



Reading Group Guide

The Chicken Who Saved Us:

The Remarkable Story of Andrew and Frightful

by

Kristin Jarvis Adams

Introduction

A few words whispered by an autistic boy to a chicken may have ultimately saved his life.

When Kristin Adams heard her eight-year-old son, Andrew, talking to his pet chicken, it was nothing out of the ordinary. Many people with autism have a special ability to relate to animals, and Andrew and the chicken he named Frightful were best friends. But what Andrew said to his chicken one day stunned Adams.

“I think my body is trying to kill me,” he told Frightful.

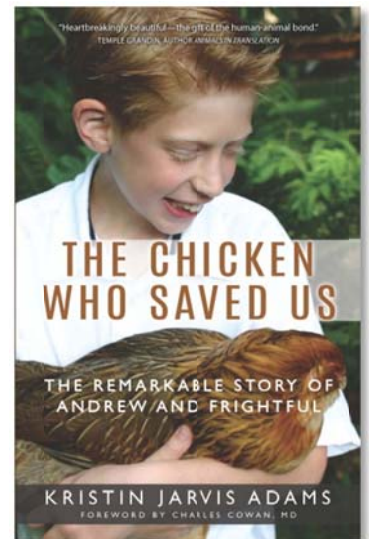
That confession, from a boy to his chicken, catapulted Andrew’s family and medical community into action: To discover and destroy the unseen monster that was claiming his life—a disease so painful and obscure that his medical team had no idea how to treat it.

This beautiful, fierce, and refreshingly honest memoir takes readers on a mother’s journey through the complex landscape of modern medicine to discover the healing bond between a boy and Frightful, the chicken who saves them all.

“Heartbreakingly beautiful—the gift of the human-animal bond.”
TEMPLE GRANDIN, Author, *Animals in Translation*

“Sometimes hope comes in the form of a perfect match or a loving family; other times hope arrives in the form of a soulmate with feathers. This book is proof that the transcendent human-animal bond can offer a very real kind of salvation.”

JULIE BARTON, New York Times Bestselling author of *Dog Medicine, How My Dog Saved Me From Myself*



The Chicken Who Saved Us

Discussion Questions

- Research shows that the human-animal bond can aid in healing from stroke, injury, PTSD, lower blood pressure, and alleviate anxiety and depression. Have you experienced a special bond with an animal that helped you to heal?
- Why do you think it was easier for Andrew to communicate with Frightful as opposed to his parents or another family member?
- How was Hannah affected by her brother's recurring illness? Would you have parented in a different way?
- Kristin describes an unexpected encounter at the grocery store with a woman who filled her cart with food, purchased it and sent her home, saying, "You are taken care of tonight. Bless you." Has anyone ever shown you a random act of kindness? How did it make you feel?
- After a desperate midnight phone call to a local church, Pastor Becki encourages Kristin to accept help from others. What did she mean by, "You will have people now, people who can hold you, your family, and your story."
- Sue becomes Andrew's closest human friend. How was her relationship different than Frightful's, and in what ways was it similar?
- What did Sue's stories offer Andrew that simple conversation could not?
- At what point in the story does Andrew turn to superheroes as a way of connecting with his feelings? Why superheroes?
- Raising a special needs child with the addition of a medical crisis, can easily fracture a family. What do you think allowed Jon and Kristin to function well as a team?
- In the book, Kristin refers to her relationship with Jon as "extreme tag-team parenting." Have you ever put your marriage on hold while dealing with transition or crisis? How did you navigate through it?
- What would you sacrifice for your children?
- At one point, Kristin asks Frightful who she is. What do you think?
- Near the end of the book, Kristin admits that healing for her is an ongoing process. When she let go of her need for a perfect life, she was able to embrace her "new normal." What does that mean to you?
- After reading *The Chicken Who Saved Us*, what themes stand out the most? What could you relate to?

About Kristin Jarvis Adams

Kristin Jarvis Adams is an advocate for children with special needs. Her speaking engagements have included: Seattle Festival of Trees Gala, Rotary, Community Bible Study, high school graduations, and local school boards. She serves on the Board of the Lake Washington School District Transition Academy, one of the nation's leading transition programs for adult students with special needs. She is a member of the Autism Center Guild at Seattle Children's Hospital, a fundraising and awareness group supporting children with ASD in Washington, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho.

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Kristin is available to discuss *THE CHICKEN WHO SAVED US* with reading groups in person or via Skype.

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As a psych/sociology major from back in the early Jurassic Era, I'm intrigued with how people react to challenges. Face it; life *is* challenging, and we like tapping into stories about people who persevere against all odds. We like stories that make us think, make us better people, and make us remember their stories long after we finished their book. We call it "scratching my soul." And that's what our books do.