

COLD CEREAL

BY ADAM REX

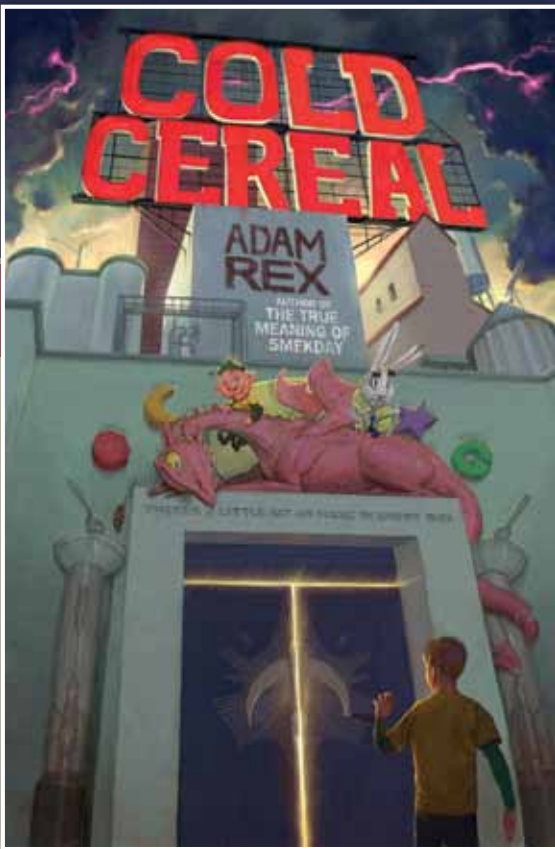
DISCUSSION GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Scottish Play Doe—aka Scott—is used to being a little different. Sometimes he hallucinates things no one else can see. Mermaids. Unicorns. A talking rabbit-man in tweed pants.

But then one of these hallucinations tries to steal Scott's backpack, and he comes face-to-face with an honest-to-goodness leprechaun named Mick who's on the run from, of all things, the Goodco Cereal Company.

With the help of his friends Erno and Emily (who have their own weird connection to Goodco), Scott and Mick uncover Goodco's sinister plans—and take the first steps in saving the world from the evil cereal company.



PRE-READING ACTIVITY

There are references to Arthurian legend throughout the story. Before reading the book, ask students how much they know about the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Have each student keep a list of Arthurian references in the story as they read. When everyone has finished the book, go through the lists as a class, comparing notes (and pointing out any missed references).





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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Scott's family move to Goodborough? How does Scott feel about the move? Why do Scott and Polly have to be secretive about their father? Why does Scott get to school thirty minutes early to talk to his teacher? What is unusual about Scott's name?
2. What strange things does Scott encounter on his bike ride to school? Do you think he really sees them, or is he hallucinating? Later on in the story, why can't Emily see Mick and Harvey?
3. What has changed about the "games" Mr. Wilson has Erno and Emily play? Who is Biggs, and what is his role in Erno and Emily's life?
4. What is significant about the names of Goodco's founders, Nathan Goode and Jack Harmliss? What secret organization did Goode and Harmliss found within their company, and what was its purpose?
5. What does Erno find at the home of Merle Lynn, CPA? What is the significance of Merle's name?
6. What does Scott learn about the rabbit-headed man from Mick? What does Mick say Goodco has done to Harvey?
7. Who are Haskoll and Papa, and why are they in the park? Why does Mick tell Scott to "Watch what you say" to them (p. 135)? What does Scott see in Haskoll and Papa's hunting lodge?
8. Where does Biggs take Emily and Erno when he rescues them? What is Biggs's home like? What do Emily and Erno suspect Biggs might be?
9. What do you think is the meaning of the poem in the envelope Biggs gives to Erno? Can you decipher the meaning of the riddle that Erno tucks inside Reggie's jacket?
10. Why do you think Goodco would send Scott's mother to do research in Antarctica? What in Antarctica could a cereal company possibly be interested in?
11. From whom do the Freeman believe they are descended? What are some of the beliefs of the Freeman? Why do Goodco and the Freeman want to get rid of the Knights Bachelor?
12. What is a "true name"?
13. What does Erno learn about E1 and E2? What is his reaction to his discovery? How do you think you would have reacted in Erno's place?
14. Toward the end of the story, how does Merle Lynn look different from when Scott first met him? What does Merle know about the future? How does he know about events to come?
15. How does Scott know the John Doe in the studio is not his father? Who or what was impersonating him? Scott says he forgives John. Do you think he really means it? What questions does Scott still have about his father?
16. What happens when Queen Nimue appears? What does she reveal about her plans?
17. What are your predictions for what will happen in the next novel?





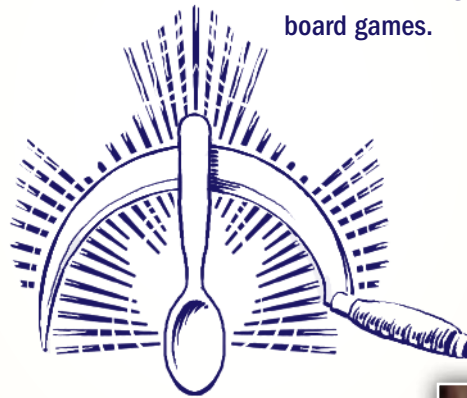
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EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- 1. The Legendary Arthur.** After reviewing the Arthurian references in the story, assign one to each student to research using print or electronic resources. Ask students to share their findings with the rest of the class.
- 2. Cereal Creations.** Have students work in pairs or small groups to create new cereals for Goodco. In addition to coming up with names and concepts for their cereals, have students design the packaging, come up with marketing plans, and create characters to help market the brands. As an extra challenge, students can create commercials.
- 3. Faerie Folk and Creatures.** *Cold Cereal* is populated with magical creatures from folklore and legend. Have students work in pairs or small groups to research the creatures in the book and create an illustrated guide. Entries in the guide could include: changeling, clurichaun, daoine sidhe, elf, fairy, goblin, leprechaun, pooka, troll, and unicorn.
- 4. Supergame!** Erno and Emily create the supergame “Ronopolisk” by combining the board games Monopoly and Risk. Have students work in pairs or small groups to create their own supergames by combining two or more existing board games.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Rex is the author of many children's books, including the *New York Times* bestselling picture book *Frankenstein Makes a Sandwich*, the middle-grade novel *The True Meaning of Smekday*, and the teen novel *Fat Vampire*. *Cold Cereal* is the first book in a trilogy, the Cold Cereal Saga. Adam lives in Arizona with his wife. You can visit him online at www.adamrex.com.



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Questions and activities prepared by Edward T. Sullivan, a librarian and author who has written many articles about and reviews of children's and young adult books.