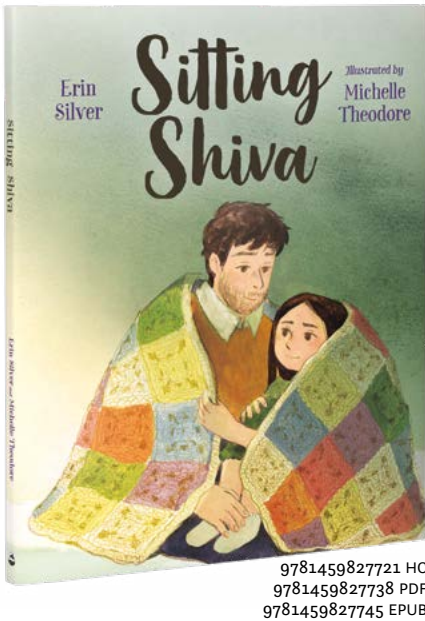


Sitting Shiva DISCUSSION GUIDE



Sitting Shiva is a picture book about a young girl grieving the loss of her mother. When all her friends and family come over to sit shiva, she's upset at first; she'd rather be alone. But soon she realizes that everyone is there to comfort her and the community helps her feel better. Then she is able to comfort her dad when he is sad.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is an important part of the elementary health and physical education curriculum across jurisdictions. Offering students the tools to manage frustration, sadness and stress helps foster positive mental health and the ability to identify feelings, communicate effectively, build resilience and solve problems. *Sitting Shiva* is one of these tools. Not only does this story provide students with the chance to share their own feelings and experiences, but it also shows the importance of relationships and respect for diversity. By learning to discuss difficult feelings and understanding the ways they can deal with upsetting situations, children can build a sense of belonging, confidence and hope.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BOOK

1. Why do you think the girl in the book doesn't want to come downstairs when people arrive?
2. Why is everyone bringing food and sharing stories?
3. What makes the girl want to come downstairs? Who is there for her?
4. How does the artwork make you feel?
5. Why do you think her dad disappears?
6. How does the girl help him in the end? Why do you think she does this?

ACTIVITIES

1. Draw a picture of a tradition you share with your family. It could be a fun tradition like a birthday or a sad tradition, like burying a pet.
2. Discuss with your partner: Think of a time when you were sad. Why were you upset? What made you feel better?
3. Your friend is sad. Write a card or draw a picture to cheer them up. What words would make you feel better if you were sad?
4. Think of a time when you were sad and how someone helped you feel better. Act it out with a friend and share it with others.

EXTENSION QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about a time when you were sad or upset. What happened and how did you react?
2. Who do you go to when you have big feelings?
3. What kinds of things help you feel better when you're sad?
4. Have you ever helped anyone when they were sad? What did you do to make the person feel better?
5. The girl in the book sits Shiva—it's a Jewish tradition. Tell us about your cultural background. What traditions do you have?
6. What are your favorite cultural, religious or family holidays and why? Examples could be Lunar New Year, an anniversary or Christmas...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



PHOTO CREDIT: JUSTINE APPLE

Erin Silver is a children's author and freelance writer with 20 years of professional industry experience. Her books include *Just Watch Me*, *What Kids Did: Stories of Kindness and Invention in the Time of COVID-19* and *Proud to Play: Canadian LGBTQ+ Athletes Who Made History*. Erin's freelance work has appeared in everything from *Good Housekeeping* to the *Globe and Mail*, among others. She has a master of fine arts in creative nonfiction from the University of King's College in Halifax, Nova Scotia, a postgraduate journalism degree from Ryerson University and a bachelor of arts from the University of Toronto. Erin lives with her family in Toronto.



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