

LEVELED BOOK • Z

# Tessa's Family Day



Written by Racheal Rice • Illustrated by Joel Snyder

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## Focus Question

How does family day both create and help resolve the conflict between Tessa and her mom?

## Words to Know

argument  
commitments  
communication  
compromise  
effervescence  
impression

paparazzi  
performance  
principles  
support  
volunteered

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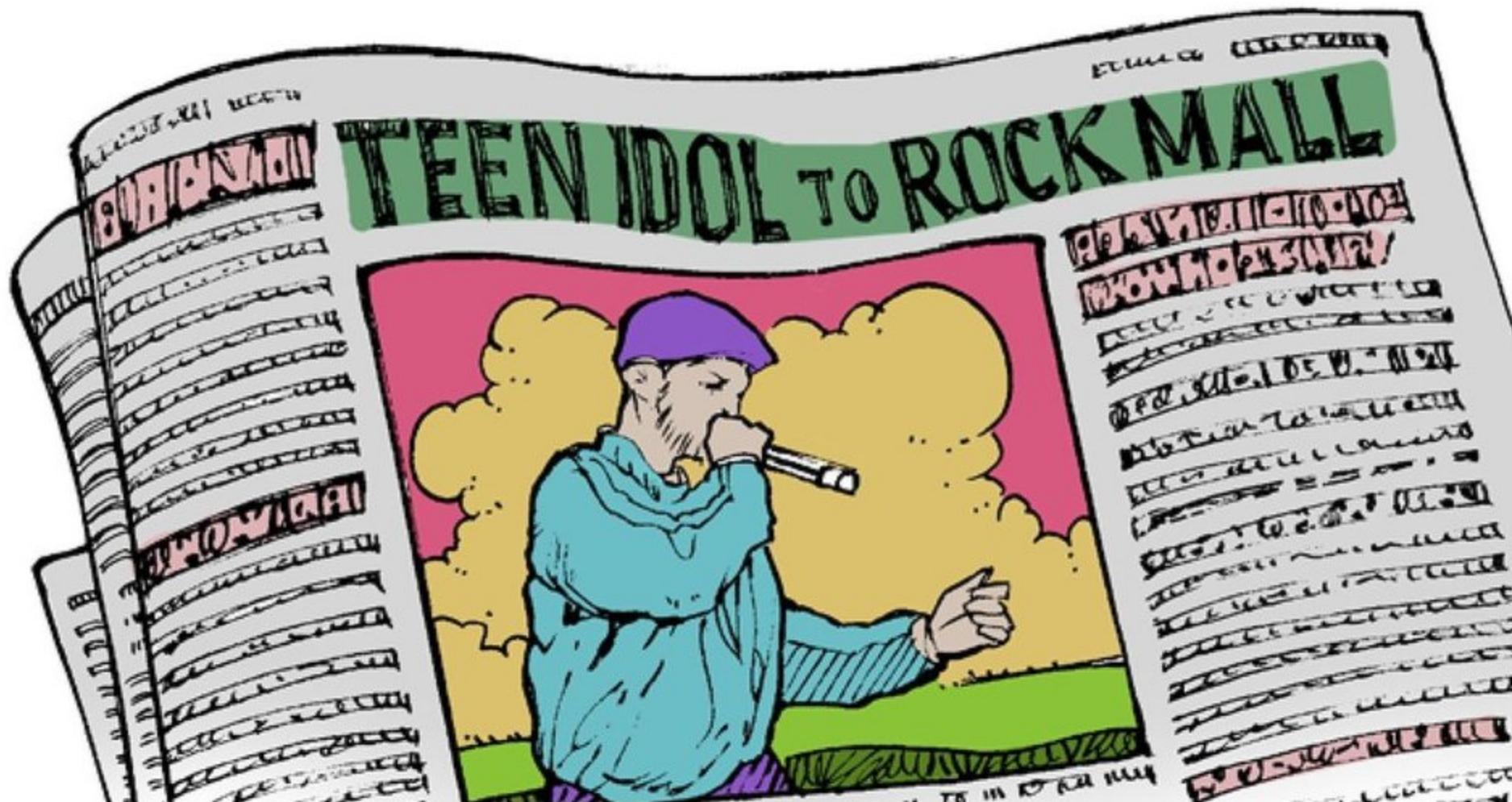
### Correlation

LEVEL Z	
Fountas & Pinnell	U-V
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	50



## Table of Contents

Concert Makes Waves .....	4
Family Day Runs Aground.....	6
Stewing on the Sandbar .....	9
Struggling Loose with the Tide .....	11
Smooth Sailing Ahead.....	14
Glossary.....	16



## Concert Makes Waves

Bree squealed excitedly as Tessa bounced around the living room grinning like a fool and waving the newspaper up and down. Blake Baker, their favorite hip-hop rock icon, would be performing at the local megamall in two weeks. “Amazing! Terrific! Fantastic! I can’t believe it, our first rock concert!” Bree exclaimed.

“I know. My mom will totally freak. She doesn’t like Blake Baker because of that unfortunate incident with the **paparazzi**, but since she can’t find anything to disapprove of in his lyrics, she can’t object to me listening to him,” Tessa explained defiantly.

“She can’t object to you listening to him,” said Bree, “but she can object to you attending the concert, even if it is free.”

"Oh, I hope she doesn't want to invite herself to make sure we 'behave,'" Tessa snorted, imitating her mom's voice. "How embarrassing would that be?"

"Your mom is really wonderful," Bree insisted quietly but sternly after Tessa brought up her mother. The two hadn't been communicating well lately and Bree was concerned about her friend.

"She has to let me go," Tessa practically pleaded. "It's on a Saturday, which is family day, but she allowed Trevor to attend that recognition dinner at the statehouse on a Saturday when his wrestling team won the state championships. It's the same idea," Tessa declared.

"Trevor earned that dinner. You didn't earn a trip to a concert in the mall," Bree reminded her.



Tessa looked at her friend, whose habit of being almost *too* honest really irritated her right now.

"Oh, well then, I guess I should go ask my *wonderful* mother about the concert," Tessa retorted. "It's two weeks away, she can't say no with so much advance notice."

Bree shook her head back and forth and watched Tessa bound out the front door and across the street to her own house.

## Family Day Runs Aground

Tessa crept through the front door so she could gauge her mother's mood before approaching her about the concert. Lately Mom had been on Misery Island. Tessa surprisingly discovered her mother smiling and humming as she prepared dinner.

Before she could think about what to say, the words just poured out of Tessa's mouth like water gushing over a waterfall.

"Mom, guess who's going to give a concert at the megamall in two weeks? It's Blake Baker! Can you believe it? My idol is going to be here, in our little town, giving a free, live **performance**. It's on a Saturday, but not for two weeks. You just have to let me go with Bree, you just have to."

Tessa's mother peered carefully at her daughter.

"Tessa, I've already **volunteered** all of us to help on Saturday with the local food bank's food drive. You and Trevor are slated for sorting duty to keep the canned foods and the boxes of dried goods separate. Your dad and I will be organizing the volunteers and checking on the way the food crates are loaded into the truck for delivery to the donation center."



Tessa's heart dropped in her chest. Not only would she miss the concert, but she would also be forced into manual labor.

"That's so unfair, Mom," Tessa complained. "You never consider how I feel when you volunteer me for things. Who wants to sort food all day long? I don't. I won't. You can't make me!"

Tessa's mother let the words hang between them for a moment.

"Tessa, I know how you feel . . ."

"No, you don't!" Tessa shouted.

“Please do not raise your voice at me, Tessa. The food bank people rely on us to provide help. They can’t supply the necessary services people require without **support** from volunteers. Besides, you know how important family day is. We discussed the **principles** that we believe family day represents when we started setting aside special time to be together. We all agreed that family time takes priority over everything else. You’ll present yourself at that food drive young lady, end of story.”

“Fine,” Tessa stated curtly. “I’m going to my room to do homework.”

Tessa moved like greased lightning. She couldn’t bolt out of the kitchen quickly enough. Tessa attempted to shrug off the tears that were about to rain down, but once her bedroom door closed, she couldn’t prevent them from pouring down her cheeks.

On the following day at school, Tessa explained to Bree the **argument** that had occurred with her mother. Bree tried to console her friend, but she also reminded Tessa of the importance of sticking with **commitments**, which prompted Tessa to accuse Bree of defending her mother and effectively ended the conversation. Bree decided to give Tessa some breathing room to sort things out for herself, which meant for the rest of the week, the girls barely spoke.



## Stewing on the Sandbar

On Friday when Tessa arrived home from school, feeling absolutely terrible about how she'd exploded at Bree again when her friend asked how she was feeling, she found her mother crying in the kitchen. *Good, Tessa thought, now, she really does know how I feel.* Tessa hurried upstairs to her room before her mother could realize she was home.

When Tessa awoke Saturday morning, her thoughts wandered to why her mother was crying. *Could she be as upset as I am about our fights? I bet it's work that is bothering her and not our fights—work's more important anyway.*

Tessa switched her thoughts to today's family activity—a water park—an experience she'd anticipated since her dad first read the newspaper article about the park's opening. Tessa's dad was the coach for the local high school's swim team, who called him "Coach Neptune" after the mythical god of the seas; and Tessa's mom had swum competitively in college.

Tessa's parents always said she and Trevor came naturally by their love of water recreation—and Tessa did love the substance from which all life springs, as her mother would say. Tessa's mom often shared a story with anyone who would listen about how each of her children seemed to swim like backstroking Olympians even in the womb.

Tessa decided to try to forget about the events of the past week and concentrate on enjoying a day of water slides, inflatable beach toys, and machine-generated waves.



## Struggling Loose with the Tide

After eating a stiff picnic lunch with her family later in the afternoon, and then trying to enjoy becoming pruney in a quiet corner of the wave pool, Tessa braced herself as she saw her mother swimming toward her.

“Tessa, we should talk,” her mother stated softly.

“Okay,” agreed Tessa, causing ripples in the H<sub>2</sub>O as she crossed her arms over her chest.

“Do you remember when you were a little girl and I was home all the time?”

“Sure,” answered Tessa, not sure where this conversation was headed.

"Well, since I went back to work, things have been very different between you and me."

"You went back to work ages ago," Tessa reminded her.

"That's true. But recently I've realized how much I miss staying home with you and your brother and volunteering at your schools. It's really become clear to me how much you're growing up without me around. I'm angry with myself for what I'm missing—how much I miss you."

Tessa's stomach dropped like a lead balloon, and her arms followed suit. Immediately she wished she could take back every horrid thought her mind created about her mother, especially over the past week.

"I miss you, too. In fact, Mom, I miss you so much it makes me angry sometimes, too. We don't talk anymore—at least not like we did before. We have family day, but Dad and Trevor are always around."

"I know, honey," Tessa's mother agreed, "and it won't ever be like it was before, but I think if we **compromise**, we can both be happier."

Tessa looked warily at her mother, whose face seemed to glow with expectation like the sun's reflection off the water.

“I propose that I pick you up after school Tuesday and Wednesday so we can help the food bank prepare for the donation drive and sort any food that comes in early,” Tessa’s mother said, smiling tentatively. “That will fulfill our promise to the organization and give us some time together. Regularly, on Tuesdays after school, you and I can bond over water aerobics. On Saturday, your father and Trevor will still work during the food drive, and Saturday will continue to be family day, so we’ll all have dinner and play games that night.”

“However, as an olive branch to properly start our mother-daughter bonding time, this Saturday, you and I will attend that Blake Baker concert.”

“Really? Mom, that’s phenomenal,” Tessa said, practically bubbling over with excitement.  
“Wahoo!”

“But wait, you really want to go to the concert?”

“I want to go with you. Besides, I need to give Blake Baker a second chance to make a better **impression** on me,” Mom said, smiling. “Everyone deserves the chance to make up for dreadful behavior.”

## **Smooth Sailing Ahead**

Tessa's **effervescence** quieted. "I'm sorry, Mom. I'm sorry I didn't talk to you about why I was so angry because I thought you cared more about work than you did about me."

"I'm sorry, too, Tessa. You, Trevor, your dad—my family—are the most important things in this world. We have to better communicate our feelings to each other so we don't end up hurting each other's feelings again."

Tessa thought of a great analogy.  
**"Communication** is to our family as water is to life."

"Exactly," her mom said.

"I have the best plan for making things up to you, Mom. You'll be so proud of me, but it's a surprise."

"I can't wait to hear what you have planned," her mom said, knowing that whatever surprise Tessa held up her sleeve, she was assured they would be making a concerted effort to bond with each other.

"It'll be amazing, darling," Tessa said, striking her best movie star pose, "we'll do lunch."



## Glossary

<b>argument</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a disagreement (p. 8)
<b>commitments</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	promises or agreements to do something in the future (p. 8)
<b>communication</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the exchange of information using words, pictures, gestures, or other means (p. 14)
<b>compromise</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a decision between parties in an argument where both sides give up something to reach an agreement (p. 12)
<b>effervescence</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a quality of liveliness or excitement (p. 14)
<b>impression</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an opinion, belief, or notion formed about someone or something (p. 13)
<b>paparazzi</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	photographers who are often aggressive in following celebrities to take their picture (p. 4 )
<b>performance</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a show done in front of an audience, such as a play, a concert, or a dance recital (p. 6)
<b>principles</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	basic values or ideals that guide actions or decisions (p. 8)
<b>support</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	help given to others, often in the form of money, time, or comfort (p. 8)
<b>volunteered</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	offered to do work for free (p. 7)

# Tessa's Family Day

A Reading A-Z Level Z Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,649

## Connections

### Writing

Write an essay explaining the importance of communication. Use details from the text to support your answer.

### Social Studies

Tessa's family volunteers at the local food bank. Research to find at least three places to volunteer in your community. Present your findings to your class.

The logo for Reading A-Z features the word "Reading" in a large, bold, red sans-serif font. The letter "A" is stylized with a small sun-like icon above it, having rays extending upwards and to the sides. To the right of "Reading", the letters "A-Z" are written in a smaller, red, bold, sans-serif font.

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