

Counting by 7s

by Holly Goldberg Sloan

Discussion Guide

1. “Mom and Dad believed that I’d never found a teacher who truly understood me. I think it was more accurate to say that I’d never understood any of my teachers.” p. 24
Discuss this statement as it applies to Willow. In your experience have there been students you didn’t understand? Or that didn’t understand you?
2. How comfortable, or uncomfortable were you with Dell Duke’s classification of students? p. 45-46. Are there classification you are comfortable using? Do we need classifications?
3. Willow finds Dell’s classification list; p. 358. Is it true, as Willow states, that “all of us are all of those things.” How is that significant for Willow, for everyone?
4. Willow has Adverse Childhood Experiences. Discuss the ones that have affected her life. (see list)
5. Discuss Willow’s resilience and how she was able to go on. Using the Resilience Chart, talk about personal factors in place as well as support factors in her surroundings. (see chart)
6. Discuss the cover and the quote, “If you’re lost, you might need to swim against the tide.”. How does it relate the to the story?
7. Willow had a depth of understanding beyond someone her age. Discuss some of her statements and how they applied to her and how they might apply to others:
 - It has been my experience that rewarding and heartbreaking often go hand in hand. p.22
 - I usually found so-called “small talk” boring. I like “large talk” which is more about theories and concepts, mixed with facts and known quantities. p.89
 - Never let someone tell you that you can’t do it. p. 94
 - And endings are always the beginnings of something else. p. 107
 - What we expect rarely occurs; what we don’t expect is what happens. p. 214
 - Dell Duke is not a bad person. He is just bad at *being* a person. p. 289
 - It’s possible that all labels are curses. Unless they are on cleaning products. p.