

# Extra Credit

Recommended for Grades 5-7

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## **Book Summary: Extra Credit**

Abby doesn't enjoy doing homework. The only class she enjoys is gym and especially climbing the rock wall. Because she has done so poorly on her work, she is told she will have to redo sixth grade unless she is able to make a better effort and do a special project. Abby agrees and begins penpalling a girl in Kabul, Amira.

Sadeed is initially chosen as the one to write Abby back because the village elders wanted their country represented by the best student. However, they decide that it is more appropriate for Amira to write the letters with Sadeed helping her. He ends up writing the letter she dictates but decides to change it and send his version because he doesn't believe hers is good enough. Sadeed continues sending his own letters until he reveals to Abby that it has really been him writing to her and not Amira.

## **[SPOILER]**

When Abby finds out, she writes her next letter especially for him. Sadeed is embarrassed to read it aloud to his class, but he secretly treasures it. On his way home, he is threatened by a man who hates America and tears up his letter. He tells the village elders who decide that it is too dangerous for the letters to continue. Amira sends Abby a final letter.

Abby presents her report to the class and on the last day of school, she receives a final note from Sadeed that explains why he can't send anymore letters. He says he hopes one day to come to America.

## **Author Biography: Andrew Clements**

Andrew Clements was born May 29, 1949 in Camden, New Jersey. He grew up loving to read and in his senior year of high school he was handed back a poem with a note that it should be published. He graduated from Northwestern University with a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and from National Louis University with a Master of Arts in Elementary Education. While teaching, he began to write songs. In 1996, he wrote his first novel, *Frindle*, which went on to receive numerous awards and publication in several languages. He lives in Westborough, Massachusetts with his wife Rebecca. They have four children: Charles, George, Nathaniel and John.



Oswego Campus  
32 W Jefferson Street  
Oswego, IL 60543  
[www.oswego.lib.il.us](http://www.oswego.lib.il.us)

Montgomery Campus  
1111 Reading Drive  
Montgomery, IL 60538  
(630) 978-1272

# Extra Credit

Recommended for Grades 4-8

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## Discussion Questions: Extra Credit

1. When the letter comes to the Afghanistan school from American, the village elders determine who would be best to act as pen pal. Do you agree with the reasons they chose Amira? Why or why not? Why was it so important to them that their country be represented by only the best?
  2. Abby loves the rock-climbing wall at school and the freedom it gives her. What sorts of activities allow you to be self-reliant and free? Why are these kinds of activities important?
  3. While Abby enjoys school, she doesn't enjoy all the work that comes with it. Why is schoolwork important? What do you think school would be like without homework every day?
  4. Abby is told she will have to repeat sixth grade. How would you feel if you had to repeat a grade? Why would repeating sixth grade be the best thing for her?
  5. Amira is too slow at writing in English so Sadeed proposes to dictate for her. Was this a better solution? Why or why not? Are there any other solutions they could have found to make it easier for Amira? If so, what?
  6. Think about the details the authors uses to describe life in Kabul. How are things different there than where you live? Is there anything that is the same? If so, what is similar?
  7. Sadeed's letter encourages Abby to put more effort into her next letter. Do you think Abby would've had the same response to Amira's letter? Why or why not? Has there been a time where you were inspired to do something better a second time?
  8. Sadeed is annoyed by all the attention Amira gets for the letter even though she didn't write it. Is it fair that she is getting all the attention? Why or why not? Has this ever happened to you?
  9. Why did Sadeed write Abby the second letter? Do you think he had to tell her the truth about writing all the letters? Why or why not? What would you have done if you were Sadeed?
  10. On his way home, Sadeed is ambushed by a man who believes America is evil and girls should not go to school. The village elders agree that only one more letter will be sent. Do you think this was the right decision? Why or why not?
  11. What do you think would happen if Sadeed continued to send Abby letters?
  12. Have you ever had a pen pal? If yes, how were your letters similar to Abby and Sadeed's? How were they different? How would the story be different if they had sent emails instead?
  13. How did writing the letters change both Abby and Sadeed?
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Oswego, IL 60543  
[www.oswego.lib.il.us](http://www.oswego.lib.il.us)

Montgomery Campus  
1111 Reading Drive  
Montgomery, IL 60538  
(630) 978-1272