

## When You Reach Me

### Things You Keep In A Box-Mom's Rules For Life In New York City

1. How does the author create suspense in the first chapter?
2. Why is the name Miranda important to Mom?
3. Miranda's favorite novel begins, "It was a dark and stormy night" and features a main character named Meg. Do you know that title of the novel and who wrote it? Can you summarize the novel?
4. What does Richard mean when he says, "Keys are power"? How else are keys important to the story?
5. For what game show is Mom practicing to become a contestant? How are people helping her practice?
6. Describe Miranda's relationship with Sal. What does losing Sal mean to Miranda?

7. Why does Miranda think the guy who Mom calls the laughing man is crazy? Why does she pretend not to notice him?
8. Why hasn't Miranda written the letter she was asked to write?
9. Compare and contrast Mom's rules for living in New York City with Miranda's trick for dealing with someone who frightens her. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
10. Why did the kid in the green army coat punch Sal?
11. Who is writing the notes to Miranda?

#### Things You Wish for-Things You Keep Secret

1. Miranda does not miss her nonexistent dad. Do you agree with Miranda that "a person can't miss something she never had"?

- 2. What can you infer from Miranda's observation of the kid in the green jacket?**
  
- 3. Why hasn't Miranda paid much attention to the other girls at school? What has she noticed about them? Do you think making friends with Annemarie means Miranda will be okay without Sal?**
  
- 4. What does Miranda mean when she says "Mustard always makes my lips burn, but I didn't care. It was worth it"?**
  
- 5. Why does mom need the two weeks left before going on the game show? Do you think Miranda and Richard are doing everything possible to prepare her?**
  
- 6. What reason does Mom give for Mr. Tompkin's class studying buildings every year? Do you think Mr. Tompkin made the right career choice?**

**7. Why is Miranda unaware of the dentist office at her school? Do you agree that she should not tell Mom about the dentist?**

**8. What does Marcus tell Miranda about time travel? What does he say about common sense? Does what Marcus says make sense to you?**

**9. Why do you think Marcus does not notice things about people?**

**10. What is Richard and Miranda's secret plan for Mom's game show winnings?**

### **Things That Smell- Messy Things**

**1. Is it fair that Jimmy hires Miranda and her friends and then does not pay them with money?**

**2. Did Mom forget to lock the apartment door? What does she wonder about the incident?**

- 3. What is odd about the timing of Miranda finding the first note? What questions does the note raise?**
  
- 4. What does Jimmy do that would have made Mom whack him on the head? Is Jimmy's behavior amusing or inappropriate? What does it tell you about him?**
  
- 5. Should Miranda be embarrassed to bring Annemarie to the apartment? What is Annemarie's reaction?**
  
- 6. What predictions can you make from the second note? How do you think the note's author knew Miranda shared the first note?**
  
- 7. Mom uses a veil as a metaphor for how people are distracted by little things and ignore the big things. Why might Miranda wonder if some people see the big things all the time? How would the world change if people would not wear "veils"?**
  
- 8. Why does Miranda call Julia "Swiss Miss"? What does Jimmy think is the reason for the nickname?**

**9. Miranda and Julia are competing for Annemarie's friendship and are jealous of one another. Whom do you think makes a better friend for Annemarie?**

**10. What will cause Miranda to stop going to Jimmy's shop?**

#### **Invisible Things-Things That Make No Sense**

**1. Why does Miranda think Jimmy tells Julia to leave the shop? Why do you think he tells her to leave?**

**2. What does Mom hope to accomplish by visiting pregnant women in jail? Why?**

**3. What health condition does Annemarie have? What is the result of keeping her health condition a secret? Do you think Julia has the right to tell Miranda personal information about Annemarie?**

4. Do you think Miranda is a good friend?
  
5. What does the third note say?
  
6. According to Marcus, why doesn't Miranda understand explanations of time travel? How does Marcus explain time travel?
  
7. Marcus hit Sal to see what would happen. What do you think Marcus expected to happen? What kind of person is Marcus?
  
8. How will "tesser" apply to Miranda's Christmas?
  
9. Why does the laughing man run away from Marcus?

#### **The First Proof- The Second Proof**

1. Why do you think Colin took two of Jimmy's bread rolls? How could the author of the notes know Collin would take the rolls?

- 2. While visiting Annemarie, Miranda says, "I was miserable, sitting on the edge of her bed in that puddle of meanness". What does she mean?**
  
- 3. Why does Miranda give a sandwich to the laughing man? How is her opinion of him changing?**
  
- 4. Are you surprised by Mom's reaction to Miranda's concern for the laughing man? How is Miranda supposed to distinguish between helping others in need and avoiding strangers for safety reasons?**
  
- 5. Why is Mom afraid to marry Richard even though she loves him? What advice would you give her?**
  
- 6. Why do Miranda and Mom argue about the apartment? Why can't Miranda hug Mom?**



7. Why does Jimmy think Julia stole his bank? How does Annemarie feel about his accusation?
  
8. Does putting the loss of Sal's friendship into perspective make Miranda feel better?
  
9. How does Richard's Christmas gift affect Miranda? Why?
  
10. Why does the laughing man seem familiar to Miranda?

#### **Things In The Elevator- Things That Heal**

1. Why is Miranda preoccupied with Annemarie's building elevator?
  
2. Is there a difference between Miranda calling Julia "Swiss Miss" and Annemarie accusing Miranda of stealing Jimmy's bank?

3. What does Miranda mean when she says, "Sometimes you never feel meaner than the moment you stop being mean"? Have you ever had this feeling?
  
4. How is Miranda changing? How is Julia contributing to Miranda's changes?
  
5. What does Miranda discover when she visits Julia's house?
  
6. Why do you think the author wrote the chapter titled "The Last Note" in a list format? How does this affect readers?
  
7. Why does Marcus sob after the accident?
  
8. What is the significance of "Book", "Bag," "Pocket", "Shoe"?

**9. Miranda ties knots as she studies the four notes. What does she conclude? What questions remain?**

**10. What is Sal's explanation for avoiding Miranda? Do you think his hints about their friendship were enough, or should he have told Miranda exactly how he felt?**

**11. Who is the laughing man? Why is his trip difficult?**

#### **Things You Protect-Parting Gifts**

**1. Why does Miranda want to protect Marcus? Who helps her protect Marcus until Mom arrives? Why do they help her?**

**2. Why is Marcus surprised to learn that Sal is afraid of him? Why do you think the laughing man is afraid of Marcus, too?**

**3. Why can't Miranda forget the laughing man? What does she think may help her?**

4. What does Miranda realize about Marcus? Why does she consider him "the magic thread"?
5. Miranda refers to the time that the laughing man will return as "the year of the burn scale, the year of the dome". What do you make of this reference?
6. What is the significance of Mom's and Richard's gifts?
7. Why is the letter that Miranda writes for Marcus a horrible burden? Why is it a letter that most people would not want to receive?
8. How does Miranda react to finding a drawing of an aged Julia?
9. Why does Miranda think her relationship with Sal is better now than before? Do you think they will ever be as close as they once were?

**10. Why won't Miranda put everything she knows in her letter to Marcus?**

**11. How do you think Marcus will react to Miranda's letter? Why will he risk his life to come back to save Sal?**