

A Crooked Kind of Perfect by Linda Urban

Discussion Questions:

1. "Take it up with Domestic Affairs" means talk to your father. Have you ever heard a parent use a phrase that means stop asking, we will talk about it later, or we'll talk to your father (or mother) later?
2. What parts of the story made you laugh?
3. What did you like or dislike about Zoe? If you met her in your school, could you become friends?
4. Librarians call this book "realistic fiction." Did anything in the story seem real or believable for a 10 year old girl's life? Did anything seem too strange or unbelievable?
5. What did you think about Zoe's descriptions of Living Room University?
6. Please read Zoe's description of a school lunchroom on p. 12. How is her lunchroom like or different from yours?
7. What did you think of Zoe's organ teacher when you read the first description of her on page 21? Did your opinion of her change? If so, how and why?
8. On page 23 Zoe is sure she has a talent for the piano. Have you ever known someone who was sure, as a child, that they had a special talent for something like singing, dancing, sports, or writing? How is that person like or different from Zoe?
9. What did you think when you read on page 29 that Emma has a new best friend, but Zoe can sit with them until *she* finds a new best friend?
10. Emma chose Zoe to be her best friend in third grade because Zoe was wearing toe socks. What did you think of this reason? What other reasons might someone chose a friend?
11. Was there a part of the story where you felt really proud of a character or where you thought someone made a good choice?
12. On page 107 Wheeler walks home from Zoe's house. Along the way he punches a neighbor's plastic stork. Why did he do this?
13. Why did the author choose this title?
14. Did you feel sorry for anyone at some point in the story?
15. On page 137 Zoe's mom said that joy, art, music, and life have mistakes in them. Do you agree? Why or why not?
16. The author tells the story in the present tense. Zoe tells us: I do this and he does that, I ask..., Dad says.... How does this way of writing help or hurt your enjoyment of the story?
17. On page 144 we read that Mona is pretty and blond which is not like Zoe. Did Zoe ever tell us what she looks like? If not, why not? How do you picture her in your mind?
18. The author thanks her kids for inspiring her to make up words when regular ones don't fit. I only noticed one: scraggedy on page 99. What does it mean? What other made up words did you see? What words have you and friends or family made up?
19. Zoe describes her mom's system for predicting who will win the trophies. She says on page 180 that this is how her mom has fun. Does it seem strange to you that creating and using a calculation system is fun? Would you like to tell us about someone who has fun doing something that doesn't seem fun to you?

20. On page 184 Mona asks, "Wouldn't it be funny if everyone wore shirts with true stuff on them?"
If you wore a shirt about you, what would it say?
21. Zoe's mom and Judy remember a brand of jeans that you had to wear to be cool when they were young. What is cool now? What was cool when the moms were in middle school?
22. Zoe admires a pianist named Vladimir Horowitz. She wants to play as well as he did. Is there someone who inspires you? Someone you would like to be like (in any way, not just a musical talent)?
23. Were you surprised to read that Zoe has 432 rolls of toilet paper in her house? Why do they have so many?
24. Zoe does not have a good time at Emma's party. Is there anything Zoe could do to have a better time? What if you had been one of the guests and saw how Zoe acted and guessed how she was feeling, what would you have done?
25. Before you read this book, how would you describe what is needed to be a complete chapter?
After you read A Crooked Kind of Perfect, did your idea of a complete chapter change?
26. What did you think when Zoe decided to quit playing the organ? Does your family have any general rule about how long someone should try something new before he/she quits?