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Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Ralphie and Louie Ratsos and the rest of the Big City Scouts are leaving the city to go camping for the first time. And they have a special guide: Grandpa Ratsos! He was Scoutmaster when Ralphie and Louie's dad, Big Lou, was a kid. Grandpa teaches everyone the Scouts motto he still remembers, which says that Big City Scouts are always able to solve problems without asking for help. But the Scouts soon find that figuring out how to pitch a tent, make a fire, and find their way through the woods is tough to do by themselves. In fact, not asking for help isn't working at all! Luckily for the Scouts, someone unexpected comes along to set them all straight about what the motto *really* says: scouts have the courage to ask for help and work together.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kara LaReau is the author of numerous picture books, as well as the middle-grade ZomBert series. She lives in Providence, Rhode Island.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Matt Myers is the illustrator of *E-I-E-I-O: How Old MacDonald Got His Farm (with a Little Help from a Hen)* by Judy Sierra and *Pirate's Perfect Pet* by Beth Ferry, as well as many other books for young readers. Matt Myers lives in Charlotte, North Carolina.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

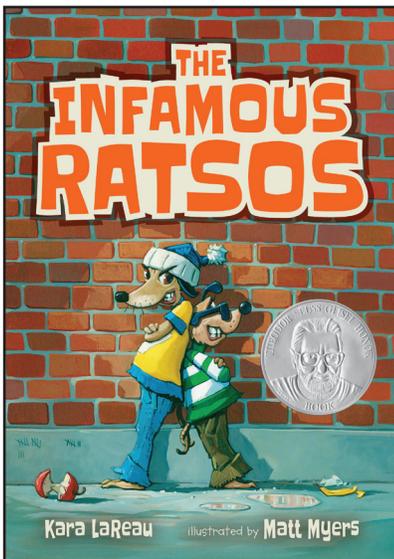
1. What do you think is the difference between a Street and an Avenue member of the Big City Scouts? Can you tell what you have to do to become a Street Scout? An Avenue Scout? Do you think that Avenue Scouts are smarter scouts than Street Scouts?
2. Big Lou tells the scouts that Grandpa Ratso is at camp “to show [them] all the ropes” (page 8). What does that mean?
3. Grandpa recites the Big City Scouts oath. What parts do you think are good promises to make and which do you think may cause problems?
4. Big Lou has told Ralphie that the best part of camping is “sitting around the fire and telling stories” (page 22). What do you think is the best part of camping? If you have never been camping, what do you imagine would be the best part?
5. What things do the scouts do while camping that they don’t ask for help with? Do you think things would have been easier if they had asked for help? If so, how? If not, why?
6. Louie says “roughing it is actually kind of fun” (page 32). What does he mean by “roughing it”? And why do you think he feels it is fun?
7. The Avenue Scouts don’t listen to the advice that Velma gives them because she is “only” a Street Scout. What are three things that Velma told them that would have made them happier campers/scouts if they had listened to her? Would you have listened to Velma and let her help you? Why?
8. Grandpa Ratso insists that he doesn’t need help and that asking for help is for “chumps” (page 30). Do his feelings about this change at the end of the book? Explain.
9. “I think asking for help is just as admirable as offering it,” says Big Lou (page 54). Do you agree with him? Share a time in your life when you asked for help and it made things easier/better for you.
10. In what big way did Grandpa Ratso help Big Lou? What might have happened if Big Lou hadn’t asked for help?
11. Who comes to the Scouts’ rescue? How does she know to come to the Scouts’ campsite?
12. What part of the Big City Scouts oath did Grandpa get wrong? How does saying the oath correctly change things for the Scouts?
13. When Grandma Ratso arrives, she says, “It’s important to admit when you’re in trouble” (page 63). What does she do to help the Scouts with their troubles? How does this help?
14. Louie and Ralphie earn Emergency badges for “taking initiative when [they] were in trouble” (page 70). What does it mean to take initiative? Describe a time when you took the initiative to do something. Did it help your situation?



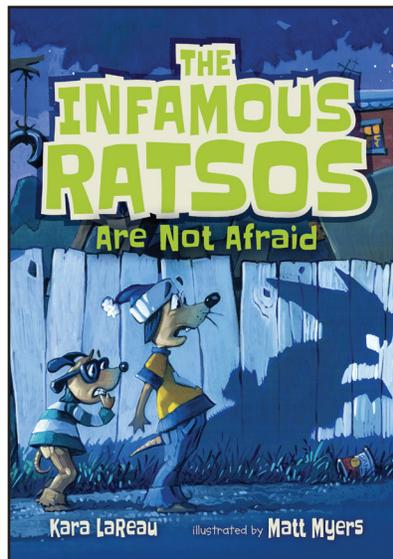
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15. Velma earns Forager and Ingenuity badges. What does *ingenuity* mean? Have you ever shown ingenuity? Tell about it.
16. The word *helping* can mean more than one thing, as Tiny points out when saying, “Since being a Big City Scout is all about helping, I’ll have a second *helping* of chili” (page 73). What does each *helping* mean in that sentence?
17. Big Lou says, “Life is much easier when we admit we can’t do everything ourselves” (page 73). And Velma adds, “And when we help each other!” Do you agree with Big Lou and Velma? Why?
18. Do you think the Scouts will ask for help from now on? How would asking for help have made their camping trip more enjoyable?
19. At the end of the book, Louie and Ralphie say, “The scouting life is sweet!” (page 74). Share one way that it is sweet and one way it might *not* be.

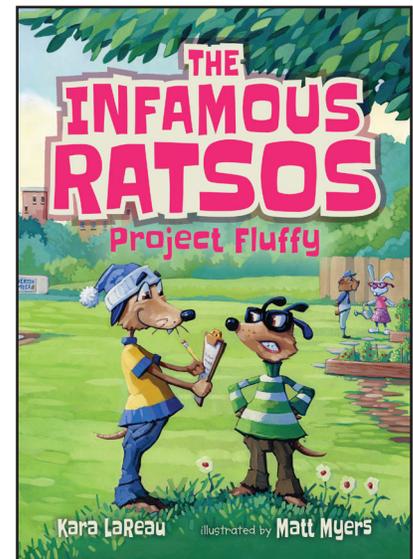
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