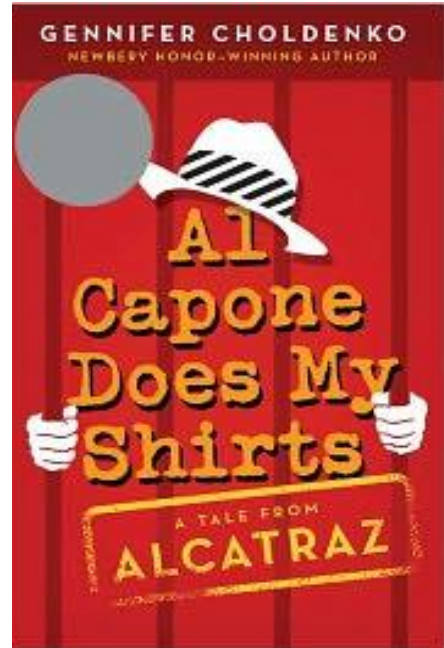


***Al Capone Does My Shirts* by Gennifer Choldenko  
(Penguin, 2004)**

*When 12 year-old Moose Flanagan moves with his family to Alcatraz Island after his father takes a job at the prison, he reluctantly goes along with a money-making scheme dreamed up by the warden's pretty, but troublesome daughter.  
Newbery Honor Winner*



**Discussion Questions**

1. Why did Moose and his family move to Alcatraz Island? How did Moose feel that first night?
2. What is it about Natalie's behavior that makes it difficult for her family to live with her? (Note that the author had a sister with severe autism) Theresa describes Natalie's condition – p. 18-19.
3. After Natalie has spent just one night at the Esther P. Marinoff School, Mr. Purdy calls the Flanagans to let them know that Natalie isn't ready for the school. Why was she rejected?
4. Moose has allot of responsibility for Natalie, he is also very good with her. He spends a lot of one-on-one time with his sister and seems to understand her. When Moose's mother begins teaching piano on the Mainland, Moose has to give up his baseball game to babysit Natalie. His mother says, "We all have to help out if this is going to work." Do you think this is fair?
5. What kind of a person is Piper Williams, the warden's daughter? Why does she flaunt her position as the warden's daughter and intimidates Moose by announcing that her father won't like the fact that Moose's sister is "crazy?" (p. 19)
6. Why did Moose go along (reluctantly) with Piper's laundry scheme? Why does Moose find himself both attracted to Piper and very suspicious of her?
7. Mrs. Flanagan tells Moose: "You're better with Natalie than I am." (p. 180) what does Moose do for Natalie that their mother does not? How does Moose treat Natalie? And how do Moose's friends on Alcatraz play a role in helping Natalie?
8. Who is "105," and why does this person cause Moose so much anxiety? (p.149)  
P. 185 The second time Natalie meets up with 105 and they hold hands Moose says "This is terrible. This is good." What did he mean by this?
9. Why do you think it is so important to Mrs. Flanagan to keep celebrating Natalie's tenth birthday? And how does Moose get her to change her mind about this?

10. Is Mrs. Flanagan a good mother to Moose? Is she a good mother to Natalie? Why does she treat her children so differently? Is she right in being this way? Why does she apologize to Moose? P. 196
11. As Moose obediently helps his sister off the boat as they head to school, he thinks to himself, "Good Moose, obedient Moose. I always do what I'm supposed to do" (p. 28). Is this true? Why does Moose secretly defy the warden and the prison rules by writing to Al Capone to ask for his help for Natalie. (pp. 209-10)
12. Throughout the course of the novel a number of the characters show signs of changing their attitudes and behavior – which characters change and how? How do the kids on the Island view Natalie at the end of the novel?
13. When Moose finds the brown piece of paper in his laundered shirt that says “Done” what does this mean and who do you think wrote it? Are there other possible reasons why Natalie is accepted at a new school for older kids?

**The above questions were adapted from the *Al Capone Does My Shirts Discussion Guide* published by Scholastic**

**Caroline Ward,  
Coordinator, Youth Services**