

# the *Chance to Fly* READING GUIDE

Thirteen-year-old Nat Beacon loves a lot of things: her dog, Warbucks; her best friend, Chloe; and competing on her wheelchair racing team, the Zoomers, to name a few. But there's one thing she's absolutely OBSESSED with: MUSICALS! From *Hamilton* to *Les Mis*, there's not a cast album she hasn't memorized and belted along to. She's never actually been in a musical though, or even seen an actor who uses a wheelchair for mobility on stage. Would someone like Nat ever get cast?

But when Nat's family moves from California to New Jersey, Nat stumbles upon auditions for a kids' production of *Wicked*, one of her favorite musicals ever! And she gets into the ensemble! The other cast members are supercool and inclusive (well, most of them)—especially Malik, the male lead and the cutest boy Nat's ever seen. But when things go awry a week before opening night, will Nat be able to cast her fears and insecurities aside and “Defy Gravity” in every sense of the song title?



**“The perfect read for any dream chaser.”**

—KRISTIN CHENOWETH, Tony and Emmy Award winning actress and singer

**“Unique, inspirational, and full of heart.”**

—CHRIS COLFER, *New York Times* bestselling author and Golden Globe winning actor

**“I only wish that *The Chance to Fly* was written when I was a teenager.”**

—JUDITH HEUMANN, international disability rights activist and author of *Being Heumann*

**“A story both fine and also uplifting—in both senses of the word, moral and physical!”**

—Gregory Maguire, author of *Wicked*

## About the authors



Photo credit: Brigitte Jouxrel

**Ali Stroker** made history as the first person in a wheelchair to appear on Broadway and win a Tony Award. She made her Broadway debut in the revival of *Spring Awakening* and then played Ado Annie in the revival of *Oklahoma!* Ali graduated from NYU Tisch School of the Arts and has starred and recurred in numerous television shows including *Glee*. Her work as a humanitarian includes speaking and performing around the world, helping people with and without disabilities through her message of “Making your Limitations into Opportunities.”



Photo credit: Marques Walls

**Stacy Davidowitz** is the author of the Camp Rolling Hills series and coauthor of *Camp Rolling Hills the Musical*, which continues to have productions across the country. She is also the author of the Hanazuki chapter books based on Hasbro's YouTube series. Stacy has written award-winning plays that have been produced regionally and internationally. When she is not writing, she teaches creative writing and musical theater in schools, foster care facilities, and juvenile detention centers. She is a graduate of Tufts University and Columbia University, where she earned degrees in drama and acting. Stacy lives in Manhattan with her husband and twin boys.

## Chapter One: A House Is Not a Home

The story begins with Nat Beacon playing a musical theater version of the License Plate Game while driving cross-country with her parents. Create your own car game, infusing a passion of yours. It can be a completely original game or a standard car game with a twist!

On page 3, Nat talks about escaping into the *Hamilton* soundtrack—time melts and her own problems are temporarily gone. Is there a particular soundtrack, album, or song that feels like an escape? What about the music helps you feel that way—the lyrics, the melody, both?

On page 12, Nat thinks, “A house isn’t a home if I can’t get inside of it.” What do you think Nat is looking for in a home beyond accessibility? What is the definition of a home? What makes your home feel like home?

## Chapter Two: There Are Worse Things I Could Do

On page 24, Nat describes her dream role of Nessarose in *Wicked*: “She was yearning for love. Yearning to be accepted. Yearning to feel normal.” Why does Nat identify with Nessarose so much? What character from a book or TV show or movie do you identify with and why?

## Chapter Three: My Shot

Nat is dying to audition for *Wicked*, but her parents are reluctant. If you were Nat, what else would you say or want to say to your parents to convince them? Why do you think Nat’s parents don’t want her to audition? Write a letter from Nat to her parents, articulating her argument even further.

We don’t see Nat preparing her audition. Write the scene! How does she decide what she’ll sing? What she’ll wear?

## Chapter Four: Bring It On

On page 35, it says, “Nat didn’t know Hudson and Rey, but she wanted to be best friends with them.” What is it about them that Nat was drawn to? What draws you to your friends?

On page 41, Savannah breaks the news to Nat: “Nessarose is in a wheelchair in act one. But then, in act two, Elphaba gives her the power to walk.” How do you think Nat feels in that moment? Write Nat’s internal monologue—what’s she thinking?

## Chapter Five: Pulled

On page 46, Nat tells Malik, “I love *Wicked*. But I’m not sure *Wicked* loves me.” What does she mean by that, and do you agree?

On pages 48 and 49, Nat describes her out-of-body experience while auditioning. Have you ever felt that nervous-excited adrenaline rush that totally takes you out of yourself? Describe your experience.

## Chapter Six: I Hope I Get It

On page 60, Nat stops chatting with her new friends and calls for her parents. Add another page to the chat. What do the Oz Bounderz say next?

## Chapter Seven: The History of Wrong Guys

On pages 71–73, the Broadway Bounders participate in the warm-up game One Thing You Might Not Know About Me. If you were playing the game, what would you say about yourself and why?

On page 75, Calvin the director tells Nat, “We think it’s best for you to sing the song, not worry about all the movement.” Nat is speechless with anger and disappointment. Why does Calvin make this decision, and why does Nat feel it’s wrong? Write out what Nat *wants* to tell Calvin.

### Chapter Eight: The Nicest Kids in Town

On page 79, Nat defines Miscast as when actors sing songs by characters they would never get to play in real life. If you were performing as part of the Miscast gala, what song would you sing and why?

On page 81, Savannah suggests that Nat can tell Rey “what she can and can’t do as Nessarose, so she can portray her realistically.” But Nat doesn’t want to be a wheelchair consultant. If you were Nat, how would you explain your reasoning to Savannah?

### Chapter Nine: One Step Closer

In this chapter, Hudson and Nat work together to *translate* the choreography. How does that play out and why is their collaboration so meaningful to Nat?

On page 102, Hudson uses Nat’s wheelchair, Eliza. How does it help with the translation process, and how does it make Nat feel?

On page 106, Nat points out that in *Wicked*, Glinda makes Boq ask out Nessarose as a form of charity, just because she’s in a wheelchair. What does Nat think and feel about that plot point in terms of her crush on Malik and her own aspirations to play a “legit, normal leading lady with love stuff”?

On page 107, Hudson and Nat talk about *willing suspension of disbelief*. What does that mean to Hudson? To Nat? What does it mean to you?



### Chapter Ten: Waving Through a Window

On page 115, Nat thinks, “How can I show my parents I can do more, when stuff like this keeps happening to me?” Make a list of all the ways that Nat has proven she’s independent and fierce, and another list of obstacles she’s faced so far. Looking at the two lists, what would you tell Nat to encourage her?

On page 117, Nat thinks about how she can feel her and Chloe’s 2,928 miles of separation in Chloe’s underuse of the heart emoji. How would you define what’s going on with their friendship? How do you imagine Chloe felt when Nat moved away? Write a series of texts or a letter from Chloe to Nat, where she really opens up about how she feels being separated from her best friend.

### Chapter Eleven: There’s a Fine, Fine Line

On pages 129 to 130, Nat and Rey bond over their insecurities and securities about their respective bodies. How does this conversation change the way Nat sees herself? Do you think it affects how she feels when Malik gives her a piggyback ride on page 133?

### Chapter Twelve: If It’s True

Throughout this chapter, the Oz Bouncerz play Truth or Truth, and really open up. What would your truth be if you were playing this game with your closest friends?

On pages 143 to 146, Nat opens up to the Oz Bouncerz about her wheelchair. How does Nat feel while sharing, and why is this such a huge moment for her?

On page 149, Nat realizes that Savannah doesn’t see Nat as a threat to her relationship with Malik. She only sees her as the perfect wingwoman. How does this change how Nat sees herself?

### Chapter Thirteen: I'm Here

On pages 155 to 156, Nat and Hudson finally show off their dancing to Calvin, and after Calvin's positive response, Nat is euphoric! But then Savannah says, "Nat, your little dance is adorable." What do you think Savannah's intention is? How does that make Nat feel?

### Chapter Fourteen: The Smell of Rebellion

On pages 164 to 166, Nat feels waves of anger rolling through her as her friends joke in the chat. Why is she so angry, and how does that motivate her to take action to restore the show?

On page 170, Nat brings up the Wizard from *The Wizard of Oz* and says, "He's just a weak dude speaking into a microphone, and he can't help them. But everything Dorothy and her friends needed was inside them all along." What is Nat trying to say? How does that connect to the Oz Bounderz resurrecting *Wicked*?

The Oz Bounderz' bios are on pages 179 to 181. If you were to perform for the Broadway Karaoke Kickstarter, what would you write in your bio? What song would you choose to sing?

### Chapter Fifteen: Superboy and the Invisible Girl

On pages 184 to 185, what does Savannah want Nat to do? How does that make Nat feel? Would you do as Savannah demands if you were Nat? Write an alternate version of the scene, where Nat tells Savannah no, nope, not gonna do it.

On page 187, Nat watches Hudson talk to his mom before she huffs and goes upstairs, presumably to change her shirt. Write out what you think Hudson and his mom say to each other.

On page 191, Nat hesitates to say what part she wants to play in *Hamilton* because of the Miscast rule. What's her thought process? What qualifies as a Miscast and why? Do you agree?

On page 196, Nat thinks, "*He could be that boy, but I'm not that girl.*" How does she come to that conclusion?

### Chapter Sixteen: Going Down

When Nat storms out of the theater building, Savannah says she's being melodramatic. Why does Nat disagree? What does the out of order elevator mean to Nat on a deeper level?

### Chapter Seventeen: Raise You Up

On page 208, how does Malik use Nat's words—"Our show is bigger than us"—to motivate Nat to channel Elphaba and do whatever it takes to keep *Wicked* alive?

On page 212, Savannah tells Nat, "After you danced for Calvin, I realized you didn't need me to protect you or to make you feel cool." How did that affect how Savannah treated Nat? What does Nat teach Savannah in this scene, and how might that affect how Savannah will treat her sister?

### Chapter Eighteen: The Shoe Fits

In this chapter, Nat experiences a roller coaster of emotions: anxiety, despair, hope, and giddy shock. Write out or map out Nat's emotional journey—what she feels, when she feels it, and why.

On page 224, Savannah proposes a solution to Jac's absence. Why is it so meaningful to Nat?

### Chapter Nineteen: Like a Comet Pulled from Orbit

What about the lyrics of "For Good" from *Wicked* make Nat think about Chloe?

On page 234, Nat tells her parents, "I need to test the limits, and I want your support." How does this land with her parents? How has Nat been testing the limits all summer long?

### Chapter Twenty: Tomorrow Is

Before Chloe saves the day, how was Nat planning on "flying" in the song "Defying Gravity"? If you were directing, how might you stage Elphaba's flight?

### Chapter Twenty-One: The Most Important Night

On page 247, when Nat asks Sierra why she didn't audition for *Wicked*, she replies, "I—I didn't know I could." Nat then nods with understanding. What is the unspoken understanding? How does meeting Nat change Sierra's belief in herself?

### Chapter Twenty-Two: What I Was Born to Do

While Nat performs "Defying Gravity," she connects the character of Elphaba and the lyrics she sings to her own life. How is Nat similar to Elphaba? What lyrics seem to reflect Nat's real-life experiences?

### Chapter Twenty-Three: Because I Knew You

On pages 261 to 262, Malik asks Nat to dance. What is so special about their slow dance? How does Nat feel while dancing with him?

Why is the kiss on page 263 so important to Nat beyond the fact that she's just KISSED HER CRUSH?! (Hearts! Squeal!)

