

**Alexandra Hopewell, Labor Coach**  
by Dori Hillestad Butler

**Teacher's Guide**

**Note from the Author:**

When I was pregnant with my second child, my first child (who was 4 at the time) told me he wanted to be there when the baby was born. He wanted to cut the baby's umbilical cord. I didn't think a hospital birthing room was any place for a 4-year-old, so I kept hoping he'd forget about that idea. But as the weeks and months went on, he didn't forget. He grew more adamant. This was really important to him. So I talked with my midwife about the possibility. She said she'd had other siblings there during childbirth. This was something we could do...if we prepared our child for what he would see and we had someone else there to take care of him. He did get to be there when the baby was born. And he did get to cut his baby brother's umbilical cord. It was a really special time for our family. So I always knew I would one day write a book about another child who wanted to be there when his or her mom had a baby...a few years later, Alex Hopewell appeared in my head.

**Pre-reading Activity:**

Look closely at the cover art. What kind of book do you think this is going to be? What do you think is going on in the picture? What does the art tell you about the main character?

**Prediction Guide:**

- Ch. 1 Do you think Reece's egg will break?
- Ch. 2 Do you think Alex's parents will let her be there when the baby is born?
- Ch. 3 What do you think is going to happen when Mrs. Ryder, Alex and Alex's parents have another conference?
- Ch. 4 Do you think Alex is right when she says Mrs. Ryder "hates" her? Why or why not?
- Ch. 5 Do you think the baby is a boy or a girl?
- Ch. 6 How will this incident with Mom's ring affect Alex and Mom's relationship?
- Ch. 7 Do you think Alex will try and get even with Reece?
- Ch. 8 What do you think will happen when Alex meets Dr. Anneling? Do you think Dr. Anneling will allow Alex to be there when the baby is born?
- Ch. 9 Do you think Alex is going to change her mind about being there when the baby is born?

- Ch. 10 What do you think is going to happen to Alex when she gets home?
- Ch. 11 Do you think Alex and Ben will work things out? Why do you think Ben is really mad at Alex?
- Ch. 12 How might Alex change after spending the day with Olivia?
- Ch. 13 What do you think is going to happen when Alex goes back to school? What kinds of things might be different?
- Ch. 14 What do you think is going to happen next?
- Ch. 15 How do you think Alex's dad will react when he hears what Alex did tonight? How about Mrs. Ryder? Ben? Olivia? Reece?
- Ch. 16 Do you think Alex will be a good big sister?

**Comprehension Guide:**

1. Who is the narrator of this story. Describe her.
2. What is Alex's main goal in the story? Why do you think her goal is so important to her?
3. Compare Alex to Ben. How are they alike? How are they different?
4. What are some things Alex learns from Olivia? What are some things Olivia learns from Alex?
5. Of all the characters in the book, who do you identify with most?
6. What kinds of things does Mom do to help prepare Alex to be there when the baby is born?
7. Do you think Mrs. Ryder is too hard on Alex? Use examples from the book to support your answer.
8. Do you think Alex should have gotten suspended for fighting with Reece (ch. 10)? Why or why not?
9. Could Alex have gotten Ian's hat back without getting into a fight with Reece?
10. Do you think Olivia would fit in at public school? Why or why not?
11. What was your favorite scene in the book? Why?
12. What if Dad had been home when Mom went into labor. How do you think the story would have been different?
13. Did the ending surprise you?
14. How has Alex changed over the course of the book?

## **Discussion Guide:**

1. What do you think about kids being there in the hospital birthing room when their baby brother or sister is born? Do you think it's a good idea? Why or why not? Would you want to see your baby brother or sister come into the world?
2. Tell about a time when you wanted to do something that kids don't usually get to do. Did you get to do it? Was it what you expected?
3. What do you think about homeschooling vs. traditional schooling? If you attend a public or private school, would you like to be homeschooled? If you are homeschooled, would you like to attend a public or private school? Why or why not?
4. Ben is Alex's best friend. Do you think having a best friend of the opposite sex is different from having a best friend of the same sex? Why do you feel that way?
5. What do you think of Alex? Discuss her strengths and weaknesses. Is she somebody you'd like to be friends with? Why or why not?
6. Have you ever had a teacher you didn't get along with very well or a teacher you feel didn't understand you? What did you do about it? Did things get better as the year went on? Is there something Alex could have done to improve her relationship with Mrs. Ryder?
7. What do you think the author was trying to say in this book?

## **Multiple Intelligence Projects:**

### Verbal/Linguistic:

Try carrying an egg around with you for a week like Alex's class did. The egg should go everywhere you go. Keep a daily journal about your experience.

Or

Write the news story that might appear in the local paper about Alex and her baby brother.

### Logical/Mathematical:

Make a brief timeline of the major events in the story. Be sure to place each scene in its proper location. List at least 10 major events. Circle the event that you believe is the major turning point in the story.

Or

Make a list of all the high school, college or professional sports matches going on this week. Like Ben, choose which teams you think are going to win. Do this for the next 6 weeks. How did you do? Graph your results.

### Visual/Spatial:

Design a poster for Alexandra Hopewell, Labor Coach with the purpose of convincing others to read the book. Include the title, author's name, publisher, copyright and a few words to describe the book.

### Body/Kinesthetic:

Choose your favorite scene in the book, then act it out. Don't write a script. Just do it as you remember it. Improvise if you'd like.

### Musical/Rhythmic:

Ask your parents or teacher to play some "soothing" music for you. What did they play? Did you like it? Why or why not? How is it similar to your favorite kind of music? How is it different? Would you rather listen to this music or your favorite music when you're stressed?

### Interpersonal:

Divide your students into boy/girl pairs. Ask each pair to pretend they are Alex's parents. How would they deal with Alex's request to be there when the baby is born? How would they deal with Mrs. Ryder? How would they deal with Alex's suspension?

### Intrapersonal:

Write a letter to Alex and tell her about an experience you've had that is similar to something that happened to her in the book.

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