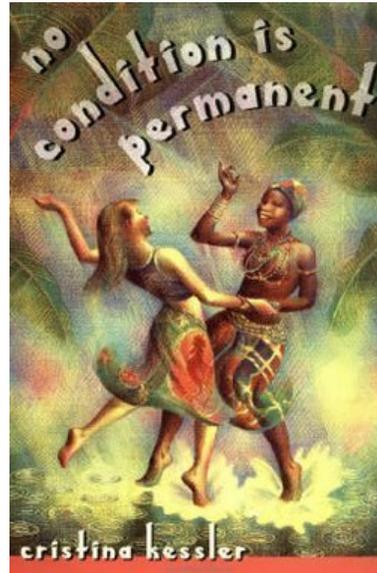
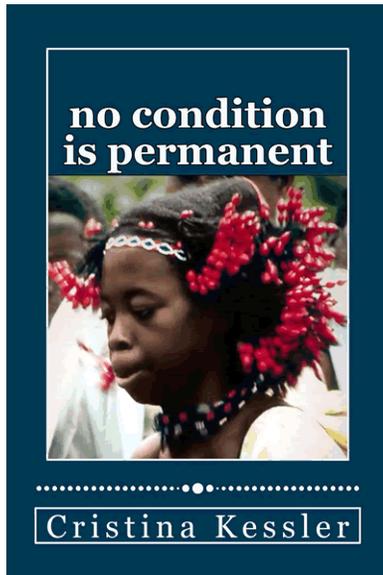




Cristina Kessler
Learning with the Books
No condition is permanent



Parent-Teacher Guide

NO CONDITION IS PERMANENT

<https://www.cristinakessler.com/product/no-condition-is-permanent/>



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This book definitely took me way back to probably the most difficult place we lived in Africa. We were in Sierra Leone from 1981 to 1983. No electricity, getting struck by lightning while in bed one night, having my dog Budley die in my lap after being bitten by a green mamba, and snakes in the house were just a few of the challenges. And yet the place is one that I will never forget for good times as well.

We did live on the edge of the bush, and one day I saw a clearly traumatized young girl/woman wander past our house in a daze. We tried to give her some food or water, but she could not be reached. I think that experience planted the seed for this book.

Few of my books have elicited from me such strong reactions, and while re-reading it I went from laughing out loud to feeling my pulse race as the tension builds. It's a book about fitting in in a foreign culture while recognizing the limits of cultural acceptance. It also has an important message – change comes from within a culture and cannot be forced or demanded by anyone outside the culture. Providing information to those who can make the changes is the most important thing someone can do.

This book was well ahead of its time, broaching a subject, female circumcision, long before most American kids would have heard of it. I wrote it because I wanted American kids to be just like Khadi and help new kids from other countries feel included in their new settings. Khadi taught Jodie the basic skills of daily tasks. And a friendship that means so much to each of them evolved. I love that Jodie teaches Khadi how to read and changes her life forever in return for all the great lessons Khadi gave her new American friend.

It's almost embarrassing how much Jodie reminds me of myself. Her cheeky observations; her intense loyalty to her mother Val and friend Khadi; her fearlessness that's not always the best choice; her love of adventure and her stubbornness which leads to a series of wrong moves. (I think it would be wise to say "series of wrong – and right – moves. You don't want to leave your young reader with a negative feeling.)



1. Possible discussion topics:

- Tradition is very important to Khadi and her community. What are Jodie's biggest mistakes in her reactions to tradition?
- Does Jodie have the right to reject things done based on tradition?
- Have you ever tried to fight tradition?
- Do your grandparents have different beliefs from you? Do you respect your elders? If yes, why and if no, why not?
- Do you think traditions help or hinder life?
- Is there a favorite family tradition you plan to carry on to your children one day?
- Do you think your country has a strong connection to tradition?

Jodie and her mom are awfully close, but Jodie still thinks she knows best in a lot of ways.

2. Courage is a major theme in this book:

- Did it take courage for Jodie and her mom to pack up everything and move to Africa?
- Would you want to do the same thing if you were given the opportunity to move to a foreign country?
- Has your family ever made a big move from a place you knew and loved?
- Were you happy about it?
- If not, did it take long to adapt to the new place?
- If you were to move to a different continent what things would you take with you?
- Are there any parts of your culture that you couldn't live without?
- What does Jodie do that really upsets Khadi the first time?



- In this new place, with traditions new to you, have you thought you knew better and forged on with a plan based on your original culture?

3. Language skills:

- Have you ever learned another language?
- What is it and how often do you speak it?
- What are the benefits of learning a new language?
- Initially Jodie rejects the idea of learning a new language. When does she change her mind, and why does she change her mind?
- Once she starts speaking Krio does she get more acceptance from the village?
- Do you think in this day and age being multilingual is an important thing?

4. Cultural Awareness:

- One of the earliest things Khadi does for Jodie is to teach how to dress in the traditional way. Is Jodie accepting of the change?
- Have you ever been someplace you felt like you stuck out like a sore thumb?
- Do you think something as small as dressing correctly shows respect for another culture?
- Have you ever seen someone do something in your culture that you found unacceptable? Did you do anything about it?
- When Khadi suddenly starts to disappear for days at a time Jodie is confused and angry. Did that give her the right to do the things she does, like following Khadi and the girls into the bush?
- Did this show disrespect to the local people?
- Have you ever made a cultural blunder and had someone point it out to you?



- Do you think it's ok to try and force your beliefs on another culture?

5. Growing up:

- Jodie and her mom have to make a sudden and hurried departure from the village. What was the last straw for Jodie's mom?
- Was Jodie sorry for what she did. Does she regret her decisions eventually? Did her actions and choices show disrespect to her mom too?
- Have you ever followed your own idea and disregarded advice because you thought you were right?
- What was the final outcome of this choice? Did you regret your actions or defend them?
- Does Jodie try to defend her choices?
- Do you think she learned anything about herself, or her mom from making the choices she did?
- Would you have followed the same course as Jodie?
- If you could give Jodie a piece of advice, what would it be?

6. Final outcomes:

- Are Jodie and her mom glad to be home?
- Does Jodie eventually apologize to her mom, or Khadi or the village?
- What is the thing that finally sets them free to resume a happy life?
- Have you ever had the experience of viewing someone with only a negative perspective? Is that kind, or helpful?
- What changes the villagers' minds about Jodie and her impulsive behavior?
- Khadi uses the biggest and best gift Jodie gave her to give Jodie and Val relief. What was that gift and what did she do with it?
- Do you think Jodie learned anything about herself? Have you ever had an experience that taught you something new about yourself?



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- Do you care to share it?
- Have you ever forgiven someone? Did that make you feel better?
- Have you ever wanted to be forgiven for a mistake?
- To forgive is to be charitable. Could you forgive someone for an action they did that really upset you?
- Val has a personal lesson too regarding cross-cultural issues. What was it?
- As countries become more culturally mixed what do you think is the best approach to making things work culturally?
- Why is the title No Condition is Permanent important?

