

TAE KELLER

Winner of the Newbery Medal for When You Trap a Tiger

JENNIFER CHAN IS NOT ALONE



“Glorious writing . . . Instantly relatable. I loved this book!”

—R. J. PALACIO, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Wonder* and *Pony*

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

RHCBTeachersLibrarians.com



ABOUT THE BOOK

In her first novel, since winning the Newbery Medal for *When You Trap a Tiger*, Tae Keller weaves an insightful story about shifting friendships, right and wrong, and the power we all hold to influence and change one another.

Thanks to her best friend, Reagan, Mallory Moss knows the rules of middle school. The most important one? You have to fit in to survive. But then Jennifer Chan moves in across the street, and that rule doesn't seem to apply. Jennifer doesn't care about the laws of middle school or the laws of the universe. She believes in aliens—and she thinks she can find them.

Then Jennifer goes missing. Using clues from Jennifer's journals, Mallory goes searching. But the closer she gets, the more Mallory has to confront why Jennifer might have run and face the truth within herself.



THEMES: Friendship, Bullying, Supernatural, Space



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



TAE KELLER is the Newbery Award-winning and *New York Times* bestselling author of *When You Trap a Tiger* and *The Science of Breakable Things*. She was born and raised in Honolulu, where she grew up on purple rice, Spam musubi, and her halmoni's stories. Visit her at TaeKeller.com, follow her monthly love letters at bit.ly/lovetae, and find her on Twitter and Instagram.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Read the title and book summary. What do you think this story is about? Why do you think the title is “Jennifer Chan Is Not Alone”?
2. Look up “Asian American Studies” (AAS) and explore the Association for Asian American Studies website (aaastudies.org). Where is the nearest AAS department or program to where you live? What might someone with an AAS degree do as a job? What kinds of contributions can someone with a degree in AAS make to society?
3. Write down everything you know about aliens. Look at the SETI Institute website (seti.org). What seems to be true about what you already know? What appears to be false? What new facts or ideas did you learn by looking through this website?
4. What are radio frequencies, and how do they work?
5. Have you been new to a school or welcomed a new student to your class or neighborhood? What was challenging or exciting about the transition? Write a letter, either to the new student or to someone who made you feel welcome, detailing what you remember about those events.
6. Sometimes people pick on new students because they are new or different. In particular, bullies who gossip, cyber-bully, and intentionally cause drama, have long been a trope in stories for young people. What are some examples of bullies in popular culture? Why do you think people behave this way, and what can we do about it?
7. Does what other people think about you matter?

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. What do Mallory and Jennifer want? How do they work toward what they want, and how do they change throughout the book?
2. When Jennifer and Mallory talk about the search for life beyond Earth, Jennifer says, “Humans would rather spend their money creating bombs and death than searching for *life*” (p. 42). Look up your country’s budget and see how money is allocated. What does your government spend most of its money on, and why? Do you think people should prioritize searching for life beyond Earth? Why or why not? Make a new budget based on what you think your country’s priorities should be, and write a memo explaining your choices.
3. Ingrid suggests the US government might not always tell the truth (p. 71). Should governments always tell the truth? Under what circumstances is it okay for a government to withhold information or lie?
4. Why do you think Mallory is friends with Reagan? With Tess?
5. Mallory says, “For the first time, I wonder if my friends are good people. And I wonder if I am” (p. 86). Have you ever wondered this about your friends or yourself? What did you (or can you) do about it?

6. Ingrid wonders, “What if one group of aliens killed all the others and then set off to colonize the rest of the universe? That’s likely what humans would do if we could” (p. 99). Is she right that this is typical of human behavior? What examples can you pull from our history?
7. Ingrid asks, “Would humans ever care about other people, or other species, more than themselves?” (p. 99). Find instances of characters caring for one another in the book. What are some examples of them being selfish? What about outside the book? Find one example of humans caring for one another and one example of humans being selfish.
8. Why did no one speak up for Jennifer when Pete was taunting her? Why didn’t Mallory? What would you have done if you were there?
9. In chapter 3, Mallory’s mom says that the rumor about Jennifer “karate-chopping” a kid at her old school is playing on racist stereotypes. Later, Mallory says that Pete and his friends do “karate chops” when they see Jennifer. What is a stereotype? What is Pete trying to achieve by making this hand motion? How do racist stereotypes harm both the people who use them and the people they are directed at?
10. During a conversation with Pete, Mallory realizes that he was using words as a weapon, and she wonders if boys are as conscious of doing this as girls are (p. 113). How can words be used as weapons? Does gender play a role in how we use words?
11. Kath says, “Lots of things seem like they aren’t that bad, as long as you don’t look too closely” (p. 122). How can we learn to look more closely? What are some areas of your life in which you might want to pay more attention?
12. Mallory’s mom says she needs more intellectual curiosity. What is intellectual curiosity? What is something you are curious about? Write a letter to Mallory about something of interest to you.
13. Why is it so easy to talk negatively about someone? Why do people bond over being mean (p. 125)? How can people who do this break out of this behavior?
14. Mallory, Reagan, and Tess begin to take pictures of Jennifer without her permission. At first, Mallory isn’t comfortable, but she soon gets caught up and takes pictures, too. What is consent? Why were the girls’ actions a violation of Jennifer’s privacy? Write a sincere letter of apology from Mallory to Jennifer about the pictures.
15. Mallory keeps mentioning “The Incident” throughout the book, but readers don’t learn what happened until near the end of the story. When you finally got to that scene, what thoughts went through your mind, and how did you feel as you were reading? Write a journal entry about your experience reading that passage
16. The way people see the world around them and themselves is often based on their perspective and beliefs. How do we form belief systems? What else influences the way we see and interact with the world? What are some systems of belief or faith, and what do they offer to explain phenomena, provide comfort, and so on? Do you adhere to a particular belief system? How does it help you understand the world?
17. What role does racial identity play in *Jennifer Chan Is Not Alone*?

POST-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Throughout the book, Mallory had multiple opportunities to change her thoughts and behavior toward Jennifer. She often wonders if she could have stopped The Incident. When were some of those times? Why do you think she didn't change her behavior until the very end?
- It is everybody's responsibility to intervene when they witness harassment, and some organizations, such as Right to Be (righttobe.org), provide resources and training on how to do so safely. Attend a free training and then write an article for your school's newspaper about what you learned.
- Ask your teacher, librarian, or another trusted adult to help you find books, websites, and other resources about consent and bodily autonomy. Create a flyer that explores and explains consent and why it is crucial. Include resources and steps we can take to respect one another and keep everyone safe. Consider sharing it with your classmates and friends.
- Why do you think this story is told from Mallory's perspective and not from Jennifer's? How might it be different if Jennifer were telling the story? Rewrite their first meeting from Jennifer's perspective.
- Revisit the pre-reading question: Does what other people think about you matter? Reread chapter 6 and consider how Mallory's view changes over time.
- On page 163, Mallory wonders, "Do some people really just have power? Or is it given, or taken, or some combination of both?" How do you think people gain power? How do leaders and followers share power? Can you think of any historical or contemporary examples, however big or small? How do various characters give, take, or regain power throughout the story?
- Why do you think Tae Keller chose aliens as Jennifer's interest? What parallels can you draw between aliens and Jennifer and Mallory?
- Having read the book, why do you think the title is "Jennifer Chan Is Not Alone"? What does Keller mean by "not alone"?
- In the author's note, Keller says that she was the girl in the bathroom, that the incident happened to her when she was twelve. She told teachers, but they did not do anything. So instead, Keller wrote about the incident in her journal. What should the teachers have done, and how can writing about an experience such as "The Incident" help?
- Keller writes, "And healing came from recognizing that I am not locked in that one moment—and neither are my bullies" (p. 273). How can reaching back into painful memories be healing? How can it help us move forward, even with those who have caused us pain or to whom we have caused pain?



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ASSOCIATION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES
aaastudies.org

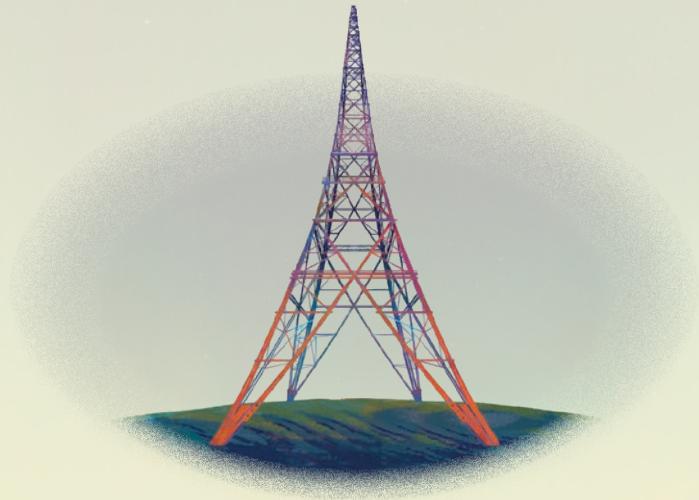
RIGHT TO BE
righttobe.org

SETI INSTITUTE:
seti.org

SPACE.COM: SEARCH FOR LIFE
space.com/search-for-life

**STOMP OUT BULLYING: END THE HATE,
CHANGE THE CULTURE**
stompoutbullying.org

STOP BULLYING
stopbullying.gov



Discussion questions prepared by Sarah Park Dahlen 박사라, PhD.
Dr. Dahlen is an associate professor in the School of Information Sciences
at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She cofounded and
coedits *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature* and researches
Asian American children's literature.

PRAISE FOR JENNIFER CHAN IS NOT ALONE

★ “KELLER USES A VULNERABLE FIRST-PERSON NARRATIVE that alternates between past and present to sensitively detail the emotional roller coaster of navigating changing social rules, the anxieties of being oneself, and the process of coming to terms with one’s flaws”

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “The emotionally absorbing story is FULL OF THOUGHT-PROVOKING EXPLORATIONS on self-confidence, forgiveness, and friendship while illuminating parallels between alien and human struggles.”

—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “With an appeal to a wide variety of readers, this genre fusion is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED FOR ALL LIBRARY SHELVES.”

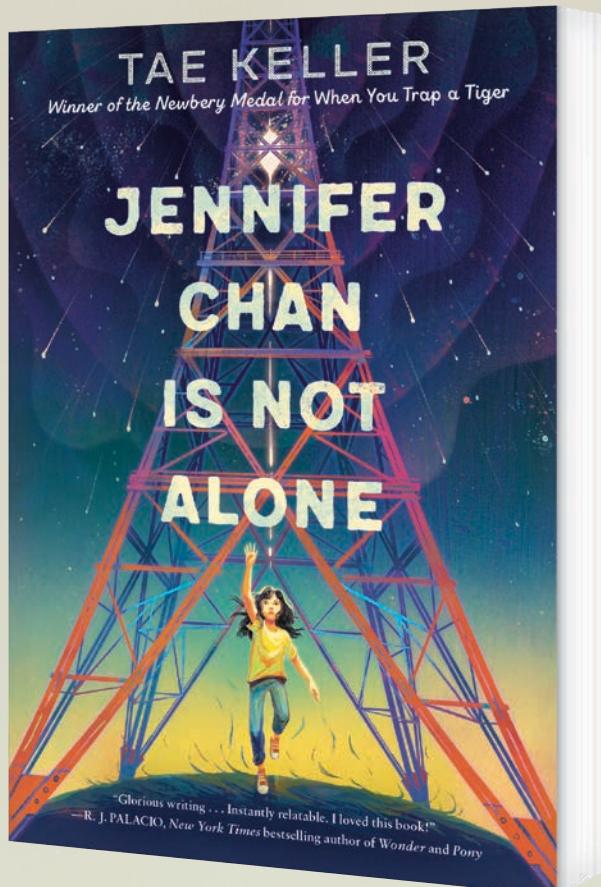
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “By setting the victim, the missing Jennifer, into the narrative background, Keller directs the flood light onto Mallory and company and AIMS RESPONSIBILITY (AND POSSIBLE REDEMPTION) RIGHT WHERE IT BELONGS.”

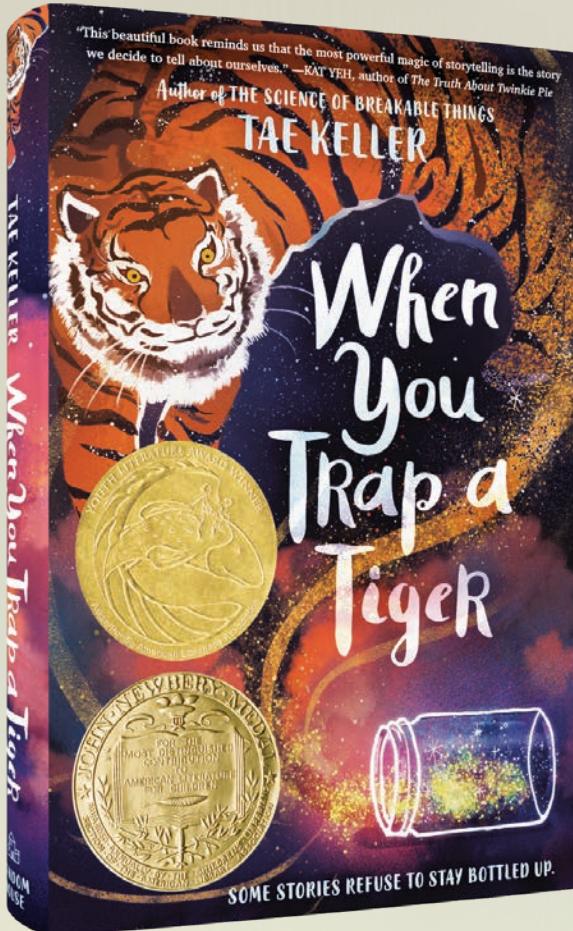
—*The Bulletin*, starred review

★ “A MESMERIZING LOOK AT BULLYING AND ITS AFFECTS.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review



PRAISE FOR WHEN YOU TRAP A TIGER



**Winner of the Newbery
Medal and the Asian/
Pacific American Award
for Children's Literature**

★ “Keller weaves ancient folklore with Korean history through contemporary magical realism. She calls on **THE POWER OF STORIES TO BRING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER** and the ability to heal by speaking to their pasts.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “Explores both the end of life and coming-of-age, with **A SENSITIVE EXAMINATION OF IMMIGRATION ISSUES** and the complexity of home.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “**A TALE ABOUT LETTING GO** and the immortality that story can allow.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “**A COMPLEX, SATISFYING STORY**, one that foregrounds family and healing alongside a love for Korean folklore.”

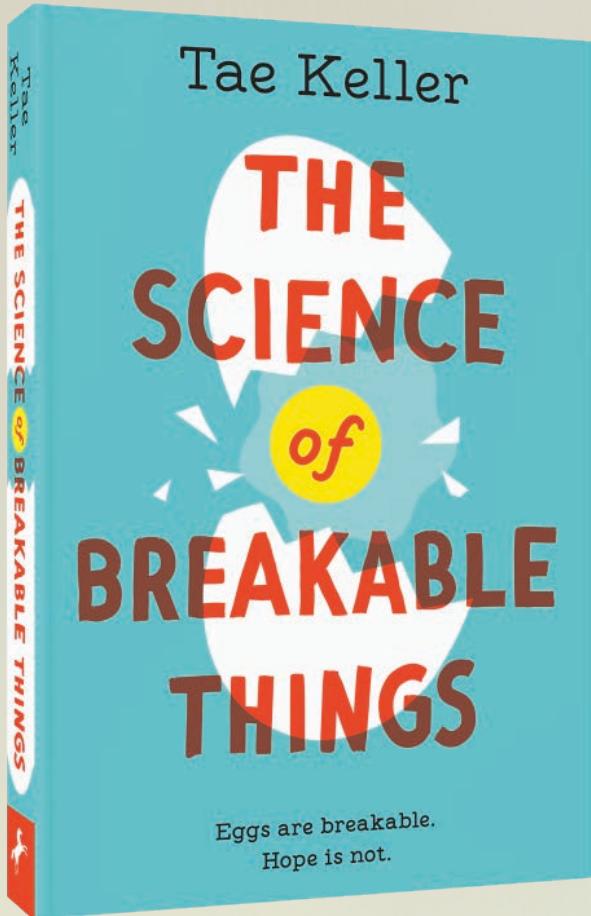
—*The Bulletin*, starred review

★ “Every chapter is filled with **A RICHNESS AND MAGIC THAT DEMANDS EVERY WORD BE TREASURED**, a heartfelt reminder of the wonder and beauty in our everyday lives.”

—*Booklist*, starred review

[Click here for the WHEN YOU TRAP A TIGER Educators' Guide](#)

PRAISE FOR THE SCIENCE OF BREAKABLE THINGS



★ “A COMPASSIONATE GLIMPSE OF MENTAL ILLNESS accessible to a broad audience.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “Keller’s layered, accessible story offers beautifully crafted metaphors, a theme of mending old friendships and creating new ones, and an empowering teacher to a variety of readers. **A MOVING STORY ABOUT FRAGILITY AND REBIRTH.**”

—*Booklist*, starred review

“AN EMOTIONAL STORY THAT EXPLORES PARENTAL DEPRESSION WITH REALISM AND EMPATHY.”

—*School Library Journal*

“NATALIE’S KOREAN HERITAGE IS SENSITIVELY EXPLORED, as is the central issue of depression.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

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you need for your classroom or library!



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