

# Discussion Guide for "Zero Grandparents"

Michelle Edwards

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## Zero Grandparents

Michelle Edwards, Author and Illustrator

Teachers, librarians, and parents, feel free to choose from the questions below, all of which prepare the readers for the ideas brought forth in the book.

### Pre-Reading Questions

1. Has someone ever made a present just for you? Do you have a pair of mittens or a hat that someone has knitted for you?
2. What do you imagine a "story cloth" is? Have you ever seen one? Have you ever done any sewing?
3. Have you ever tasted sweet potato pie? Do you think it is sweet? Or does it taste like potatoes? Does your family have a special dish they love to eat?
4. Do you have any grandparents? Or do you know your friends' grandparents?
5. What do you think of when you hear the word "grandparent"? Are grandparents funny, cuddly, athletes, cooks, carpenters, serious, happy?
6. Did you ever feel left out of a big celebration at school? Why?



### While Reading the Book

1. [After page 22] Calliope doesn't have any grandparents who are living. This makes her really sad. What do you think she should do to be a part of Grandparents Day at school?
2. What would you do to help Calliope if you were her friend?

### After Reading the Book

1. Have you seen family pictures? Of your aunts? Uncles? Grandparents? Are they pictures of when they were younger? Are you surprised by how different they look? Do you think your nose looks like one of your family member's? Or maybe your ears? Or the color of your hair?
2. Do you wish you could know what your grandparents were like when they were younger? If your grandparents are still alive, ask them to tell you what their lives were like when they were your age? How about asking these questions and recording your conversation on a tape? Or having your grandparents write their thoughts on paper? What about working with them on scrapbook pages that have photos of them, of you, and some journaling about your memories? Ask them:
  - a. What they remember?
  - b. What they were thinking about?
  - c. What books they liked to read?
  - d. What they did for fun?
  - e. What did they want to be when they got older?
  - f. What scrapes did they get into?



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3. If your grandparents are no longer living, who could you ask about your grandparents?
4. What do you think the author meant by “She [Calliope] made the freckles on her face dance.”?
5. Stinky Stern’s grandfather looks like Santa Claus. Do you think he acts like Santa Claus?
6. How do you think Calliope changes in this book?
7. What do you think about Calliope’s solution for taking part in Grandparents’ Day? Did you predict how she would handle this?

## About the Illustrations (visual literacy)

Michelle Edwards not only wrote the Jackson Friends series, but she also illustrated and designed the series. We can take part in Grandparents’ Day at Jackson Magnet School.

1. On page 6, there are squiggles around the portraits of the students’ grandparents. What do you think those squiggles represent?
2. Notice on page 12 how Calliope is stepping out of the drawing of coming in the door of her house. What does this make you think?
3. On this same page, Ms. Edwards fills up the page with dotted-line circles and little frowning faces. What does this tell the reader?
4. Did you notice on page 17 that Calliope is drawn inside a piece of candy? What kind? Do you think Ms. Edwards likes candy a lot to know all of those kinds? How do you think she remembered what all that candy looks like?
5. On page 24, there are sentences and words all around Calliope. Is this what the kids in her class are saying? Is that what you might say?
6. On page 40, Calliope and her bag and her crown are pieces in a puzzle. What do you think the illustrator is trying to tell us?

## Learning about the illustrations from Michelle Edwards

“In a sense all of the Jackson Friends books start on the title page. In this book, it’s a little vignette of Calliope getting ready for school. Here you get to meet her parents and her dog, Woof, who appears in The Talent Show with her.”

## Unfamiliar illustration terms?

*title page* . . . . . At the beginning of the book, the page which has the first mention of the title of the book, as well as the author’s, illustrator’s, and publisher’s name. Quite often, this page has only words on it.

*vignette* . . . . . (n., pronounced vin-yet) A small part of a larger drawing.



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## About Michelle Edwards

Michelle Edwards writes and illustrates children's books. Her newest books are *Stinky Stern Forever* and *Papa's Latkes*, the fourth book in the Jackson Friends series. Michelle turned fifty years old on January 25, 2005. She was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut and grew up in Troy, New York. Michelle has studied, lived, and worked in Jerusalem, Israel. Her children and her children's books were born in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Michelle now lives in Iowa City, Iowa with her husband Rody and their three daughters Meera, Flory, and Lelia.

## Zero Grandparents

is a part of the *Jackson Friends Series*



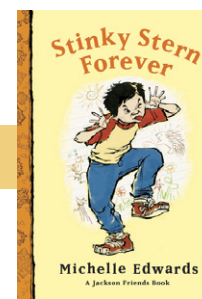
**Pa Lia's First Day**  
Harcourt 1999  
ISBN 0-15-205748-X



**Zero Grandparents**  
Harcourt 2001  
ISBN 0-15-205754-4



**The Talent Show**  
Harcourt 2002  
ISBN 0-15-205760-9



**Stinky Stern Forever**  
Harcourt 2005  
ISBN 0-15-216389-1



**Michelle Edwards is available for school visits and conference presentations. For more information please visit her website at [www.michelledwards.com](http://www.michelledwards.com) or send an e-mail to [michelle@michelledwards.com](mailto:michelle@michelledwards.com).**



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