

# Unplugged: Ella Gets Her Family Back

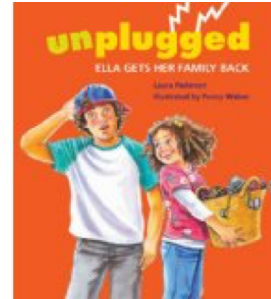
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Illustrated by Penny Weber

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9 x 10, 32 pages, color illustrations

Children; Grades 2-6



Ella is *really* frustrated. Lately it seems like the whole family has forgotten how to be together. Instead of playing hangman and making muffins, everyone is talking on cell phones, playing video games, and using the computer. What's a girl to do?

When Ella finally makes her move, it gets everyone's attention. At first there is some confusion—does Ella just want a cell phone of her own? But Ella makes it clear that what she really wants is her family back.

Laura Pedersen has written a timely story that will get everyone talking about his or her feelings on the impact of technology on family life. Penny Weber's warm, contemporary illustrations add a distinctive dimension to the story.

*Unplugged* could prompt conversations about:

- Finding positive ways to deal with feelings of frustration.
- Family rituals and traditions—what they are, how they get started, and why they are important.
- The differences between rules and rituals in family life.
- Different rules that families may have about digital devices.
- Kid-initiated vs. parent-initiated rules.
- Ways that technology can improve life for us, and the ways it creates new challenges.
- Basic Internet safety and privacy issues.
- Non-technology games and activities families can play together.

## Activity: Emotion Charades (Drama)

Make a list of emotion vocabulary words and post it on the wall or board. Explain the game of charades to the students, and invite them to take turns acting out emotions for the class to guess.

## Activity: Perfect Day (Art / Social Studies / Technology)

Invite children to make a drawing or write a paragraph describing what they would do on their "perfect day." It could be anything from eating ice cream, to going to an amusement park to going to the beach with friends.

- Have everyone take a close look at each group of drawings.
- Discuss the differences between each child's "perfect day" scenarios.

- Explore ways the scenarios might be experienced from a child's perspective versus an adult's perspective.
- What general themes can they see in the drawings from a student's/child's perspective?
- What general themes can they see in the drawings from an adult's perspective?
- Finally, observe how many of the perfect day scenarios involve the use of technology!

## **Activity: Perfect Day (Math Skills / Technology)**

Do the Perfect Day activity above and follow up by making a large graph for class use to chart how many of the Perfect Day scenarios include the use of technology. Discuss the role of technology in daily life.

## **Activity: Perfect Day (Diversity / Cultural Awareness)**

Do the Perfect Day activity above and imagine if and how these scenarios might be in different cultural groups.

## **Activity: Family Traditions and Technology (Art / Social Studies / Technology)**

Does Ella want a cell phone? If not, why not? Discuss what matters more to Ella.

Ask the group to discuss what fun traditions Ella misses and then discuss what traditions students may have in their own families. If children aren't able to identify any, have them make up one or two.