

Extra Credit by Andrew Clements
(Simon & Schuster, 2009)

Abby and Sadeed develop a pen pal friendship that is based on their similarities even though Sadeed lives in Afghanistan. But not everyone is happy with their relationship and they are forbidden to continue writing letters. Can their friendship survive? A 2012 Nutmeg Book Award Nominee.



1. We first meet Abby when she is attempting to climb over the top ledge of the climbing wall in gym class. Why does she love to climb the wall?
We learn that she is plenty smart, but that she is failing 6th grade, especially math, science, English and social studies. Why is Abby failing?
2. Sadeed from Afghanistan and Abby Carson from Illinois live on opposite sides of the world. How are their lives similar, how are they different? What about school, family, what they do for fun, what kinds of family responsibilities do they have?
3. In order to pass the 6th grade Abby has to bring all her grades up to a B or better and complete a pen pal project with a student in another country. How does Abby feel about this project initially? What was her first letter like? (p.45)
4. Why wasn't Sadeed allowed to write back to Abby directly? How do you feel about this?
How does Sadeed feel about having to help his little sister write the letter to the American penpal?
Sadeed's teacher, Mahmood, had to appear before the town elders to request a response to the American request for a letter. He has to compromise and allow Amira to write the letter with Sadeed's help. Sadeed says "It must be hard to have so many masters." (p. 46)
What do you think he meant by this?
Later in the novel, Mahmood decides to go along with the elders' decision to stop the letter writing. Why did he agree to the elders' decision?
5. Sadeed wrote down the letter dictated to him by his sister, but then he feels that he could write a much better letter and he does. He gives both letters to his teacher. Read p.64 – The teachers says, "It should be Amira's letter..... Which letter does the teacher send? Why did he choose the letter written by Sadeed?
6. Abby receives Sadeed's letter supposedly written by his sister (p. 74) – what does Abby learn about Sadeed from this letter? Read Sadeed's poem (p.77) When Sadeed receives Abby's second letter he says, "compared to the first one it felt that it had been created by a totally different person." Why is Abby's second letter so different from her first?
After reading the letter Sadeed says, "How strange it was to have this contact with someone so far away. It was like these people lived on the moon, or in a whole other universe." Why do you think he feels this way?
7. Why does Sadeed decide to send two letters in response to Abby's 2nd letter – one written by his sister and another much more detailed one directly from him? (p 121 Pride, vanity and because it was a little dangerous). Why do you think Sadeed thought it was a little dangerous to write to Abby?
He asks his teacher if he can drop off the letter directly at the Bazaar – do you think his teacher knew he was going to write directly to Abby?

8. Abby's return letter is really two letters, one to Amira and another one in code to Sadeed – why did she decide to write the return letter this way?
9. Abby learns from Sadeed and Amira that not all girls in the village attend school. Amira says she is lucky because she is “permitted” to attend school. How did this make you feel?
10. Flags – how does Sadeed get into trouble with the American flag on his letter from Abby? Do you think it was right of Abby's teacher to take down her display of the Afghanistan flag after a student and parent complained that it had a religious symbol on it (show copy of the Afghan flag)?
11. When Abby gives her report to the class on her pen pal project she explains: “part of what I learned is that people are simple, but the stuff going on around them can get complicated.” What do you think she meant by this?
12. After Abby gets the last letter from Sadeed when he tells her about climbing the rock and saying goodbye, Abby says, “It didn't feel like the last day of school, it felt like the last day of something else.” Why do you think she felt this way?
13. How do you feel Sadeed changed Abby, and how did Abby change Sadeed?

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