

MEREDITH DAVIS AND REBEKA UWITONZE

HER OWN TWO FEET

A RWANDAN GIRL'S
BRAVE FIGHT
TO WALK

Grades 3–7

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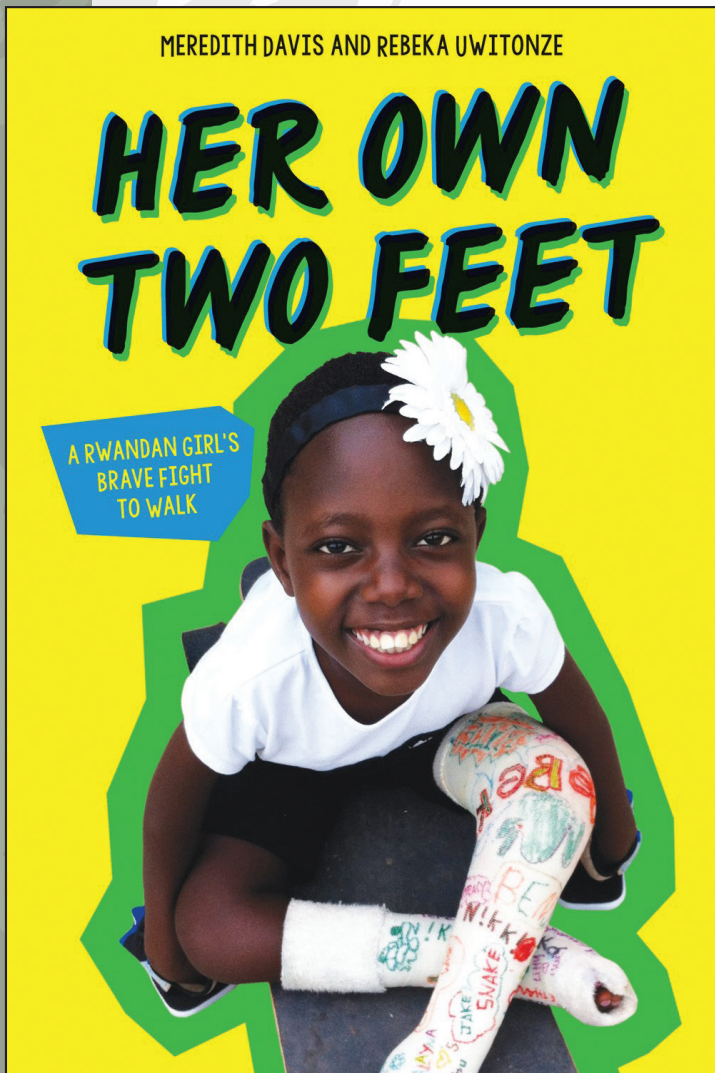
The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions and activities in this guide are listed below. For more information on the Common Core, visit corestandards.org.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1–7.1;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2–7.2;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.4–7.4;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.6–7.6;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.9–7.9;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2–7.2;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3–7.3

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ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

- In “A Note from Meredith” at the end of the book, coauthor Meredith Davis shares that she gathered information about Rebeka’s remarkable life not only from Rebeka herself, but from interviews with her family, teachers, headmasters, and friends as well. Think of an important person in your life. Generate a list of questions designed to reveal key details about your selected person. Interview your selected person and at least three other sources. Organize the results of your interviews to write a short biography or essay about your selected person. Alternatively, do this activity in school by partnering with a classmate and interviewing each other. Then interview at least three additional sources to learn more details about your classmate—talk to his/her friends, your teacher, former teachers, etc. As a team, give an oral report about what you learned about each other.
- Meredith Davis and her family were deeply impressed with Rebeka’s bravery and resilience in facing an extended stay with strangers in a new country and the challenges of multiple surgeries. Think of a time in your life when you had to be brave or resilient and write a personal narrative about the experience. Include what motivated you to persevere and your feelings during this difficult time.
- A glossary of words and sentences in Kinyarwanda is included at the end of the book. Select four words or sentences from the glossary and think of a scene from the story that exemplifies each one. Draw a detailed picture of each scene. Label each illustration with the word or phrase in Rebeka’s native tongue. Include the English translation for each term in Kinyarwanda.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The opening chapter of the book describes one night in Rebeka’s life in Rwanda. What details does the author share that let the reader know Rebeka faces physical challenges?
- Medical intervention for Rebeka was difficult, not only because of the cost. What two hurdles do Rebeka and her family contend with when they take Rebeka to a Rwandan clinic for treatment when she is four years old?
- Rebeka is unaware of the course of treatment her clinic doctors and parents have agreed upon. What are Rebeka’s fears when she is left by her parents at the clinic?
- Rebeka and her younger sister Medea are especially close. Describe ways in which Medea supports her older sister’s efforts to learn to walk.
- Access to education does not come easily for Rebeka in Rwanda. What factors

did Rebeka have to overcome in order to go to school? How was the headmaster especially helpful to Rebeka at school?

- How did a visit from the muzungu and a lollipop change the course of Rebeka's life?
- Rebeka's papa often says, "Chance comes once." How is this theme of taking advantage of opportunities repeatedly represented in Rebeka's life?
- Rebeka's story is divided into three sections. The first section is set in Rwanda, the second in America, and the third section circles back to Rwanda. Discuss the impact of each setting on Rebeka's emotional and physical health.
- Rebeka's experience with medical clinics in Rwanda was marked with pain and disappointment. How were her experiences with American doctors the same? How were they different? Describe Rebeka's treatment plan. What role do casts, braces, walkers, and French fries play in Rebeka's medical treatment in America?
- Many in Rwanda saw Rebeka as cursed and unworthy, but her mother knew that Rebeka deserved a chance at life. What experiences with acceptance and friendship does Rebeka have once she arrives in America?
- The Davis family takes Rebeka to California to visit Disneyland, to spend time in the snowy mountains, and to see the ocean. Rebeka's favorite part of the trip was experiencing the ocean. Why is the ocean so meaningful to her?
- Rebeka's physical therapist, Katie, says she's proud that Rebeka has learned to walk on "her own two feet." Why does this phrase confuse Rebeka? Why is it an appropriate title for this book?
- Rebeka knew very little English upon arriving in America, but by the time her surgeries were completed, she understood almost every conversation. How does her increasing knowledge of English benefit her? What is surprising about Rebeka's language skills once she returns to Rwanda?
- Rebeka's point of view is shared at the end of each chapter. How do these short passages contribute to the story? How is the very last passage in the story different from the others that Rebeka shares?
- Rebeka's surgeries in America do not solve all of her physical challenges, but what effect does walking more normally have on Rebeka's life and outlook, especially once she returns to Rwanda?
- Once back in Rwanda, Rebeka attends her old school. What challenges does she face? Why does Rebeka change schools? How has her time in America helped her face attending school far from her family? What type of student is Rebeka?
- Describe the "Note from Rebeka" at the end of the book. What does Rebeka want readers to take away from her story? How does Rebeka's story affect how you feel about your own challenges and about how you see others with disabilities?

HER OWN TWO FEET: A Rwandan Girl's Brave Fight to Walk

By Meredith Davis and Rebeka Uwitonze

Rebeka Uwitonze was born in Rwanda with curled and twisted feet, which meant she had to crawl or be carried to get around. At nine years old, she gets an offer that could change her life. A doctor in the US might be able to turn her feet. But it means leaving her own family behind and going to America on her own.

Her Own Two Feet tells Rebeka's inspiring story through her eyes, with the help of one of her American hosts. She travels from Rwanda to Austin, Texas, to join the Davis family, despite knowing almost no English. In the face of dozens of hospital visits and painful surgeries, Rebeka's incredible bravery and joyful spirit carry her to the opportunity of a lifetime.

Courtesy Meredith Davis



Meredith Davis (right) worked at an independent children's bookstore and started the Austin chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators before earning her MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts. She lives and writes in Austin, Texas.

Rebeka Uwitonze (left) goes to school in Kayonza, Rwanda, and spends her holidays at home in Bugesera with her family. She was born with arthrogryposis, a disease that caused her joints to contract, resulting in stiffness, clubfeet, and muscle atrophy in her arms. She loves her family, friends, ripe mangoes, and good stories.



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