

The Distance Between Us

By Kasie West
Discussion Questions

Before Reading

1. A stereotype is when a generalized attribute is assigned to a whole group of people based on a single characteristic of the people in the group. A too-simple and therefore distorted image of a group, such as “Football players are stupid” or “The British are cold and unfriendly people.” Stereotypes can be negative or positive in nature. In the book, Caymen’s mom has stereotyped “the rich” and taught her daughter that “all rich people only care about themselves and will never accept someone who is not rich”. Can you think of a stereotype that you have been taught since a young age? Tell about a time when you realized an exception to a stereotype you were taught?
2. What is the difference between stereotypes and prejudices?
3. List some other stories that feature characters from two different economic classes. Can you think of other movies, songs or TV shows that deal with this theme?
4. Do you think it’s hard to be in a relationship with someone -- either a friend or a boy/girl friend -- who has more or less money than you do?

After Reading

1. In Chapter 24, Caymen and her mother have a discussion about acceptance. Caymen’s mother is very proud of Caymen for accepting Mason even though he appears to be very different from Caymen (tattoos and lip ring), but she had just finished making fun of Xander for attributes she deems as stereotypically rich. Caymen thinks her mother’s statements are ironic that she is willing to accept Mason but not Xander. Caymen desires for her mom to get to know Xander as an individual and not as just his stereotype. Can you think of a time in your life when you got to know someone better and your original first impression of them was incorrect?
2. At the end of the book, Caymen begins to build a relationship with her grandparents. She is very relieved to have their help dealing with her mother’s illness and the doll shop bills. At the end of Chapter 38 Cayman thinks “It is nice to have backup”. Can you think of a time when a family member has provided backup to you? Has there ever been a time when you realized too late you wished you would have asked for help from a family member?
3. What do you think will happen to Caymen and Xander next? Do you think they will discover they have more or less in common as time goes on? Why?

Post Reading Activities

1. Over the next several days, as you watch television programs, news, commercials, or films, note what stereotypes you find. Use the following questions to lead you through your analysis:
 - i. Are the members of one group playing similar roles over and over again?
 - ii. Can you find certain similarities between the people who are portrayed as the “bad guys”; and those who are the “good guys”?
 - iii. Who plays the lead roles and who plays supporting roles?
 - iv. How does language, such as different languages or accents, shape your feelings about different characters?
 - v. What groups are not portrayed in the media?

