

**CYRM RESOURCE GUIDE
MIDDLE SCHOOL/
JUNIOR HIGH NOMINEES
(GRADES 6-8)
2012-2013**

Invisible Lines

by Mary Amato
Edgmont, USA, 2009

Wild Things

by Clay Carmichael
Front Street, 2009

Out of My Mind

by Sharon Draper
Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2010

California Young Reader Medal
MIDDLE SCHOOL/JUNIOR
HIGH BALLOT
2012-2013

_____ *Invisible Lines*

_____ *Wild Things*

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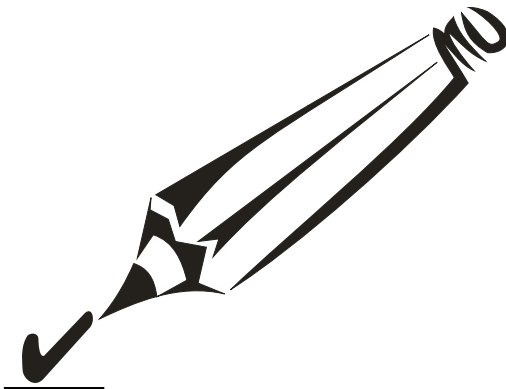
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INVISIBLE LINES

by Mary Amato



MEET THE AUTHOR

Mary Amato grew up in Libertyville, Illinois. She started writing at the age of seven when she kept a journal of her family's trip to California. Her favorite book as a child was *Harriet the Spy* by Louise Fitzhugh because, as Amato says, "Harriet was a terrific journal keeper."

Amato studied special education and dance during her undergraduate studies at Indiana University, Bloomington, and later fiction writing and poetry as a graduate student at John Hopkins University.

Publishing since 2000, Amato has written books for all ages, including *The Riot Brothers* chapter book series for Holiday House, the chapter book *Please Write in This Book*, Holiday House, 2006, the picture book *Chicken of the Family*, Putnam 2008, and a number of novels for Intermediate Readers. In addition to *Invisible Lines* she has published *The Word Eater*, Holiday House, 2000, *The Naked Mole-Rat Letters* Holiday House, 2005, and *Edgar Allan's Official Crime Investigation Notebook*, Holiday House, 2010.

As well as writing, Amato also plays guitar and writes songs, which she performs in the Maryland/Washington D.C. area. A former dancer and choreographer, she collaborates on ballets with her sister. She also co-founded Firefly Shadow Theater, where she designed and made puppets, and directed various productions. Amato still occasionally works in theater. Just recently Amato published her first young adult novel, *Guitar Notes*, Egmont, 2012.



CONNECTIONS

Positive Relations with a Teacher

- *Evolution, Me & Other Freaks of Nature* by Brande, Robin, Random House, 2007.
- *The Summer of May* by Cecilia Galente, Aladdin, 2012.
- *Peace is a Four Letter Word* by Janet Nichols Lynch, Heyday Books, 2005.

Dealing with Abuse

- *Give a Boy a Gun* by Todd Strasser, Simon & Schuster, 1999.
- *Leftovers* by Laura Wiess, Pocket Books, 2008.

Social Status

- *Twisted* by Laura Halse Anderson, Viking, 2007.
- *Define "normal"* by Julie Anne Peters, Little, Brown Books, 2000.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Seventh grader Trevor Musgrove's family has moved again, into a shabby, run-down apartment in Hedly Gardens, locally known as *Deadly Gardens*. Trevor's mom works two jobs, but barely makes enough money to pay the rent, let alone clothe and feed her three kids. With Trevor's dad out of the picture—he's in jail — Trevor's in charge of his younger step-siblings while his mom works. He'd rather hang out with friends and play soccer but in his not-so free time, Trevor draws. It is his art and his sense of humor that carries Trevor through his more difficult times in life.

Starting over at a new school, Trevor is determined that this year is going to be HIS year. He takes a bus along with kids from his underprivileged neighborhood to attend school along with a bunch of rich kids from a different part of town. Everything starts out great for him when he accidentally ends up in an advanced science class, part of the Summit program, with some of the cool kids and the best teacher he has ever had. At first he is worried about not making the grade, but once he starts learning incredible things about mushrooms, he finds out learning is fun and easier than he ever imagined.

Observing the lay of the land at his new school, Trevor creates a place for himself among the cool kids as a great soccer player and an even better artist. When he has a chance to try out for an elite league soccer team, which is too expensive, Trevor doesn't take his mother's "no" for an answer. He secretly attends the tryouts and gets a place on the team. It should be good news, but that's when everything else begins to go wrong. The same humor that makes him friends and earns his quirky science teacher's respect, also makes him an enemy of soccer star and coolest kid in school, Xander, who really has it in for Trevor. When Xander's missing cell phone mysteriously ends up in Trevor's backpack, Trevor has to decide how to deal with Xander's dishonest and stealthy play to get him permanently banned from school.

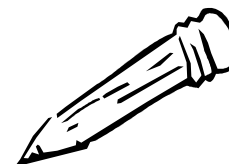


HOOKS

- Moving to a new school is hard enough, but what if one of your classes is full of kids who seem to have everything and know everything, including how to please your strange new teacher? A teacher who says things like, “Let us perambulate to the egress!”
- Have you ever tried using a joke or making people laugh to make friends? Have you ever used humor to cover up that fact that you are nervous? What about using humor to keep someone from finding out something serious that you didn’t want him or her to know about you?
- Trevor Musgrove’s mother once told him, “Everybody has an invisible line, so figure out where it is, and don’t cross it.” What kinds of invisible lines do people have? Do you have an invisible line that you don’t want anyone to cross?
- Trevor Musgrove believes that you never really know what another person is thinking because most human beings are good actors. Trevor is an excellent actor. He has to be to keep the kids at his fancy new school from knowing things like his father is in jail, he lives in the projects called “Deadly Gardens”, and he can’t really afford to join the exclusive soccer team he has been asked to join.

WRITING PROMPTS/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INVISIBLE LINES



- Trevor and Diamond are connected by the invisible line of poverty—they both live in “Deadly Gardens”, they both take the bus to school, they both know what it is to do without niceties and to worry about necessities, and they both know what it is to be looked down upon for not having the things their more well-off classmates take for granted. So why does Trevor resist being friends with Diamond, given they have so much in common? How does Trevor reconcile his rejection of Diamond and his pursuit of being one of the cool kids?
- How does Trevor get to be one of the cool kids? What talents does he have that help him fit in? Do you have a talent that helps you find your place at school? Trevor’s moniker is “the Graffiti Guy”; what would yours be if you were named for your talent?
- One of the problems Trevor faces is that he is constantly expected to take care of his younger siblings rather than hang out with his friends. Do you think it is fair that Trevor doesn’t get a lot of free time for himself? Do you have things that are expected of you by your family that you don’t think are fair?
- Trevor’s mom tells him he cannot try out for the league soccer team because it is too expensive. Trevor ignores her and tries out anyway, only to discover his mother was right. Have you ever been told there is something you cannot do or have because it costs too much? Have you ever been upset because your family can’t afford something you really want? Have you ever saved up for something you really want? Was it harder or did it take longer than you expected?
- Langley and Xander are both from families of privilege; they have no problem affording \$1000 for extra-curricular activities like soccer and always having food in the house and living in a nice neighborhood. Yet Langley and Xander are very different when it comes to how they treat Trevor: how are they different in that way? Why do you think they react so differently to Trevor’s humor and skill at soccer?

WRITING PROMPTS/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INVISIBLE LINES



- It's often hard for others to see that Xander is a bully, especially adults because he always acts polite in front of them. In what ways does Xander bully Trevor? Why do you think Xander is a bully? How does Trevor react to being bullied?
- Does our school have different levels of classes for different students? Are you in one of those classes or do you know someone who is? What do you think about the fact that at Trevor's school someone has to apply for special classes or programs—is it a fair way of determining who gets in? What do you think about Trevor getting into the class because of an error? Do you think he would have gotten in if he had applied before he attended the class?
- Is there a difference between Xander accusing Trevor of stealing his cell phone and Trevor accusing Diamond of stealing it? Why is Trevor so quick to point the finger at Diamond, and not another of Xander's friends, like Langley?
- What do you think about Trevor's solution to Xander's putting his own cell phone in Trevor's backpack? What would you have done in the same instance, given that you may not have Trevor's talent for art?

WILD THINGS

by Clay Carmichael



MEET THE AUTHOR

Clay Carmichael grew up in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, living next door to her grandparents. Her grandparents had a library with shelves of art books, so art and books were a major part of her life growing up, and her stories and art are always intertwined. She attended Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts and graduated summa-cum-laude in Creative Writing from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

A member of Writers and Illustrators of North Carolina, a professional organization of creators of children's books, Carmichael began with writing and illustrating picture books, which include *Bear at the Beach* (1996), *Used-Up Bear* (1998) and *Lonesome Bear* (2001). *Wild Things* is her first novel. Much of her writing and illustrations emerge from important themes in her own life—loss of a father, absence of a father figure, the joys of love, the security of loyalty, seeking one's place in the world.

Carmichael is also a member of the Orange County Artists' Guild and teaches poetry, illustrating and book-making. She makes public appearances at libraries and schools, offering workshops about illustrating, publishing and writing. She lives with her husband, sculptor Mike Roig in Carrboro, North Carolina where they run Heartworks Studio together.

Brother, Brother, Carmichael's young adult novel, is due to be released Spring 2013.



CONNECTIONS

Cats

- *The Book of Night With Moon* by Diane Duane, Aspect, 1997.
- *To Visit the Queen* by Diane Duane, Aspect, 1999.
- *Cat Girl's Day Off* by Kimberly Pauley, TU Books, 2012.

Parental Abandonment

- *Pictures of Hollis Woods* by Patrica Reilly Giff, Dell Yearling, 2002.
- *The Secret Story of Sonia Rodrigues* by Alan Lawrence Sitomer, Hyperion Books, 2008.
- *The Shape of Water* by Anne Spollen, Flux, 2008.
- *So B. It* by Sarah Weeks, Harper Collins, 2012.

Adoption

- *The Snowball Effect* by Holly Nicole Hoxton, Laura Geringer Books, 2010.
- *Red Glass* by Laura Resau, Delacorte Books, 2009.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

After her mentally-ill and neglectful mother commits suicide, headstrong eleven-year-old Zoe is adopted by her equally stubborn half-uncle, widower Henry Royster. She joins the former heart surgeon and current renown artist to live in the small-town of Sugar Hill, North Carolina, where he welds outlandish structures that Zoe euphemistically calls “wild things.”

Just like the black and white feral cat living under Henry’s porch, and her uncle’s sculptures, Zoe is a wild thing, too. She attempts to befriend the cat whom she names Mr. C’mere, but remains wary of her Uncle Henry. Having never met the father who left before she was born, and only knowing a string of unreliable men with whom her mother hooked up, Zoe’s sure Henry will let her down just as everyone else has.

Yet as Mr. C’mere gradually comes to trust her, Zoe begins to let her guard down with Henry as well, and realizes that she and her uncle have a lot in common: red-haired and gap-toothed, both have quick tempers and are outspoken, yet are also compassionate and intelligent. Zoe also gradually makes friends with Henry’s caretaker and his wife as well as the acquaintance of Henry’s quirky art-world friends and well-meaning neighbors.

Zoe resents being forced to go to school for the first time in her life but getting new clothes and living in a clean home somewhat offset her resistance. Having access to her Uncle’s vast library doesn’t hurt either, nor does having her teacher, Mrs. Avery, take an interest in her reading, and giving her space and time to grow accustomed to the classroom. She takes the books her teacher lends her to an abandoned cabin she finds in the woods behind her Uncle’s house and it is in this hideout she starts to write her “memoirs.” It is also where she encounters two more wild things—a white deer and a strange, unkempt teenage boy who seem to travel the woods together.

By figuring out who the boy is and how he is related to her family, saving the deer from local hunters, and appreciating the beauty of her uncle’s sculptures and all things wild, Zoe finally finds her place in the world.



HOOKS

Do you look more like your mother or your father? Maybe you look like or act like someone else from either side of your parent's family. Eleven-year-old Zoe Royster looks nothing like her mother, who recently died. And she doesn't know if she looks much like her Daddy since he left when she was little. Zoe does, however, share the same red hair, feet, gap between two front teeth, short-temper, impulsiveness and moodiness with her daddy's half-brother—her before-last-Monday-never-heard-of-Uncle Henry.

What is your idea of heaven? Eleven-year-old Zoe Royster's idea of heaven is this: shelves and shelves of books, each with stories or pictures more exciting and beautiful than the next and two overstuffed chairs big enough for her to sleep in. Living with her Uncle Henry sure isn't her idea of heaven, but it looks like she may get a few things she has only ever imagined having: her own room, a book she can keep longer than two weeks, and a grown-up smarter than she is in the house. These are things Zoe might want, but she has learned to push wanting away as hard as she can.

Do you know what a feral cat is? The word feral means untamed, wild, or uncontrollable. Zoe Royster knows that there is a feral cat living on the farm where she has just moved to live with her Uncle Henry. Even though Uncle Henry has never seen it, Zoe knows it is there. Only now the feral cat isn't the only "wild thing" living on Uncle Henry's farm since Zoe has had, what has been described as, a "near-feral upbringing." Maybe there is something to that old saying, "it takes one to know one."

WRITING PROMPTS/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *WILD THINGS*



- Although Zoe doesn't remember what her father, Owen Royster, was like or even looks like, she soon discovers she shares Royster family features, behaviors, and what other's think of as peculiarities with her "before-last-Monday-never-heard-of-uncle-Henry." For example, Mrs. Wilson believes that "mendacity and smart tongues run deep in the Royster family." What is mendacity and do Zoe and Uncle Henry share that trait? What are some of the traits, behaviors, and peculiarities, good and bad, that they do share?
- The man who works for Uncle Henry, Fred Montgomery, asks Zoe what her talents are. When Zoe says one of her talents is that she knows how to pay bills, Fred tells her that paying bills is a chore and not a talent. Fred explains that, "Chores are what you *have* to do. Talents are your natural abilities, what believers like Bessie would call your gifts from God. Things you're good a without knowing why." Do you have any talents? What are Zoe's talents? What are Henry's? Do Henry and Zoe share talents like they do peculiarities? Do Zoe and Maud Booker have any talents in common? How about Zoe and Wil or Wil and Henry?
- A Hospital social worker tells Uncle Henry, "Zoe's street smarts are a kind of armor she wears to protect herself since she was old enough to walk." What street smarts do you have? Are street smarts a talent or something you have to learn? What kind of "smarts" did Wil have to develop?
- Zoe and Wil had very different upbringings, but both can also be described as being brought up "near-feral". How did their separate upbringings differ and how were they similar? Who do you think had the harder childhood and why?
- Personification is when you give human traits, qualities, feeling, action, or characteristics to something non-human, like an animal or an object. What examples of personification can you find in *Wild Things*?
- Zoe believes that an animal's love is purer than human beings. Why do you think she believes this?
- Describe the similarities in the way Zoe and Mr. C'mere feel about people at the beginning of the book and by the end. Compare Zoe's relationship with Mr. C'mere to that of Wil and Sister's relationship. What is missing from Zoe and Mr. C'mere's relationship that is present between Wil and Sister?

WRITING PROMPTS/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *WILD THINGS*



- Zoe's first-person narrative in *Wild Things* alternates with the observations of Mr. C'mere of both the past and the present. Did you find this an interesting way to tell the story? Try to write about something that has happened to you from the viewpoint of a family pet.
- Zoe refers to Henry's sculptures as "the big metal contraptions in our yard," but Wil calls them "wild things". Ms. Avery tells Zoe to study all the sculptures that Henry was making for his show and find one piece that reached deep down inside her, tugs at her heart, or spoke her name. Why do you think Wil calls Henry's sculptures wild thing? Can a sculpture reach down inside a person and tug at their heart or call their name?
- After Zoe discovers the cabin in the woods, she fixes it up and makes it her own. She'd never had a home of her own and considers the cabin, no matter how humble, her home. Why was it important for Zoe to have a home she could call her own? Why didn't she think of Uncle Henry's house as her home? Eventually Zoe looks at her little cabin and sees it "for the shack it was." What brings about Zoe's change of attitude toward the cabin?
- Hargrove Peters, a boy at Zoe's new school, spends half of every school day staring at Zoe. Even though they had never exchanged one word, he stares at Zoe in a "burning way", like he already hated her. Why do you think Hargrove stares at Zoe? Do you think he really hates her? If not, why does he stare at her? Do you think he *still* hates Zoe by the end of the book? How does Zoe feel about Hargrove?
- Fred thinks Henry lets Zoe run wild and gives her too much freedom. Do you think Fred has a point? What characters in *Wild Things* have too much freedom and is too much freedom a good or a bad thing? On the other hand, what happens to the characters in the book that don't have enough freedom?
- How many "wild things" do you think Clay Carmichael wrote about in *Wild Things*?

OUT OF MY MIND

by Sharon Draper



MEET THE AUTHOR

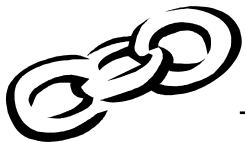
Sharon Draper, born April 11, 1952, grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. A National Merit scholar, she attended Pepperdine University and received her bachelors in English. She returned east to Cincinnati, Ohio, married her husband Larry and began teaching English in the public school system. She earned in her Master's degree from Ohio's Miami University in 1974 while continuing to teach high school in Cincinnati.

After being encouraged by a student to enter a writing contest sponsored by *Ebony* magazine in 1991, Draper won the short story contest. That inspired her to finish a young adult novel she had working on. *Tears of a Tiger* (Simon & Schuster) was finally published in 1994 to rave reviews and won the Coretta Scott King Genesis Award for 1995.

While waiting for *Tears of a Tiger* to publish, Draper began the first of a picture book series, *Ziggy and the Black Dinosaurs*, Just Us Books, 1994, which also won an award. In 1997, Draper was named both Ohio's Outstanding Language Arts Educator of the Year and Ohio Teacher of the Year, and ultimately National Teacher of the Year.

She followed up *Tears of a Tiger* with *Forged by Fire*, Simon & Schuster, 1997 and *Darkness Before Dawn*, Simon & Schuster, 2001; *Forged by Fire* won the Coretta Scott King Genesis Award for 1998 and another novel Draper wrote, *Battle of Jericho*, Simon & Schuster, 2003 won the same award in 2004.

For *Out of My Mind* Draper, drew inspiration from her disabled daughter and explored the themes that are prevalent in the life of those who live with disabilities: social biases, physical obstacles, medical complications, complex daily routines, and limited opportunities and resources.



CONNECTIONS

Cerebral Palsy – Fiction

- *Mine for Keeps* by Jean Little, Penguin Group, 1995.
- *Don't Stop the Music* by Robert Perske, Abingdon Press, 1986.
- *Cruise Control* by Terry Trueman, Harper Collins, 2005.
- *Life Happens Next* by Terry Trueman, Harper Collins, 2012.
- *Stuck in Neutral* by Terry Trueman, Harper Collins, 2001.
- *Reaching for the Sun* by Tracie Zimmer, Bloomsbury, 2007.

Cerebral Palsy – Non-Fiction

- *I'm the Big Sister Now* by Michelle Emmert, Albert Whitman & Company, 1989.
- *Living with Cerebral Palsy* by Susan H. Gray, Child's World, 2002.
- *Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair* by Jamee Riggio Heelan, Peachtree Publishers, 2000.
- *From Where I Sit: Making My Way with Cerebral Palsy* by Shelley Nixon, Scholastic, 1999.

OUT OF MY MIND

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Being stuck inside her head is making Melody go out of her mind.

Everybody uses words to express themselves. Except me. And I bet most people don't realize the real power of words. But I do. Thoughts need words. Words need a voice.

Eleven-year-old Melody Brooks has synesthesia--she has an eidetic memory, remembering everything she sees and hears. She also has cerebral palsy, a condition that affects her body but not her mind. Although she is unable to walk, talk, or feed or care for herself, she can read, think, and feel. In fact, Melody is the most brilliant kid in fifth grade, if not the whole school, but almost nobody knows because she has never spoken or written a word.

Early on, experts determined she was severely retarded and not capable of learning. But her parents know she is a smart girl trapped by her uncooperative wheelchair bound body, and so does her caretaker neighbor, who tries to teach her anything she can. Placed in a special education classroom, Melody wastes her days away watching cartoons and listening to preschool level alphabet audio lessons. Yet she is determined to make her mark in the world in spite of her physical limitations and in fifth grade, she acquires a Medi-Talker computer. And everything changes.

Suddenly, Melody can unlock the voice inside her by typing out her thoughts on the computer's keyboard. When she is transitioned into the regular classroom, not everyone is ready for Melody to have a voice, though – including members of the quiz team she wants to join. However, it is Melody's amazing contribution that enables her class to make it to the national quiz team finals. When something happens that causes her to miss the finals, she is devastated by her classmates' actions and reactions to her absence.



HOOKS

- How would you like to have a photographic memory? Your brain would be like a video camera that is always recording, but it wouldn't come with a delete button. If you think having a photographic memory would be a great gift, what would you give up to have it?
- Sometimes people laugh with you and at other times they laugh at you. Can you tell the difference between people making fun of you and people being nice to you? What do you do if they aren't just laughing at you, but at your friends as well? How would you feel if you couldn't tell them to stop?
- Synesthesia is the condition in which a person may be able to hear colors or visualize flavors when music is played. What color or colors do you think classical music would be? How about a rap song? What color or colors do you think your favorite song would be? What flavor or flavors do you think your favorite song would taste like?
- Sometime people lose their voices. What if you lost your voice for a day, a week, or even a month, what do you think your first words would be? What if you were eleven years old before you could speak for the very first time? What would be the first words you would say to your parents, your friends, or what about the kids who use to make fun of you for not being able to speak?

WRITING PROMPTS/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

OUT OF MY MIND



- Synesthesia is the condition in which a person may be able to hear colors or visualize flavors when music is played. For example when Melody hears classical music always seems to be bright blue and smell like fresh paint. Jazz to her sounds brown and tan and smells like wet dirt. Melody's favorite music, county music is lemons – not sour, but sugar sweet and tangy. What color or colors do you think classical music should be? How about a rap song? When you think of your favorite music what colors can you visualize? What flavor or flavors do you think of?
- If you were Melody what ability or talent would you give up not to have cerebral palsy? Being smart, photographic memory, or synesthesia? What else would you willing give up: your dog, your support neighbors and teacher, or maybe even your loving family?
- Melody has had a variety of different types of teachers, some good, some bad, some indifferent, and some excellent! Write about the differences between Melody's teachers. Compare Mrs. Tracy to Mrs. Billups. What about Mrs. Lovlace and Mr. Dimming? Think about whether or not you have had teachers like these and how you could tell your parents about how you felt being in their class.
- How does the way that Mrs. V treats Melody differ from that of her parents? Melody's parents tried to keep her from falling while Mrs. V taught her how to fall. Which is the more important lesson? How do you think Melody's parents would have felt about Mrs. V putting Melody's monkey out of reach? In what ways does Catherine differ from Mrs. V and Melody's parents? What, if anything, do they all have in common?
- Have you ever known a person or seen a person who had similar disabilities to Melody's? Think of the kids in Melody's inclusion music class when they first meet the kids from H-5. Which classmate's reaction is similar to the way you reacted or the think you may react?

WRITING PROMPTS/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

OUT OF MY MIND



- How do you feel about the quiz team leaving Melody behind? Who was given the responsibility to call Melody and why didn't they call? In actuality, who should have been the one to call Melody's parents? Do you think Melody should forgive Rose?
- Melody's mother seems to understand her most of the time. She defends her intelligence when a doctor tells her that Melody will never learn and later figures out why Melody has a "volcano episode" when Mrs. Billups plays *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, over and over again. Why then does she fail to understand what Melody is trying to tell her about the colored blocks, the fish jumping out of its bowl, or when Penny darts behind the SUV? Does Melody realize how different circumstances might be involved with her mother's ability to know what she is trying to communicate? What were the circumstances that prevented her Mother from understanding that Penny was in danger? What can Melody and her mother do to improve their communication?
- Many people celebrate special occasions by sharing meals or eating out. The quiz team celebrates their going to Washington D.C. for the National competition by going out for pizza. Melody is unable to eat the pizza and must be fed her dinner by her mother in front of her classmates. Would you rather stay home than go out to celebrate if it meant going hungry or being fed by someone? What part does the pizza celebration play in Melody being left behind at the airport?
- Before she gets Elvira, her talking computer, Melody communicates by pointing at words and phrases taped to her table. Make a list of the words you would include on your own talk board.