

We Dream Of Space PDF

Erin Entrada Kelly



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About the book

Book Overview: "We Dream of Space" by Erin Entrada Kelly

Setting:

- Time: Days before the Challenger disaster in 1986
- Place: Delaware

Characters:

- Burke, Cash, and Fitch Nelson-Thomas: Three siblings bound together by a complex family situation and individual aspirations.

Plot Summary:

The narrative follows the Nelson-Thomas siblings as they navigate the challenges of their turbulent home life. Each sibling faces personal fears and ambitions, illustrating their coming-of-age journey in a fragile environment.

Themes Explored:

1. Space Exploration: The siblings draw inspiration and comfort from the idea of space, reflecting their inner struggles and dreams.
2. Scientific Curiosity: The characters' interests in science and the cosmos serve as a backdrop for their development.
3. Familial Bonds: The strong yet complicated relationships between the siblings highlight the importance of family support during tough times.

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Narrative Style:

Kelly employs a poignant and nostalgic lens to depict the turmoil of adolescence, effectively portraying the theme of resilience in the face of life's challenges.

Conclusion:

"We Dream of Space" stands out as a compelling narrative about wonder, the tenacity of human spirit, and the ceaseless pursuit of dreams against a backdrop of adversity.

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About the author

Author Spotlight: Erin Entrada Kelly

Background: Erin Entrada Kelly is an esteemed author, born in Lake Charles, Louisiana, in 1977. Her Filipino heritage plays a significant role in shaping her narratives.

Literary Achievements: Kelly has garnered numerous accolades, including the prestigious Newbery Medal for her standout novel, "Hello, Universe."

Themes in Writing: Her storytelling resonates across generations, focusing on themes such as family bonds, friendship, and the quest for identity.

Contemporary Influence: With a commitment to authentic representation, Kelly has established herself as a vital voice in modern children's literature.

Notable Work: "We Dream of Space" exemplifies her ability to weave poignant narratives with emotional resonance, captivating readers of all ages.

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We Dream Of Space Summary

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We Dream Of Space Summary Chapter List

1. Chapter 1: A Glimpse into the Daily Lives of the Cassidy Siblings
2. Chapter 2: Exploring the Dreams and Aspirations of Each Character
3. Chapter 3: The Impact of the Challenger Disaster on the Cassidy Family
4. Chapter 4: The Journey of Self-Discovery and Family Connection
5. Chapter 5: Concluding Reflections on Dreams, Loss, and Resilience

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1. Chapter 1: A Glimpse into the Daily Lives of the Cassidy Siblings

In the opening chapter of "We Dream of Space" by Erin Entrada Kelly, readers are introduced to the Cassidy siblings: Cash, Fitch, and Bibi, each navigating their unique experiences and struggles as they grow up in a modest household in 1986. The chapter offers a window into their daily lives, highlighting their individual personalities, the dynamics within their family, and the external environment that shapes their existence.

Cash, the oldest sibling, is characterized by his perceptiveness and contemplative nature. Despite his intelligence, he grapples with the feeling of being overlooked by his parents, who are consumed by their own problems and the weight of their past. Being the eldest, he often carries the responsibility of caring for his younger siblings while trying to find his place in a world that seems to ignore him. For instance, after school, Cash does his best to help Bibi with her homework, sacrificing his own time and need for social interaction to ensure that his sister feels supported.

Fitch, the middle sibling, is the embodiment of a rebellious spirit. His struggle with identity and acceptance leads him to act out at school, creating a facade of toughness that hides a deeper insecurity. The chapter illustrates his challenges in engaging with his peers, where he often feels pressure to fit into a mold that does not resonate with his true self. This internal conflict is



visible in his interactions with classmates and his attempts to establish a persona that masks his vulnerabilities.

Bibi, the youngest, is filled with imagination and curiosity but also faces the societal pressures that come with being a girl in a world that prioritizes boys in STEM fields. Her fascination with space and the Challenger mission reflects her dreams that extend beyond the confines of her immediate reality. While she admires the astronauts, dreaming of a life among the stars, Bibi also desires recognition and validation from her family, particularly her brothers, who often seem distant in their own struggles.

The daily lives of the Cassidy siblings are punctuated by moments of tenderness and tension, showcasing the complexity of their relationships. The siblings often engage in playful banter, each teasing the other, but underlying this camaraderie is a palpable sense of yearning for deeper connection and understanding. For example, a shared breakfast might quickly devolve into arguments over who will do the dishes, yet it also serves as a reminder of their shared home life and familial bonds.

Moreover, the ambient backdrop of their lives—set against the cultural and historical context of the 1980s—adds another layer of depth to their narrative. The nation is captivated by the excitement of the space program, with the Challenger launch just around the corner, symbolizing both



inspiration and the fragility of dreams. This period influences the siblings in profound ways, shaping their aspirations and fears as they navigate their own personal journeys.

As the chapter closes, it draws attention to the Cassidy household as a reflection of American life during this time, encapsulating virtues of both resilience and fragility. Through the poignant reflections of the siblings, Kelly presents a narrative that is rich in emotion and relatable experiences. The daily lives of the Cassidy siblings serve as a mosaic of childhood—filled with challenges, dreams, and the longing for belonging, setting the stage for their evolving stories in the chapters to follow.

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2. Chapter 2: Exploring the Dreams and Aspirations of Each Character

In "We Dream Of Space," Erin Entrada Kelly delves into the personal ambitions and dreams of the Cassidy siblings: Cash, Fitch, and their sister, the young and determined Bird. Each character embodies distinct hopes and aspirations that reflect their individual personalities and situations, while also connecting to broader themes of family, identity, and resilience.

Cash, the eldest brother, battles with his dream of being a successful athlete. He is not just a teenager chasing a fleeting fantasy; for Cash, sports represent an escape from the chaotic environment of his home life, where he struggles with feelings of inadequacy and disappointment. His dedication to basketball becomes a beacon of hope, symbolizing his desire for acceptance and validation, not just from his peers but also from his family. Cash's aspirations reflect the typical teenage hope of making a mark in the world, but they are also tinged with the harsh realities of looming expectations and the fear of failure that young athletes often face. His journey illustrates a common struggle among adolescents trying to carve out their identity while dealing with the pressure of societal and familial expectations.

Fitch, the middle sibling, showcases a different facet of ambition. He dreams of being recognized and respected for his intellect, revealing a desire to be valued beyond the confines of his family dynamics. Fitch's aspirations are



deeply rooted in his longing for connection, particularly with Bird, as he navigates the complexities of being a misunderstood middle child. His hope to win a science fair or excel in academia is not just about grades but about finding his place within the family unit and asserting his individuality.

Throughout the narrative, Fitch embodies the struggles of social anxiety and the quest for validation through achievement. His journey resonates with many young readers who may feel overshadowed and seek their own ways of standing out through intellectual pursuits.

Bird represents the most ethereal dreams among the siblings, captivated by her fascination with the stars and the universe. Her aspirations are fuelled by a desire for exploration and discovery, reflecting her hope for a future that transcends the limitations of her immediate environment. Bird dreams of becoming an astronaut, a symbol of adventure and limitless possibilities. This dream serves as both an escape and a coping mechanism for her as she grapples with the complexities of growing up in a tumultuous household. Her fascination with space is not only a pursuit of knowledge but also a metaphor for her longing to break free from her circumstances. Bird's aspirations resonate with themes of wonder and imagination, highlighting how dreams can provide solace and inspiration during challenging times.

Together, the dreams of the Cassidy siblings weave a complex narrative of ambition and desire, illuminating their individual struggles and the ways



they intersect with each other. Each sibling's aspirations serve as both a mirror and a contrast to one another, showcasing different aspects of the human experience as they confront personal and familial challenges. The siblings' diverse dreams underscore the idea that ambitions are shaped by one's environment and personal experiences, and how, despite their differences, they can still find common ground in their collective yearning for something greater.

As the narrative unfolds, their dreams provide a crucial lens through which we can understand the weight of their aspirations against the backdrop of their family's hardships. The siblings' journeys emphasize that dreams can be both a motivation and a source of conflict, pushing them to confront their realities and seek connection, acceptance, and ultimately, redemption. Through their stories, Kelly encapsulates the essence of youthful hope and the complex tapestry of family dynamics, inviting readers to reflect on their own dreams and the lengths to which they are willing to go to achieve them.

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3. Chapter 3: The Impact of the Challenger Disaster on the Cassidy Family

The Challenger disaster, which occurred on January 28, 1986, is forever etched in the memories of those who witnessed it, especially in the very fabric of American culture and its relationship with space exploration. For the Cassidy family, the fallout from this national tragedy ripples through the lives of each family member, acting as a catalyst for profound change and reflection.

As the news of the Challenger shuttle explosion reached the Cassidy household, each sibling—Cash, Fitch, and their sister, Stella—grappled with the reality of what had happened, and the implications it would have on their dreams and aspirations. The disaster shook the country's faith in space travel, provoking a wave of disappointment and fear that echoed through their home, marred by its affected perception of the cosmos.

Cash, the eldest sibling, had always been fascinated by space. He idolized astronauts and painted vivid dreams of becoming one of them someday. The Challenger disaster shifted Cash's perspective dramatically. Instead of focusing on planetary exploration, he found himself haunted by the stark reminder of vulnerability that the tragedy represented. He began to question whether pursuing such lofty aspirations was even worth the risk. This introspection caused a rift between his dreams of the future and the grim



reality that the world had suddenly laid before him. The hope that once fueled his imagination was replaced with a penetrating sense of fear, compelling him to reconsider not only his ambitions but also his sense of identity.

Fitch, on the other hand, had a more dismissive attitude towards the disaster. He was deeply immersed in his world of video games and daydreams, often more focused on escapism than on external realities. The incident didn't grip him as it did Cash; he perceived it through a filter of teenage apathy and skepticism. Yet, as weeks passed, the weight of the disaster began to seep into his leisure pursuits. He noticed that even the games he loved turned darker, reflecting themes of loss and tragedy. Although he would initially brush it off, the tragedy lingered in his psyche and gradually became a shadow that influenced the decisions he made and the relationships he formed.

Stella, the youngest, experienced the Challenger disaster with an innocence that became tainted by the harshness of reality. She was captivated by the beauty of stars and the idea of limitless possibilities. The news of the disaster left her confused and scared. For the first time, she realized that her hero astronauts were not invincible, that they too were human beings with lives cut short. This realization profoundly impacted her childhood innocence. She began drawing pictures of rockets but was now haunted by



the specter of fear in space, an activity she once cherished with joy. The emotional toll altered the way she expressed herself through art—what were once bright, bold colors morphed into muted tones, a visual representation of her shadowed enthusiasm.

The Challenger disaster also affected the Cassidy parents, amplifying an undercurrent of tension within the household. Their own dreams and aspirations had been shaped by an optimistic view of science and progress—the very ideals that had been shattered on that tragic day. This incident became a point of grief they struggled to articulate, a complex web of disappointment and a loss of hope that strained their familial relationships. Conversations at the dinner table turned somber, often filled with silence as news reports rolled in, fostering an environment thick with unspoken fears and anxieties about the future.

Within this whirlwind of emotions, the Cassidy siblings found themselves wrestling with their identities, their relationships with each other, and how they navigated the fragile border between dreams and reality. The disaster did not just serve as a catalyst for personal reflection; it redefined the fabric of their family dynamic, pushing them to confront not only their ambitions but also their interconnectedness.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, as they processed grief in their own ways,

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the experience became a shared point of connection—and conflict. The siblings had to learn to talk about their feelings, finding solace amid the chaos, while also identifying the need to support one another's aspirations despite the shadows cast by recent events. In this light, the Challenger disaster acted as more than a singular event; it united them in their diversity of response, ultimately shaping their journey toward self-discovery and resilience.

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4. Chapter 4: The Journey of Self-Discovery and Family Connection

In the heart of "We Dream of Space," the journey of self-discovery and family connection unfolds with profound depth through the lives of the Cassidy siblings—Cash, Fitch, and their sister, Beryl. Each character embarks on a path that not only reveals their individual struggles and aspirations but also emphasizes the importance of familial bonds in navigating the complexities of adolescence and personal growth.

Cash, the eldest, grapples with the weight of expectations placed upon him. As he wrestles with his dreams of becoming an astronaut, he simultaneously faces internal conflicts about his ability to achieve greatness. His self-discovery is marked by moments of self-doubt, yet it is within these crises that he begins to recognize the value of vulnerability and authenticity. Cash learns that it is okay to not have everything figured out, a realization that fosters deeper connections with his siblings.

Fitch, often overshadowed by his ambitious brother, is on a different journey of self-awareness. His character reflects the poignant struggle of feeling lost and isolated within his family dynamics. Yet, through interactions with his siblings and a developing friendship with an unexpected peer, Fitch learns to express his feelings and realizes that his worth is not defined by comparison. His journey emphasizes the significance of finding one's voice, which



ultimately leads to moments of catharsis and familial unity. The way Fitch opens up about his ambitions and frustrations creates a ripple effect, encouraging Cash and Beryl to do the same.

Beryl, the youngest sibling, embodies a fiery spirit coupled with a sensitivity that is often overlooked. Her passion for the stars becomes a symbol of hope amidst the uncertainties her family faces. It is through her curious nature and relentless determination that she begins to forge her identity apart from her brothers. Beryl's journey showcases how familial connections can serve as both a support system and a catalyst for individual growth; her dreams propel her siblings towards introspection and affirmation of their dreams. For example, her fascination with space prompts a shared project among the siblings, igniting a newfound sense of teamwork and collective aspiration.

As the plot progresses, the Cassidy siblings find themselves navigating the delicate terrain of childhood trauma and resilience brought about by the Challenger disaster. This tragedy looms in the background, serving as a stark reminder of the fragility of life and dreams. It acts as a pivotal point that shapes their interactions and emotional responses towards each other. The siblings' journey towards healing and understanding is intertwined with their willingness to confront their fears and support each other amidst the chaos of their emotions.

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In critical moments throughout the narrative, instances of cooperation emerge that highlight the siblings' growing understanding of one another. For example, when Cash openly shares his fear of not measuring up, Fitch and Beryl confide their own insecurities. This moment of honesty strengthens their familial bond, illustrating the concept that self-discovery is often intertwined with mutual support and empathy.

Ultimately, the journey of self-discovery within the Cassidy siblings culminates in an understanding that their individual aspirations do not have to exist in isolation. Instead, their experiences and dreams are woven together, creating a rich tapestry of shared identity and resilience. The story powerfully underscores that while personal growth can be a lonely endeavor, the presence of family can provide the grounding needed to explore one's true self. The nuances of self-acceptance and familial ties radiate through their interactions, paving the way for emotional growth that is characterized by both independence and connection. This chapter powerfully encapsulates the essence of discovering who they are while embracing the love and support of each other, reinforcing the thematic premise of the book that dreams are sometimes best chased together.

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5. Chapter 5: Concluding Reflections on Dreams, Loss, and Resilience

In Erin Entrada Kelly's poignant narrative, "We Dream of Space," the themes of dreams, loss, and resilience are interwoven through the lives of the Cassidy siblings—each navigating their own path while wrestling with personal aspirations and the overarching shadow of shared family trauma. As we reach the culminating reflections of the book, it is essential to contemplate how these themes interconnect and the lessons they impart about the human condition.

Dreams play a crucial role in the lives of the Cassidy siblings, highlighting their individual motivations and desires, which are intricately shaped by their family dynamics and external circumstances. For instance, as the reader follows the eldest sibling, Fitch, we witness his yearning for acceptance and recognition, straddling the line between childhood innocence and the weight of adult expectations. His fixation on space and the mission of astronauts symbolizes a broader quest for freedom and adventure, mirroring the universal human desire to reach beyond one's current limitations and aspirations.

Nora, the middle sibling, embodies the struggles of adolescence, often caught in her dreams of being a successful writer while grappling with the insecurity and isolation that accompanies her quest for identity. Her passion



for literature serves not just as an escape from her troubled home environment but as a vehicle for self-expression and resilience. The contrast between her dreams and the chaos surrounding her reflects how individuals often find solace in creativity despite life's tumultuous challenges.

Meanwhile, the youngest sibling, Cash, faces his journey anchored in innocence, grappling with the pain of loss after the Challenger disaster. His perspective provides a touching insight into how children process grief, further revealing that dreams are not merely lofty goals but can also be rooted in the simple desires for safety, belonging, and understanding. Cash's encounters serve as a reminder that resilience can manifest in various forms—while some express it through outward ambition, others cultivate it through introspection and emotional healing.

The Challenger disaster remains a poignant backdrop against which the Cassidy family's narrative unfolds. This tragic event serves both as a catalyst for their personal struggles and a poignant reminder of the fragility of dreams. The family's reaction to the tragedy illustrates how collective loss can fracture relationships while simultaneously revealing the strength of familial bonds. Each character's response to this shared trauma highlights their resilience: while dreams may be shaken, they are not extinguished. For example, Fitch channels his grief into active pursuits, where his earlier dreams turn into a mission to connect with others who understand his

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plight—reinforcing the notion that shared experiences of loss can foster deeper connections among individuals.

Ultimately, the concluding reflections on dreams, loss, and resilience in "We Dream of Space" resonate deeply. Kelly probes beneath the surface of her characters' aspirations to reveal how the pursuit of dreams can be both a source of strength and vulnerability. The Cassidy siblings illustrate that loss, while deeply painful and isolating, can also serve as a transformative force, pushing individuals toward renewed aspirations and helping them to uncover their inner strength. This theme teaches us that resilience often comes from the ashes of despair, highlighting the significance of community and family in the healing process.

In their journey, the siblings embody the profound truth that while dreams may be deferred, they are never truly lost. The resilience displayed through their growth and self-discovery underscores an enduring message about human perseverance—showing us that even amidst heartbreak, we have the capacity to dream again, adapt, and ultimately flourish. This resilience is a powerful response to life's unpredictability, offering hope not only to the characters but also to the readers who find themselves reflecting on their own dreams, losses, and paths to recovery.

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