



Addy's Race

Debby Waldman

Interest level: ages 8–11

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136 pages

Consider the following questions as you read *Addy's Race*:

How easy is it to break free of something that's limiting you? How can you make sure people see you for what you are capable of?

Story

Addy has worn hearing aids for as long as she can remember. Her mother tells her this makes her special, but now that Addy's in grade six, she wants to be special for something she's done. When Addy joins the school running club to keep her best friend, Lucy, company, she discovers she is a gifted runner. Lucy isn't, which is problematic. Further troubles surface when Addy gets paired on a school project with Sierra, a smart, self-assured new classmate who wears a cochlear implant.

Author

Debby Waldman is the co-author of *Your Child's Hearing Loss: A Guide for Parents* (Plural Publishing), which she began writing after learning that her then three-year-old daughter would need to wear hearing aids for the rest of her life. *Addy's Race* is inspired by her daughter and the many children she learned about while working on the book. Debby is also the author of the Orca picture books *A Sack Full of Feathers*, *Clever Rachel* and, with Rita Feutl, *Room Enough for Daisy*. She lives in Edmonton, Alberta, with her husband, daughter and son.

Connecting to the Curriculum

Language Arts

- **Focus:** *story map*
Guide students through the creation of a story map or plot diagram for a story that is familiar to them (*Little Red Riding Hood* or *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* are good ones). Divide students into groups and have them create a similar plot diagram for *Addy's Race*. Work with students to break the story into the beginning, the rising action, the climax, the falling action and the resolution.
- **Focus:** *vocabulary*
Have students compile a lexicon of words from the book. Here are a few to get started: *cochlea, implant, audiologist, transmitter, integrity, meticulous*. Have students add to their word lists as they go through the story, writing a definition beside each word. The definitions can be student-generated or taken from a print or online dictionary.
- **Focus:** *oral presentations*
Have students prepare a sales talk for *Addy's Race*. The goal is to sell the book to one or more specific audiences. Brainstorm with students the different types of groups that this book might be marketed to (e.g. kids who have physical differences, parents of children with hearing impairments, running enthusiasts, etc.). Have students draft a sales pitch and present it—complete with graphics and/or video for full effect—to their target group.
- **Focus:** *character web*
Invite students to choose a character from the book and create a character web for that individual. Webs should include personality traits, physical characteristics, likes or dislikes, habits and whatever other information students can dig up about the character. Encourage students to make as detailed a web as possible for their chosen character.
- **Focus:** *character arc*
Addy's character grows and develops over the course of the story. Have students draw a character arc showing Addy's personal development and learning over the course of the story. (You could have them visualize the arc like a rainbow.) Along the way, have students note significant events that shape Addy's growth (such as racing, being snubbed by Sierra, or feeling indignant that Sierra is such a goody-goody with telling others about her implant).
- **Focus:** *summarizing*
Challenge students to write three new titles for *Addy's Race*.
- **Focus:** *similes*
A simile is a way of writing about something by comparing it to something else using the words *like* or *as*. For example, in chapter 1, when Addy's mom is talking about Addy's best friend Lucy, she says that the girl is "solid, 'like a farmer's wife.'" Challenge students to find other examples of similes in *Addy's Race*. There are plenty!

- **Focus:** *idioms*
Addy's grandmother says to "Kill 'em with kindness." This is an *idiom*—an expression that means something more than just the words it's made up of. Other examples of idioms include "birds of a feather flock together" or "beat around the bush." Have students discuss what each of these idioms really means. In small groups, have students brainstorm a list of idioms to share with the class.
- **Focus:** *descriptive writing*
In chapter 11, Addy reflects on how slowly she and her best friend ran their first race together: *Lucy and I were about as fast as two jellyfish in a bowl of pudding.* This is an example of descriptive writing, where the author uses words that conjure up strong images in the reader's mind. (Notice how the simile helps?) Have students find other examples of descriptive writing from *Addy's Race*.
- **Focus:** *letter writing*
Have students write a letter, speaking as Addy, to all the people who drive her crazy with their pity. Before they begin, brainstorm with students some ways to express Addy's opinions and views in a way that's diplomatic but makes a clear point. What suggestions would Addy have about how others should treat her differently?

Social Studies

- **Focus:** *history*
Helen Keller was a key player in showing the world how people with disabilities can lead full, impactful lives. Starting with the suggested resources (below) have students research Helen Keller and either prepare a short presentation, video or report about this determined, dynamic woman.

Health and Career Education

- **Focus:** *careers*
In chapter 4, Addy says the new kid, Henry, reminds her of a nerdy kid from the audiologist's office. Have students investigate audiology. They can do this in a group jigsaw, where each group has ten minutes to research one of the following questions: What kind of training does this career demand? Where do audiologists work? Who do they help? What kind of tools and equipment do audiologists use?
- **Focus:** *interpersonal relationships*
As a group, have students brainstorm individual and group behaviors that contribute to a safe and caring school environment. Divide students into pairs or small groups. Task each group to create a list of strategies, actions and examples around one of the following topics:
 1. demonstrating empathy for others
 2. taking responsibility for personal actions
 3. standing up for their own beliefs and values
 4. acting as role models or helpers for others, including younger children
 5. working toward eliminating one's own tendencies to bully or hog power
 6. engaging in socially inclusive behavior

Science

- **Focus:** *body systems*
Using the resources listed at the end of this guide, go online with students to explore how the ear works. Read about the ear and watch a YouTube video to investigate cochlear implants. Extend the activity by engaging students in a discussion about cochlear implants for young children—there's a lot of controversy over this topic. People disagree about whether it's always necessary to “treat” hearing impairment with implants.
- **Focus:** *electricity*
Addy uses batteries in her hearing aid. Explore with students the characteristics of batteries. How does a chemically-produced (battery) electrical charge compare to a friction-produced (static) electrical charge?
- **Focus:** *circulation and respiration*
Addy relies on her heart and lungs as well as her muscles to get her through every race. Create learning stations for students to investigate their circulatory and respiratory systems. Have them measure and record their heart rates before and after mild exercise (i.e. jumping jacks). Have them measure and record lung capacity by exhaling through a tube or straw inserted into a container of water. Assist students with proper investigative experimental design.

Connecting to the Students

Focus: *constructing, monitoring and confirming meaning; making connections*

1. How does Addy feel when her mother explains her daughter's hearing loss to other people? At the beginning of the story, what stops her from telling her mother she doesn't like it?
2. Addy doesn't want other people to feel sorry for her. She has a tool to help her do everything that everyone else can do. But other people don't understand this. Have you ever felt like you're quite capable of doing something—but other people don't think you are? How does this make you feel?
3. Addy observes that Lucy shouldn't have to join running club if she doesn't want to. *Why should she join a club she's not interested in?* she asks. For what reasons are people—kids and adults alike—so often stuck doing stuff that they don't really want to do?
4. What connections can you make with the following selection from chapter 5, where Lucy and Addy join the running club for the first time?
My legs felt twitchy. I wasn't tired or sore. It was as if I hadn't run at all. If Lucy hadn't been there, I would have kept running.
5. In chapter 6, Trevor joins the class discussion about how teams should include players of the same ability. He calls skilled players “good kids” and unskilled players “bad kids.” The teacher asks him to use the term “less-skilled kids” instead of “bad kids.” Addy thinks to herself that all Mrs. Shewchuk accomplished is telling everybody that “less-skilled” is teacher talk for “bad.” But it's just a matter

of words, right? Or is it? As you see it, why is it sometimes important for us to choose carefully the words we use?

6. What connections can you make with this part of chapter 8, where Addy is at the start line of the first race of the year?

That's when I started to run as fast as I could. If I didn't, I'd be like those people who get flattened at soccer games in England or Brazil, or wherever soccer is called football, and there are stampedes at the stadiums.

7. As you see it, why *do* unkind words hurt just as much as “sticks and stones”? What do you tell yourself when someone says something rude or mean?
8. Addy often thinks about what her grandmother says about how other people behave. How is the wisdom of our elders useful in helping us understand our world? Which elders help you?
9. Sometimes Addy feels like there's something “wrong” with her. But what do you think? Don't we all have differences? For some of us, those differences are visible (a hearing aid; a prosthetic arm; braces; glasses). But for many of us, the differences can't be seen (interrupting others; teasing; always feeling sad; being very shy). Think about this for a while. What's different about you?
10. It's a relief for Addy to be able to escape Stem and talk to her best friend, Lucy. Having friends is important for our spirits and our mental health. Write about a friend who's special for you. Why do you like this person so much?
11. Addy tries to engage with Sierra by showing her that she, too, has a hearing impairment. This is one way of showing *empathy*. What does the word mean? Write about a time when you showed empathy to someone else.
12. Addy is amazed when she realizes she's a fast runner. Have you ever discovered yourself to be surprisingly good at something that you never would have expected?
13. When Addy is paired with Sierra for the constellation project, she is frustrated that Sierra seems to have all the answers. Lucy tells Addy that she needs to take a bigger role in getting *her* ideas heard. Why is this good advice?
14. What does it say about Addy as a person that she is always willing to wait for Lucy during races? Do you know any people who are like this?
15. After the Rundle Park race, Addy has a strange dream. How do dreams reflect what's happening in our lives?
16. Lucy tells Addy that Sierra acts as though she likes her implant because people will think she's important. “If she says she hates it, they feel sorry for her,” she says. Explain why this makes sense. Is there something in your life that you could put a better spin on?
17. What kind of courage does it take for Addy to stand up to her mother and ask her to stop talking about her hearing impairment?

Author's Note

Dear readers,

The idea for *Addy's Race* came to me when my daughter was in a cross-country meet in grade five. Her dad and younger brother ran alongside her at the end of the race, cheering her on. She never acknowledged them. At the finish line, they asked her why.

"I didn't hear you," she said. "I turned off my hearing aids at the end of the race. It was really peaceful."

About a year later, that image came to me when I was thinking about writing a chapter book. But I needed more of a plot than "a girl turns off her hearing aids in a race." So I came up with a story about a girl with hearing aids who goes to a small school where she has trouble fitting in. When she joins the school running club, she develops the confidence she needs to make a friend. She also learns that her hearing aids allow her to shut out the world—and sometimes that's a good thing.

It took more than two years to complete a draft. I was proud I'd finished the book, but when I read it my first thought was, "Gosh, Addy is whiny. No wonder she doesn't have any friends."

I wanted to make her more likeable. I just wasn't sure how. So I left the book for nearly a year and worked on other projects. Toward the end of the year, I went to a conference for people who write and illustrate children's books. After listening to some terrific, accomplished authors and editors, I knew how to revise the book.

Revising can be scary. It means deleting at least part of your original manuscript to make room for new ideas. Sometimes it means deleting the entire manuscript. Who wants to do that? I certainly didn't. But *Addy's Race* wasn't going to get better on its own. So I gave myself a pep talk: *You are not destroying a masterpiece. You are improving your book. Revising is a good thing. Revising will make your work better.* (Feel free to use this pep talk next time your teacher tells you to revise something.)

In the original version, Addy had a younger sister and no friends and she wasn't always nice to the one girl who was nice to her. The original was also written in third person. But I wanted Addy to have a sense of humor, and it was easier to accomplish that if she could speak directly to the readers. Once I started writing in her voice, I discovered she already had a friend. Yes, you read right: I discovered. I was just writing along, and that's what came out.

I used to roll my eyes when people told me writing is a magical process. After all, if it's magical, why doesn't that first draft come out perfectly? What I've learned is that writing is a mix of magic and hard work. You don't get one without the other, and you can't schedule in the magic. But the magic doesn't happen without the hard work (which includes—you guessed it: revising).

I've done the hard work for Addy, and I'm grateful for the magic. I hope you'll enjoy the end result!

Happy reading.

Sincerely,
Debby Waldman

PS: I revised this letter too!

Resources**Books***Fiction*

- Blatchford, Claire H. *Nick's Secret*
 Butts, Nancy. *Cheshire Moon*
 Hirsch, Karen. *Becky*
 Hodge, Lois L. R. *Season of Change*
 McElfresh, Lynn E. *Can You Feel the Thunder*
 Neufeld, John. *Gaps in Stone Walls*
 Piper, Deb. *Jake's the Name: Sixth Grade's the Game*
 Quinn, Patrick. *Matthew Pinkowski's Special Summer*
 —*Signs of Spring*
 Shreve, Susan Richards. *The Gift of the Girl Who Couldn't Hear*
 Yeatman, Linda. *Buttons: The Dog Who Was More Than a Friend*

Nonfiction

- Adler, I. & Adler, R. *Your Ears.*
 Goodrow, Carol. *Kids Running: Have Fun, Get Faster and Go Farther*
 Gray, Susan H. *Hearing*
 Keller, Helen. *The Story of My Life*
 McDougall, Christopher. *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen*
 Naffclayton, Farris. *Deafness and Hearing Impairment*
 Parker, Victoria. *I Know Someone With a Hearing Impairment*
 Whitfield, Simon. *Simon Says Gold*
 Wouk, Henry. *Hearing Disorders*

Online

Hearing Loss

- http://kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems/sight/hearing_impairment.html
<http://deafness.about.com/cs/earbasics/a/typesofloss.htm>

The Ear

- <http://kidshealth.org/kid/htbw/ears.html>
<http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/bigear.html>

Cochlear Implants

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmNpP2fr57A
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cochlear_implant

Audiology

- <http://careerplanning.about.com/od/occupations/p/audiologist.htm>
www.asha.org/
www.health.gov.sk.ca/audiologists

Helen Keller

www.afb.org/braillebug/helen_keller_bio.asp

www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=1

Batteries

<http://electronics.howstuffworks.com/everyday-tech/battery.htm>

<http://science.discovery.com/videos/deconstructed-how-car-batteries-work.html>

Running

www.kidsrunning.com

Dealing with bullies

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/bullies.html>