



A Discussion Guide to

Grounded

By Kate Klise

Grades 3-6

Ages 9-13

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ABOUT THE BOOK

After her brother, sister, and father die in a plane crash, Daralynn Oakland receives 237 dolls from well-wishers, resulting in her nickname: Dolly. But dolls are little comfort to a twelve-year-old girl whose world is rocked by the dramatic changes in her life, including her angry, grieving mother's new job as a hairstylist at the local funeral home.

Dolly gets a job, too, where she accidentally invents a fashionable new haircut. But her real work begins when a crematorium comes to town, and someone has to save a dying business, solve a burning mystery, and resuscitate the broken hearts in Digginsville, Missouri, population 402.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Daralynn's life is saved by a coincidence. Has a chance event ever changed your life?
- Daralynn doesn't like her nickname, Dolly. Have people ever given you a name or label you don't like?
- Why does everyone decide to give Daralynn dolls? Why doesn't she want them?
- If Daralynn's idea of "living funerals" ever caught on, would you be tempted to have one? What would your "living funeral" look like? Who would you invite? Would you give a speech? If so, what would you say? Who would you thank?
- Daralynn and her mom listen to "Swap Line," where people trade things they don't want for things other people don't want. Why would some people want things that other people don't want? Do you have anything you would swap? Can you think of a modern-day equivalent of "Swap Line" that takes place on the Internet?

- How did Daralynn's mother change after the accident? Why? How did Daralynn change? How did Aunt Josie's and Daralynn's mom's reactions differ? How are their personalities different?
- How were Lilac Rose and Daralynn different? Why does Daralynn feel like her mother wishes she was dead instead of her sister?
- *"I begin to think of my life as a time line. Before the Crash was B.C. After the Deaths was A.D."* (p. 15) Daralynn divides her life into B.C. and A.D. because so much has changed after the crash. If you had to divide your life around a significant event (birth of a sibling, moving to a new town, etc) when a lot of things changed, what event would you choose? What changes occurred, and what would you call the two eras?
- After the crash, Daralynn's mom feels mad instead of sad, and at the funeral, Daralynn has trouble feeling sad. Why? Do you ever have trouble feeling the "right" emotion at the right time? Why? Is there such a thing as a "right" emotion?
- How does Daralynn's mom finally deal with her grief and begin showing emotions again? Do you ever feel like you "swap" one emotion for another, and is that a good or bad thing?
- Many people in town don't accept Aunt Josie because she's different. They gossip about her and call her names. Do you know people who are treated badly because they're different? Do you ever feel like other people say mean things about you because you're different? Why isn't Daralynn allowed to visit Aunt Josie?
- How would you have handled the situation when Daralynn mistook Frankie for a boy and gave her a short hair cut? (p. 44-45) Why did Daralynn cut her own hair short, even when she knew it would look bad on her? What would have happened if she hadn't cut her hair? Why does everyone want *Le Frenchie*?
- *"Daddy always said he got his best thinking done when he fished."* (p. 80) When do you get your best thinking done? Do you have any activity that you do to relax and think?
- Aunt Josie says that having *"somebody to take care of . . . makes us sweet and keeps us grounded."* (p. 94) What keeps Daralynn grounded? What keeps you grounded? Why is it important to be grounded? What do you consider your roots—your family, love, faith, something else?
- Daralynn orders plaques that say "We are indebted to Wayne T. Oakland, Sr., for making this possible." If you made plaques like that, who would you say you were indebted to? Where would you put the plaques?

- How does Daralynn change throughout the book? How do her relationships with her mother, grandmother, aunt, and uncle change? How do people see Daralynn differently once she solves the mystery and exposes Clem?
- Little by little, Daralynn discovers Clem's true intentions. What clues does she find throughout the story, and how do they add to her understanding of Clem's actions and motives? When does it all become clear for Daralynn? When or did you suspect Clem wasn't such a great guy?
- Why do you think Daralynn was the one who noticed what was going on? Why wasn't it another one of the characters? Could another character have come to the same conclusion Daralynn did? Why or why not?
- How did *Grounded's* small-town setting affect the plot and characters' relationships? Would Clem's plot have worked in a larger town or city?
- Do you live in a small town or a larger city? How does/could that affect your life and your relationships with family, neighbors, and friends?
- Since the story begins after the crash, we only see glimpses and flashbacks of Daralynn's family before the tragedy. How do you think Daralynn got along with her mother before the crash as opposed to after?

ACTIVITIES

- Lilac Rose was named after the flowers her dad gave to her mom on their first date. Are you named after anyone or anything? Look up your name. Does it mean anything? (Examples of name reference sites: <http://www.meaning-of-names.com/> <http://www.behindthename.com/> or <http://www.name-meanings.com/>)
- Daralynn's dad only said "love" on postcards. (p. 72) Do you tell people that you love them? Create postcards for people you care about and write messages to them.
- Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D., was a psychiatrist, author, and pioneer in the study of grief. Research Kübler-Ross on the Internet and find her theory on the five stages of grief. Do you agree with these stages? Can you think of an event where you've gone through a similar grief process?

AUTHOR BIO



Kate Klise is the author of the 43 Old Cemetery Road series (*Dying to Meet You* and *Over My Dead Body, Till Death Do Us Bark*), of epistolary novels, illustrated by her sister, M. Sarah Klise, as well as several picture books including *Shall I Knit You a Hat?* Her standalone novels include *Deliver Us From Normal*, which *School Library Journal* praised as “a superb psychological novel.” In addition to writing for children, Kate spent fifteen years working as a journalist for several publications, including *PEOPLE* magazine. She now leads writing workshops all over the country for aspiring authors of all ages. You can visit Kate on the Web at www.kateandsarahklise.com.



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