

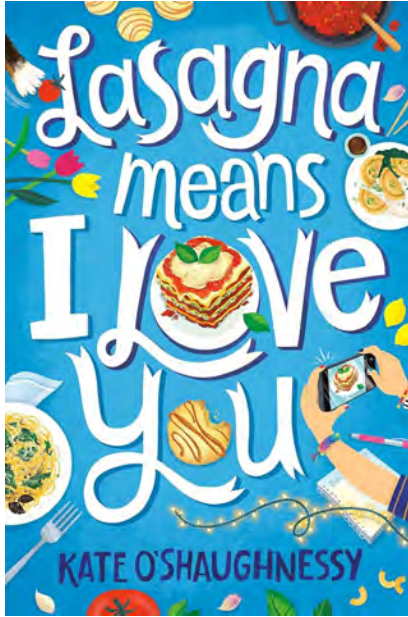


The Book Planter



Ag in the Classroom

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September 2025 Chapter Book

Lasagna Means I Love You

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What are the essential ingredients that make a family? Eleven-year-old Mo is making up her *own* recipe in this unforgettable story that's a little sweet, a little sour, and totally delicious.

Nan was all the family Mo ever needed. But suddenly she's gone, and Mo finds herself in foster care after her uncle decides she's not worth sticking around for. Nan left her a notebook and advised her to get a hobby, like ferret racing or palm reading. But how could a *hobby* fix anything in her newly topsy-turvy life? Then Mo finds a handmade cookbook filled with someone else's family recipes. Even though Nan never cooked, Mo can't tear her eyes away. Not so much from the recipes, but the stories attached to them. Soon Mo finds herself asking everyone she meets for *their* family recipes. Teaching herself to make them. Collecting the stories behind them. Building a *website* to share them. And, okay, secretly hoping that a long-lost relative will find her and give her a family recipe all her own. But when everything starts to unravel *again*, Mo realizes that if she wants a family recipe—or a real family—she's going to have to make it up herself.

Discussion Questions:¹

1. At first, Mo's website did not really see much traffic. What happened to propel her on her journey?
2. Why do you think the book is made up of letters that she wrote to Nan, who had already passed away?
3. Why do you think there is such a large gap between her January 1 letter and her May 8 letter?
4. Which recipe do you think you would like to try?
5. Stories that come with the recipes were one of the best parts of the project for Mo. Which story did you like the most and why?
6. Mo's Uncle and June and Tate disappointed Mo. How do you think her Uncle and June and Tate could have done better?

Activity 1: Recipes on a Budget²

1. Say to students, “Healthy eating is important at every age, and can be done on a budget. Healthy choices include eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy or fortified dairy alternatives. When deciding on what to eat or drink, choose options that are full of nutrients and limited in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.”
2. Tell the students that they will be making recipes for a healthy meal, while keeping a budget in mind.
3. Provide the following tips to the students:
 - Plan your meals for the week based on your food budget and make a grocery list that includes staples and perishables. Use the [Shop Simple with MyPlate](#) tool to find savings in your area and discover new ways to prepare budget-friendly foods.
 - Locate the “unit price” on the shelf sticker near the item price. Compare different brands and sizes for the best money-saving option.
 - Add beans and canned or frozen vegetables to bulk up your meals and make your food dollars go farther. You will reap the benefits of extra fiber, vitamins, and nutrients while feeling full.
 - Save money by buying larger quantities of foods that store well like whole grains, canned or dried beans, and frozen vegetables. Don’t overbuy foods that you will throw out later.
 - Grocery stores rotate their sales and buying what is on sale is a great way to save money and get variety. Do the same with frozen and canned items.
4. Tell students they have \$40.00 to feed a family of four a healthy meal. They can choose a lunch or dinner. They must abide by the rules of MyPlate ([see MyPlate Create Your Own Menu file](#), attached). They may use grocery store websites to research prices of ingredients, or research recipes as a guide for their recipe. Encourage students to read and interpret nutrition labels to note the value of each ingredient.
5. Once they have completed their Create Your Own Menu worksheet, have each student present their meals to the class.

Sources

1. <https://www.sjpl.org/blogs/post/ms-ilas-middle-grade-reading-club-lasagna-means-i-love-you-by-kate-oshaughnessy/>
2. <https://www.myplate.gov/tip-sheet/eat-healthy-budget>

K-6 Subject Areas: English Language Arts, Healthful Living, Social Studies

English Language Arts

- RL.K.1 With guidance and support, identify a detail in a familiar text.
- RL.K.2 With guidance and support, identify the main topic of a familiar text.
- RL.1.1 Identify details in a familiar text.
- RL.1.2 Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
- RL.2.2 Identify the main topic of text.
- RL.2.4 Identify words that relate to the topic of a text.
- RL.3.2 Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
- RL.3.4 Identify key words that complete sentences in a text.

- RL.3.5 Locate key facts or information in a familiar text.
- RL.4.1 Identify explicit details in an informational text.
- RL.4.4 Determine the meaning of words in a text.
- RL.5.1 Identify words in the text to answer a question about explicit information.

Healthful Living

- K.NPA.1 Identify sources of food and water and their importance to the body.
- 1.NPA.1 Describe where food and water come from and their importance to the body.
- 2.NPA.1 Explain where food and water come from and their importance to the body.
- 3.NPA.1 Recall why the body needs a variety of foods.
- 4.NPA.1 Interpret tools to apply nutrition information.
- 5.NPA.1 Use tools and resources to interpret nutrition information.
- 6.NPA.1 Compare tools such as Dietary Guidelines and the Nutrition Facts Label as they relate to the planning of healthy nutrition and physical activity.
- 6.NPA.2 Explore the benefits of consuming a variety of foods and beverages.

Social Studies

- K.B.1 Understand cultural practices in local communities and around the world.
- 1.B.1 Understand how culture, values, and beliefs shape people, places, and environments.
- 1.C&G.1 Understand how people engage with and participate in the community.
- 2.E.1 Understand how the availability of resources impacts economic decisions.
- 3.E.1 Understand how economic decisions and resources affect the local economy.



LIST YOUR MENU ITEMS USING THE TIPS BELOW:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

 **TIPS FOR YOUR MENU:**

- Try to include all five of the MyPlate food groups: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein Foods, and Dairy.
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Include low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt.
- Make half your grains whole grains.
- Limit sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.

FLIP OVER TO DRAW YOUR MENU! 

DRAW YOUR MENU!

