



Activity One

Casting Call

El Deafo is the true-life story of author Cece Bell. When Cece was a small child, she lost her hearing. This graphic novel shows Cece's early childhood and her struggles growing up deaf. Research "deafness". How can a person become deaf? Does it happen at birth? Does it happen from an illness? Are there different levels of deafness? Can someone be hard of hearing? Can someone be completely deaf?

Start by reading the "A Note from the Author" section at the back of the graphic novel. You'll read about Cece's understanding of the Deaf culture, and how her own experiences fit in it. She begins by highlighting some answers to the questions above.

- Some people are born deaf.
- Some people are exposed to one big, loud noise and lose their hearing immediately.
- Some people are exposed to loud noises over a long period of time and lose their hearing slowly.
- Some people get sick and lose their hearing from a disease.

People can be...

- mildly deaf
- moderately deaf
- severely deaf
- profoundly deaf

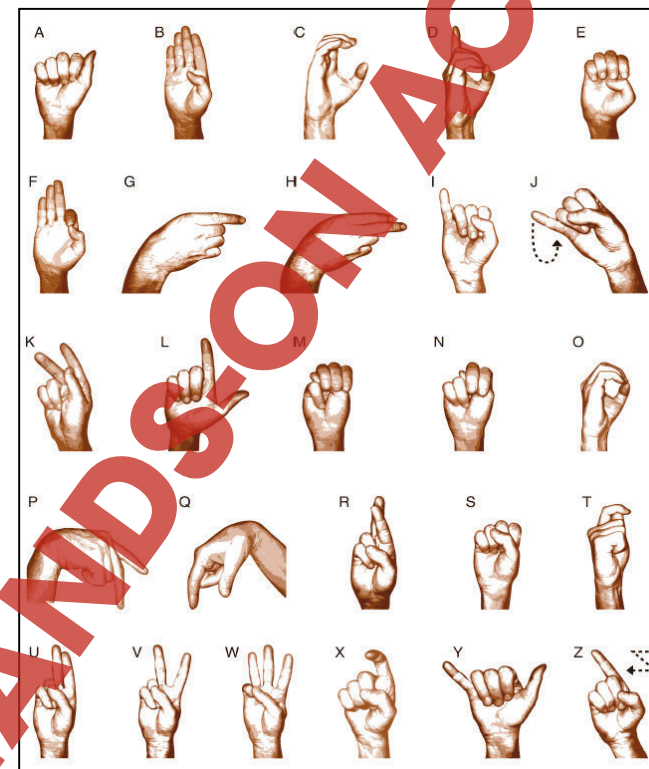
Do your own research into the Deaf culture. Write a report detailing the wide range of people who experience deafness. Explore the different tools made available to help those live in a "hearing world".



Activity Two

A Conversation to Sign For

Sign language is a useful tool for those with hearing loss. Without being able to hear, it can be hard to have a conversation with someone. That's why sign language was developed. ASL, or American Sign Language, is the standard form of sign language used in the United States today. It developed in 1817 with the American School for the Deaf, founded by Thomas Gallaudet. Below is the ASL alphabet.



Using this alphabet, create a short conversation with a partner. Watch some videos online to get inspiration and help. It could be helpful to speak the alphabet as you sign along.



Activity Three

Reading Between the Lips

Another useful tool for those with hearing loss is lipreading. This is tricky, as shown with Cece. Lipreading lets you read a person's lips to figure out what they are saying. Someone reading lips will look at a person's speech patterns, movements, gestures and expressions. Some skills you'll need to learn to get started are:

- understanding the movements of a person's mouth, teeth and tongue
- understanding a person's facial expressions, body language and gestures
- understanding meaning by using prior knowledge to fill-in-the-blanks

Find some lipreading practice exercises online. Start by learning consonants and vowels before moving on to common phrases. Once you're feeling confident, pair up with a partner. One person will be wearing noise cancelling headphones. The other person will quietly say a short phrase. The person with the headphones will need to use their skills to lipread what their partner is saying.



Activity Four

A Hospital Visit

When Cece was four years old, she got very sick very suddenly. Her parents rushed her to the hospital. The doctor put a needle in her back. They collected fluid from her spine. It told them that she had meningitis. Do some research into meningitis.

- Find out what it is.
- Find out what the signs are.
- Find out how someone can get it.
- Find out what the test for it is.

Below are some hints from the graphic novel:

Symptoms: throwing up

Test: needle in the back

Result: Meningitis

Complication: brain swelling, deafness

In Cece's case, she fought the meningitis in her body. However, she ended up losing her hearing. In your research, find out what other complications can come from meningitis. Are there other illnesses that can cause deafness?

Revisit the scene in the graphic novel when Cece is in the hospital. Elaborate on the test they would have done when treating Cece. Use the information from your research to complete the scene.



Activity Five

Route to Downtown

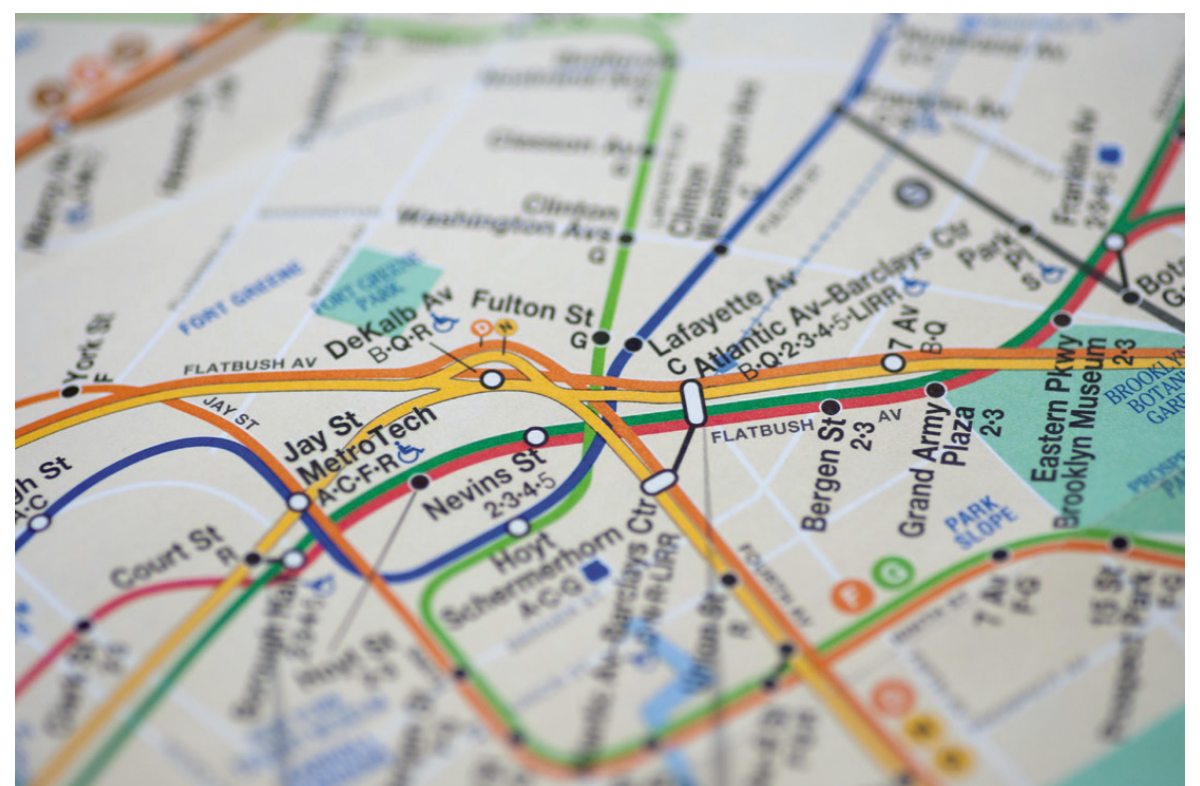


Mike and Cece do an experiment. They want to see how far her Phonic Ear and microphone will reach. Mike sets out leaving Cece at his house. He walks downtown, all the while talking. At some point, Cece only hears static. This is the limit of her Phonic Ear system.

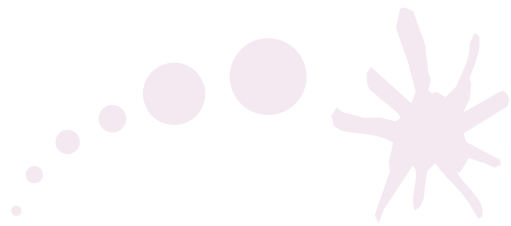
Create a map showing Mike's route downtown. Start your route at his house. Mark down each stop. Refer to Chapter 19 of the graphic novel. Below is a list of stops in order that Mike takes downtown:

- Dan's house
- Crossing the street at David's house
- In front of Tricia's house
- Big Baptist Church
- The Pawn Shop
- Static
- Mike meets Martha at The Green Market

Without knowing the layout of the town, it's up to you to use your creativity to imagine how the town is laid out. You can assume that Cece and her friends all live in a neighborhood close to downtown. Once you've finished your maps and routes, compare them with the rest of the class. How are your town layouts similar? How are they the same?



NAME: _____



Activity Six

Warm Fuzzies for Everyone



At Cece's school, they are running a school-wide "Reading is Fun" campaign. The idea is to highlight the importance of reading. Each grade puts on their own presentation, or has their own activity. The sixth-grade students put on a "The Wonderful World of Books" presentation. The fifth-grade students make "warm fuzzies" to share with their classmates.

The "warm fuzzies" come from Mrs. Catawba's favorite book, "T.A. for Tots". The book talks about feelings. When "someone says something nice to you, or gives you a hug, you feel good. That feeling is a warm fuzzy". Cece and her classmates then make their own "warm fuzzies". They share these with their classmates by dropping them into custom-made bags.

Your job will be to create your own "warm fuzzies" using materials described in the book. Personalize your own paper bag to receive other's "warm fuzzies". Plan your bag design on this page.

