

## ABOUT

### *the Author*

**P**AMELA EHRENBERG grew up in a suburb of Baltimore, spent time in Philadelphia and western Maryland, and has lived in Washington, D.C., for ten years. She has taught seventh and eighth grade English at a Washington, D.C., junior high school and has worked for nonprofit organizations concerned with high-quality public education. Pamela currently resides near the National Zoo with her husband and daughter. This is her first published novel. For more about the author, visit [www.pamelaehrenberg.com](http://www.pamelaehrenberg.com).



## ETHAN, SUSPENDED

Written by Pamela Ehrenberg

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5.5" x 8.25" ❖ 272 pages ❖ Ages 11 and up  
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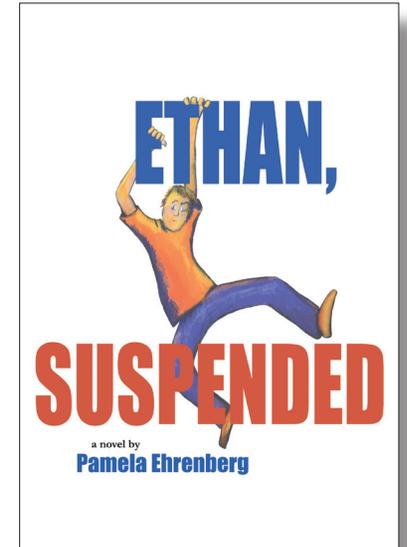
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*With my old-people lunches in wrinkled plastic bags, I was basically a freak of nature at Parker Junior High.*

### THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

- ❖ Diversity
- ❖ Family relationships
- ❖ Peer pressure
- ❖ Civil rights
- ❖ American history
- ❖ Racism
- ❖ Friendship

## **VOCABULARY**

Look up the following words in the dictionary:  
amenable, blockbusting, subsidizing



## **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE READING THE BOOK**

1. What are some of your favorite foods? What would you think about a kid who brought cream cheese sandwiches and store-brand ginger ale for lunch? What about a kid who brought cold hot dogs on white bread?

2. Who in your family (or extended family) are you closest to and why? Are there family members you wish you were closer to?

3. What stereotypes have you heard about kids who live in suburbs and kids who live in cities? Why do you think people believe these things?



## **QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON AFTER READING THE BOOK**

1. What do you think the title means? Have you ever been “suspended” between two places or cultures?

2. Racial diversity is obvious, but other types of diversity also affect people’s interactions with each other. What types of diversity exist at Parker Junior High and at Maple Heights Middle School? What about at your school?

3. In Chapter 14, Ethan wonders if people really need music. Do you think so? Why or why not?

4. In Chapter 22, Ethan wonders whether his grandparents are heroes or cowards, whether they are selfish or just people like anyone else. What do you think and why?

5. In Chapter 23, Ethan says that he thinks the civil rights battle has been won, but Diego says racial issues are worse than they were in 1968. Do you agree with Ethan or Diego or neither? Why?

6. People in Maple Heights place a high value on education. What clues does the book give that Sharita, Diego, and the Taylors also value education? What obstacles do they face regarding their education?

7. How did your views of Ethan’s parents and grandparents change during the novel? Describe a time when your views of one of your own family members changed as you grew up or as you saw that person in different circumstances.

8. The book ends before Ethan goes back to school in Maple Heights. How do you think Ethan will relate to his old friends?



## **ACTIVITIES**

1. At Parker Junior High, Ethan is surprised to find that the restroom lacks soap and paper towels, and that the textbooks are older than the books at Maple Heights Middle School. Interview a school administrator to find out where your school’s

budget comes from and why not all public schools have the same amount of money.

3. Both Diego and Daron experience the pull of gang activities. Why do you think some people are attracted to gangs? Design a poster or public awareness commercial that urges youth not to become involved in gangs.

4. Ethan’s social studies teacher lists a few people and events that shaped the civil rights movement. What items would you add to this list (see page 81)? Choose one person or event and prepare a presentation for your class similar to the presentation Ethan had to make in the book.

5. Cities across the country faced violence after Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated. Interview someone who was alive during that time about what happened after the assassination. Convey the results in a poster, poem, or song.

6. Ethan and Sharita work together to raise money for Hungry for Music, which meets a need in their own community. What needs exist in your community? As a class or in groups, plan and execute a service project to meet one or more of these needs.

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