

Thank you

FOR YOUR  
INTEREST IN  
CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Guided Practice for Reading Growth, Grades 4-8*, by Laura Robb and David Harrison.

**LEARN MORE** about this title, including Features, Table of Contents, and Reviews.

## ***I Am Not a Number***

<sup>1</sup>Last night the weather was warm and the stars were out, so Mom and my little sister and I slept outside on blankets spread on the grass. Mom told Molly her favorite bedtime story about a mouse that finds a strawberry. It was too dark to read, but Mom can't read well anyway so she always tells her stories. I've heard the mouse and the strawberry about a thousand times, so I thought about other stuff, like how full I was. We'd stood in line at the church for box dinners and ate them in our car with the doors open. I would get a free breakfast at school today so food wasn't on my mind.

<sup>2</sup>I thought about how lucky I am. No one has messed with my sister or me. Mom protects us, and we love her. I thought about my homework. My life is complicated. Sometimes, just the little things take longer than expected. I'm a guy, so if nature calls, and I'm not close to an indoor toilet, I've been known to step behind a tree somewhere to do my business. Molly is only three, so it doesn't matter as much for her. But for Mom it's a different thing. Some nights it takes forever to find a restaurant or filling station or just somewhere that allows the public to use their bathrooms.

<sup>3</sup>After that, we like to go to the park so Molly can run and get some exercise while we wait for the food line to open over at the church. Before we lost our last apartment, it didn't take Mom long to open a can of stew or make sandwiches or even cook a full meal. Now that we're back to living in the car, things are harder. It's not like we're broke or anything. Mom has a little money in her purse. We get welfare, and once in a while Mom's dad comes by and gives her ten dollars or whatever he can spare. Then, we go to the grocery store and stock up on food that won't spoil. Lots of nights we eat right out of those boxes and bags. That doesn't sound like we have any manners. We do, but when you're eating in a car, there's not much room for manners.

<sup>4</sup>Anyway, if I don't get my homework done before it gets dark, I'm screwed. And last night it got dark before I was ready. Mom started a new job. She says soon we'll find another apartment. That would sure help. I'm falling farther and farther behind in school. The other day, I saw a newspaper headline that said almost one kid in every ten is homeless. That makes me a number: I'm that one kid. But I don't feel like a number. I feel like me, a real person who is having a hard time for now. I can do better. I want to. One of these days, when things get better, I will.

## Lesson 10


### PARTNER DISCUSSIONS FOR THE TEXT, “I AM NOT A NUMBER”

---

**Purpose:** To make inferences to identify personality traits, draw conclusions, and visualize. This memoir builds empathy and compassion for homeless families with children.

#### Part 1. Teacher Prepares Students to Read

##### Day 1: About 20 minutes

- Organize students into partners.
- Watch the video, “Positively Homeless; Homelessness in America” (5:01)   
<https://youtu.be/j32lEpYvqvA>
- Invite students to turn-and-talk about the hardships of homelessness from the children’s point of view—from the parents’ point of view. Why is it important to help families who are homeless find work and a home?
- Have pairs discuss: What might make a teenager say, “I am not a number?”
- Review *memoir* so students understand it’s a biography that a person writes based on his or her memory of significant events. It’s based on the person’s memories and perceptions of events.
- Give each student a copy of the text, their file folders, and have them retrieve the blank sheet of paper and cover paragraphs not being read.

#### Reading the Text

- Read the first two paragraphs of the memoir out loud and ask students to follow silently.
- Stop after the second paragraph, share your emotions, and explain why.

- Read the last two paragraphs of the memoir out loud and have students follow silently.
- Have partners turn-and-talk and share their feelings along with parts of the text that caused these emotions.

#### Focus on Word Building: Context Clues

##### Day 2: About 15–20 minutes

- Reread the second paragraph out loud. Then read the sentence: “My life is complicated.”
- Have partners discuss details in this paragraph that explain the meaning of *complicated*. Students share.
- Introduce the words *complicate*, *complicating*, and *complication*. Explain that *complication* is a noun. Write this sentence on chart paper or a white board: Losing their apartment and becoming homeless created complications for this family, such as sleeping outside or in a car. Ask students to use context clues in this sentence to explain complications.

#### Model Cold Writing in Your Teacher’s Notebook

- Use this prompt to model cold writing: *The narrator’s mom does the best she can for her son and daughter.* (Notes: Mom tells bedtime stories, she makes sure kids get dinner at church, and they play and get exercise in the park.)
- Cold write in front of students turning notes into sentences.

## Part 2. Students Work with a Partner

**Day 3:** About 20–25 minutes

### Prompts for Paired Discussions

Pairs choose two questions that ask them to use text details to draw conclusions. Encourage students to reread or skim parts of the memoir to find evidence and paraphrase it in their words.

### Prompts/Questions for Paired Discussions

- Discuss why the memoir is titled: “I am Not a Number.”
- What are two personality traits of Mom? Use text details to support your thinking.
- What are two personality traits of the narrator? Use text details to support your thinking.
- Skim Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3. Choose one paragraph, reread it carefully, and describe the picture the details create in your mind.
- Explain why the ending of the memoir is hopeful by citing text details.

### Notebook Writing

*Take a few minutes to review the cold writing you modeled for students. Remind them to head a page in their notebook with name, date, and the title of this selection.*

- Choose a question you discussed with your partner, write it in your notebook, jot notes, and then put them into sentences.
- Explain why the narrator dislikes the newspaper headline. Jot notes and then put them into sentences.
- Use *complicated* and *complication* in sentences that show you understand their meaning.
- Circulate among students to support, observe, and jot notes.

### Part 3. Teacher Assesses

- Return to the chart where students offered suggestions prior to reading the memoir for what made a teenager say, “I am not a number.” Invite students to add to or refine ideas now that they’ve read the memoir.
- Read students’ notebook entries and reflect on how students did adjusting the statement, “I am not a number.” Make a list of students who require extra support and practice.

### Reflect and Intervene

- Decide how you will support students who required interventions: work with a peer; scaffold specific areas using this text or re-teach using a text in the Appendix I.

