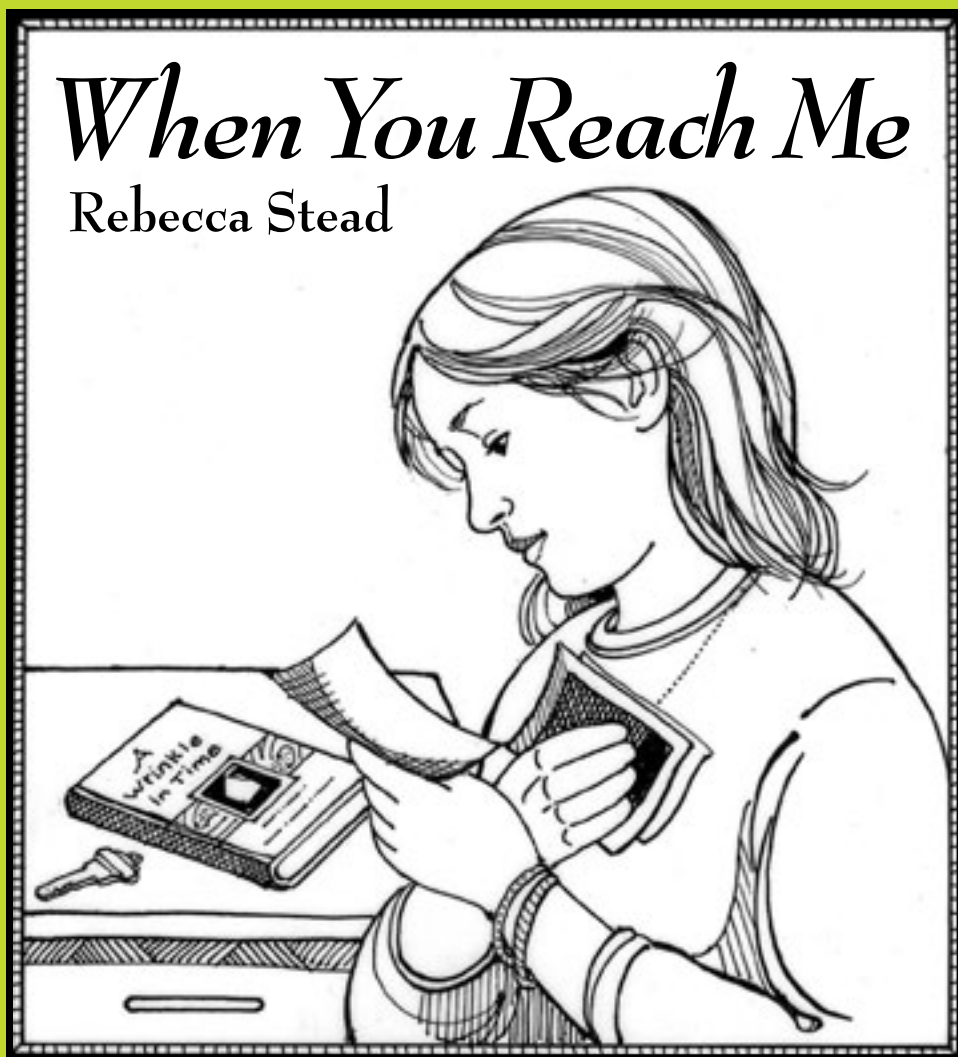


Novel•Ties

When You Reach Me

Rebecca Stead



A Study Guide

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LEARNING LINKS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Synopsis	1
Pre-Reading Activities	2 - 3
Things You Keep in a Box - Things that Stain [Pages 1 - 24]	4 - 6
Mom's Rules for Life in New York City - Things You Keep Secret [Pages 25 - 53]	7 - 10
Things That Smell - Invisible Things [Pages 54 - 80]	11 - 12
Things You Hold On To - Things That Make No Sense [Pages 81 - 106]	13 - 16
The First Proof - Things That Fall Apart [Pages 107 - 131]	17 - 19
Christmas Vacation - Things That Are Sweet [Pages 132 - 156]	20 - 22
The Last Note - Things That Heal [Pages 157 - 170]	23 - 25
Things You Protect - Parting Gifts [Pages 171 - 197]	26 - 28
Cloze Activity	29
Post-Reading Activities	30 - 31
Suggestions For Further Reading	32
Answer Key	33 - 35

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For the Teacher

This reproducible study guide to use in conjunction with the novel *When You Reach Me* consists of lessons for guided reading. Written in chapter-by-chapter format, the guide contains a synopsis, pre-reading activities, vocabulary and comprehension exercises, as well as extension activities to be used as follow-up to the novel.

In a homogeneous classroom, whole class instruction with one title is appropriate. In a heterogeneous classroom, reading groups should be formed: each group works on a different novel at its reading level. Depending upon the length of time devoted to reading in the classroom, each novel, with its guide and accompanying lessons, may be completed in three to six weeks.

Begin using NOVEL-TIES for reading development by distributing the novel and a folder to each child. Distribute duplicated pages of the study guide for students to place in their folders. After examining the cover and glancing through the book, students can participate in several pre-reading activities. Vocabulary questions should be considered prior to reading a chapter; all other work should be done after the chapter has been read. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. The classroom teacher should determine the amount of work to be assigned, always keeping in mind that readers must be nurtured and that the ultimate goal is encouraging students' love of reading.

The benefits of using NOVEL-TIES are numerous. Students read good literature in the original, rather than in abridged or edited form. The good reading habits, formed by practice in focusing on interpretive comprehension and literary techniques, will be transferred to the books students read independently. Passive readers become active, avid readers.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Preview the book by reading the title and the author's name and by looking at the cover illustration. Do you think it will be realistic fiction or a fantasy? Do you think it takes place in the present or the past? Have you read anything else by the same author?
2. Look at the quotation credited to Albert Einstein that appears on the page before the first chapter in the book. What do you think it means? Do you agree?
3. In 2010, *When You Reach Me* was presented with the top prize for children's literature: The John Newbery Medal. Think of other award-winning books you have read. What qualities do these books have in common? As you read this novel, determine why it was selected to receive this prestigious award.
4. Do some research at the library and on the Internet to locate biographical information about Rebecca Stead. One source you might consult is an interview with the author that can be found at <http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com>. When you reach this site, click on *Reviews* and then type in the book title *When You Reach Me*. As you do your research, look for answers to these questions:
 - What did Rebecca Stead do before she became a writer?
 - How old was she in the late 1970s? Where did she live and who lived in her neighborhood?
 - What are some of her favorite children's books?
 - What does she like to do when she isn't writing?

As you read the novel, think about the ways Stead's background and interests are reflected in her writing.

5. Has anyone ever made fun of you because of the money you have to spend, where you live, or because of a condition over which you have no control? How did this behavior make you feel? Have you ever been a witness to an incident where someone made fun of another person? Did you get involved or did you walk away? Under what circumstances might walking away be acceptable?
6. One of the personal puzzles that the main character in this book must solve is why her best friend decided to abruptly end a lifelong friendship. Has this ever happened to you? How did it make you feel? Were you able to form new friendships? Did you reestablish your relationship with your former friend?
7. *When You Reach Me* makes many references to *The \$20,000 Pyramid*, a popular quiz show game in the 1970s and 1980s. Familiarize yourself with the two parts of this game by looking at portions of these two Internet clips:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v_TtnoAteirEI

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v_3GA2rbbT-jo

After you watch these clips think about how you would help a family member practice to be a contestant on this show.

Things You Keep in a Box – Things That Stain (cont.)

Read to find out how Miranda’s mom prepares for her TV appearance.

Questions:

1. Why was April 27, 1979 an important date for Miranda and her mom? How did Miranda help her mom prepare for this special event?
2. Who was Mr. Perfect and how did he get his nickname?
3. How did Belle reveal that she was fond of Miranda?
4. Who was Belle and why did she want to hear something about the book Miranda was reading? What other story did Miranda like to hear again and again?
5. How did Miranda get her name? What did this reveal about Miranda’s mom, who had given her the name?
6. Why did Miranda and her mom hide a key? Why is this an important bit of information?
7. Whom did Sal and Miranda typically see on the walk home from school? Why did this disturb them?
8. What was the beginning of the whole true story that Miranda thought she was supposed to tell?

Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you think Miranda resented being a latchkey child?
2. Do you know what book Miranda was reading? If so, does it sound like a book you would like to read?
3. Why do you think Miranda’s mom rented an apartment that was dirty and in poor condition?
4. Why might tying and untying knots get someone in the right frame of mind to resolve a difficult problem?
5. Why do you think the assault against Sal marked the end of his friendship with Miranda?
6. Whom do you think Miranda was writing to? Why do you think she was writing?

Literary Devices:

- I. *Point of View*—Point of view in a book of fiction refers to the person telling the story. It could be one of the characters or it could be the author narrating the story. Who is telling this story?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this point of view?
