life. Describe Emily's relationship with her father. How does it change over the course of the novel?
- Mina's struggles are both a secret and very public. What behaviors of Mina's lead her parents to seek treatment for her? How are some of these behaviors still an issue when Mina returns home?
- Contrast how Anita and Sara support Emily on school picture day with how Hazel and her teammates treat Emily at the movie theater.
- Why do you think that Emily didn't shame Hazel when Hazel appeared in tears at Emily's house toward the end of the book?
- Do you think Emily and Hazel will go back to being friends? What might their relationship be like in the future?
- Describe Hector. Does he change over the course of the book? How do Emily's feelings about herself affect how she feels about having a friendship with Hector? Have you ever become friends with someone you didn't expect to like?
- Ms. Arnold tells Emily, "A lot of times, life works itself out... but sometimes, I think, people need a little push in the right direction" (pp. 275-6). In what ways does Ms. Arnold support Emily and help her with that "little push"?
- What lessons do you think Emily learned through all of her difficulties and discoveries in the novel?

Most discussion questions are from the **Things That Surprise You** Discussion Guide; used with permission. Download this guide for additional discussion questions and extension activities: jenmaschari.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Things-That-Surprise-You-discussion-guide.pdf

Go Further!

*Ideas for extending the experience of reading **Things That Surprise You**.*

Emily and Hector visit the natural history museum to research earth history. Whether for a purpose or just for fun, a trip to a local museum is a classic group activity. Ohio has a wealth of museums and cultural sites. Browse this guide to over 240 museums in Ohio and find a destination for a great field trip:

ohio.org/things-to-do/museums

Emily plays the game of "Three Things" with Hazel (p. 9) and with her dad and Alice (p. 169). Adapt this game for the classroom, as a library program, or as a family activity. Students can take turns suggesting a category, such as "Places I'd Like to Visit," or "Books I Loved," and sharing three things within the category.

Emily and Hector collaborate on a project about plate tectonics. Readers can use online resources available to students through INFOhio (infohio.org) and to all Ohio residents through Ohio Web Library (ohioweblibrary.org) to learn more about plate tectonics. This topic appears in Ohio's Learning Standards for science in 8th grade, but is appropriate for independent exploration by younger students as a home or library activity. If you are planning extensions for this book at school, consider selecting a related earth science topic, within their grade-level standards, for the students to research.

Explore More!

Additional ideas and resources to use with **Things That Surprise You**.

What Is Friendship?

people.howstuffworks.com/what-is-friendship.htm

From HowStuffWorks, an overview of friendship and its benefits, the different types of friends, and healthy ways to respond when a friendship turns sour.

What's Next®: Books in Series Database of Kent District Library

ww2.kdl.org/libcat/whatsnext.asp

Unicorn Chronicles is a made-up book series, but there are plenty of actual book series for students to discover! The Kent District Library in Michigan has been building this finding aid for series fiction since the mid-1990s. Search for specific authors or series titles, or browse by selecting the Youth category and the genre or genres of your choice.

The Greyhound Project, Inc.

adopt-a-greyhound.org

Mina's and Emily's dog Bean is a greyhound adopted through a rescue organization. Learn about greyhounds and greyhound adoption by exploring the website of The Greyhound Project, a nonprofit organization that provides information about and promotes the adoption of retired racing greyhounds.

National Eating Disorders Association

www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

Like Mina, millions of people struggle with eating disorders, and like Emily, millions more are impacted by eating disorders. The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) is the largest nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by eating disorders.

See the Author's Note at the end of **Things That Surprise You** for additional important information on eating disorders.

Check It Out!

Recommended for readers of **Things That Surprise You**.

Most of these books have been recommended by Jennifer Maschari, and two were recommended by Ms. Arnold!

Anastasia Krupnik by Lois Lowry.

The BFF Bucket List by Dee Romito.

Fish in a Tree by Lynda Mullaly Hunt.

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E.L. Konigsburg.

Moonpenny Island by Tricia Springstubb.

Nest by Esther Ehrlich.

No Place Like Home by Dee Romito.

Orphan Island by Laurel Snyder.

The Secret Language of Girls and **The Kind of Friends We Used To Be** by Frances O'Roark Dowell.

The Someday Suitcase by Corey Ann Haydu.

Still a Work in Progress by Jo Knowles.

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits:
library.ohio.gov/ctro.

This toolkit revised
July 2019.