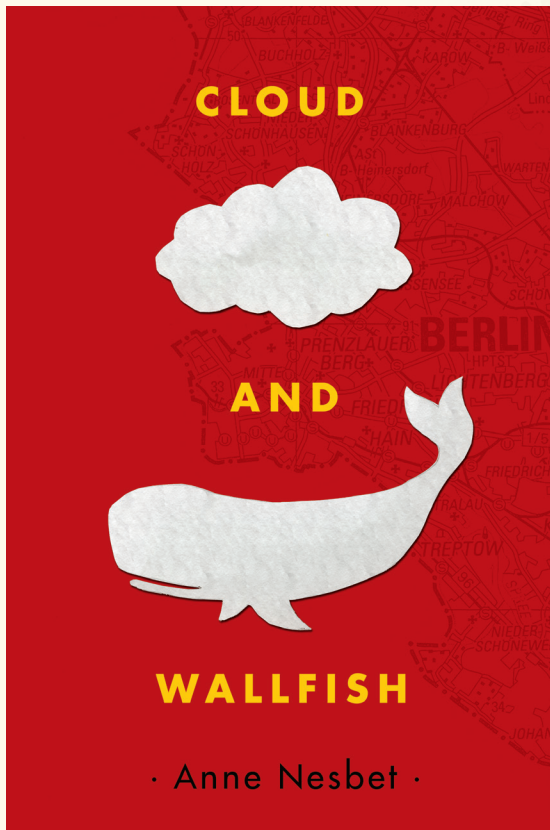


# CLOUD AND WALLFISH



HC: 978-0-7636-8803-5

Also available as an e-book and in audio

## • ABOUT THE BOOK •

Noah Keller has a pretty normal life, until one wild afternoon when his parents pick him up from school and head straight for the airport, telling him on the ride that his name isn't really Noah and he didn't really just turn eleven in March. And he can't even ask them why—not because of his Astonishing Stutter, but because asking questions is against the newly instated rules. (Rule Number Two: Don't talk about serious things indoors, because Rule Number One: They will always be listening.) As Noah—now “Jonah Brown”—and his parents head behind the Iron Curtain into East Berlin, the rules and secrets begin to pile up so quickly that he can hardly keep track of the questions bubbling up inside him: Who, exactly, is listening—and why? When did his mother become fluent in so many languages? And what really happened to the parents of his only friend, Cloud-Claudia, the lonely girl who lives downstairs? In an intricately plotted novel full of espionage and intrigue, friendship and family, Anne Nesbet cracks history wide open and gets right to the heart of what it feels like to be an outsider in a world that's impossible to understand.



photo courtesy of Anne Nesbet

## • ABOUT THE AUTHOR •

**ANNE NESBET** is the author of the novels *The Cabinet of Earths*, *A Box of Gargoyles*, and *The Wrinkled Crown*. Her books have received starred reviews and have been selected for the Kids' Indie Next List, Chicago Public Library's Best of the Best list, and the Bank Street College Best Children's Books of the Year list. An associate professor at the University of California, Berkeley, Anne Nesbet lives with her family in the San Francisco Bay Area.



CANDLEWICK PRESS

## • DISCUSSION QUESTIONS •

1. How would you react if your parents announced everything about your life—even your name and birthday—was going to change *right now*? Do you think Noah should have demanded more answers, even if it was against the rules?
2. Which rule do you think would be the hardest to follow? Why?
3. Cloud-Claudia says, “Names are like codes, yes? Like magic codes. They have everything that ever happened to you squeezed tightly inside them” (pages 151–152). Is she right? How important is your name to who you are?
4. Does Noah agree with Cloud-Claudia about names? Would his parents?
5. Should Noah trust his parents just because he knows they love him?
6. Is what Noah’s parents did wrong? Is it OK to lie to someone you love in order to protect them, or is it more important to always tell the truth?
7. Imagine you are on one side of the Berlin Wall and part of your family is on the other side. What events in your life would you most wish you could share with your relatives on the other side? What might you want to ask them about their lives?
8. The secret police in East Berlin are automatically distrustful of Noah’s family, and when he is in the police station they try to make Noah admit that his parents are spies. Why do some governments use fear as a tactic to control their citizens? Is it really possible to control what everyone in a country does, says, and thinks? Why do people in this story do things their government does not want them to do?
9. Who do you think Noah’s parents really are?
10. At a few points, Noah’s Astonishing Stutter makes it difficult for others to understand him, like when he attends the party or when the police are questioning him. But how is it sometimes an advantage?
11. Language is a very important part of this book. Noah and his family need to speak German once they are in East Berlin, and Noah learns a clue about his mother’s past when he finds out she speaks Hungarian. What languages would be useful for *you* to know, and why?
12. Is speaking a different language like putting on a disguise? If you speak more than one language, are you the same *you*, whatever language you are speaking?
13. The Pan-European Picnic that Noah and his family attend actually did take place. Imagine you were behind the Iron Curtain. Considering the risks involved, would you have gone to the picnic and attempted to cross the border?
14. Noah spends every day holding up his cloud sign at the end of the book. He does this for a long time before Cloud-Claudia finally sees it. How long do you think he might have kept trying, if no one told him to stop? How long would you wait if you were trying to reach a friend that way?
15. If you had to pick one image, like a cloud or a wallfish, to describe yourself, what would you pick, and why? Think of a close friend or family member. What might they choose for you?