

Things Not Seen, by Andrew Clements



About the Book...

Bobby Phillips wakes up one morning to discover he's a missing person. Not that he's been kidnapped — he's still in his own home — but he's turned invisible! Worried that he'll become a medical curiosity, his parents decide to keep it a secret and Bobby is more alone than he's ever been in his life. Then he befriends the blind girl, Alicia, who doesn't know how different he really is. Can Bobby trust her with his big secret? And will he stay invisible forever? Award-winning author Andrew Clements explores all the exciting "what-if" possibilities of being invisible, but his real triumph is in his characters, who must learn to reach out to one another to prevent their own "invisibility."



About the Author...

Andrew Clements, born on 7th May, 1949, is an American children's book writer of repute, who stuck fame with the publication of his first novel *Frindle*. Over ten million copies of his books have sold to date and he has been nominated for a multitude of state awards and has won two Christopher Awards and an Edgar Award. Other awards include the Children's Book Award of Georgia, the Sasquatch Award for Children's Books, and another similar award from Massachusetts and Rhode Island. He also deservingly claimed the Young Hoosier Award for the year 2000.

Mr. Clements lived in New Jersey and Illinois and grew up to become a teacher, a profession he continued for seven years along with his college studies. He ventured into a literary career by writing for picture books but soon drifted towards children's novels. Mr. Clements taught in the public schools near Chicago for seven years before moving East to begin a career in publishing and writing. He lives with his wife in central Massachusetts and has four grown children. His website is andrewclements.com.

Discussion Questions:

1. In *Things Not Seen*, Bobby Phillips is invisible. This is clearly a fictional story, but people can be "invisible" in real life too when they are ignored or shunned by the rest of society. Give some examples of the different ways that both

- individuals and groups of people have been treated as "invisible," using both historical and modern examples.
2. Imagine the effects this stigma had on people, and how it would feel if they were the "invisible ones." Why do you think that there are so many examples of people being treated this way? Are things improving, or are there still people in today's world who aren't being counted?
 3. Discuss examples of people breaking out of the "invisible" status. How did these individuals make their presence felt? What can we learn from them? (e.g., Rosa Parks)
 4. Being seen by other people is a fundamental truth — a "fact of life" — one which Bobby unexpectedly loses. What are some of the fundamental truths in your lives, the things you take most for granted?
 5. Imagine waking up to discover that this fundamental change has taken place. You may be invisible like Bobby, or it may be another change entirely. How does it affect you? How do other people react? What do they do?
 6. Discuss the ways that Bobby behaved differently after he became invisible. How did he change throughout the course of the story? In what ways did he remain fundamentally the same?
 7. In *Things Not Seen*, Alicia describes the plot of the famous H.G. Wells story *The Invisible Man*. In this story, a scientist realizes that there are drawbacks to being invisible, and it leads him to commit terrible crimes. Reread her summary together, and then discuss ways that invisibility could bring out the worst in a person. Would they behave in cruel, illegal, or dangerous ways if they were invisible and thought no one could see them?
 8. Why do you follow rules or behave in a "correct" manner. Is it just to stay out of trouble? Is this a good enough reason to follow a rule? What are the real reasons that should guide your behavior?