

## DISCUSSION & ACTIVITY GUIDE



4 Joan Brady

"Lexi's story is deeply touching,  
laugh out loud funny, and wonderfully inspiring!  
Can't wait for her next book!"

—AMY JO JOHNSON, THE ORIGINAL PINK POWER RANGER

### ABOUT THIS BOOK

**Watch the book trailer:**

<https://www.pennycandybooks.com/shop/buttered-cat>

Thirteen years ago, when she was just a tiny baby, something terrible happened to Lexi Haas. Something criminal. It left her with an out-of-control body and without a voice. Now, as a precocious, superhero-obsessed teen, Lexi is counting down the final 24 hours to a risky brain surgery that might help her talk or—dare she dream it?—to walk and use her hands. As surgery grows closer, Lexi finds an urgent, relentless need to share the story of the year in her life she calls *The Year of the Buttered Cat*.

That year, on the verge of shutting out the rest of the world, Lexi began a gutsy and solitary quest to find her “missing” body. After the family cat went missing, too, and a mysterious letter appeared, Lexi reluctantly enlisted two budding friends to aid her search. But when these friends also disappeared, Lexi had to learn new ways to reach out to the world to save her friendships and uncover the truth about what happened to her as a baby.

*The Year of the Buttered Cat* is a middle grade (and up!) memoir based on the real-life story of Lexi Haas. In the spirit of *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio and *Out of my Mind* by Sharon M. Draper, *The Year of the Buttered Cat* offers empowering, powerful messages about disability, friendship, family, loss, and the art of redefining ourselves.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER (AGES 11-14) READERS



1. Lexi says “We call people who run crazy fast and jump extra high superhuman. Where does that leave me?” (page 176). Do we place too much emphasis on physical excellence? What message are we sending to people who don’t excel physically?
2. In Lexi’s kindergarten assessment, the lady from the state said that Lexi didn’t interact with her peers at preschool (page 27). Why do you think that was? By the end of that pivotal year that she calls “The Year of the Buttered Cat,” how had Lexi grown and changed?
3. Why do you think Crazy Mr. Bean thought it was okay to interrupt the lunch of a stranger to pray over her (page 40)? Can you think of a time when someone’s lack of boundaries overwhelmed you?
4. Lexi was obsessed with superheroes. In what ways did this obsession help her and in what ways did it hold her back? Describe one of your own obsessions and how it helps or holds you back.
5. Why do you think Lexi got so upset when the man at the fair said, “I just blew her little mind!” (page 109).
6. Lexi says optimism is an action word—something you work out rather than something you have (page 304). Do you agree or disagree and why?
7. Lexi called her year of growth and discovery The Year of the Buttered Cat. Thinking back on your life so far, think of a year where you grew and changed a lot. What would you call that year and why?

### Activity

The back cover of *The Year of the Buttered Cat* has a summary of what happened in Lexi’s year of discovery. Think about a time period in which you experienced growth or discovery about yourself. Write a summary (about one paragraph) of the key things that happened during your year of growth.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER (AGES 9-11) READERS



1. When she was little, Lexi thought her body would just come in and she would be able to walk and talk (page 23). What were some misunderstandings you had about growing up?
2. In the park before surgery, a girl points to Lexi and says, "What's wrong with her?" (page 189). How would it make you feel if someone said that about you? Can you think of other ways a kid can be curious that wouldn't hurt someone else?
3. Lexi can't talk but she uses a number of gestures and noises to communicate. How would you communicate if you couldn't talk or use your hands?
4. Anna and Elle are Lexi's best friends. Think about the first time they met Lexi (page 192). Why do you think this introduction to the girls was so special to Lexi?
5. Pretend you are in Lexi's class and want to say hi to her. What will you say to her? What will you do if she can't answer your questions?
6. Lexi considered herself as on the "other side" (pages 59, 213). Why? What are some other ways people might feel like they are other, or separate? Do you ever feel like this?
7. Why do you think Lexi was obsessed with superheroes?
8. A lot of important things happened in Lexi's life in the year she calls The Year of the Buttered Cat. Think about a year in your life when something important happened. What would you call that year and why?

### Activity

Draw a book cover with your year  
as the title ("The year of \_\_\_\_").  
Draw a picture for your cover.