

## **Counting by 7's**

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The narrator and main character of this book is Willow Chance, a 12-year-old highly gifted girl who likes to count by 7's, gardening, and medicine. Willow lived with her adoptive parents, Jimmy and Roberta, who Willow is able to trust and connect with despite her abnormal and unique personality. As she started to attend Sequoia Middle School, she was accused by her teacher of cheating on a test in which Willow completed perfectly herself. This leads her to meet the school counselor Dell Duke. During her counseling sessions, she also meets two Vietnamese high schoolers, Mai and Quang-ha Nguyen. Excited to spend time with her new friends, she starts to ride a taxi to arrive earlier to Dell's office and becomes friends with the driver, Jairo Hernandez. As Willow meets these new people and interacts with them, she is able to inspire each individual and help them to self-reflect. Willow Chance, who had a hard time connecting with others, was finally able to do so. Willow was content with her life until her adoptive parents died in a car crash, leaving Willow with no relatives and no home. Dell Duke, Jairo Hernandez, Mai and Quang-ha Nguyen along with their mother Pattie, all come together to help Willow to find a home and heal emotionally.

I loved reading this book as it is very heartwarming and shows how people can influence and help each other in times of hardships. The main character of this book also shows that being considered "abnormal" in today's society is not something to be ashamed of and is something to embrace. This book contains many meaningful messages that shows the importance of relationships. It is very well written, with hopeful tones throughout the book that emphasizes the message to not give up and strive for your dreams. The word choice and mood are also excellent, as it perfectly communicates feelings of happiness, grief, heartbreak, and humor.

I think the most appropriate age group for this book are late elementary and middle schoolers, or ages 9-13. The vocabulary level is suitable for middle school students to read. The main character is also in middle school and tells the reader of her middle school experiences, allowing middle school readers to relate and understand more efficiently. However, because of the beautiful messages and themes communicated through this book, I think that this book should be recommended to all ages. Many, no matter their age, will be able to learn from this heartwarming novel.

I would suggest this book to be given as a gift. This story can touch the hearts of many people, including those with no motivation, grief, heartbreak, or scared of being different. This hopeful novel can also be given to others to inspire them to strive for what they desire.

**Recommended Titles:**

- Rules, Cynthia Lord
- The One and Only Ivan, Katherine Applegate
- Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library, Chris Grabenstein