

DISCUSSION GUIDE

DEER RUN HOME

BY ANN CLARE LEZOTTE

AGES
10-14
GRADES
5-9



The
Power
of Story

Building Equitable
Bookshelves

 SCHOLASTIC

About the Book



Effie is Deaf, and no one in her family speaks sign language, her language. This heart-filled story of survival and found family is inspired by a true court case and will appeal to fans of *Wonder* and *Out of My Mind*.

Effie and her older sister, Deja, have recently moved into their father's trailer after an incident at their mom's house. Daddy communicates with Effie by pointing, stomping on the floor, and making thoughtless jokes. Even if they did understand each other, could Effie tell the terrible secret she carries when telling feels impossible—and dangerous?

But what if telling is the only way to be seen?

Tender, spare, and emotionally charged, *Deer Run Home* explores what it feels like to be a stranger in your own family and to awaken—through friendship, poetry, and kinship with the natural world—to a new understanding of yourself.

Discussion Questions

1. The first and last poems reference the story of Iphigenia from Greek mythology, a particular version in which the goddess Artemis saves the princess and leaves a deer in her place. Research this story and then discuss the connections you find between the Greek myth and *Deer Run Home*. Why do you think the author included this literary allusion?
2. Effie is mainstreamed; she attends her neighborhood school with a sign language interpreter. Her Deaf friends, Josh and Jordan, attend a residential school where students typically live apart from their families in order to meet their educational needs. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each scenario? Which option would you choose?
3. Effie exists in the world of the hearing and the Deaf, and she uses her bilingual ability to navigate between the two. The author captures this duality, in part, by presenting Effie's voice in poetry. How does this choice make the narrative feel simultaneously grounded in both English and American Sign Language? What else does the author do to develop Effie's first-person narrative through the verse novel format?
4. There's an old saying that warns us not to judge a book by its cover, yet both Effie and her friend Cait are often judged based on their respective disabilities: deafness and cerebral palsy. Compare and contrast the misconceptions that each girl faces and how she deals with them. Why do we so often define people by what they cannot do rather than what they can do? And what are the dangers of doing so?
5. When poverty is depicted in children's books, the setting is often urban or suburban, but 1 in 4 rural children live in poverty and that number is growing. What does it mean to be poor? There are several ways to define and measure poverty, and experts don't always agree. Would you describe Effie as poor? Would she think of herself in similar terms? What evidence from the text would you cite to support your opinion?
6. Effie has a complicated relationship with her family: her father, mother, stepfather, and older sister, Deja. How would you describe these relationships, and how do they grow and change over the course of the story? How does this family dynamic shape the plot of the novel, and what enables Effie to display resilience and thrive despite this situation?
7. The role of Child Protective Services is to intervene in cases of abuse and neglect. Abuse is actively hurting someone physically, emotionally, or verbally, while neglect is ignoring a child's needs: failing to provide for basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter or—as in Effie's case—communication. Is Miss Kathy justified in making a report to Child Protective Services? How would you have handled this difficult situation?
8. We are born into one biological family but often make such strong bonds with special people that they become a second family, one that we have found or chosen. Discuss how Effie's relationships with her friend Cait and her interpreter, Miss Kathy, deepen over the course of the story and sustain her during the difficult climax of the novel.

Discussion Questions (Continued)

9. Effie has been so disappointed by the adults in her life that it is hard for her to trust people, especially well-meaning strangers in the justice system. Fortunately, she has a relationship with a caring adult, Miss Kathy, who is able to successfully advocate on her behalf. Why is it important to have trusted adults in our lives and how can we ensure that all children have at least one?
10. On page 26, Effie says, “I’m repeating a grade because of my reading scores, but libraries don’t judge. They reflect the quietness inside me.” How does the Media Center become a haven for both Effie and Cait? What is the value of having a quiet space for reflection, comfort, and safety, and what spaces fill that role for you?

Extension Activities

1. On page 115, Effie introduces the idea of sign rhymes in her poetry, that is, signs that look the same, but differ in meaning depending on their context. A similar concept in English would be homophones, words that sound the same but have different spellings, such as pear and pair. Generate as many homophone pairs or sign rhymes as you can think of and then use some of them in a poem.
2. Fingerspelling allows Deaf people to spell out English words when there isn’t a commonly understood sign for them. There are numerous fingerspelling tutorials online that will allow you to practice both your receptive and expressive skills. One place to start could be the alphabet, but it’s also useful to learn a few basic conversational words and phrases. Try to think of phrases you use often, like “hello,” “thank you,” “you’re welcome,” or “excuse me” so you begin to gain confidence in your ability to communicate! Advanced readers can look up and memorize a short poem!
3. Read *Deer Run Home* and listen to the audiobook, then compare and contrast the different ways of experiencing the same story, that is, seeing the printed words versus hearing them read aloud. How is it the same? How is it different? Why do you think the author, who is Deaf, and the publisher chose to publish a deaf story in a format that is inaccessible to a deaf audience?
4. Effie speaks two very different languages: English and American Sign Language. One is verbal, the other visual—and they don’t share the same vocabulary or grammar! Find somebody who is bilingual in any two languages and interview them. How are their languages similar? How are they different? What are the strengths of each language? What are the benefits of being bilingual?
5. Effie is alarmed by how the housing development in her rural community is encroaching on the deer habitat with dire consequences for the deer population. How does your community impact the wildlife in your area? What can be done to mitigate the negative consequences? What can you do personally to change things for the better?



Resources and Further Reading

Articles & Websites

ASL University (Lifeprint) | "ASL 101"
lifeprint.com/asl101

Gallaudet University | ASL Connect Online Program
gallaudet.edu/asl-connect

HandSpeak | "Deaf-gain: A Hearing Person's Loss"
handspeak.com/learn/index.php?id=340

The Humane Society | "Deer eat my garden—and it flourishes" by Nancy Lawson (2021) humane.society.org/news/deer-eat-my-garden-and-it-flourishes

Marlee Signs App marleematlin.net/app

National Association of the Deaf nad.org

National Association for the Deaf | "Implications of Language Deprivation for Young Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, and Hard of Hearing Children" nad.org/implications-of-language-deprivation-for-young-deaf-deafblind-deafdisabled-and-hard-of-hearing-children

Parents.com | "An Age-by-Age Guide to Explaining Privilege to Kids" by Juno DeMelo parents.com/kids/development/social/an-age-by-age-guide-to-explaining-privilege-to-kids

ScotusBlog | "Court rules for deaf student in education-law case" by Amy Howe scotusblog.com/2023/03/court-rules-for-deaf-student-in-education-law-case

The Spokesman-Review | "Father Loses Custody of Deaf Girl" by Martha Waggoner (1995) spokesman.com/stories/1995/jun/02/father-loses-custody-of-deaf-girl-judge-cites

Stories By Hand | American Sign Language (ASL) Manual Alphabet Printable storiesbyhand.files.wordpress.com/2020/10/american-manual-alphabet.pdf

Stories By Hand | British Sign Language (BSL) Manual Alphabet Printable storiesbyhand.files.wordpress.com/2021/06/british-sign-language-manual-alphabet-handout.pdf

Time | "She Coined the Term 'Intersectionality' Over 30 Years Ago. Here's What It Means to Her Today" by Katy Steinmetz time.com/5786710/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality

Voice Magazine | "I'm Not Inspirational for Being Deaf, So Please Don't Treat Me Differently" by Lucy Evans voicemag.uk/blog/11100/im-not-inspirational-for-being-deaf-so-please-dont-treat-me-differently

Yale University Library | "Deaf: Cultures and Communication, 1600 to the Present" Online Exhibition onlineexhibits.library.yale.edu/s/deaf-culture/page/home

Videos

AI-Media | 5 Signs of Audism
youtube.com/watch?v=FOnFFvb7ojs

AJ+ | What It's Like To Be Deaf
youtube.com/watch?v=0YcGev7B5AA

ASL That! | The ASL Alphabet - American Sign Language ABCs youtube.com/watch?v=tkMg8g8vUo

The Deaf Academy | British Sign Language (BSL) Fingerspelling Alphabet youtube.com/watch?v=DglvXXdwjvw

National Deaf Center | What Does Deaf Mean?
youtube.com/watch?v=eBoIOr0HZUY

Books

***A Place of Their Own: Creating the Deaf Community in America* by John Vickrey Van Cleve and Barry A. Crouch** (Gallaudet University Press; adult)


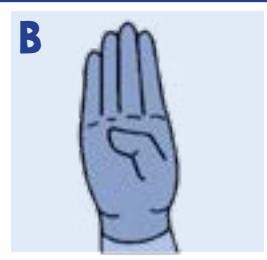
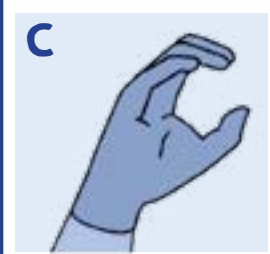





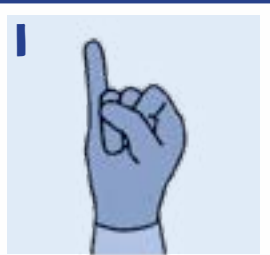

















***The Iphigenia Plays: New Verse Translations* by Euripides; translated by Rachel Hadas** (Northwestern University Press; adult)

***My Heart Glow: Alice Cogswell, Thomas Gallaudet, and the Birth of American Sign Language* by Emily Arnold McCully** (Hyperion Books for Young Readers; ages 6–9)

To learn more about ASL and Deaf culture, look for classes in your community. Universities, community colleges, libraries, places of worship, and organizations/clubs of the deaf can bring you in touch with Deaf community members who share their language and unique experiences with their students.

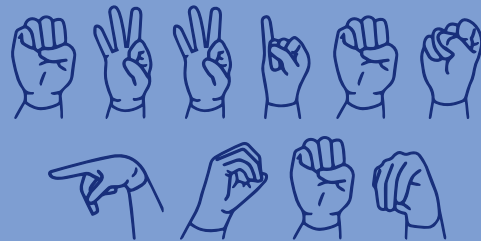
You can also seek out well-vetted, Deaf-created online resources like ASL Connect from Gallaudet University, ASL University (Lifeprint), and Marlee Matlin's app, Marlee Signs.

American Natural Alphabet Right-Handed Version

		A 	B 
C 	D 	E 	F 
G 	H 	I 	J 
K 	L 	M 	N 
O 	P 	Q 	R 
S 	T 	U 	V 
W 	X 	Y 	Z 

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EFFIE'S POEM



I
Deaf
flower
tall
proud.



—From *Deer Run Home* by Ann Clare LeZotte



Watch a video of the author
hand-signing this poem at
bit.ly/EffiesPoemVideo.



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Praise for Ann Clare LeZotte



Deer Run Home

HC: 9781339021904 • \$18.99
Ages 10–14 • Grades 5–9
On Sale 10/1/2024
Also available as an ebook and audiobook

★ “A Deaf girl in an abusive situation has a chance at a new home . . . While the issues Effie faces are huge, the story avoids didacticism; this poignant and compelling book is meant for anyone, yet it is accessible to kids who, like Effie, struggle with reading. Quietly extraordinary.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “This novel in verse blends ASL grammar with English, infuses appalling circumstances with poetry, and elegantly weaves a heartbreaking story with hope . . . The themes of found family, abuse, neglect, conservation, friendship, independence, and self-worth are faced head-on, with grace and dignity.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

“LeZotte takes inspiration from a real-life court case and her own experiences as a ‘completely deaf’ member of the Deaf community to sensitively explore language deprivation among deaf children . . . A moving, emotionally affecting novel.”
—*Shelf Awareness*

“Rarely does a work of fiction capture the experience or mindset of a child who is deaf and has experienced abuse. *Deer Run Home* is an important work at a key time in deaf education, when language deprivation is getting more attention. This work could help students, educators, and parents think about the implications of children growing up in homes or schools where language isn’t emphasized.”

—Michelle Niehaus, LCSW, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Provider

“Tween Effie, who is Deaf, commiserates with the deer losing their homes due to redevelopment in her rural neighborhood . . . Using vivid and minimalist verse, LeZotte unflinchingly and sympathetically uncovers Effie’s family history of neglect and abuse, shedding light on an issue that often stays in the dark.”

—*Publishers Weekly*



Show Me a Sign

HC: 9781338255812 • \$18.99
PB: 9781338255829 • \$8.99
Audio CD: 9781338782004 • \$29.99
Ages 8–12 • Grades 3–7
Also available as an ebook and audiobook

Winner of the 2021 Schneider Family Book Award

NPR Best Books of 2020

Kirkus Reviews Best Books of 2020

School Library Journal Best Books of 2020

New York Public Library Best Books of 2020

Chicago Public Library Best Books of 2020

American Indians in Children’s Literature Best Books of 2020

Bank Street Best Children’s Books of 2021

2020 Jane Addams Children’s Book Award Finalist

2020 New England Independent Booksellers Award Finalist

“Well researched and spare . . . a sensitive portrayal of a young girl’s fight for respect and human dignity.”

—*New York Times Book Review*

★ “A vivid depiction of Deaf community along with an exciting plot and beautiful prose make this a must-read.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “Mary’s dramatic adventure will enthrall readers, but her internal journey—from being an uncomfortable witness to prejudice, to experiencing it herself, to determining to oppose it by leading by example—is equally important, and profound.” —*Horn Book*, starred review

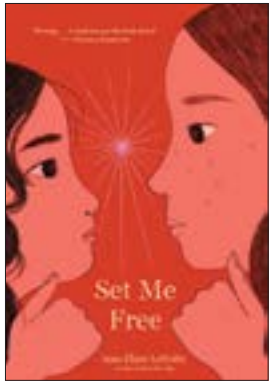
★ “Exceptionally written, faced paced, and full of topics that will inspire deep discussion.”
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “Engrossing . . . LeZotte, who is deaf, deftly connects the islanders’ prejudice against the Wampanoag to the mainlanders’ view of deaf individuals as lesser; Mary’s progressive attitudes feel modern while aligning with her character’s sensibilities.”
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“LeZotte’s writing is fresh, crisp, and exciting.”
—*School Library Connection*, highly recommended

“Precise and thoughtful.” —*Booklist*

Praise for Ann Clare LeZotte (Continued)



Set Me Free

HC: 9781338742497 • \$18.99
PB: 9781339023823 • \$8.99
Ages 8–12 • Grades 3–7
Also available as an ebook and audiobook

★ “Full of unique detail about the experience of interacting with the world as a Deaf person (the author is also Deaf), this historical novel will serve as a helpful window book for non-Deaf readers, but also a much-needed mirror book for those who are Deaf. Historical endnotes make clear how much research went into doing justice to the setting and the characters outside of the author’s lived experience, including those characters who are members of the Wampanoag Nation . . . An excellent addition to any children’s or tween historical fiction collection.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

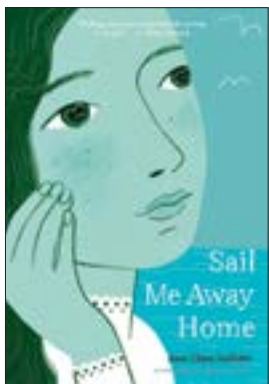
“Mary seems set to become a true hero-adventurer, an almost larger-than-life sleuth, teacher, and woman of action.”

—*Horn Book*

“In addition to the central themes of ableism and language deprivation, LeZotte naturally weaves in social issues of the time that still resonate today, including racism, colorism, feminism, and colonialism . . . A simultaneously touching and gripping adventure.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Many of the book’s themes resonate today, as Mary fights for the rights of all people and offers hope to readers facing challenges.” —*Booklist*



Sail Me Away Home

HC: 9781338742503 • \$18.99
Ages 8–12 • Grades 3–7
Also available as an ebook and audiobook

“LeZotte’s prose is as lovely and descriptive as ever, vividly depicting Mary’s world as well as her inner life . . . Fans will be pleased with this third installment in a delightful series.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Through Mary’s insights and opinions . . . LeZotte shows that the heartfelt need for Deaf culture, solidarity, and belonging is something both historical and contemporary.” —*Horn Book*

“LeZotte deftly weaves Deaf history throughout Mary’s adventures. This book is *kissfist*!!” —Alex Gino, award-winning author of *Melissa and Green*

“Readers will be delighted that Mary’s story continues in this compelling seafaring adventure. A fascinating historical backdrop, timeless social issues, and Mary’s sense of humor add layers of depth to the story.”

—Lynne Kelly, author of the Schneider Family Book Award winner *Song for a Whale*

“Thrilling, important, and profoundly moving evocation of the Deaf experience from a brilliant Deaf writer.”

—Brian Selznick, bestselling creator of *Big Tree* and the Caldecott Medal winner *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

About the Author

Photo © Ann Clare LeZotte



Ann Clare LeZotte is a completely deaf and bilingual-bicultural (ASL/English) member of the Deaf community, and an essential voice for Deaf / HOH, disabled, and marginalized youth. She is the author of the Schneider Family Book Award–winning novel *Show Me a Sign*, which was named a best book of the year by NPR, *Kirkus Reviews*, *School Library Journal*, the New York Public Library, the Chicago Public Library, and *American Indians in Children’s Literature*, as well as its stand-alone companions *Set Me Free* and *Sail Me Away Home*. Ann worked for many years as a youth librarian before becoming a full-time writer. She lives in Gainesville, Florida.

Discussion and activity prompts prepared by Jonathan Hunt, Coordinator of Library Services at the San Diego County Office of Education and Teacher Librarian Program Coordinator at San Jose State University.



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