

Crenshaw

Recommended for Grades 4-8

Book Summary: Crenshaw

Jackson doesn't believe in imaginary friends, but he begins noticing a large black and white cat hanging around him again. When he was in first grade, his parents had to sell their home and live in a car and Jackson first began to see Crenshaw. He begins noticing the familiar signs that his parents aren't doing well again and becomes increasingly frustrated that they aren't being honest with him about their situation.

When his parents sell many of their belongings to make extra money, Jackson has to remind himself that they are just things. Crenshaw continues to follow him around, allowing Jackson the chance to cope with the upheaval.

[Spoiler]

Crenshaw admits to Jackson that he is here because Jackson wanted him here. When his parents find a note Jackson writes to tell them he wants to stay with his friend Marisol instead of running away again, they finally open up to him about their situation. They agree that Jackson is old enough to know the truth.

His dad is offered a part-time management position at a music store and offered a garage to stay in, which keeps them from having to becoming homeless again.

Author Biography: Katherine Applegate

Katherine Alice Applegate was born October 9, 1956 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She loved animals as a child and knew that she either wanted to work with them or become an author. She graduated from The University of Texas at Austin with a liberal arts degree. She first began her writing career with creating personality quizzes for a magazine. Later, she would go on to write books in the *Animorphs* and *Roscoe Riley Rules* series. In 2013, she won the Newbery Award for *The One and Only Ivan*.

She currently lives with her husband, writer Michael Grant, and two children in Southern California.



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Discussion Questions: Crenshaw

1. Crenshaw still appears to Jackson even though the boy doesn't have much of an imagination. Why do you think the cat shows up? Would you deny it if you kept seeing something no one else could see? Why or why not?
 2. Is having a good imagination an important life skill? Why or why not?
 3. When Jackson's parents announce a garage sale, they tell him and Robin to set aside their keepsakes. What kinds of keepsakes would you save? Why do you think keepsakes might be important to them right now?
 4. Jackson's parents face the possibility of having to move out of their house. Where would you go if you couldn't live in your house anymore? What would you do if you were Jackson and you knew that money was tight?
 5. How can Jackson hear and feel Crenshaw if the cat is imaginary? How can Aretha see the cat?
 6. Crenshaw insists he is there because Jackson needs him. Why do you think Jackson needs the imaginary cat? Why might someone need an imaginary friend?
 7. After Jackson finished first grade, his family has to live out of their car. What were some of the ways that Jackson learned to make the best of the situation? How would you try to make things better if you were Jackson?
 8. Why did Crenshaw vanish when Jackson met Marisol? How did Crenshaw come into Jackson's life when the boy needed him most?
 9. Why do you think Jackson felt like the most grownup one in his family? Do any of his actions support this? If so, which ones and how?
 10. Jackson begins stealing to get extra food for Robin. What do you think his reasoning for doing it was? What could he have done instead of stealing the food?
 11. Jackson is surprised when Marisol names the cat statue "Crenshaw". Are there always logical explanations to things? Why or why not?
 12. Marisol claims that not knowing everything makes things more interesting. Do you agree? Why or why not?
 13. How do you think things will improve for Jackson's family now that his dad has a new job? Do you think Crenshaw will stick around? Why or why not?
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