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Making Character Development Fun



## Adult Guide To the Rescue

### Plot Summary

One day while playing Frisbee in the park, Lauren meets Desta and Salem, a brother and sister who recently moved to Middlebury from Ethiopia. Desta and Salem love their new home, but they may not be able to stay. The food cart their father had used to sell pies has been stolen, and now he cannot earn a living for their family. Moved by their situation, Lauren promises to help raise money to buy Desta and Salem's father a new cart. With some help from the rest of the Spruce Street Six, Lauren sets up a lemonade stand. But it starts to rain—hard—and the kids have to abandon their plan. The next day, Lauren and her friends try again. They decide to set up their stand at the park. The kids load the supplies for the lemonade stand into Jarrett's wagon, and then they head out to the park. This time, however, a dog overturns the wagon, breaking it and shattering the pitchers of lemonade inside. Warm-hearted Mr. Lacey gives Jarrett a better wagon from the general store, but everyone is still tempted to give up the fund-raising effort. Finally, with some encouragement from Mr. Lacey and Zaki, the "character chameleon," Lauren and the gang resolve to try again. The next day, things seem to go much more smoothly. Tiffany, a popular girl from school, helps make the lemonade, and the Spruce Street Six get all their supplies safely to the park. But when they set up the stand and start to sell the lemonade, their first customer tells them that the lemonade tastes terrible! The kids eventually figure out that Tiffany added salt instead of sugar to the lemonade. Now, they have to throw all of it away. After so many disappointments, everyone—even Lauren Never Quits—is ready to give up. Lauren considers the situation over the next several days. She feels terrible that she is going to break her promise to Desta and Salem, even though she knows they won't be angry with her. Zaki talks to Lauren and helps her see that she just needs to be a little more persistent. The next day, Lauren and her friends set up a different kind of stand in the park—one selling Frisbee lessons. The stand is a success, and the Spruce Street Six are finally able to collect enough money to help keep Desta and Salem in Middlebury. Lauren and her friends are proud of themselves for showing such perseverance, and Zaki is proud of them, too!

## Moral Trials

Throughout the story, Lauren and her friends encounter many situations where they are challenged to learn when to keep trying and when to try something else. By showing perseverance at the right times and in the right ways, they are able to accomplish their goals and help their new friends.

The first time the kids try to set up their lemonade stand, it starts to rain. Lauren is so eager to follow through with their plans, though, that she wants to try to sell lemonade in the rain. Of course, there won't be any customers in the downpour, and it might be dangerous if there is lightning. But Lauren still gets frustrated and has trouble seeing that she's not being persistent—she's being stubborn and foolish.

Here is a set of questions you can ask your children about this part of the story:

*Have you, like Lauren, ever really wanted to keep doing something even though it was no longer a good idea? If so, please explain.*

*How did that situation turn out for you? What would you do differently next time?*

*What would you do if a friend, classmate, or sibling was being stubborn and refusing to abandon an effort that was clearly hopeless or even dangerous? How would you try to stop him or her and help that person be more reasonable? (Hint: think about what Zaki would do.)*

*How are the virtues of perseverance and patience related to one another?*

The next time the kids try to sell lemonade, they lose all their supplies when Jarrett's wagon is broken in a collision with Mrs. Compton's dog. The kids are discouraged. They don't think they can fix Jarrett's wagon, and they can't bring themselves to set up the lemonade stand another time. But then Mr. Lacey, the kindly owner of the general store, rewards the kids for trying to do a good deed by replacing Jarrett's wagon. And Zaki reminds Lauren not to give up. Newly resolved, Lauren rallies her friends to try once more.

Here is a set of questions you can ask your children about this part of the story:

*Quitting can be contagious. If all your friends wanted to give up on something that you thought was important, what would you do to convince or inspire them to keep trying?*

*Sometimes the solution to a problem isn't obvious. For instance, Jarrett didn't think anything could be done about his broken wagon, but Mr. Lacey was able to help. Who can you turn to when you can't see your way out of a jam?*

*Why is it a good idea to ask others for help and not to try to do everything yourself?*

*Why did Zaki think it was so important for Lauren to keep trying to help Desta and Salem?*

When the Spruce Street Six try yet again to set up their lemonade stand, their efforts are foiled by the popular—but mean—girl Tiffany, who ruins their lemonade by putting salt in it instead of sugar.

Here is a set of questions you can ask your children about this part of the story:

*Why does Shawnie invite Tiffany to help make the lemonade? Should Shawnie have acted differently? Would it have been better if Lauren (or any of the other Spruce Street Six kids) had refused to let Tiffany help them?*

*How should the Spruce Street Six kids act the next time they see Tiffany?*

*How would you feel if you were in Lauren's shoes? Would you feel like you had tried hard enough to keep your promise to Desta and Salem? Why or why not?*

In the final part of the story, it seems like Lauren is not going to keep her promise to Desta and Salem. Lauren doesn't understand why she feels so badly about this, even though she's sure that Desta and Salem will forgive her. Zaki helps Lauren understand that making a promise matters, even if other people are not going to be mad at you for breaking it. As Zaki explains, when you make a commitment to someone else, you also make a commitment to yourself. He says, "When you decide to do something, it's like making a promise to yourself." Lauren realizes that she won't feel good about herself until she follows through with her commitment.

Here is a set of questions you can ask your children about this part of the story:

*Lauren had tried three times to set up the lemonade stand and raise money for her new friends. Why did she feel so badly when she couldn't follow through?*

*Has anyone ever broken a promise to you? If so, how did that make you feel?*

*Have you ever broken a promise? Did you feel badly about it, even if the other person forgave you? If so, why?*

### **Concluding Reflection**

In the end, Lauren and her friends find another way to raise money for Desta and Salem—by teaching Frisbee. The Spruce Street Six do not quit but instead come up with a clever new solution to the problem. Sometimes it takes imagination to be persistent! When you encounter obstacles, you may have to think hard to find a way to get around them (or over them, or under them) and reach your goals. When you do, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that your own hard work and determination were the keys to your success.

Here are some final questions to consider:

*Would you like to have a friend like Lauren Never Quits? Why?*

*Why do you think some people have a hard time sticking with things?*

*What do people mean when they say, "What doesn't break us only makes us stronger"? What about the saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going"?*