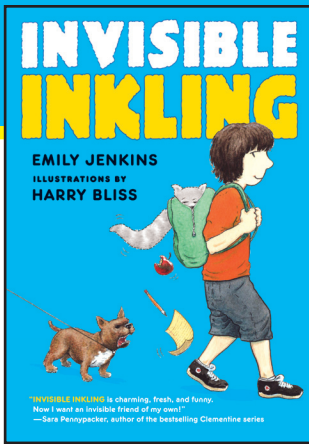


DISCUSSION GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK

Invisible Inkling is a bandapat who appears at Hank Wolowitz's family's Big Round Pumpkin ice-cream shop in Brooklyn, New York, looking for a necessary supply of edible squash. What is a bandapat? Well, Hank isn't sure. But he is delighted to have a new friend since his best friend, Wainscoting, moved to Iowa City and now he has to start the fourth grade alone.

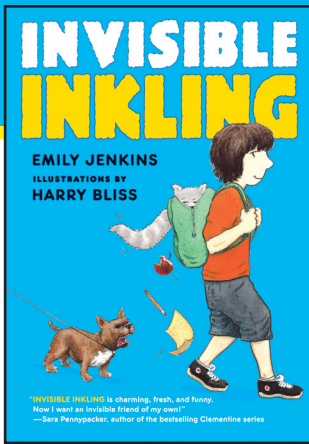
Hank, who suffers from an overbusy imagination and questionable sports skills, is bullied by a larger fourth grader. When all seems lost and Hank has reached the end of his rope with his lunch-stealing tormentor, Bruno Gillicut, Inkling comes to his rescue in this hilarious and heartwarming story.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you were Hank, would you keep Inkling's secret, or would you tell someone you had a bandapat living in your laundry basket? Why or why not? Do you think there are certain situations in which keeping a secret can be necessary?
2. What is a bandapat? Where does Inkling say he came from? On a map, find Peru, Ethiopia, the Ukraine, Mexico, the Australian Outback, and the Himalayan Mountains. How did Inkling end up in Brooklyn, New York, and why does he stay?
3. What is a code of honor? Do you think Inkling and Hank Wolowitz act honorably in the story? Why or why not?
4. What do you think of Ms. Cherry's motto: "Strangers are friends you haven't gotten to know yet" (page 49)? How does Ms. Cherry carry out her motto? Do you think she is successful? Does your classroom, teacher, or school have a motto?
5. Why does Hank call his friends by their last names? Do you have friends you call by their last names? What do you think are the most important things to do to be a good friend? How does Sasha Chin become Hank's friend?
6. Do you think Gillicut threatens and bullies Hank just because Hank ruins the soccer game? What do you think Gillicut's problem is? Do you feel sorry for him?
7. Where do you think the word *bully* comes from? Are there bullies in your school? If so, how are they handled? Hank seeks help from his father, the lunch aides, and Ms. Cherry, all of whom are adults. Do you think their help is effective in the story? Do you think it is significant that Rootbeer, who terrorizes Inkling, is a French bulldog? How?
8. What two mean things does Wolowitz do in the story about which he later feels guilty? Why does he do these things if he knows they are wrong and mean-spirited? Bruno Gillicut is described as a "bully and a dirtbug and a caveperson" (page 81). What do these names suggest? Do you think these names apply to Wolowitz as well?
9. Do you think Wolowitz should have apologized to Gillicut for his hurtful comment? Would that have made the situation better? What do you think would have happened if, when Hank's father took Hank and Sasha out to eat dumplings, they had invited Gillicut to join them?
10. Do you think it is important or necessary to know what a friend looks like? How does Hank eventually see Inkling? Does this change their friendship?
11. Mr. Wolowitz describes himself as a pacifist (page 80). What is a pacifist? Would you describe yourself as a pacifist? Can you think of a situation in which fighting is ever necessary or justified?
12. Hank is accused of biting Bruno. Is Hank guilty even though he didn't actually do the biting? Do you think it is worth tarnishing your own reputation to rid yourself of a bully?
13. Ms. Cherry is a participant in the event that causes Wolowitz to be suspended from school and sends Gillicut to the school nurse. Her interpretation of what happens is different from Hank's, Sasha's, and possibly your own. Engage your class in a discussion about how perspective and position can cause variations in how people see things. Have students come up with real-life examples of this and talk about how it affects situations in different contexts (school, politics, international conflict, family dynamics, etc.).



DISCUSSION GUIDE



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- 1. Draw the Invisible.** Prompt students to imagine: If you could have an invisible friend, what would he or she be? Think about his/her appearance, size, attributes, etc. Now try documenting your invisible friend's appearance visually by drawing, painting, sculpting, or using a combination of techniques. [Hint: Even though Inkling was invisible, he still took up space.] Have students pair up, and ask partners to describe how they see each others' invisible friends. Ask students: Does your partner see your friend the same way you do?
- 2. Flavorific Experiment.** Have students pretend they work at Big Round Pumpkin and charge them with creating new ice-cream flavors. Make a list of everyone's favorite flavors to get ideas, then ask each student to devise a new flavor combination that is thoroughly his own (remind them that weird isn't always tasty!). Ask students to bring in samples for the class, and have a tasting party. If they can't make ice cream at home, suggest combining their ingredients into a cookie or cupcake to bring in for the class.

- 3. What's Your Motto?** Have students collect mottoes from various organizations, businesses, religious communities—anywhere they can find them—and prompt them to discuss what the mottoes say about our society. What values or qualities are considered important, based on what you've collected? Ask students: If you had to have a motto for either yourself or your classroom, what would it be and why? Once you have a motto, consider all its meanings. Can you live by it?
- 4. Prey Foiling Predators.** Inkling tells Hank to "fluff up" his hair to make him look bigger and scarier to Gillicut. Although this doesn't quite work for Hank, it is common technique in the animal world. Have students research how various animals change their appearances and intimidate or elude their predators. Which animal would they want to be if a predator ever came around? Why?
- 5. Bully Me Not.** Start a class discussion about bullying and bullies. As a group, develop a workable plan to deal with bullies and bullying in all its forms. Discuss the idea of taking responsibility for one's actions, and ask students if they think things like honor codes, mottoes, and behavior contracts might be effective. Have students look up what a mediator is and think about whether such a person might be helpful in resolving bullying situations. As a class, brainstorm who might serve as a mediator in your school.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Heather Weston

Emily Jenkins is the author of *Toys Go Out* and *Toy Dance Party* as well as many picture books, including *The Little Bit Scary People*, *Skunkdog*, *That New Animal*, and *Five Creatures*. Her favorite ice-cream flavor is *dulce de leche*. No sprinkles. If she has an invisible friend, she's not telling. She also writes books for teens under the name E. Lockhart and was a National Book Award finalist and Printz honoree for *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks*. Visit her online at www.emilyjenkins.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Sean Knight

Harry Bliss is the *New York Times* bestselling illustrator of *Diary of a Fly*, *Diary of a Worm*, and *Diary of a Spider* by Doreen Cronin; *Louise, the Adventures of a Chicken* by Kate DiCamillo; *A Fine, Fine School* by Sharon Creech; and *Which Would*

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