

# The List of Things that Will Not Change

## REBECCA STEAD

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Fiction

RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 8+

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### CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.

### SYNOPSIS

Bea lives in New York with her parents. She has a cat named Red and she loves Star Trek.

When Bea's parents divorce and her dad announces that he and his boyfriend, Jesse, are getting married, her entire world changes.

Despite her parents giving her a list of things that will never change, many still do—including living between two apartments, gaining a sister and a whole lot of emotions to sort through and understand.

With the help of her therapist, Miriam, her friends and her family, Bea learns to adapt to her new world. She also learns about the importance of forgiveness, empathy and love—and just how lucky she is to have 'two moons'.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rebecca Stead is the author of *First Light*, *When You Reach Me* (a *New York Times* bestseller and Newbery Medal winner), *Liar & Spy* (*Guardian* Children's Fiction Prize winner and *New York Times* bestseller) and *Goodbye Stranger* (a *New York Times* notable book). She lives in New York City with her family.

### BEFORE READING

1. As a class, brainstorm a list of emotions and write them on the whiteboard. Ask students to match emojis to these different emotions. Ask them to consider how people can be both happy and sad or how anger and passion can be similar.
2. Write the title of the novel on the whiteboard. Ask students to create a list of things that are unlikely to change in their lives.

### WHILE READING

1. Bea lives in New York City with her mom and dad. What do you know about New York City? Look up images of New York City and develop a list of adjectives to describe the pictures.
2. After Bea's parents inform her that they are getting divorced, they give her a green spiral notebook with a list of the things that will never change in her life. What is initially included in the list?
3. How does Bea react when her dad tells her that he and Jesse are getting married?
4. On page 32, Bea refers to her 'mind's eye'. What does she mean by this?
5. Miriam teaches Bea about 'thinking two steps ahead'. What does it encourage Bea to do? Is this

a helpful way of dealing with tricky situations and intense emotions?

- How does Bea communicate with her mom and dad when she is feeling overwhelmed by her emotions? Do you have a special way of communicating with your parents, caregivers or siblings?
- On page 156, Angus stands up and offers to eat the oyster from Jesse. Why is this significant?

## AFTER READING

### CHARACTER

- Make a character chart and use Bea's 'laser beams' to show how each of the characters connects to the others.
- Bea struggles to believe that she is a good person. She understands that she can do good things and bad things. If someone makes a mistake, does it mean they are a bad person?
- How is Mission an example of a person who has not yet learnt how to understand and manage their emotions?

### STYLE & STRUCTURE

- The novel is told through first person narration, meaning that first person pronouns are used. Find an example from the novel that illustrates how it is written in first person narration. Practise writing your own story using first person narration.
- The story includes a number of flashbacks into Bea's early childhood. How do these flashbacks allow us to understand Bea more deeply? Does Bea tell these memories accurately? What does she initially leave out that is unearthed in her session with Miriam?
- 'It happens sometimes. Like a passing storm.' (page 86) Bea uses a number of metaphors and similes to describe various emotions. Write down three different emotions and create a simile or metaphor for each of them.

### THEMES

#### Family

- How does Sonia react differently to Bea when she learns that her dad is getting married to Bea's dad? Why is it important to remember not everyone sees the world in the same way?
- 'Did that add up to real sisters? I didn't know.' (page 93) Do people need to be biological family members to be a family?
- 'With the right people, you can carry your boat and it doesn't feel that heavy.' (page 209) What does this metaphor suggest about the importance of family and friends in our lives?

### Forgiveness

- 'Feelings are sometime like big dogs, Bea. Sometimes they drag you around a little.' (page 36) How does Bea's guilt about Angelica hold her back?
- How does Bea seek forgiveness from Carolyn? Is this an effective way of mending a relationship?
- 'You are allowed to make mistakes. And to be forgiven.' (page 191) Why is it important after others forgive us, that we also forgive ourselves?

### Emotional intelligence

- Is it ever possible to truly know how someone else feels? For example, when someone smiles – does it always mean they are happy? Or, when someone cries – are they simply sad?
- 'There are a lot of feelings behind feelings.' (page 74) Can we feel multiple emotions at the same time? For example, can we be both happy and sad?
- 'Worry takes a lot out of me.' (page 124) How does anxiety and stress affect Bea? How does limiting her 'time' to worry help her?
- 'Seeing red' means your feelings are so worked up that you can't think straight.' (page 185) Have you ever felt like you have seen red? What do you do to calm down and regain control when you feel angry, hurt or upset?

## RESPONDING

- Throughout the novel, Bea must sit spelling tests from her teacher Mr. Homes. Find ten challenging words from the novel and create your own spelling test to quiz a friend with.
- Bea writes letters to Sonia as a way of getting to know her new sister. Write a letter to one of your friends. Read page 64, and take note of how Bea structures this letter and the tone she uses. Make sure that your own letter uses the same structure.
- Which character do you connect the most with in the novel? Write a list of similarities you share with that character.
- In groups of three or four, give a class presentation outlining the most important lessons that Bea learns from Miriam.
- Write about a time when you have felt happy, sad, angry or guilty. How did you deal with that emotion?