

**ME
THREE**



SUSAN JUBY

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



ME THREE

SUSAN JUBY is the critically acclaimed and award-winning author of eight novels for teenagers. Her bestselling debut novel, *Alice, I Think* (the first of the Alice MacLeod trilogy) was made into a successful television series. *The Truth Commission* won the Sheila A. Egoff Award and the Amy Mathers Book Award.

It received six starred reviews and was named a best book of the year by Barnes and Noble, *Kirkus*, and the *Globe and Mail*.

She is also the author of a memoir, *Nice Recovery*, and the adult comic novels *The Woefield Poultry Collective* and *The Republic of Dirt*, which won the Leacock Medal for Humour. Susan lives in Nanaimo, BC.

This guide was created by **KATHLEEN ODEAN**, a school librarian for more than 15 years who now gives professional development workshops for educators on new children's and young adult books. She chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and served on earlier Caldecott, Newbery and Notable Children's Books Committees.

Eleven-year-old Rodney is starting sixth grade in a new school, in a new home, in a new state. The new school is really old and he's in a class with a bunch of kids who seem to sort of hate him. Even his best friend won't write him back.

It's strange, because just a couple of months ago, Rodney was one of the most popular guys in his class. He lived in Las Vegas, with his mom, older sister and his dad, who was a successful professional poker player. Now his old life is over—his mom even says they shouldn't tell anyone their real last name. Because of something his dad did. Or something people said that he did. His dad says it's all a big misunderstanding. Rodney is confident that it won't be long until the misunderstanding is all cleared up and they can all go back to their old life. But he can only keep the truth at bay for so long . . .

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CCSS.ELA- Literacy.RL.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.RL.6-8.2, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.RL.6-8.3, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.RL.6.5, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.RL.6-7.6, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.SL.6-8.1

1. Why do you think the novel opens with “10 Rules for Living a Lucky Life?” What do the Rules tell you about Rodney’s father and his values? When are the Rules helpful to Rodney in the course of the story, if at all? Why does Kate describe them as “a gambling version of toxic positivity?” (p.42) Discuss Rodney’s observation, “I’ve noticed that I keep forgetting the Rules. I don’t want to get lucky anymore.” (p. 129)
2. What is Rodney like? How does he treat the people in his life? Describe his relationship with his mother, his sister, and his father. Is he a good family member? How does he change over the course of the novel?
3. Explain what Rodney’s father has done in his career to become a celebrity. Why does Rodney think that he, his mother and sister, have moved from Las Vegas to Arizona? What does he believe has happened with his father? What are some of clues that he is wrong about his father’s actions?
4. Contrast Rodney’s living situation in Las Vegas, including his house and school, with his life in Stony Butte. How does Rodney feel about living in Stony Butte at first? What does he come to like about living there?
5. Describe Rodney’s mother and how he feels about her. Identify some of her actions that show what kind of person she is. What does she do to cope with the difficult situation they are in, including their financial problems? Why does Rodney’s half-sister, Cardi, treat Rodney’s mother badly?
6. Talk about Kate’s personality. What are her feelings about their father? Why is Kate so obsessed with eating fewer carbs? How do her mother and Rodney feel about that? What role do Kate’s two best friends play in the novel? How does Rodney and Kate’s relationship change during the story? Explain the title and how it relates to the family.
7. What is your impression of Rodney’s father, based on Rodney’s visits with him? How has he hurt his family? What has he done that has hurt other people? Analyze his words and discuss whether he is taking responsibility for his past actions.
8. Why is Rodney writing to Larry, and not mailing the letters? What do the letters tell you about what kind of friend Larry is? Why do you think Rodney often mentions that Larry is better at things than he is? For example, he describes Larry as “always more responsible than the rest of us.” (p. 191) What is it like when they meet again? How do things get better between them after that?
9. How do the students at school find out about Rodney’s father? What different reactions do they have? How do Ben, Fisherman, and Rigmor show that they are still Rodney’s friends? Talk about how media and social media, including Van Johnson’s song, make Rodney’s life worse during this period.
10. Discuss Elizabeth’s observation to Rodney: “None of this is your fault, but unfortunately, you have to live with the aftermath and it’s going to influence your life.” (p. 156) Why did Macii confront Rodney about his father in front of his friends? Why did she want everyone to know about it? Why did Lallie say she didn’t feel safe around Rodney? Why do they act like the actions of his father reflect on Rodney?
11. Consider the friendship between Ben and Rodney. Why do you think Ben shows an interest in being friends with Rodney? Describe Ben’s physical skills and his family’s work. Give examples of how Ben influences Rodney to take risks. Identify times that Rodney chooses to be safer than Ben.
12. Talk about Rodney’s trip to the Stop and Shop. Why does he shoplift the candy bars, something he had never done before? How is he feeling at that point? What is Ben’s reaction to Rodney’s shoplifting?
13. Why is it surprising that Rodney and Fisherman become friends? When does Fisherman help Rodney? What does Rodney learn about Fisherman in the course of the story that surprises him? How is Rodney’s friendship with Ben and Fisherman different from his friendship with Larry?
14. Recount the times that the boys go to the ranch owned by Fisherman’s relatives. What do they do there? What is Rodney’s reaction to King and how does he interact with him? What effect does it have on Rodney when he thinks King is dead?
15. “Your parents tell me you don’t like conflict,” Elizabeth says to Rodney. (p. 152) What are some examples of times that Rodney purposely avoids conflict? What are the consequences? How do his father’s Rules relate to avoiding conflict? What motivates Rodney to insist on seeing Larry and his father in Chapter 27, even though both encounters lead to conflict?
16. After those encounters, Rodney’s mother says to her children, “The best thing you will ever learn is to deal with what is versus what you wish was.” (pp. 209-210) What does she mean? What prompts her to say it? When have she and Rodney acted on what they wished were true instead of what was true?

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

The Power of Pets

Rodney finds King very comforting. Fisherman, who has a hard home life, shows affection to the dog, Willy, and says of his turtle, Yoda, "He always makes me feel better." (p. 218) Working in pairs, do research on how animals help people emotionally. Prepare a multimedia presentation to share with the class on some aspect of this topic, such as the relationship between pet ownership and emotional health, or programs related to emotional support animals.

CCSS.ELA- Literacy.SL.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.SL.6-8.5, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.W.6-8.7.

Ask the Author

As a class, brainstorm possible questions to ask the author about the book, such as, "Why did you choose this topic?" or "Why did you set it in Arizona?" Decide as a group which ten questions to use. Everyone in the class will write answers as if they were the author. Then videotape interviews with one student asking questions and the other answering them, posing as the author. Share the interviews with the class.

CCSS.ELA- Literacy.RL.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.SL.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.SL.6-8.5, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.W.6-8.3

Rules for Living a Lucky Life

Break into ten groups, with each assigned one of the "10 Rules for Living a Lucky Life." Discuss what the rule means. Talk about ways in which it could be helpful to you or others. Then consider ways, if any, that the rule could cause problems in someone's life. Use specific examples from life and from the novel in your discussion.

CCSS.ELA- Literacy.RL.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.RL.6-8.2, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.W.6-8.1

Falsely Accused?

Nils was accused of "touching a girl" and "worse stuff." (pp. 93-94) but a camera proved she was lying. Fisherman also mentions "false accusations." (p. 217) Yet research shows such false accusations are rare. Review Brown University's webpage, "Myths about Sexual Assault Reports," and discuss its contents. Talk about the fact that sexual crimes rely on secrecy, and that those who are guilty, like Rodney's father, often claim the accusations are false.

<https://www.brown.edu/campus-life/health/services/promotion/sexual-assault-dating-violence/myths-about-sexual-assault-reports>

CCSS.ELA- Literacy.SL.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.W.6-8.7.

Comparing and Contrasting Characters

Use a graphic organizer that compares and contrasts two things, such as a Venn Diagram or a simple chart. Take any two characters and use the chart to note their similarities and differences. You could also take a character and compare that person to yourself. In addition to basic facts (same age, one sibling), explore character traits such as outgoing or shy. How does comparing and contrasting help you understand the characters?

<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/compare-contrast-chart>

CCSS.ELA- Literacy.RL.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.RL.6-8.3, CCSS.ELA- Literacy.W.6-8.2.

