Sara Talbot

Book Talk

October 1, 2022

*The Mediator*

A cover of a book

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**About the Author**

<https://www.megcabot.com/>A person wearing glasses

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Meg Cabot is a very widely known author for not only young adult fiction, like *The Mediator* series or *The Princess Diaries* series, but also popular contemporary fiction and mysteries like *Where Roses Grow Wild* and *Size 12 is Not Fat.* Cabot is a notorious insomniac and often credits her inability to sleep with how she can write so many books. Cabot is a multi-award-winning author who loves her cats and her husband of over twenty years. Cabot has had many of her stories turned into movies and is currently in talks with Netflix for a television show based on *The Mediator* series.

Photo from author’s website

**Book Summary**

Suze Simon has just moved across the country from her busy life in New York City to the sleepy coastal town of Carmel in California. Not only did she gain a new stepfather, three new stepbrothers, and a new school, but she also got an uninvited male roommate. A dead boy that no one else can see is making her life a bit more complicated than she originally hoped. Unfortunately for Suze, she is a mediator who can communicate with ghosts, and because of this “gift,” trouble and ghosts seem to find her wherever she goes.

**Quotes**

“My room was upstairs just above the roof of the front porch…Never” (23-27).

In this quote, Suze tells the reader that she can see ghosts. She has been different all her life, and with this new start in Carmel, she was hoping for a more normal life. One where she wouldn’t have to spend all of it in graveyards fighting ghosts; instead, she could go to the beach and make friends. This quote is significant to the story because it shows just how much Suze wishes she was normal, how she has had to hide everything about herself to make others around her comfortable. This quote also showcases Suze’s origin story and how alone she feels with this gift.

“271 272. I stumbled to a halt… ‘Interesting mediation techniques they are teaching out east these days” (74-78).

This quote is important because it is the first time Suze found another person who can see ghosts. She knew that there were other people, but she had never met anyone like her, and this is when she realizes that she isn’t entirely alone. This remarkable passage shows the snark that Suze uses to protect herself from the world. In the exchange between Father Dom, Heather, and Suze, the reader can see the difference in how she carries herself from the beginning of the exchange until the end. It also gives Suze a support system in Father Dom, something she didn’t have in New York, who wants to help her with her powers and teach her to use them in a way that she hadn’t thought about previously. Suze, she deals with ghosts using her fists, and Father Dom shows her that she can do something else with her gifts. She doesn’t have to use brute force like she initially thought; she can use her words. Through this passage, you can almost feel the hope that Suze has for her future.

“Jesse, I noticed, was smiling…The word *querida* was definitely not mentioned” (234-238).

This quote shows just how headstrong Suze is and how she doesn’t care what happens to her as long as she can keep everyone else safe. Suze has no sense of self-preservation, especially when those being threatened are her family. In this exchange between Suze and Jesse, you can see just how much Jesse cares for Suze in his way and how much Suze has come to enjoy being around him. This is one of the only times in the entire book that Suze acknowledges that she is scared but continues to do what she has to do to protect innocent people. It also shows her growth from not wanting anything to do with Jesse and his past to telling him to stay behind so he isn’t caught in the crossfire and sent away because of it. This passage shows that Suze is capable of growth and that she does care about people, even if her attitude makes those around her believe the opposite. In this passage, Suze almost seems to realize that these gifts are a part of who she is, and she isn’t going to fight it any longer.

**Teaching**

**Why Students Should Read It**

*The Mediator* is a great story filled with twists and turns and many things the reader wouldn’t initially expect. Suze is a great narrator and creates a great connection with her audience. Suze is a very headstrong and vibrant young woman who can not only hold her own in a battle of wills, but also in a physical battle. Suze will resonate with the audience because they will love her quick wit and funny way of telling stories. Suze is also a great friend who doesn’t “ditch” the friends she makes when she gains popularity; instead, she chooses to remain with the people who liked her when she wasn’t popular. The book helps with the idea of loss and how Suze copes with her dad’s death and comes to terms with her own identity. For boys who may not want to read about a girl, there is a pretty fantastic fight scene and a murder plot.

**How to Teach It in the Classroom**

This book would be good to teach around Halloween, maybe in conjunction with Edgar Allan Poe’s short stories. Or even in conjunction with eerie Victorian literature like *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, or *The Turn of the Screw*. You could introduce the book by having the class do a free write around any experiences they have with ghosts or the paranormal and then ask for a peer share. Another idea would be to ask the class to come up and write on the whiteboard all the “rules” they know about ghosts from any form of media. After reading, you could compare the way that ghosts are presented in *The Mediator* to other stories with ghosts.

**How it applies to Chapters 4-8 in *Adolescents and the Search for Meaning***

Chapter 5: Books about Facing Death and Loss

*The Mediator* could fit into chapter five because, throughout the book, Suze is dealing with her father’s death and how she hasn’t seen him since she moved to California. She is finally coming to terms with his death like ordinary people because she can’t speak with him like she used to. Also, Suze spends most of her time speaking with ghosts and helping them do their unfinished business so they can move on to the afterlife or wherever people go after they die.

Chapter 6: Books about Identity, Discrimination, and Struggles with Decisions

*The Mediator* fits into chapter six because Suze struggles to figure out where she fits in this new place. In New York, she knew where she stood, how to deal with the ghosts around her, and how to fit in at school. In Carmel, her entire life changed, and now she is struggling to find where she fits within the school and in her home life. She now has to deal with three brothers and a stepfather, which are things she never had to deal with in the past.

Chapter 7: Books about Courage and Survival

*The Mediator* fits into chapter seven because Suze is incredibly brave regarding her mediator abilities. Suze stands up for herself in all situations, and when Heather (a vengeful and jealous ghost) is trying to murder her, she doesn’t run away from the danger; she chooses to fight and save her friends and the life of the boy she likes.

Chapter 8: Books on Allegory, Fantasy, Myth, and Parable

*The Mediator* fits into chapter eight because of the book's prevalent nature of ghosts and the afterlife. Suze communicates with ghosts and often spends much of her time trying to help them pass on. The book has many different people who can do magic and others who can also tell the future.

**Age Level**

*The Mediator* is best for students in grades 10-11. (Further discussed in text complexity.)

**Text Complexity**

**Quantitative**

Lexile: 14-17, 760

AR: ATOS book level-4.9; interest level-grades 9-12; AR points-9

Readability: 6th grade, ages 11-12

New Dale-Chall: 7-8th grade

Flesch-Kincaid: 6-7th grade

Coleman-Liau: 7th grade

SMOG: 6th grade

Linsear Write Formula: 6th grade

Flesch Reading Ease: 80.14 (fairly easy to read)

**Qualitative**

1. Structure
   1. First-person POV for the entire book —all from Suze’s POV
   2. Nonlinear Chronology
      1. Utilizes flashbacks sparingly and only when Suze remembers something pertinent to the situation at hand.

I.e., Talking about her dad dying and then going into a flashback of her seeing and talking to him.

1. Language Convention and Clarity
   1. Vocabulary not overly complex
   2. First-person POV has the feeling of being written by an actual teenager
   3. Foreshadowing, descriptive language, hyperbole, and metaphor are the dominant forms of literary techniques used
2. Knowledge Demands
   1. Primarily societal knowledge and pop culture knowledge
      1. Familiarity with the idea of magic
         1. Ghosts, witches, oracles, etc.
   2. Family dynamics
      1. Stepsiblings and stepparents
      2. General understanding of older brother/younger sister dynamics
         1. Older brothers believe they are in charge and are the “boss” of the younger siblings.
      3. Mother-Daughter relationship
   3. Ghosts
      1. Generic “laws” of ghosts and the idea of “unfinished business.”
         1. Ghosts can’t touch people
         2. Ghosts will fade away after they have completed their unfinished business
3. Levels of Meaning
   1. Two levels of meaning
      1. Story and surface-level mystery/ghost story
      2. A girl finding her place in a hard-to-navigate world