



# Orca soundings

Teen Fiction for Reluctant Readers



## One More Step Sheree Fitch

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READING LEVEL 2.5, AR QUIZ #62995

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## Book Summary

When Julian's mother begins dating Jean-Paul, Julian is sure he will be just another man passing through his mother's life. But he is wrong; Jean-Paul is there for Christmas, he is there when Julian gets sick and throws up, and he is there to pick up the pieces after Julian's beloved grandfather dies. After the wedding, Julian learns to adapt to having a man around the house, working to restore his relationship with his real father as well.

## Pre-Reading Activity

Show students how to produce a family tree and have them make their own tree working as far back in time as possible. Show them how to include stepparents and stepsiblings, as well as half brothers and sisters. Then, have them write about their family relationships and their sense of belonging.

## Connecting to the World: Writing Activities

Julian keeps a photo album of his stepfamily in his head, but most people have favorite pictures in frames. Ask students to choose one of their favorite photos and write a description of the picture, including information about the events surrounding the photo and items in the photo. Students can use Julian's snapshot descriptions on pages 36 through 39 as examples. Have students place the snapshot and the written description on a piece of construction paper and put them in a notebook for a classroom photo album.

Christmas for Julian is different than any Christmas he has ever had, and it proves to be not only memorable, but life changing—beginning with Jean-Paul being included in his family Christmas, and ending with his trip to Quebec City for the holidays with Jean-Paul's family. Ask students to write about a special holiday they have experienced, including what it was that made the holiday so memorable. When the papers are completed, have students put their desks in a circle and read their stories.

**Connecting to the Text: Elements of the Novel****Theme**

Julian's family is not the traditional Mom and Dad with two kids living in a house in the suburbs, but the importance of family is seen in every relationship Julian has. Divide the students into groups of three and ask them to investigate the statistics on families to determine the makeup of the "traditional" family of the twenty-first Century. Each group can create a family based on their findings and make a poster to introduce them to the class.

**Conflict**

Julian's anger and inner conflict drive the story forward. Ask students to write a poem from Julian's point of view conveying why he is so angry. Have students focus on specific images and memories that add to his conflict, as well as questions he would like answered. Ask students to type or print the poem using colors and/or fonts that convey the tone of the poem.

**Point of View**

*One More Step* is told from Julian's point of view, so readers know only what he tells us and how he feels about people and situations. Ask students to choose an incident that involves another person and rewrite that incident from the other person's point of view. For example, when Julian gets sick after hearing the news of his grandfather's death, Jean-Paul is standing outside the car with him. How would Jean-Paul have told the story?

**Connecting to the Students: Discussion Questions**

1. Julian's mother gave him a diary for Christmas and wrote on the inside cover, "The diary is for getting out your innermost feelings. To learn to talk to yourself. In the end, you have to make friends with yourself and life will be easier," (page 4). When Julian received this diary, he said the inscription made him want to barf. Do you think Julian learned to be friends with himself? Why or why not?

2. Julian is angry with his dad for leaving when he was just one year old and for explaining Julian's birth as an attempt to save the marriage. How does Julian's anger contribute to how he acts around his mother's boyfriends, especially Jean-Paul? What helps him overcome his anger?
3. Julian's mother has a mathematical theory for life, "If it adds keep it in, if it subtracts take it out," (page 12). What does she mean by this statement? What conclusions can be drawn about Jean-Paul based on this theory? Do you think this is a workable idea for your life? Why or why not?
4. Julian says, "When people use a certain tone of voice with me, I just want to do exactly the opposite," (page 21). It would seem that this rebellious attitude and his smart mouth get Julian in trouble. Why do you think Julian feels the way he does about people telling him what to do? Have you ever felt the way Julian does? How do you handle the situation?
5. The respect Julian feels for Poppie is because he never uses that voice or gives Julian *the look*. As a result of the respect Poppie gives Julian, Julian would do anything for him, and their relationship is the best one Julian has with anybody. What is respect and how do you show it to others?
6. The title, *One More Step*, could relate to the book in several ways. What do you think the title means? How does it relate to the characters and their situations?

### Writers Craft

#### Dialogue

The use of dialogue helps maintain the reader's attention, moves the narrative forward, and gives additional information about the characters' personalities and their situations. Read the interaction between Julian and his father on page 49. You notice that "dad said," "Julian responded,"—the dialog tags—were not used because the reader knew who was saying what. Not using

the dialog tags helps the dialogue flow more realistically if the words reflect the feelings and personalities of the characters. In partners have students pick their favorite section of dialog from the story and then practice and present the scene for the class.

### **Author Biography**

Sheree Fitch has been writing full time for twenty years, and has published award-winning books of poetry for children. She loves language and was influenced by a father who loved to tell stories, a mother who loved books and words, and a grandmother who gave her a lot of books. She loves to travel and visit schools and is inspired by the people she meets. Sheree Fitch grew up in New Brunswick but now lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, by the ocean with her husband and two sons.

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