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ABOUT THE BOOK

Rescue thought he'd grow up to be a Seeing Eye dog—it's the family business, after all. When he gets the news that he's better suited to being a Service Dog, he's worried that he's not up to the task. Then he meets Jessica, a girl whose life is turning out differently than the way she'd imagined it, too. Now Jessica needs Rescue by her side to help her accomplish everyday tasks. And it turns out that Rescue can help Jessica see after all: a way forward, together, one step at a time. An endnote from the authors tells more about the training and extraordinary abilities of Service Dogs, particularly their real-life best friend and black Lab, Rescue.

This guide will provide you with discussion prompts about understanding individuals with disabilities, ways to learn more about Service Dogs, and activities to strengthen your classroom's compassion, inclusion, and community.

Discussion Questions

UNDERSTANDING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

1. What does it mean for someone to have a disability? What types of disabilities exist? Why is it important to understand different types of disabling conditions?
2. Everyone has strengths and areas of challenge. What are things you are good at doing? What things do you need to practice or try a new way in order to improve?
3. It is important to respect everyone we meet in order to create an inclusive community. How can you show respect to someone with a disability? How can you acknowledge the types of things people with disabilities are able to do independently?
4. Why is it important to ask someone if they want assistance before providing help? What are other ways that you can respect an individual's independence? How do you know if you are giving too much help to someone? What are the signs?
5. What types of things did Jessica need to learn to do in new ways when she received a prosthetic leg? When she lost her second leg, what did she need to learn again? What might have stayed the same? Is it easy or difficult to learn how to do something in a new way? Share an example of something that was difficult for you to learn.
6. Can you think of another book that you have read about an individual that has a disability? How is the character similar to and/or different from Jessica? What important message or central theme do you learn in both books?

UNDERSTANDING SERVICE DOGS AND THEIR IMPORTANT ROLE

1. How did Rescue's training help prepare him to become a Service Dog? What was his daily life like during training? What was Rescue's daily life like with Jessica?
2. The story says that "Rescue didn't want to let anyone down." Why was it important to Rescue to be an exceptional Service Dog? Support your response with textual evidence. Have you ever tried to avoid letting someone down? What is an example?
3. What were some of the ways that Jessica and Rescue communicated with each other? How did Rescue show Jessica that he understood her physical and emotional needs? How did Jessica show Rescue that she understood him?
4. Look through the illustrations in the text. Which one of Rescue and Jessica is your favorite? Why? What does the picture suggest about the relationship between them? Have you ever traveled to the city of Boston? Do you recognize any of the locations in the illustrations?



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5. In the story we learn that dogs can support individuals with disabilities in many different ways. What is the difference between working beside someone (a Service Dog) and working in front of someone (a Seeing Eye dog)? How does each dog provide support? Have you seen dogs helping people? How did they help?
 6. Rescue was trained to support Jessica during everyday tasks. What other supports or tools do individuals with disabilities use to help them with their daily needs? Are they similar to or different from the tools we learn about in the story?
 7. Have you ever seen a Service Dog or Seeing Eye dog? What should you do if you see a Service Dog? What types of actions might distract or prevent a Service Dog from doing his or her important job?

DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES OF COMPASSION AND INCLUSION

1. Jessica encountered many challenges throughout the story. What were Jessica's visible and invisible struggles? How did she overcome those obstacles as the story progressed? How did Jessica change throughout the story? What caused her to change emotionally and physically?
2. Why is it important to support everyone in a community? How can your community be supportive of someone who is experiencing physical or emotional challenges? Can you think of a time you provided someone in your community with support?
3. Imagine Jessica is a new student in your school. How would you welcome her? How can you build the school community so that it is welcoming to her? How can you make your school more accessible for her?
4. In the Q&A with the authors in [this article about the book](#), Patrick Downes states, "You can achieve almost anything when you are part of a dedicated and loving team." In the story, how did the partnership of Rescue and Jessica represent a dedicated and loving team? Describe a team you have been on that had a shared purpose.
5. What does it mean to be a friend to someone? What actions make a friend special? Do you have an example of a life-changing friendship? Using examples from the text, discuss how the friendship between Rescue and Jessica developed.



Vocabulary Connections

RESCUE

1. In the story we learn that “Rescue wanted to help people.” How did Rescue receive his name? Why was Rescue a fitting name? Based on the events in the story, did Rescue accomplish his goal? Why?
2. The book ends with the line, “But the truth was, they had rescued each other.” How did Rescue rescue Jessica? How did Rescue work with Jessica every day to make life easier? How did Jessica positively impact Rescue’s life?

PROSTHETIC LEG

1. In the book the doctor said, “You’re an amputee now, Jessica. You have to wear a prosthetic leg or use a wheelchair for the rest of your life.” Why did Jessica have to wear a prosthetic leg? How did it help her in her everyday life? Why might it be challenging to adjust to wearing a prosthetic leg?
2. What types of questions did Jessica wonder about wearing a prosthetic leg at the beginning of the story? How did her life with a prosthetic leg and Rescue change from the beginning to the end of the story? Support your response with textual evidence.
3. In the Q&A with the authors in [this article about the book](#), Patrick Downes states, “What has been created is a mutual appreciation for the humanity of the other, so the next time they see someone with a prosthetic or a wheelchair, they are going to have a deeper appreciation for that person as a fellow human being rather than thinking them something to fear or avoid. So right there we have the power to humanize even the strangest of situations and instill compassion and understanding.” What misconceptions might cause people to fear or avoid someone with a prosthetic leg? How should we treat individuals with disabilities when interact with them?



BRAVE

1. Rescue was “named in honor of a brave firefighter.” How are both Jessica and Rescue brave throughout the story?
2. Can you think of a time you did something brave? How did you feel? Why is it important to be brave when things are difficult? Why can it feel scary to do brave things? Think about the story. Is it possible to be nervous and brave at the same time? Provide a text example.

Classroom Activities

WRITING PROMPTS

1. Read the last two sections in [this article about the book](#): “About NEADS” and “Meet the Real-Life RESCUE.” In a short essay, answer these questions: What new details does the reader learn about Rescue and Service Dogs? What is aligned or similar to the information presented in the story? Use evidence from both texts to support your response.
2. In a short essay, answer these questions: What life-altering change did Jessica experience in the story? How did the shift impact her everyday life? Have you ever experienced a change so significant that you wondered what your new life might be like, such as switching schools, moving towns, or changes in your family? How did you respond? Provide details to support your response.

Community Engagement

BUDDY READING

In a community, it is important to support one another and engage in positive discussion. Have students visit another classroom and buddy (partner) read *Rescue and Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship*. Students can take turns reading every other page aloud. If your student is reading to a student who cannot read yet, remind them to read slowly with a clear voice and expression to make the story interesting. After they read the text, have them discuss what they learned about Jessica, Rescue, and respecting individuals with disabilities.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

In the story we learn that Rescue had an important role in Jessica's life. Ask students to research the purpose of Service Dogs, the required training, and the ways that people in the community should interact with Service Dogs. Have them create brochures in small groups that highlight the dos and don'ts of interacting with Service Dogs. Distribute the brochures (electronically or on paper) to other students in the school, family members, and neighbors in order to enhance understanding about Service Dogs. Lastly, provide time for a five- to ten-minute discussion where they can talk about the key points in the brochures.

THE MANY ROLES OF SERVICE DOGS

Assign a short illustrated essay about the many roles that Service Dogs have in our society to help people. Research ideas could include mobility assistance dogs, guide dogs, seizure response dogs, social dogs, hearing dogs, etc. The essays should provide information about a dog's daily life, responsibilities, and the importance of the varying jobs. Once the research is complete, create a Service Dog bulletin board that displays the essays and illustrations about the many types of Service Dogs and their important roles.

SERVICE DOG OR POLICE DOG (K-9) VISIT

Invite a local assistance dog trainer or K-9 police officer to visit the school in order to demonstrate a dog's special abilities and build student awareness.

Before the visit: Contact the trainer or local police department and inquire about planning a school visit. Depending on the trainer or department policies, students may have the opportunity to learn about the dog's special job requirements, ongoing training, skills, equipment, and appropriate interaction. In preparation for the visit, incorporate books about Service Dogs and/or rescue dogs into instruction. Then students should generate a list of questions for the special visitor. Finally, discuss dog safety with students and assign appropriate locations for students to view the dog. *Note: Be sure to identify any student allergies or fears of dogs prior to the visit.*

During the visit: Remind students about the participation expectations regarding dog safety. Depending on the class size, consider arranging small group visits to allow students more time to pose their questions.

After the visit: Have students write thank-you letters to the visitors for their time and information provided. They should be sure to include things they learned from the guest. Encourage students to explain how things they learned during the visit relate to what they previously read in class.



Service Learning

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As a class, plan a charity walk to collect donations for an organization. To select an appropriate organization, conduct research on different charities and nonprofit groups that help individuals with disabilities. Engage in a discussion about the mission of each organization and decide upon which to support. Then organize a walk around the community and/or school that includes a donation goal, a donation letter explaining the purpose of the walk and the organization you are supporting, advertisement posters, and banners to carry while walking. On the day of the walk, celebrate the ways the donation will make a difference in the lives of others.

Creating a Positive School Culture

POSITIVES POSTERS

Have students each complete one of these phrases:

“Our school is welcoming because . . .”

“I show community/inclusion by . . .”

“Inclusion is important because . . .”

Then have them create posters with their completed sentences. Their posters should include illustrations and meaningful words aligned to inclusion. Illustrations may come from online searches, pictures taken in class, magazines, or original artwork. Once the posters are completed, hang them around the school to highlight that the community is a safe and accepting place for everyone. Take time as a class to look at the posters. Then conduct a discussion on what everyone learned from the representations of inclusion.

SCHOOL WALK

In collaborative teams (partners or triads), look at the structures and tools around the school building that provide access for an individual with a physical disability like Jessica. Teams should also find things that might be challenging for someone with a physical disability. Have each team write a letter to the principal about one change to make the building or community more accessible. The letters should include the students' point of view and justification for the change.

BE KIND

As a class, generate a kindness list of things that you can do to be helpful to someone in the classroom or building. Think about why the actions are helpful and whether they would be well received. Select a week to try to check everything off of the kindness list. When you've done it, reflect on how it felt to be helpful to someone else and add new ideas to the list.



Further Research

In addition to writing the book *Rescue and Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship*, authors Jessica Kensky and Patrick Downes are doing many exciting things in their community. Read the Q&A with the authors in [this article about the book](#) to learn more about their story. You can also explore the following links:

A: [Elizabeth Warren legislation](#) **B:** [BC Strong scholarship](#) **C:** [Boston Marathon handcycle inclusion](#)



PHOTO BY KYLA DUNLAVEY

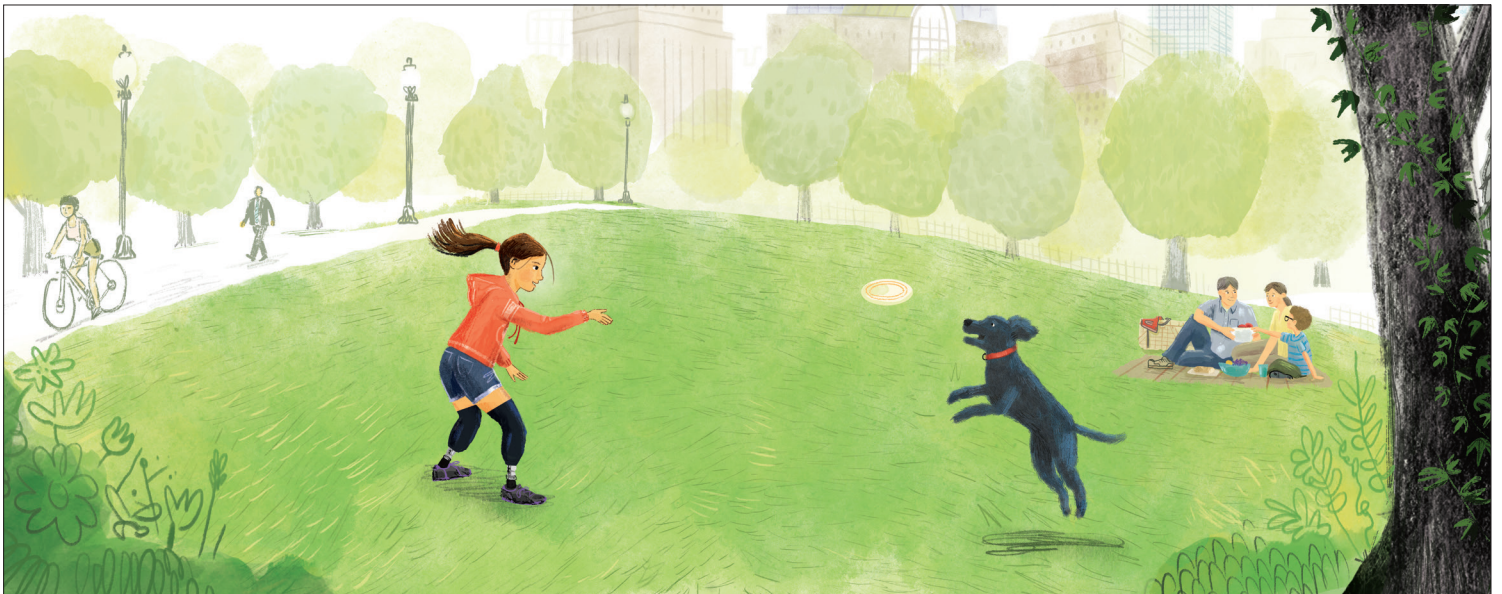
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jessica Kensky and Patrick Downes are a married couple who were both injured during the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013. Jessica's Service Dog, Rescue, joined their family in 2014. They live in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Scott Magoon has been designing, writing, and illustrating books for young readers since 2003. He is the illustrator of the Irma S. and James H. Black Award winner *Big Mean Mike* by Michelle Knudsen. Scott Magoon lives with his family near Boston, Massachusetts.



This guide was written by Dawn Jacobs Martin, an assistant professor of special education who works to improve student academic outcomes through teacher development, instructional design, and research in the areas of response to intervention, social support, and Common Core Connections.

Name _____

Think about the story using the chart below. In the first column, write things that Jessica found challenging at the beginning of the story. In the second column, write things that she could do by the end of the story after practicing a new way.

Things that were challenging for Jessica at the beginning of the story:	Things she could do after practicing a new way:

