



The
**ICE
HOUSE**

MONICA SHERWOOD

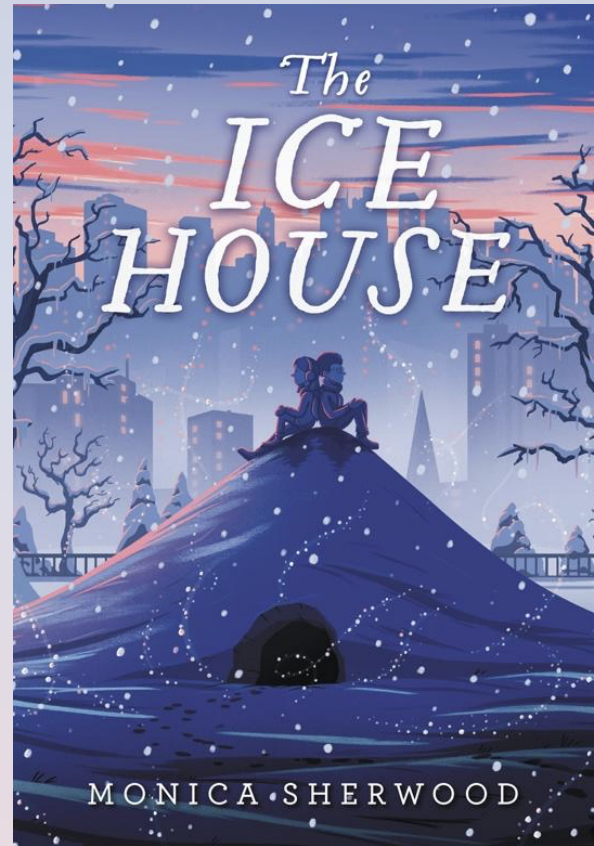
educator's guide

about the book

Louisa feels trapped. There's a global temperature drop, and her family's been snowed into their apartment building for months. Her parents are overwhelmed. Her little brother is driving her up the wall. She's barely seen her friends, so they're growing apart. But her neighbor and former friend, Luke, has been around a lot after his dad's scary ice-related accident. The universe is out of whack, and all she wants is for "normal" to return—fast.

Everything changes when Louisa and Luke build an ice house as a getaway from their stressed-out families. But when they discover a mystifying window to what could lie ahead, it sets them on an impossible mission to restore the world to its rightful order.

Full of heart and sparkling with a touch of magic, this story of emerging from a certain kind of quarantine resonates profoundly during these extraordinary times.



MONICA SHERWOOD | ISBN: 9780316705349 | GRADES: 3-8

THEMES:
CHANGE, GRIEF, FRIENDSHIP, FAMILY, REMOTE LEARNING

about the author



Monica Sherwood was born and raised in New York. She is a former special education teacher with a master's degree in Learning Disabilities and Childhood Education from Hunter College. She is the author of *The Ice House*. Visit her at MonicaSherwood.com, find her on Twitter at [@mon_sherwood](https://twitter.com/mon_sherwood) and Instagram at [@mon_sherwood](https://www.instagram.com/mon_sherwood).

This teacher's guide was created in collaboration with grade level experts in alignment with CCSS and CASEL SEL Competencies. Specific standards and competencies are listed after each question for your reference and to support planning.

pre-reading questions

1 Read aloud the title of the book. Have students write a paragraph that states what they think the book is about. Allow time in class for students to share their writing.

CCSS ELA-W.1-2.1

2 In *The Ice House*, our main characters are sixth graders who are stuck with their families in their apartment building for months. What are some of the challenges you predict they might experience?

COMPETENCY 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS

3 Do you have a place that you feel safe to be creative, like a room in your home, a library, or a park? Where is it? Why?

COMPETENCY 1: SELF-AWARENESS,
COMPETENCY 2: SELF-MANAGEMENT

4 When you are feeling sad or frustrated, how do you wish you were treated?

COMPETENCY 1: SELF-AWARENESS

5 Have you ever had a friendship end or change? How did you feel? What, if anything, do you wish could have gone differently?

COMPETENCY 1: SELF-AWARENESS

COMPETENCY 4: RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

6 How do you feel when someone you love is upset?

COMPETENCY 1: SELF-AWARENESS

questions

- 1 One of the major themes of *The Ice House* is loss. Louisa loses Nana before the book begins, and Luke fears he's lost his dad because of his brain injury. What are some examples of the way Louisa and Luke interact with their families as they deal with these life changing events? Are their reactions similar or different?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
- 2 How are Louisa and Luke's journeys similar? How are they different? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3
- 3 Do you have a favorite graphic novel or book series like Luke? Have you ever changed your opinion on a book, movie, or TV show, after watching it?

COMPETENCY 1: SELF-AWARENESS
- 4 On page 195, Sonya and Nellie discuss Maude B and Instagram in front of Louisa. How do you think Louisa feels in this moment? Give us evidence from this scene to support your claim.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4,
Competency 4: Relationship skills,
Competency 3: Social Awareness
- 5 Louisa watches the TV show *The Marina* throughout the book, while Luke reads. Why do you think that when the characters are stuck inside, they rely on books/movies/tv shows?

COMPETENCY 2: SELF-MANAGEMENT,
COMPETENCY 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS
- 6 When Mom tells Louisa she'll be glad to return to school and have things go "back to normal" on page 153, Louisa states "we both knew life wouldn't be back to normal tomorrow." What is the significance of this statement? What can you infer about how Louisa is feeling from this exchange? Provide evidence from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1, COMPETENCY 3:
SOCIAL AWARENESS
- 7 On page 182, Mr. Rojas tells Louisa that he wishes he had an explanation for the Freeze, but he doesn't. Louisa says "I wished there were just one adult with a definitive explanation for me." What do you think Louisa is feeling at this moment? Have you ever had a similar feeling?

COMPETENCY 1: SELF-AWARENESS,
COMPETENCY 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS

questions

- 8 On page 218, Louisa says she is “stunned” to learn that Nellie’s been hurt by her actions. Were you also surprised by how Nellie felt? How do you think the fact that the book is told from Louisa’s point of view influences the way we as readers understand their relationship? What could Louisa and Nellie have done differently? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6, RL.7.6, COMPETENCY 4: RELATIONSHIP SKILLS
- 9 On page 252, Mom talks to Louisa about grief. In this passage, share the best evidence to support the statement that Mom believes that she will eventually heal from the loss of Nana. CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1, O.5 IDENTIFY SUPPORTING DETAILS IN LITERARY TEXTS
- 10 On page 252 when Mom says, “You don’t have an old life. You have a life: your family, your friends, the things you love, the things you hate, the things that make you laugh.. It’s just in a different container right now.” What do you think Louisa means by, “Well I want my original container back?” CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1 COMPETENCY 1: SELF-AWARENESS, COMPETENCY 2: SELF-MANAGEMENT
- 11 On page 286, Nellie shares her reaction to Louisa’s painting with the class. What does she say, and what do you think she means? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1 COMPETENCY 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS
- 12 Why does Louisa say that after sharing her painting with her class, she had a better understanding of Mom? COMPETENCY 1: SELF-AWARENESS, COMPETENCY 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS
- 13 On page 307, Louisa says “by trying to fix mom, I’d actually made things much worse.” What are some examples of actions Louisa took to try to “fix” her mom? Why do you think Louisa feels this way? Do you think there’s anything she could have done differently? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1 COMPETENCY 5: RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING COMPETENCY 4: RELATIONSHIP SKILLS
- 14 On page 316, Priya gives Louisa a copy of Luke’s favorite book. Why do you think that is significant? What can you predict about what might happen between Louisa and Priya after *The Ice House* ends? CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6,COMPETENCY 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS

excerpt from The Nerdy Book Club

Children witness and experience grief; many don't have the option of avoiding it, so shielding them from reality always felt wrong. In *The Ice House*, twelve-year-old Louisa's life has been upended by the Freeze, a dangerous global climate event that caused her grandmother's death. She's been snowed-in to her apartment for months with her grieving mother, her annoying little brother, and her firefighter father, who is increasingly stressed by the Freeze's treacherous conditions. Her downstairs neighbor (and former friend) Luke is the only kid her age in the building, and when his dad is seriously injured, she's forced to keep him company.

A mutual desperation to escape their scary new realities brings Louisa and Luke outside, where they build a massive snow fort in their yard. In the ice house they share with each other what they want most: for Louisa's mom to recover from her grief, and for Luke's dad's memory to return.

When they begin to see visions of their families happy and healed, they embark on a mission to stop the Freeze and bring about this better future they've envisioned.

The Ice House is a children's book, but it doesn't aim to shield its readers. Louisa and Luke are not perfect kids, but like kids today, they're living in a very chaotic world. Their dedication to keep trying even though they aren't sure of what comes ahead demonstrates a quality that's more important now than ever.

I do hope that the parallels in the story help to shine a light on what kids have endured since the pandemic began; those that clearly struggled, as well as those that seemed to thrive.

If someone recognizes their pandemic quarantine in Louisa and Luke's experience, I hope it helps them realize they weren't alone.

Every night at the height of the pandemic, I climbed up onto the roof of my apartment building and listened to my neighbors clanging pots and pans outside their windows to cheer on our front-line workers. I felt a sense of camaraderie; for those few minutes, we all wanted the same thing. We were facing the unknown together.

The Ice House is a children's book, but it doesn't aim to shield its readers. Louisa and Luke are not perfect kids, but like kids today, they're living in a very chaotic world. Their dedication to keep trying even though they aren't sure of what comes ahead demonstrates a quality that's more important now than ever. Because sometimes we all need a reminder that trying, caring, and hoping is brave, and that friendship is a power that should never be underestimated.

praise for
The Ice House

"Successfully captures the turmoil of living **far apart** and **unbearably close**."

— BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

"A timely exploration of **climate, grief, and change**."

— KIRKUS REVIEWS

"A gentle and thoughtful story about the magic that can be found in **resilience, art,** and most of all, **friendship**."

A very prescient book...Genuine and heartwarming."

— JASMINE WARGA,

NEWBERY HONOR-WINNING AUTHOR OF OTHER WORDS FOR HOME

"A beautifully written novel about a world of mostly physical **isolation** and **virtual connection** that seems all too familiar [and that] readers will strongly relate to."

— DUSTI BOWLING,

AUTHOR OF INSIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF A CACTUS

"A sensitive, **authentic** hero's journey through the unexpected, cumulative grief that life can bring and **the resilience** on the other side."

— MELISSA SAVAGE,

AUTHOR OF LEMONS

"A beautiful reminder that sometimes, things that break can't be pieced back together exactly as they were—but they can be **made anew**."

— KATE O'SHAUGHNESSY,

AUTHOR OF THE LONELY HEART OF MAYBELLE LANE