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Unit 9

Novel Guide

The Science of Breakable Things

by Tae Keller

Activity Book



GRADE 5 Core Knowledge Language Arts®
Core Knowledge

Grade 5

**The Science of
Breakable Things**
by Tae Keller

Novel Guide

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The Science of Breakable Things

by Tae Keller

When her class is told to pick a hypothesis for their science project, Natalie knows what question she wants answered: *How do you grow a miracle?* As her mother struggles with depression and her father works to keep everything together, Natalie teams up with her friends and uses the scientific method to enter the school egg drop competition, try to win the prize money, and grow her mother a miracle.

Additional Resources

- If you like this book, you might also like...
 - *The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl* by Stacy McAnulty
 - *Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech
 - *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang
 - *Hello, Universe* by Erin Entrada Kelly
 - *Where the Watermelons Grow* by Cindy Baldwin
- To learn more, you might look at these resources. Remember to get permission from an adult before using the Internet.
 - If you would like to learn more about the scientific method, consult the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Kids Homepage.
 - If you would like to learn more about botany, please see the United States Botanic Garden.
 - Depression is an illness that affects many people throughout the world. If you have questions about depression, please ask your teacher, family members, or another trusted adult. You may also find additional information in the book *Can I Catch It Like a Cold? Coping with a Parent's Depression*.

Reading: Assignments 1-3

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Natalie says she does not know why Mr. Neely misspells the word *skills*. Why might he use a z instead of an s?
- 2) How does Natalie feel about Mr. Neely's attitude?
- 3) How has Natalie's relationship with Mikayla Menzer changed?
- 4) What does it mean to "tighten your belt"?
- 5) Find a quotation in the book that explains what Natalie thinks has happened to her mom.

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Natalie repeatedly notices that Mikayla misuses the word *literally*. Look up the definition of the word, then describe what is incorrect about how Mikayla uses it.
- 2) Natalie's lab book is organized around steps. Research the steps of the scientific method to learn what they are and why it is important to follow set steps when conducting an experiment. After researching, consider how the steps of the scientific method compare with the ones Natalie has introduced so far in her lab book.
- 3) Twig's mom named her after the model Twiggy. Research Twiggy and gather information about her and her importance.

Imagine

- 1) Mr. Neely uses hashtags (marked with the # symbol) to summarize or describe his messages. Write a hashtag (or a few of them) about what happens in the first assignment. If you have time remaining, write additional hashtags for Assignments 2 and 3.
- 2) Mr. Neely asks his students to identify a “capital-Q Question.” Think of a similar question you would like to learn more about, then name at least three different things you could do to investigate it.

Observe

- 1) Reread the footnotes Natalie uses in her lab notebook. How is the information in these notes different from the information she presents in the main text?
- 2) Assignments 1 and 2 both contain a simile. Review the definition of a simile, then find both similes in these assignments. Once you have identified them, describe what they reveal about the situation or narrative.

Understand

- 1) Natalie describes her dad cooking, saying that she wasn’t “sure whether this was funny or sad” as she watched him struggle. What are some ways you could deal with a situation that makes you feel confusing or conflicting emotions?
- 2) Natalie says she and her dad ate dinner in “the bad kind of silence.” What is the difference between good and bad silence? If you were experiencing the bad silence, what might you do?
- 3) Natalie says she will not “waste time being sad” about her mom. Do you think being sad is ever a waste of time? Why or why not?

Reading: Assignments 4-6

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Today's reading comes from the "Step 2: Questions" section of the book. Natalie has not yet chosen a question for her Wonderings project, but she has a lot of questions about other parts of her life. What are some of them?
- 2) Mr. Neely tells his class that they are not taking a test for a grade but a different kind of test. What does he mean by this?
- 3) What new information does this section reveal about Natalie's mom?
- 4) How does Natalie describe Dari?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Mr. Neely introduces the class to the concept of homeostasis. List examples of how different creatures use homeostasis in their everyday lives. As a follow-up, think about Natalie and her mom. Based on what you know so far, how might the concept of homeostasis relate to them?
- 2) Natalie's plant parts diagram only describes the function or purpose of some parts. List the remaining parts from her diagram and write descriptions of their function. If you like, you may draw your own version of Natalie's diagram and use these descriptions to complete it.

Imagine

- 1) Mr. Neely asks Natalie to consider competing in the egg drop contest. If you were going to try dropping an egg from the top of your school without breaking it, how might you do it? List as many ideas as you can to describe possible ways to protect your egg during the drop.

- 2) Natalie describes how her dad sometimes acts like Normal Dad and sometimes acts like Therapist Dad. Draw an illustration or create a Venn Diagram showing both versions of her dad. What do they have in common? What is different about them?

Observe

- 1) Review the plant parts diagram, paying attention to the description Natalie offers. Natalie's mom once argued that plants and people are not that different. Based on the descriptions Natalie writes, do you think Natalie agrees or disagrees with her mom's idea? Give a reason or reasons for your answer.
- 2) Natalie describes the gradual change that has happened with her mom and their household by using an analogy: "like when you grow out of your favorite jeans and you don't even realize how short they've gotten." Create another analogy to describe something that happens so slowly you do not notice it for some time.
- 3) Natalie describes her mom as she used to be and as something she calls "Not Mom," or how her mom is now. Use a T-chart to note what Natalie says about her mom and Not Mom.

Understand

- 1) Natalie finds it uncomfortable to think about plants during class and journals instead of completing her assignment. What are some other things that could help Natalie work through her feelings?
- 2) Natalie feels embarrassed that the whole class knows Mr. Neely wants her to stay late. Mr. Neely does need to talk to Natalie, but what are some less embarrassing ways he could tell her this?
- 3) Natalie says that when she started realizing what was happening with her mom, she "could hardly breathe." How could you help a friend who was feeling this way?

Reading: Assignments 7-9

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Natalie believes that her mom lost her job. What evidence does she have to support this belief?
- 2) Natalie describes how one of her mom's techniques was to list what you know and don't know. In Assignment 8, Natalie makes her own list. What does she say that she does not know? Are there any things you think she does not know that she left off her list?
- 3) What is Natalie's "secret question"?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Natalie describes her mom's greenhouse as once being one of her favorite places. What characteristics does a greenhouse have? Why are these characteristics important in helping a greenhouse fulfill its purpose?
- 2) Natalie sometimes references genus, species, and other kinds of classification when she names plants. These are part of a classification system known as taxonomic rank. List the different groups in taxonomic rank, then pick a creature of your choice and research its full taxonomic classification.
- 3) At the end of Assignment 9, Natalie gets an idea. What do you think it might be?
- 4) Natalie says that the Cobalt Blue Orchid field is "full of miracles and hope." What makes her feel this way?

Imagine

- 1) Whose Pants? is a board game invented by Tae Keller, the author of *The Science of Breakable Things*. Imagine and create your own board game, complete with a board, pieces for each player, instructions, and other needed items. Be sure to think about the objective of your game, or what someone has to accomplish to win. You might also consider whether any setbacks can happen in your game; for example, can a player ever lose a turn or be sent back to the starting point?
- 2) Natalie's mom worked to research and understand the Cobalt Blue Orchid. Imagine you discovered a new type of plant. What would it look like, and what special qualities would it have?

Observe

- 1) The excerpts from Natalie's mom's book describe the miracle of the Cobalt Blue Orchid. In your own words, summarize this miracle.

Understand

- 1) Natalie says that she and Twig do not talk about everything, even though they are best friends. When might it be okay to avoid a topic? How do you decide if you should talk to your friend about a subject or not?
- 2) Natalie says that her dad is most comfortable in research. What are some activities that make you feel most comfortable?

Reading: Assignments 10-12

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Why does Mr. Neely ask Natalie to stay after class again?
- 2) What does Dari think of Mr. Neely? How does this compare to what Natalie thinks of him?
- 3) Why does Dari wear the potato costume?
- 4) What happened when Natalie was sick?
- 5) What does Natalie's mom say when Natalie mentions their orchid?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) What does a hāpu'u pulu fern look like? How might you make a costume that looks like this plant?
- 2) What is Paris Fashion Week? What kinds of things happen during this event? Why might Twig and Natalie have different feelings about it?

Imagine

- 1) Imagine that Natalie asked you to help make her plant Halloween costume this year. What plant would you pick for her, and how would you make the costume?
- 2) Using evidence from Natalie's descriptions of Dari's potato costume, draw what you think it looks like.

Observe

- 1) List the different hypotheses Natalie offers during this section of the reading.
- 2) Natalie describes how Mr. Neely smiles by using a simile: “like I’d just thrown a parade in his honor.” Create three more similes that could describe how someone smiles.

Understand

- 1) Natalie often describes what she wants to say to other people—Twig, her parents, Mr. Neely—but decides not to say. How do you decide if you should share or not share what you are thinking?
- 2) Natalie’s dad wants to schedule an appointment for her to talk to a therapist. If someone you cared about was having a hard time, would you ask them to talk to a counselor or therapist? Why or why not?

Reading: Assignments 13-15

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) What is Twig's mom like?
- 2) What is the egg project's new name? What effect does this name have?
- 3) What words does Natalie use to describe Twig's house? What do these words reveal about how she feels about it?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Natalie researches egg drop techniques to help her decide how to win the competition. Do the same thing to learn about different approaches to egg drops, then based on what you have learned, decide which technique you would use if you were in this kind of competition. (It's okay if after researching you decide to use an original idea, but you should explain why your research helped you make this choice.)
- 2) Mr. Neely suggests that the team consider velocity as one of their questions. What is velocity, and why might it be something important to consider in the egg drop?

Imagine

- 1) Natalie says that "adults are good at pretending." Create a scene in which an adult would pretend about something. What would the scene involve? Who would be part of it? Why would the adult want to pretend? Would it work?
- 2) Natalie says, "everyone expects me to have a plan." Imagine that you are Natalie and decide to plan for the egg drop competition. What steps would you take?

Observe

- 1) By this point in the book, you have learned a great deal about Twig and Natalie—their personalities and preferences, their families, and their taste. Use what you have learned to create a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting these two characters.
- 2) Twig's diagrams of egg drop ideas have lots of creativity. Review her drawings and evaluate each suggestion, listing why it might or might not work. Decide which of her ideas you believe is best and explain your choice.

Understand

- 1) After encountering her mom, Natalie describes all the things she does not do. When is it better not to do something than to do it?
- 2) Natalie chooses not to share her mom's suggestion for the egg drop technique. How do you decide when to keep things to yourself and when to share them?

Reading: Assignments 16-18

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Natalie says that when her mom greets her in the kitchen, it sounds like “a recording of her.” What does this suggest about how she is speaking?
- 2) Natalie’s mom is acting differently about her mother-in-law’s Thanksgiving visit this year. What is different about her behavior?
- 3) Why might Natalie be happy to be back at school?
- 4) Natalie describes how there is “strength in the cold.” How might her thoughts about the cold relate to her mother?
- 5) Natalie has a lot of complicated feelings about her mom in Assignment 18. What are they, and why does she feel them?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Natalie mentions some of her favorite Korean foods, including *bibimbap*, *kalbi*, and *mandoo*. What is each of these dishes like? What ingredients do they contain, and how are they prepared? Do they have any similarities to foods you have eaten?
- 2) Natalie says that Dari explains the magnet experiment, but she does not share his explanation. Research magnets and temperature to learn why the cold magnet worked best.

Imagine

- 1) This section explains how important food has been to Natalie's family, from her mother's cran-apple pie to her grandmother's Korean foods. Describe a food that is special to your family, including when you eat it, who prepares it, what it symbolizes or reminds you of, and any other important details.
- 2) Natalie says that "once you know a word, you can own it—it's yours, and it's a part of you." What is a word you own? How did you come to really know it, and why is it significant or important to you?

Observe

- 1) What is Twig's relationship with her parents like?
- 2) What makes Dari seem older than the other kids in his grade?
- 3) What do the superpowers Natalie and Twig most want reveal about their characters?

Understand

- 1) Natalie decides that if her mom can pretend that she's feeling okay, Natalie will, too. Do you think there are ever times when it is okay to pretend you feel something you don't? Why or why not?
- 2) Natalie says that her dad "could go on forever pretending that the Korean half of him didn't exist." Why might he find it challenging to be half-Korean living in the United States?
- 3) Natalie asks if it is "possible to be mad at someone for being sad." How would you respond?

Reading: Assignments 19-21

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Natalie says that in some ways she and Twig are “from totally different galaxies.” What makes her say this?
- 2) What is the “natural magic” that the students practice in Mr. Neely’s lab?
- 3) Natalie says she and her dad “were compass needles, pointing straight at Mom.” What might she mean by this comparison?
- 4) What is Dr. Doris like? Based on what you have observed, do you think she will be a good counselor for Natalie? Make sure to include evidence to support your choice.

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Research how to make a compass needle and describe the process. Use what you have learned to write descriptions for each illustration Natalie made in her lab notebook entry in Assignment 20.

Imagine

- 1) Natalie references “the Eyewash Incident” and “the Stolen Turtle Incident,” but she does not explain what happened in each of these things. Pick one of these incidents and create a new scene that describes what might have happened in it. Make sure that you draw on what you know about Twig’s character to shape your scene.
- 2) Natalie describes Dr. Doris’s office in great detail. If you were a therapist, how would you design your office to make clients feel comfortable? Describe or draw your ideal office, explaining what it would include and why.

Observe

- 1) Over the last few assignments, Natalie has had some moments where she has acted like her mom. List some of their common behaviors.
- 2) Once Dari officially joins Twig and Natalie’s lab group, they assign each other titles. Name those titles and any details about each character that help explain why his or her title might be a good fit.

Understand

- 1) When Natalie’s dad arrives at school instead of letting her bike home, she knows that something is up. What do adults in your life do that warns you that things are not normal?
- 2) Natalie feels like her dad has “ambushed” her by not warning her about the appointment with Dr. Doris. What are some better ways her dad could have handled this?

Reading: Assignments 22-24

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) What is the team's plan for testing their egg drop ideas?
- 2) How does the egg testing go?
- 3) Why does Natalie call Twig “reckless” and “illogical”?
- 4) Why does Natalie leave her dad at the mall?
- 5) Why does Natalie pick the *camellia japonica* for her mom?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Mr. Neely teaches his students about “the science of snow.” What are the weather conditions needed to produce snow?
- 2) Research the *camellia japonica*, learning about the plant's characteristics and how to grow it.

Imagine

- 1) Pretend that Natalie cannot get her mom a plant for Christmas. What is an alternative gift that would be good for her mom? Give reasons to explain your choice.
- 2) Natalie describes the initial awkwardness of her class's snow outing. How would you spend a class period if your teacher let you go outside in the snow?

Observe

- 1) Compare the steps of the team's egg drop test plan with the steps into which of the book's assignments are grouped. Are they the same or different?

Understand

- 1) When preparing for the egg drop, Natalie mentions managing her expectations. What does this mean? When is another time someone might need to manage their expectations?
- 2) Natalie says that sometimes if you believe in something, you can make it come true. Why is the way you think about things important?

Reading: Assignments 25-27

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Why might Natalie make so many observations during her visit with Dr. Doris?
- 2) How do Dari's parents differ from Natalie's and Twig's?
- 3) How and why does Natalie start to feel different when they are going to test their eggs?
- 4) What happens when the team tests Cotton Ball Heaven and S'meggs?
- 5) What does Natalie's dad do with the egg she hands him on Christmas? Why does this upset Natalie?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Natalie notices that Dari has Bollywood posters up in his room. Research Bollywood to learn more about it. If time permits, once you have learned about Bollywood, draw your own poster to represent what Dari might have in his collection.

Imagine

- 1) Dr. Doris asks Natalie twenty-six questions during their session. If you were trying to get someone to open up, what would you ask them? For an extra challenge, brainstorm twenty-six different questions.

Observe

- 1) Natalie says she thinks Mrs. Menzer must be evil, but then she tells a story about Mrs. Menzer giving her a seed. Drawing on this story and other observations you have made about Mrs. Menzer, explain whether or not you believe she is evil.

Understand

- 1) Natalie feels pretty conflicted in her times with Dr. Doris. On one hand, she does not want to talk about her mom. On the other, though, she feels like it might be a relief to share what she is feeling. Why might she (or any other person) have these different feelings about talking to someone? If you had a challenging situation in your life, how would you feel about talking to a counselor or therapist about it?
- 2) Natalie says that the way she has approached her background has never felt wrong before she visits Dari's house. How do they approach their nationalities and ethnicities differently?

Reading: Assignments 28-30

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) What event left Twig without knowing what to say? Why might this leave her speechless?
- 2) What does Twig imagine is upsetting Natalie?
- 3) How does Natalie's mom change her behavior on New Year's Eve?
- 4) What is Natalie's favorite memory of her mom?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Natalie says that her mom is depressed. Use the resources that your teacher provides to learn more about depression.
- 2) Natalie's family makes *dduk* for New Year's Eve. Explore other traditional foods or customs that different communities follow to celebrate a new year.

Imagine

- 1) Imagine that you wanted to create a new tradition to increase your luck in the new year. What would you do and why?
- 2) Describe a tradition your family has. This may be a holiday tradition or one that you practice at a different time.

Observe

- 1) Name the ways that Natalie starts to show her interest in her Korean background.
- 2) Throughout her interactions with her dad and Dr. Doris, Natalie identifies what she calls “Therapist Tricks.” Identify as many of these as possible; you may refer to earlier reading selections as you work. Would you call them tricks? Why or why not?

Understand

- 1) When Twig visits on Christmas, Natalie says she knows what their pattern has been; they do not talk about hard family things. But Natalie decides to change that pattern and ask Twig about her dad. When is it a good idea to talk with friends about hard things?
- 2) When Natalie tells Twig that her mom is depressed, it is the first time she has admitted this. What may have led her to say it this time?

Reading: Assignments 31-33

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) What does Natalie learn about Mr. Neely at the egg drop competition?
- 2) The team from Valley Hope describes S'meggs as creative and cute. Do you think they believe that it is a good design? What details from the text help you know your answer?
- 3) Why does Natalie have a strong reaction to the Valley Hope team's design?
- 4) What is the new plan for getting Natalie's mom a flower?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Natalie mentions Isaac Newton during her description of the science lab. Investigate Newton to learn more about his life and his contributions to science.
- 2) Natalie describes the idea of the pendulum, but she does not explain the scientific reasons behind it. Research the science behind how pendulums work, and if time and materials permit, build your own washer pendulum.

Imagine

- 1) Natalie determines a plan to break into her mom's old lab. Name other options she could have selected for helping her mom. If time permits, pick one option you listed and describe in detail how it could work.

Observe

- 1) Describe the setting for the egg drop competition, using as many words and phrases from the text as possible. How might this setting make the competitors feel?

Understand

- 1) Mr. Neely says that “there are no losers in #science.” Do you agree with him? Based on your answer, what would you tell a group of scientists whose experiments failed?
- 2) Natalie has a lot of conflicting feelings when she sees Mr. Neely talking to other people at the egg drop competition. But she says that she “realized I was being ridiculous, so I took a few breaths and tried to calm down.” What are some ways you use to reflect on your feelings when you get overwhelmed?

Reading: Assignments 34-36

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Why did Natalie skip preschool?
- 2) How does the team get past the lab's guard?
- 3) What does Natalie observe about the bag she takes out of the filing cabinet?
- 4) What makes Natalie grateful that Dari is with them?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Twig says the lab “looks like a fancy IKEA catalogue.” Investigate IKEA, learning what it is and looking at pictures from its catalogues online, and use what you see to create an image showing what the lab might look like.
- 2) Natalie uses her knowledge of Latin plant names when she's looking for the orchid seed. Pick a plant—either your favorite plant or one that you think is interesting—and research its Latin name. What does the name mean, and why was the plant given that name?

Imagine

- 1) Natalie remembers playing a game with her mom on the bus: they would try to imagine the lives of people around them. Pick a person you have seen outside of school—maybe someone you see on your way to school, at the grocery store, or elsewhere—and imagine what their story might be.
- 2) When Natalie picks up the picture of her family at Disneyland, she says she wishes she could “escape into the memory.” If you could choose a picture of yourself and jump into that point in time, what picture would you choose and why?

Observe

- 1) When Natalie finds the seed, she suddenly has a lot of questions but does not explain what they are. Use details from what you read to help you predict some of her questions and what their answers might be.
- 2) In Assignment 36, Natalie lists observations about her mother and her office. What do you think these observations mean when you put them together? Name some possibilities.

Understand

- 1) When Natalie realizes that Twig brought Dari on the mission, she feels like everything the two of them had said to each other “felt empty now.” What does Natalie mean by “empty”? How could Twig make this situation better?
- 2) Natalie is surprised that the bus driver does not stop their mission. She says that they got on the bus because it was part of the procedure. When is following a plan a good idea, and when can it lead to problems? How do you know when you should change a plan?

Reading: Assignments 37-39

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) Who does Natalie tell the guard to call instead of the police?
- 2) Natalie realizes something about her mom during the forty-five minute wait for Mrs. Menzer. What is it?
- 3) What does Mrs. Menzer do with the team? What do her actions reveal about the kind of person she is?
- 4) Why does Twig think Natalie is the team captain?
- 5) What has really happened with Natalie's mom's job and research?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Natalie has confused her Bearded Blue Iris for a Cobalt Blue Orchid. Investigate what a Bearded Blue Iris looks like, then compare it to images of different kinds of orchids. What do these flowers have in common? What makes them different from each other?

Imagine

- 1) Natalie includes a footnote about the time she and Twig tried to crash a child's birthday party. Imagine that scene, including as much detail as possible to show what it would have been like.

Observe

- 1) Natalie learns that she has misunderstood a lot of things about her mom and her mom's work. List some of those things, then pick one of them to explore more deeply. For the one you pick, go back through the book and list clues that held information about it. How did Natalie misunderstand these things?

Understand

- 1) Natalie says that she tells Mrs. Menzer the story "for the first time ever, spoken aloud so I could never get it back." Why might Natalie feel like telling the story aloud makes it more real?
- 2) At the lab, Natalie starts to feel like all the things she believed about her mom "had been a lie." If you were learning that someone you loved differed from who you thought they were, how would you feel? What would you do because of your feelings?

Reading: Assignments 40-42

Ask

Use evidence or quotations from the text to answer the following questions.

- 1) What does Natalie learn about the time she and her mom stayed in bed for a long time?
- 2) What changes about Natalie's mom in the final few Assignments?
- 3) What happens when both Natalie and Mikayla arrive at school at the same time?
- 4) Why does Natalie say she has stopped writing?
- 5) What is Natalie's ultimate conclusion about breakable things?

Explore

Use the resources your teacher provides to investigate the following items.

- 1) Natalie describes Mikayla's plant project. Research your own version of this project by exploring what sort of light conditions plants need to grow. Do all plants need the same amount of light? How do we know what conditions are best?

Imagine

- 1) Natalie says that she had felt so hurt by Mikayla that she had not considered how she might have made Mikayla feel. Pick a scene from the book and think about it from Mikayla's perspective. How does it change when you look at it from her point of view instead of Natalie's?

Observe

- 1) Natalie says that Twig is different from the person she has always known. Go back through what you have read and identify ways that Twig has changed. In your opinion, are these changes positive or negative?
- 2) Natalie and Mikayla have had a complicated relationship over the years. Chart the different stages of it, including the ones we learn about through Natalie's memories.

Understand

- 1) Natalie's mom says they "deserve a second chance." Do you think it is important to have second chances? Is there any situation in which you would not want to give someone a second chance?
- 2) Natalie says that not every day is easy, but she and her mom work together each day in the greenhouse, because it is how they show they are "trying." Why might it be important to have "trying" activities you do with someone, even if you all are not doing what you would really like to do?

Dear Family Member,

Your child has been assigned a Fluency Performance Passage in conjunction with the texts we are studying in class. This passage will be introduced in class, and students will spend several lessons practicing reading this passage aloud. On the fifth day, students will perform a reading of this passage. We follow this routine because repeated readings of text help build reading fluency, which includes automatic word recognition, expression, accuracy, and speed. Additionally, over one hundred studies have shown that deep reading, in which students spend time reading and rereading a single text, has a dramatic impact on reading comprehension. In fact, it is such an important impact that it helps students better comprehend the passage they have practiced as well as passages they will read in the future.

As part of our in-class practice, students study and discuss this passage. I will demonstrate different ways of reading it aloud, and students will analyze what makes a good reading. They will also practice reading this passage aloud in various ways.

You can assist your child by asking him or her to read the passage aloud at home. Even if your child remembers some or all of the words, remind him or her to read the passage rather than recite it from memory. Children may practice by reading to family members, caregivers, or even the family pet. Please log each reading your child completes in the Happy Hearers Log, which accompanies this letter.

Thank you for your help!

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