

INTERACTIVE READING GUIDE

Our Table

by Peter H. Reynolds

Violet longs for the time when her family was connected: before life, distractions, and technology pulled them all away from each other. They used to gather at the table, with food and love, to make memories, share their lives, and revel in time spent together. But now her family is drifting apart, and with nobody to gather around it, the table grows smaller and smaller. Can Violet remind her family of the warmth of time spent together, and gather around the table once more?

Want to read more books like this one? Visit your local or school library to check out more!

Create Successful Reading Habits

Research states that when children know information about the topic of a book before they read it, they can make personal connections between the book and their own lives.* Making these connections will help your child understand and remember what they have read. For example, knowing information about the ocean will help your child better understand a book about sharks. You can help your child make connections with books by having a conversation before you begin reading. Here are some tips to get you started:

- Look at the front cover of the book, and flip through the pages to scan the pictures and illustrations together. Ask, “What do you notice when you look at the pictures?”
- Then ask your child, “What do you already know about the book or topic?”
- Encourage your child to use their senses to think about what they already know about a topic. For example, if the topic is oceans, talk to your child about what they see, hear, smell, taste, or feel when they think about the ocean.

* U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, What Works Clearinghouse. (n.d.). Practice Guides. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuides>

WORD WORK

Help your child recognize **r-controlled syllables** to read more words.

When the letter *r* follows a vowel (*a, e, i, o, u*) in a syllable, it becomes an **r-controlled syllable**. In *r*-controlled syllables, the vowel is controlled by the letter *r*, and the vowel sound is neither long nor short. For example, in the word *cat*, the *a* makes a short sound. When the letter *r* is added after the *a*, to make the word **car**t, the *r* changes the sound of the *a*. *R*-controlled vowels make a single sound. For example:

- **er, ir,** and **ur** are pronounced with the same single sound, like in **bir**d, **fer**n, and **turn**.
- **or** is pronounced with its own single sound, like in **cor**n.
- **ar** is pronounced with its own single sound, like in **smar**t.

Here is an example of how to talk about *r*-controlled syllables using words from the book.

re - mem - ber (p. 2) **mem - or - ies** (p. 4) **mar - vel** (p. 39)

- Point to the *r*-controlled word *remember*.
 - Say, "The word is *remember*. This word has 3 syllables, *re - mem - ber*."
 - Point to the syllable that has the *r*-controlled vowel. (*ber*)
 - Say, "In this syllable, the vowel *e* is followed by the letter *r*. That makes it an *r*-controlled vowel, so the sound is /er/."
 - Ask your child to make the sound for the *r*-controlled vowel.
 - Say, "Blend the *r*-controlled vowel with the other letters in that syllable." (*ber*)
 - Say, "Now, blend the *r*-controlled syllable with the other syllables, and say the whole word." (*remember*)
- Repeat the steps with *memories* and *marvel*. Remember, *r*-controlled vowels make one sound.

Find other examples of *r*-controlled syllables in the book for more opportunities to practice.

TALK ABOUT NEW AND INTERESTING WORDS

When children encounter unfamiliar words, take a moment to talk about the words using child-friendly explanations or definitions. Here are some interesting words and child-friendly definitions to discuss from the book:

fondly (p. 2)

If you are **fond** of something, you like it a lot. Violet **fondly** remembers her family's table by thinking about all the memories they made together while sitting at it.

shrunk (p. 23)

Something that has **shrunk** has become smaller. The table **shrinks** down so much that it can fit in the palm of Violet's hand.

vanished (p. 24)

When something **vanishes**, it disappears or does not exist anymore. The table becomes so small in Violet's hand that it **vanishes** completely.

marvel (p. 39)

If someone **marvels** at something, they look at it with surprise or amazement. Violet pauses to **marvel** at the amazing table that her family had created together.

ASK QUESTIONS AND MAKE CONNECTIONS

Help your child understand what they read by pausing to have conversations before, during, and after they engage with a book. Encourage them to make connections to their lives, other books, and the world around them. Have your child go to the page number listed to help them answer the questions.

Before:



- What do you notice about the front cover illustration? What do you think this family does together during meal times?
- Families have different routines for eating meals. Some families like to eat together, and some families like to eat separately. What is your mealtime routine like at home?
- When are some other times that you sit at a table with people, other than eating meals (at school, at home, at community events)? What do you do at those tables?

During:



- What is Violet thinking about when she is fondly looking at a picture of her family's table? (p. 4 - 5)
- How do you think Violet feels about spending time with her family at the table? How do you know? (p. 4 - 5)
- Why do Violet's family members stop gathering at the table? What are they doing instead (Dad, Mom, brother)? (p. 7 - 13)
- Tell me about a time when you wanted someone's attention, but they were distracted. How did it make you feel?
- How does the family table begin to change? (p. 18 - 24)
- How does Violet find a creative way to spend time with each member of her family without sitting at the table? (Dad, Mom, brother) (p. 28 - 33)
- Share a memory of when you spent time with a family member. Why is this memory special to you?
- How does Violet bring her family back together? (p. 36)

After:



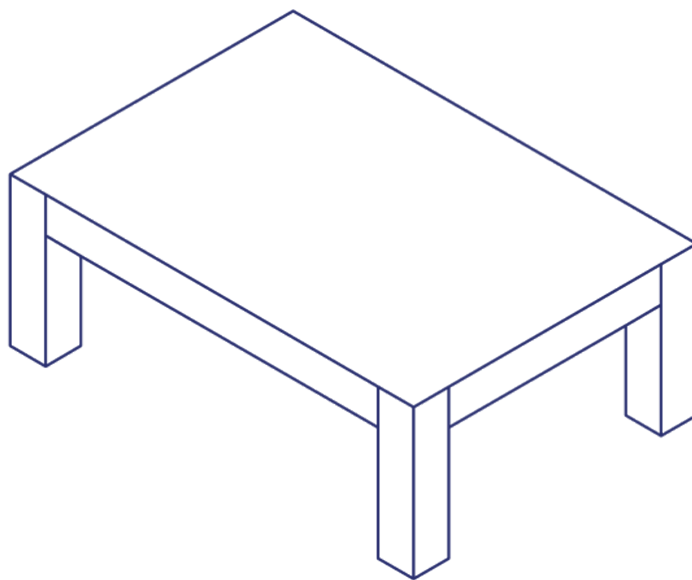
- What do you notice about the illustrations at the beginning of the book?
- How do the illustrations change by the end of the book?
- Why do you think the illustrations have changed? What does the illustrator want us to know?
- What lesson do you think Violet and her family learn?
- Where do you like to spend time with your family?

FUN ACTIVITY

After reading *Our Table*, help your child complete the activity on the last page.

OUR TABLE

Violet loves spending time at the table with her family sharing stories and making memories together. Draw yourself spending time with your family and friends around the table, and describe how you will spend time with the special people in your life.



Who will you invite to the table? _____

What will you all do together at the table? _____

How do you think you will feel after spending time together at the table? Why?
