

***The Sky Is the Limit* Conversation Starters**

Use these suggested Conversation Starters to initiate discussions with your child. Let the child's developmental age and level of interest guide your conversations.

- Ask: What would you like to be when you grow up?
- Explain: A pledge is a serious formal promise or an agreement. Synonyms of a pledge would be an oath, a vow and a commitment.
- Ask: Why might the author have included a personal pledge in the book?
- Discuss: Sometimes promises are more difficult to keep when they are made to ourselves rather than when they are made to others. Why might this be true? The book *The Sky Is the Limit* starts with some very serious promises in the form of a pledge. The person signing the pledge should put great thought into these important promises and revisit them often. The author believes expectations influence accomplishments, so life often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; these concepts should be discussed with children often.
- Read: Before starting the book, read the dedication page aloud.
- Discuss: When you complete the book, talk about why the author may have chosen to dedicate *The Sky Is the Limit* to her father.
- Explain: A motto is a statement that many believe can have psychological or spiritual powers when repeated often.
- Discuss: Many stories have characters that use mottos to help them succeed in life. Explore stories such as “The Little Engine That Could” or *Finding Dory*. What did the Little Engine repeat when faced with the challenge of a steep hill to climb? What did Dory repeat when she was trying to find her parents?
- Challenge: Help your child(ren) develop a personal, family and/or class motto.
- Discuss: The author and illustrator purposely depicted the interpreter in the book in a wheelchair in order to make it easy to open a conversation about those who wear their challenges on the outside. We humans sometimes avoid interacting with people who we perceive to be different, often because we are afraid we may say the wrong thing and because of this we choose to say nothing at all. What are the consequences of avoiding people with visible challenges? Talk about how this not only isolates those with challenges, but may also create missed opportunities for great friendships.
- Discuss: The author and illustrator made the decision to depict the judge in the book as physically blind with the idea of starting conversations about how justice is expected to be figuratively blind. What does *blind justice* mean and what are its benefits or limitations?
- Challenge: Help your child(ren) avoid discrimination based on trivial reasons such as gender, socioeconomic background, race, etc. Discuss what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. meant when he stated, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” As a family, explore films such as *Hidden Figures* to highlight how teamwork without prejudice is necessary in any worthwhile venture.

- Explain: A mentor can be a friend, coach, teacher or professional in an area of interest for the subject.
- Discuss: The author believes that behind every story of success, there is a mentor. Young people should be encouraged to reach out to appropriate possible mentors. Many professionals receive great satisfaction from helping young people learn, grow, and achieve their dreams. Who are some possible mentors in your child's life?
- Ask: Is it okay to change your dreams?
- Discuss: There are many good reasons to update your dreams as you grow and change with time. Sometimes, though, we want to change our dreams because something is too difficult or takes too long, and those types of reasons are not so good. We must watch out for the pitfalls of discouragement! Anything worth having requires hard work, and time will pass anyway, so follow your dreams!
- Discuss: It can be scary to "put yourself out there" and display your talents for others. Talk about the fact that there are many talented people, but those who are very successful must put themselves out there over and over, even following rejection.
- Explain: Teach about the concepts of fair-weather fans and fair-weather friends. Most adults can easily give examples of both of those types of people and give examples of really true friends and what character traits they tend to have in common.
- Discuss: Sometimes in life we are met with *naysayers*, those who try to discourage us from achieving our dreams. The author has some favorite naysayer stories, and she shares those during her school visits. Her personal favorite is about Doug Flutie who was told he was too small to play the quarterback position in college football. Doug ended up winning the college Heisman Trophy for the most outstanding player in college football. He was then, of course, told he was too small for the pros. Well, Doug is now in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Share with your child or class your favorite stories of those who overcame naysayers.
- Discuss: The author uses *personification* (giving human attributes to something nonhuman) in the line, "Choose a path which will make your heart dance." What does the author communicate with the use of this figure of speech? Talk about other examples of personification such as: *Lightning raced across the sky*, and *The wind howled in the night*, or *Kim heard the last piece of pie calling her name*.
- Explain: A typewriter is a machine with keys for making letters, numbers, and symbols one at a time on paper.
- Discuss: Technology grows and changes as human beings progress. Talk about how a typewriter was used in the past. What other forms of communication have changed over time? This could also be a great opportunity to consider what a feat it was to reach the moon before the modern-day computer /information age took off.
- Discuss: The author dedicated *The Sky Is the Limit* to her dad who helped build the lunar module in the U.S. Space Program. Talk about how many teams of people had to work flawlessly together to make this a reality.

Vocabulary

- 💡 Achieve: To obtain through effort; to accomplish
- 💡 Architect: One who designs and supervises buildings and their construction
- 💡 Baker: One whose work is baking bread and pastries
- 💡 Challenges: Something that requires special effort
- 💡 Choreographer: One who designs movements or plans of a dance
- 💡 Conveying: To take from one place to another or to transmit
- 💡 Cool: Slang for very good
- 💡 Craze: A fad that becomes insanely popular
- 💡 Cruise: To sail about from place to place for pleasure or in search of something
- 💡 Depict: To represent or include, usually by drawing or painting
- 💡 Dream: A fond hope
- 💡 Educator: Someone who gives lessons in a subject or teaches someone to do something
- 💡 Engineer: A person who uses science, math and creativity to solve technical problems; there are many types of engineers
- 💡 Galore: A lot in abundance
- 💡 Goal: An end that one strives to attain
- 💡 Graphic Designer: A person who make visual representations
- 💡 Historian: A writer of or authority on history
- 💡 Ice Sculptor: A person who uses the art of shaping ice into figures
- 💡 Interpreter: A person who works to explain or translate
- 💡 Judge: A public official with the authority to hear and decide cases in a court of law
- 💡 Jury: A group of people sworn to hear evidence in a law case and give a decision
- 💡 Lunar Landing Module: Lunar means moon and module means a detachable unit with a specific function.
- 💡 Mentor: An experienced and trusted advisor
- 💡 Meteorologist: A person who studies weather and climate
- 💡 Motto: Is a short phrase you can repeat over and over again as an individual, family, class or club or to motivate the individual or the group.
- 💡 Mountain Guide: A person who leads the way along mountain paths
- 💡 Naysayer: One who opposes, refuses or denies over and over or habitually
- 💡 Passion: Showing strong feelings for something
- 💡 Perceived: Mental grasp; becoming aware of something
- 💡 Photographer: An artist who produces picture images
- 💡 Predicting: To say in advance what one thinks will happen
- 💡 Pride: Satisfaction in something done; dignity and self-respect
- 💡 "Shoot for a star": A figure of speech that translates to aim high and give your all to your goals.
- 💡 Strive: To make great effort or to try very hard
- 💡 Typewriter: A machine with a keyboard for reproducing letters resembling printed ones
- 💡 Veterinarian: Branch of medicine dealing with animals
- 💡 Woodcarver: A person who uses the art of shaping wood into figures