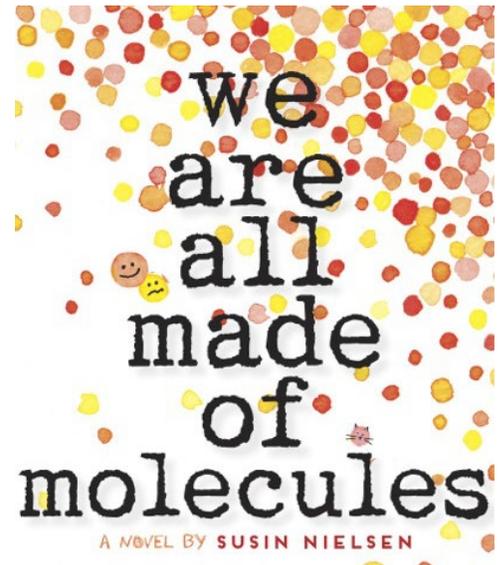


We are all Made of Molecules

SUSIN NIELSEN



THE STORY

13-year-old Stewart Inkster is academically brilliant but “ungifted” socially. 14-year-old Ashley Anderson is the undisputed “It” girl of grade nine, but her marks stink. Their worlds are about to collide when Stewart and his dad move in with Ashley and her mom. Written in alternating voices, Susin Nielsen deftly explores family tragedy and family ties; sibling rivalry and union; and adolescent confusion and revelation.

THEMES

Change • Transitions
• Adolescence • Peer Pressure • Family • Grief • Sibling Rivalry • Acceptance



AUTHOR PROFILE

Gemini Award-winner **Susin Nielsen** began her career as a script writer for the popular television series *Degrassi Junior High*. She went on to pen sixteen episodes of the hit show and four of the Degrassi books. Since then, Nielsen has written and story-edited many TV series, including Heartland, Arctic Air and Robson Arms, which she cocreated. She is the author behind *Dear George Clooney*, *Please Marry My Mom*, *The Reluctant Journal of Henry K. Larsen* (Governor General’s Award for English-language children’s literature).

WEB RESOURCES

EXTENSION

- Author website: <http://susinnielsen.com/>
- Publisher website: <http://www.randomhousekids.com>
- Book trailer website: <http://www.randomhousekids.com/books/detail/240465-we-are-all-made-of-molecules#.VW4FV89VjWE>
- Review site: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/susin-nielsen/we-are-all-made-of-molecules/>
- Review site: <http://www.quillandquire.com/authors/susin-nielsen-the-queen-of-tragicomedy/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- The Scoop on Blended Families + LZX Press + <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LD1MWRUaQU>
- Blended Families Worksheet + LZX Press + https://www.learningzonexpress.com/Documents/Worksheets/3404_Scoop_Worksheet.pdf
- Family Life Unit + Newfoundland Grade 8 Curriculum + http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/K-12/Curriculum/health/health-K-9-single-files/G8/06Gr8_FL.pdf

DISCUSS

- Compare and contrast the personalities of the two main characters, Stewart and Ashley. How are they different? How are they similar? Can you relate to either of them? Were they able to overcome their differences to get along with each other? How do you overcome differences with your classmates?
- Both Ashley and Stewart had to cope with major changes in their lives. Describe these changes. How are they similar? Which one do you think was harder to deal with? Is that a fair judgement to make?
- What strategies do Ashley and Stewart use to cope with change? What do you like about big changes? What do you dislike about them? What strategies do you find most effective to handle big changes in your life?
- How did Ashley's friends react when she told them about the change? Do you think this was an appropriate way to react? What is the best way to be supportive when your friends are going through a rough patch?

ACTIVITY SHEETS

A writing activity

Pretend that you are either Ashley or Stewart. Write four one-page journal entries describing the transitions that you are about to face. **(View this activity sheet)**

A research activity sheet

Everyone faces different challenges in their lives, even though these challenges may not be apparent at first glance. In this activity, students will research different kinds of family situations, and present their research to the class. **(View this activity sheet)**

A drawing activity sheet

Create a Venn diagram to see the differences and similarities between Ashley and Stewart's family situations. **(View this activity sheet)**

A writing activity

In groups, brainstorm at least five ways for you to help a friend going through a major transition. **(View this activity sheet)**

Optional extension: Write two skits using the results of your brainstorming. In the first scenario, friends should be supportive of the transition. In the second, friends should be unsupportive. **(View this activity sheet)**

SUGGESTED READINGS

FROM THE SAME AUTHOR

- The Reluctant Journal of Henry K. Larsen + Tundra Books + 2010.
- Dear George Clooney, Please Marry My Mom + Tundra Books + 2010.
- Word Nerd+ Tundra Books + 2008.

BY OTHER ARTISTS FROM WORDFEST 2015

- Blank + Trina St. Jean + Orca Book Publishers + 2015.
- Light Finder + Aaron Paquette + Kegedonce Press + 2014.
- Child Soldier +Michel Chikwanine + Kids Can Press + 2015.
- The Nest + Kenneth Oppel and Jon Klassen + HarperCollins + 2015.

OTHER BOOKS AND MOVIES ON RELATED SUBJECT

- For Now + Gayle Friesen + Kids Can Press + 2007.
- The Unlikely Hero of Room 13b + Teresa Toten +Doubleday Canada + 2013
- The Truth Commission + Susan Juby + Razorbill + 2015.
- Do You Think This is Strange? + Aaron Cully Drake + Brindle & Glass + 2015.
- All the Bright Places + Jennifer Niven + Knopf Books for Young Readers + 2015.
- Made You Up + Francesca Zappia + Greenwillow + 2015.

READING COMPREHENSION

- What strategies did Stewart and his father use to help them overcome their grief after Stewart's mother passed away? Why were these strategies effective?
- "Claudia has been in a so-called blended family for a few years now" (7). What is a blended family? Do you think this is a new term, or an outdated one?
- Why does Ashley think that her family was "perfect" for twelve years? What changed?
- How did Ashley feel when she found out that Stewart was in her new class?
- How did Stewart feel about starting over at a new school? How did his feelings change throughout the course of his first week?
- How is the novel resolved? Did you anticipate this ending? Can you think of an alternative one?

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

Social studies:

- value the diversity, respect the dignity and support the equality of all human beings
- demonstrate social compassion, fairness and justice
- engage in problem solving and conflict resolution with an awareness of the ethical consequences of decision making

English Language arts:

- Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to comprehend literature and other texts in oral, print, visual and multimedia forms and respond personally, critically and creatively.

4.2.1 Enhance thought, understanding, support and detail

- a. confirm the controlling idea or desired unifying effect of a text
- b. review the accuracy and specificity of details, events, images, facts and other data intended to support a focus, controlling idea or issue and add information to support/develop as needed

Dimension of thinking:

- value the diversity, respect the dignity and support the equality of all human beings
- demonstrate social compassion, fairness and justice
- understand their rights and responsibilities in order to make informed decisions and participate fully in society

