



Mystified Parents

Writing prompts, discussion questions, and audio transcript

ABOUT THE STORYTELLER

Sarah Weeks has written more than fifty picture books and novels for children and young adults, including the bestselling novels *PIE* and *SO B. IT*—which is now a feature-length film. Two of her most recent works are *SAVE ME A SEAT*, a novel, and *GLAMOURPUSS*, a picture book. In addition to writing, Sarah is an adjunct faculty member in the prestigious Writing Program at the New School University in New York City and a founding member of ART, a traveling troupe of authors who perform reader’s theatre at conventions and conferences across the country. <http://www.sarahweeks.com>

Talk it Out

Read the following quotation from an unknown source:

There are two gifts we should give our children; one is roots, and the other is wings.

Now discuss:

What do you think is meant by “roots” and “wings” in this statement? Explain your answer. Looking at Sarah Weeks’s experience, how do you think her mother gave her both roots and wings?

Do you agree with the quotation?

Brainstorm a list of ways to positively share one of your interests with someone who might not understand why it appeals to you.

If you think your family doesn’t understand you or some of your interests, what can you do to connect with people who do understand? Explain your answer. Is that answer any different if your family does fully understand you and your interests? Explain.

Write it Out

Choose one of the following prompts and write 1-2 pages, double-spaced:

- Imagine that you wake up one morning and everyone in your family is exactly like you. They like the same things, wear the same clothes, and do the same activities. Write a diary entry about how this makes you feel and whether or not you want it to stay this way forever.
- Think about a time when you have felt misunderstood. Now write a poem about that time.
- Imagine a morning when Julie Sternberg is reading in the corner of the Books department of her family's store instead of straightening up in the Luggage department, as her parents have told her to do. Her father wanders into Books and finds her there. Write up the scene. Be sure to include dialogue and describe the setting and the feelings of Julie and her father.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE AUDIO MEMORY

Sarah: Although my parents were extremely loving, nice, wonderful people, I was the third of three. My brother and sister were highly academic, very, very interested in studying, you know. And I wanted to write music, to write songs, to write poetry; and truly my parents did not know what was going on. So to say I was the black sheep would be putting it a little too strongly, but they were, they were pretty surprised. And my dad kinda threw up his hands a little bit, and my mom was the one who sat with me by the piano while I practiced. She was the one who read my poetry and all that. But there were long periods of time when I felt: They don't really understand me. I wonder what it would be like to be in a family of people who were musicians or poets or something like that. I thought about that a lot.

Julie: It's so funny that you say that because my family owned a business. They owned department stores. And my—I'm the second of four. And the other three kids were all very interested in business and, in fact, have gone into business in some fashion. Two of them still work with my parents in a new business. And I was very academic and very much a reader. And they had no idea what to do with me, either. I was supposed to be working in the department store, and in fact—instead, I was reading in a corner of the book department every Saturday. So I know exactly what you mean. You don't have to be necessarily a black sheep to feel just not quite understood.

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