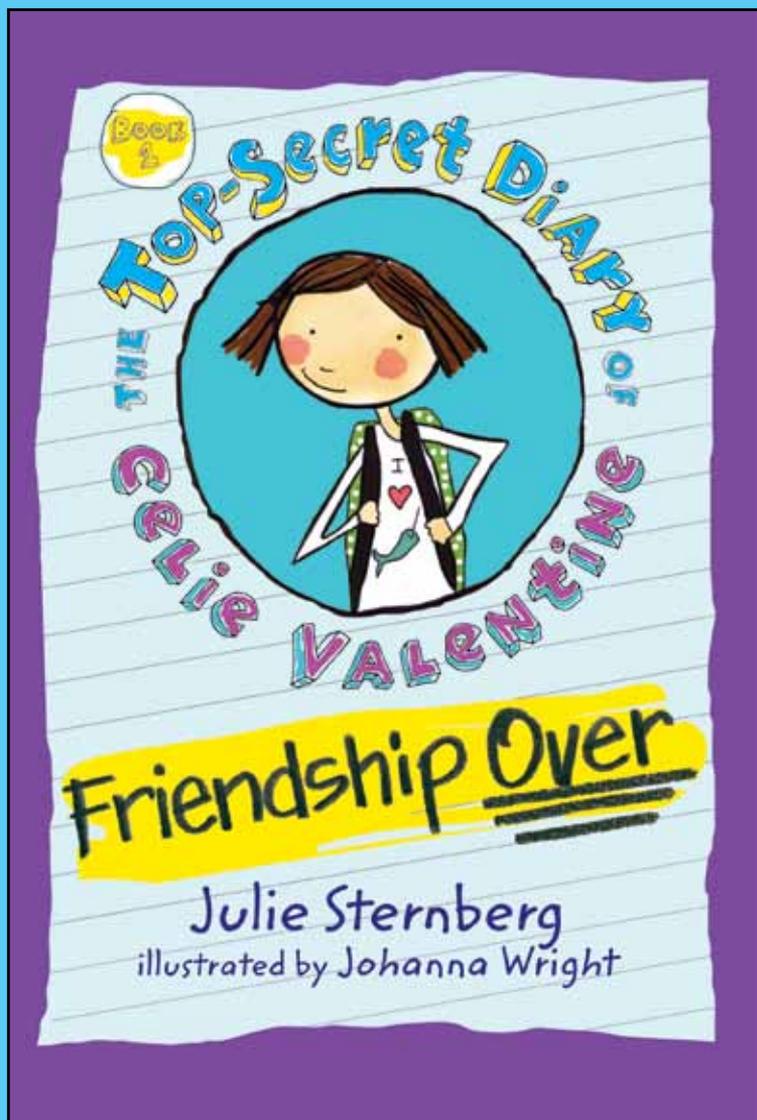
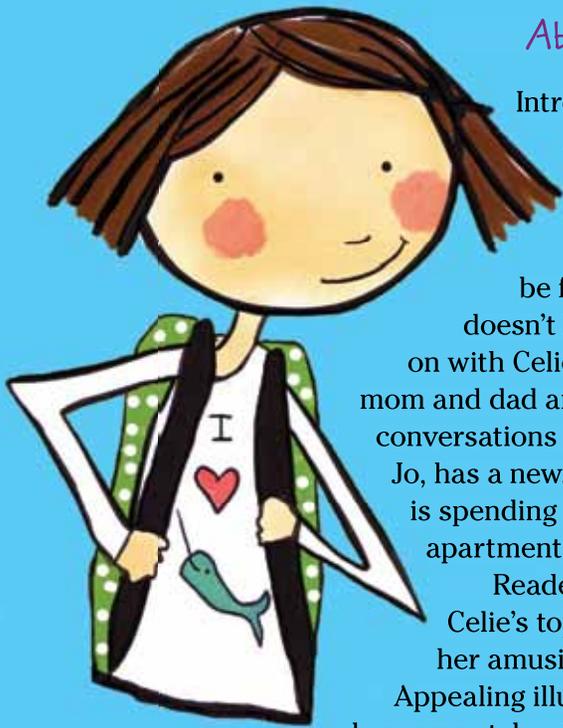


Educator's Guide



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About the Book

Introducing Celie Valentine

Altman—a funny and artistic fourth grader with a lot on her mind! Her best friend, Lula, doesn't want to be friends anymore, and Celie doesn't know why. Something is going on with Celie's grandmother, and Celie's mom and dad are having a lot of private conversations about it. And Celie's sister, Jo, has a new, not-so-nice best friend who is spending way too much time at Celie's apartment.

Readers will enjoy taking a peek at Celie's top-secret journal and reading her amusing, heartfelt journal entries.

Appealing illustrations, field notes from her spy notebook, and taped-in homework

assignments make this an entertaining read for students in third through sixth grades.

This guide is designed to help students understand and examine the book's characters and themes. Connections to the fifth-grade Common Core State Standards are noted with each activity.

Common Core abbreviations used in this guide:

RL – Reading: Literature

RI – Reading: Informational Text

W – Writing

SL – Speaking & Listening

For the complete Common Core State Standards, visit corestandards.org/ELA-literacy.

Pre-Reading Activity

Celie's dad gives her a journal for her tenth birthday, and Celie is “not just going to write and draw” in it. She's also “going to tape in letters and notes and report cards” so she can “tell the full story of

[her] whole life” (page 13). What kinds of things would you tape in your journal? Why?

Discussion Questions

- The author begins the story with a note from Celie's dad. What are the two gifts he gives Celie for her birthday? Why does he give her those gifts? What other gifts does Celie get for her birthday? What do all the gifts reveal about Celie? **[RL 3.1]**

- Even though it is Celie's tenth birthday, she is not having a good day. Why is Celie sad? Who is Lula? How does Celie's sister try to make her feel better? **[RL 3.1 and 3.3]**

- Celie's mom says “drawing helps [Celie] get [her] crank out” (page 19). What does she mean? What are some of the things Celie draws on her art walk with her mother? **[RL 3.4 and 3.1]**

- Celie's teacher sends a note home to Celie's mom. What does the note say? Why is Celie

- so upset with Jo? What does Jo do to try to make it up to Celie? **[RL 3.1 and 3.3]**

- Celie listens in on her parents' conversation and takes notes in her Top-Secret Spy Notebook. What does she find out? Who is she worried about? **[RL 3.1 and 3.3]**

- Why does Celie take a bath before dinner and freeze a used dryer sheet? **[RL 3.1]**

- Celie's teacher sends Celie and Lula to “Friendship





Forward” with Miss Wilde to work out their differences. For her first Friendship Forward assignment, Celie writes a letter to Lula. What does the letter reveal about their friendship? **[RL 3.1]**

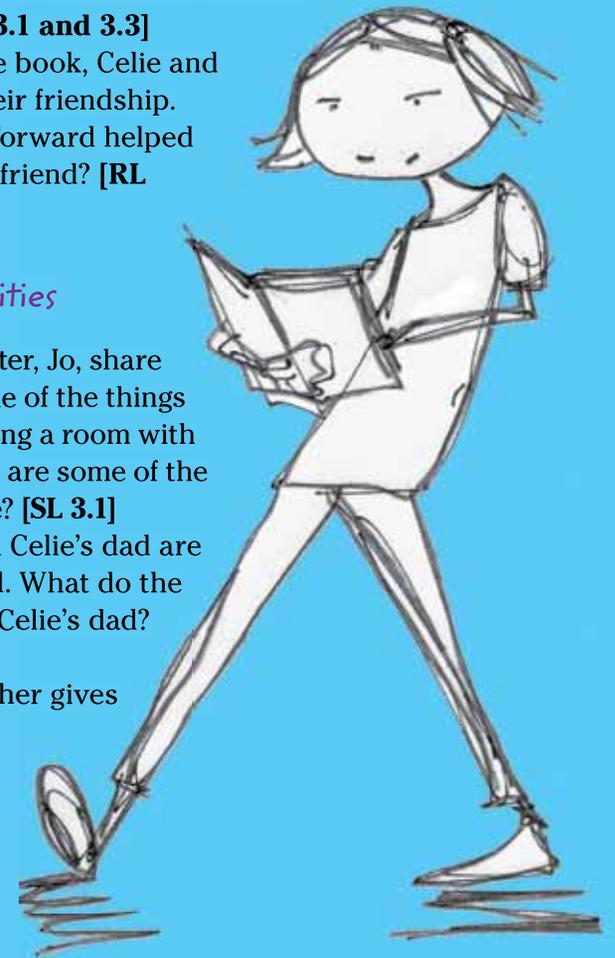
- Celie’s dad schedules a family meeting. What happens at the meeting? Where is Celie’s mom going? Who is Cousin Carla? How do the girls feel about her? **[RL 3.1 and 3.3]**
- When Celie calls her Granny, the conversation doesn’t go well. Why? What does Celie realize about her grandmother? **[RL 3.1]**
- Jo and her friend Trina make a “fashion advisory” list, and Celie reads it. What does Celie think of the list? **[RL 3.1]**
- For her Friendship Forward homework, Celie writes a letter from Lula’s perspective. What happened the last time Celie and Lula were at Lula’s apartment? Why do you think Lula has stopped being friends with Celie? **[RL 3.1 and 3.6]**
- Celie has a long phone conversation with her mother, who is out of town with Celie’s Granny. After they talk, Celie is very upset and anxious to talk to her dad. When she finally gets a chance to speak to

him, he gets upset. Why? What does he do next? How does this make Celie feel? Why does this make her think about Lula? **[RL 3.1 and 3.3]**

- At school that day, Celie writes a note to Lula and apologizes. What happens next? **[RL 3.1]**
- Jo and Trina have a disagreement over the phone. Then, at school, the argument gets worse. What is the argument about? What does their fight tell you about Jo and Trina? How does Jo and Trina’s fight help Lula and Celie become friends again? **[RL 3.1 and 3.6]**
- After Jo and Trina’s disagreement, Lula and Celie pass notes and plan to talk at recess. What does the illustration of the two of them on the swings tell you about the state of their friendship? **[RL 3.7]**
- Celie’s dad has some “complicated news” for Jo and Celie. Why is the news complicated? How does Celie feel about the news? **[RL 3.1 and 3.3]**
- At the end of the book, Celie and Lula have mended their friendship. How has Friendship Forward helped Celie understand her friend? **[RL 3.1]**

Post-Reading Activities

- Celie and her sister, Jo, share a room. What are some of the things Celie likes about sharing a room with her older sister? What are some of the things she doesn’t like? **[SL 3.1]**
- Two letters from Celie’s dad are taped into her journal. What do the letters tell you about Celie’s dad? **[SL 3.1]**
- Celie’s grandmother gives her a tablecloth for her birthday. Throughout the story, Celie’s fondness for the



tablecloth is really a reflection of her fondness for her grandmother. Think of an object that is special to you. Write a paragraph about why that object is important to you. **[W 3.1]**

- Celie does not like Jo's friend Trina. Why not? Find two instances in the story where Trina acts in a way that bothers Celie. **[SL 3.1]**

- At the end of the story, Celie and her family are preparing for Granny's arrival. What are they doing to get ready? How does Celie feel about her Granny coming to stay? **[SL 3.1]**

- Celie tapes pages from her Top-Secret Spy Notebook into her journal. Using the questions from the spy notebook (pages 37–38), observe your own surroundings. Record what you see. What are some of the things you write down that you might not have noticed if you weren't being a spy? **[W 3.10 and SL 3.4]**

- For one of their Friendship Forward assignments, Celie and Lula have to write about their friendship from the other person's perspective. Choose a friend or relative and

write about your relationship from his or her perspective. How does writing from someone else's perspective make you think differently about that person? **[W 3.1 and SL 3.1]**

Extra Credit

- Celie receives a "Narwhals Are Awesome" sweatshirt for her birthday. What is a narwhal? Where do they live? **[RI 3.1]**

- Celie is assigned the sloth for her animal report. What characteristics does a sloth have? What is another meaning of the word "sloth"? **[RI 3.1 and L 3.4]**

- Celie's grandmother paints a bottle of "Wart 'B' Gone" in her art class, and Celie tapes a sketch of it into her journal. This type of painting is called a still life. A still life is a work of art depicting commonplace items, such as flowers, fruit, pottery—or even wart medication! Select an unusual item from your classroom or home and draw your own still life.

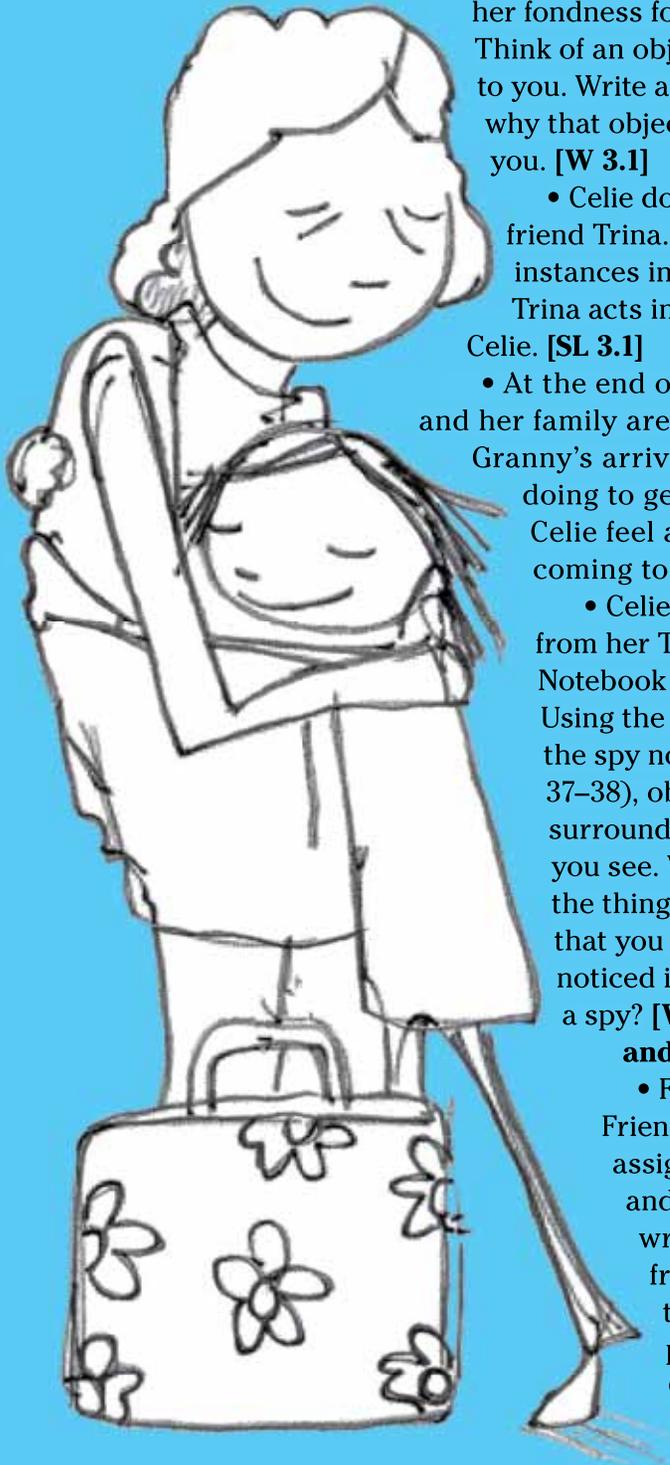
Further Reading

Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great by Judy Blume

Ramona's World by Beverly Cleary

Sophie Simon Solves Them All by Lisa Graff

President of the Whole Fifth Grade by Sherri Winston





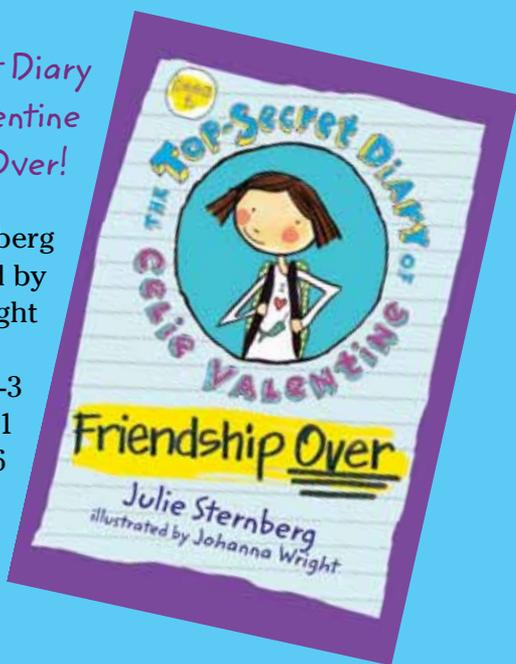
★ “Using a diary format and leavening her tale with humor, Sternberg gets Celie’s voice just right, and readers should find her completely credible. . . . Wright’s spot-on black-and-white illustrations perfectly complement Sternberg’s text. This satisfying slice-of-life story about the permutations of friendship and family resonates.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

*The Top-Secret Diary
of Celie Valentine
Book One: Friendship Over!*

By Julie Sternberg
Illustrated by
Johanna Wright

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Grades 3–6
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