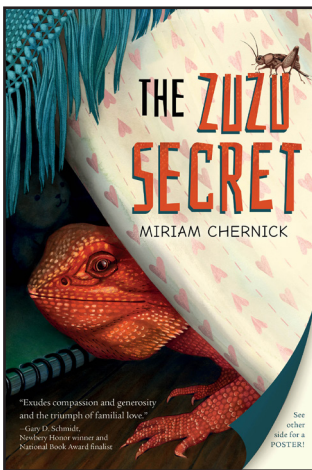


THE ZUZU SECRET

READER'S GROUP GUIDE



978-1-62354-573-4 HC

About the Book

Nobody can know that twelve-year-old Josie is keeping a bearded dragon under her bed. No pets. That's her family's rule, even though her dream is to become a veterinarian.

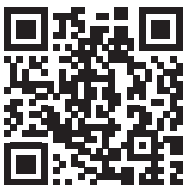
Josie's fifteen-year-old brother, Abe, has a dream, too: to see the Baltimore Orioles play at Camden Yards. But he has a rare disease called Prader-Willi syndrome that restricts his independence, and Mom's car accident right as they move to a new town means Dad is too busy for baseball.

Can Josie and Abe work together and hatch a plan to achieve their dreams, even if it means sharing secrets that could get them both in big trouble? Miriam Chernick drew on her own experiences as the sister of a brother with Prader-Willi syndrome while writing this warm-hearted middle grade novel, perfect for kids who dream big and love deeply.



About the Author

Miriam is a writer, a substitute teacher at her local public schools, a parent to three young adults, and a caregiver for her brother, who was born with Prader-Willi syndrome, a rare disease. As a child of Canadian diplomats, she lived in France, Canada, Venezuela, Israel, and Washington, D.C. She also studied and worked in Japan. Now she lives in Maryland with her husband, two clever cats named Miso and Boots, and a bearded dragon named Zuki.



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www.charlesbridge.com/TheZuzuSecret.

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1. Why does Josie want to volunteer with Dr. Murphy? Do you have a dream like Josie's? What are you doing (or what do you plan to do in the future) to follow your dream?
2. What is Abe's dream? How is it similar to and different from Josie's dream? Do you have a dream like Abe's? What are you doing (or what do you plan to do in the future) to follow your dream?
3. Josie and her mom and brother are in a car accident at the start of the book. How does the author describe the accident? What do you think would have happened differently if they had safely reached their destination instead?
4. What questions does Josie ask herself when deciding whether to rescue the lizard? Do you think there are questions Josie should have asked but didn't? How do you decide what to do in an urgent, high-stakes situation? Do you always think it through before you make a big decision?
5. Turn to the back matter note "About Prader-Willi Syndrome." What is Prader-Willi syndrome? How does PWS affect Abe's life and the lives of his family? Why did Miriam Chernick decide to write a story about a family affected by PWS?
6. This story is told in alternating points of view. How are Abe's chapters different from Josie's chapters?
7. Abe is a big fan of the Baltimore Orioles and shortstop Manny Machado. Are you a sports fan? Who's your favorite team or player? What do sports mean to you and your family?
8. Why did Josie's parents institute a no-pets rule? Do your parents have a no-pets rule, or a limitation about the number or kind of pets you can have? How did rehoming Lopsy affect Josie?
9. How does Josie identify Zuzu as a bearded dragon? What does she learn in order to be a good temporary owner for Zuzu? If you are a pet owner, how did you learn about your pet's needs? Where could you do research if you wanted to become a new pet owner?
10. How is owning a lizard or other exotic pet different from owning a dog or a cat? How is it similar? Would you like to own a lizard?
11. Abe is always hungry. No matter how much he eats, he can't feel full. Can you imagine what that feels like and why it may make him cranky and impatient?
12. Abe is not allowed to go out alone as he might get lost or seek food. What do you think about his frustration at never being free to do things by himself?
13. Abe writes fan letters to his favorite baseball player, Manny Machado. Have you ever written a fan letter to a celebrity? If you could pick an athlete to write to, who would you pick and why?
14. What are some rules Josie breaks in order to protect Zuzu? Do you think some or all of her actions are justified? Why or why not?

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15. In chapter 29, Josie tells her dad that he shouldn't use the expression "hold down the fort" because it's an offensive reference to early US history. What substitute phrase does Josie's dad use instead? Have you ever been surprised by the history of an expression you use?
16. How does Josie feel when the woman from Another Chance Rescue tells her Zuzu was probably dumped by her previous owner? What are some reasons why people dump their pets? Look up your local laws about animal abandonment—is it a crime in your state? What is the penalty for dumping a pet? What are some ethical alternatives to dumping for pet owners who cannot or will not take care of their animals?
17. Why are Josie's parents so reluctant to sign the form for Josie's volunteer job? What finally convinces her dad to sign?
18. What ultimately happens to Josie's plan to volunteer at the veterinarian's office? If you were in Josie's shoes, what could you have done to make things turn out differently?
19. How does Josie's dad react when Zuzu's presence is revealed? Do you think he handled this parenting moment well? When Josie talks to him about his reaction in chapter 75, what is his response?
20. How does Abe make his dream come true? Do you think it was worth the risk involved?
21. What are some of the fan rituals that Josie, Abe, and Bixby participate in at the Orioles game? Have you ever gone to a sports game where fans did similar things?
22. Of the secrets kept by various characters in *The Zuzu Secret*, which do you think is the biggest? What do Josie and Abe learn about secrets over the course of this story?