

The Ripple Effect

READER'S GROUP GUIDE



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About the Book

Sixth-graders have always said farewell to Kettleby Elementary with a class prank, and the school has always allowed it—as long as they play by the rules. Class clown Zella Trudi is determined to think up the greatest prank of all time. Maybe then, everyone will quit laughing at funny internet videos and start laughing at her jokes again. But when her great idea goes a little too far, the whole class is punished, and it's all her fault. Can she turn it around—and save her family's struggling ice cream shop—before it's too late?

Redemption, friendship, and a remarkable chain of kindness tastes even sweeter than the Trudi family's famous raspberry ripple ice cream in this warmhearted middle-grade novel.

About the Author

Rebecca Caprara has been writing stories since she was a little girl. What she enjoys the most is writing across genres and form for middle-grade readers. Her middle-grade novels include *Worst-Case Collin* and *The Magic of Melwick Orchard*. She is also the author of the young adult novel *Spin*.

The logo for 'The Ripple Effect' features the title in a black, cursive font inside a grey, cloud-like shape. A vertical blue line is positioned to the right of the logo.

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- What is a ripple effect? Why do you think the author chose this title for this book? Based on the cover, what do you think this book will be about?
- Marzella and her friend Beaumont both go by nicknames: Zella and Bowie. Do you go by a nickname or know somebody who does?
- Why is Bowie hangry at the start of the book? What does Zella do to support her friend as his life changes after his parents' divorce?
- Zella is jealous of her friend Janea's cell phone. Do you have a cell phone or know a peer who does? Do you think kids should wait until they reach a certain age before getting cell phones? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the author used made-up social media platforms (CliqueClok and Chirp) in this story instead of real ones, like TikTok, Instagram, or X?
- Zella has a lot of school pride but thinks their mascot, the Spindles, is "totally not terrifying." What is your school mascot? How do you feel about it? What role does school spirit play in your school or community?
- Why does Zella consider herself "a serious journalist"? Does your school have a newspaper? What kinds of stories appear in it?
- What traditions are involved in graduating from Kettleby Elementary? Does your school observe graduation traditions?
- Zella and her classmates are excited about the traditional class prank. What are the rules for the prank? Do you think these rules make sense? Why do you think this tradition is allowed to exist within these guidelines? If you could plan a totally awesome class prank, what would you do?
- Kettleby Elementary celebrates Dot Day in September—a real celebration observed on September 15 by a million educators and students around the world, based on Peter H. Reynolds's book *The Dot*. What is *The Dot* about? How is Dot Day celebrated, and what is the meaning of this celebration? Why does Principal Saltz remind the class about this celebration when talking to them about their impending graduation? What does it mean to "leave your mark" on a school or community? What kind of mark does Zella want to leave?

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- What does being the “class clown” mean to Zella? Does your school have a class clown? What does that role mean to you? Why does Zella feel like her jokes “aren’t landing quite like they used to”? Do you enjoy comedy on the internet, like memes and videos? How is it similar to or different from comedy in real life?
- What is vascular dementia? Why does Zella’s mom say her grandfather’s dementia is “both a blessing and a curse”? How does the Trudi family look out for Pops in light of his hearing and memory loss?
- What is Janea’s dream? What does she need to do to achieve it? What barriers stand in her way? How do her friends support her dream? Do you have a dream like Janea’s?
- Would you like to live above an ice cream shop like Zella? What is it like for her to be the child of a small business owner? What’s the difference between a small business and a large corporation? What are some small businesses in your community?
- What is the “almost magical effect” of the Trudi family’s raspberry ripple ice cream? If you could pick a feeling or idea to flavor your ice cream, what would you pick?
- What happened to the town of Kettleby when the mills closed? How has that affected Zella’s family?
- What kind of information does Shelby McCree write down in her investigative notebook? Why do you think the author presents this chapter as a list written in Shelby’s notebook, instead of a narrative from Shelby’s point of view?
- What does Mr. Fenimore tell his student journalists about stories? Where can you find “story seeds” in your own life?
- What does Zella’s mom say to Pops about his need for more support as he gets older on page 91? Do you agree? Who is a helper in your life? How do you help others?
- How does Zella feel about the passing of her nan? What are the good memories that she holds on to? What does she wish she could confide in Nan about?
- What advice does Miss Plumkov have to share about creative blocks? Have you ever had a creative block? What helps you get ideas flowing?
- Why is the spindle so important to Principal Saltz? Do you live in an area where people feel strong family ties to local history? Is there someone in your family history whom you look up to like Principal Saltz looks up to his great-great-grandmother Dorothea?



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- Who introduces Zella to the concept of yarn bombing? Have you ever seen a yarn bombing installation in real life? Do you think a yarn bombing project is a good idea for a class prank? Why or why not?
- Why does the prank go wrong? Do you think there could have been a version of the yarn bombing prank that didn't get Zella's whole class in trouble? Why or why not?
- Why does Casey compare problems to acne? Do you agree with her advice? If you were in Casey's shoes, trying to give Zella advice at this point in the story, what analogy would you use to get your point across?
- How do you think Zella's conversation with Principal Saltz goes? Why does Principal Saltz give her a second chance?
- Why does Shelby McCree think bad luck "might be contagious, the same way happiness can be" (page 286)? Do you think bad luck or sadness might be contagious? Why or why not?
- Where does Zella get the idea for the Ripple Effect Challenge? How does she get momentum going? What surprising ripples come out of the project? Have you ever done something that started a chain reaction and ended in something you never expected?