

Discussion Guide #3: Delving Deeper Into Themes

Heroism

1. One of the central themes in this book is heroism. Have students explain their definition of what it means to be a hero. What does it mean when people say that a hero “saved the day?”
2. Tako risked his safety and well-being for the good of the community; like many heroes, he “saved the day!” Is he a typical hero?
3. What kinds of actions are heroic?
4. Are police officers, military personnel, doctors, nurses, or firefighters heroes? Is anyone who helps people a hero?
5. In this story, Mr. McCracken’s job is to protect people from misbehaved animals. Is he a hero? How does he change throughout the story?
6. How are “everyday” heroes different from superheroes?
7. Is there someone in your life that you consider a hero because of something they have done for you or something they have done for their family or community?
8. Can teachers be heroes? What would make a child a hero?

Good & Bad Behavior

9. After reading the story, would you say that Tako is a good dog or a bad dog? What are some of his actions that would be considered “good” or “bad?”
10. After reading the story, would you say that Mr. Pritchard is a good man or a bad man? What are some of his actions that would be considered



“good” or “bad?” Was he being “good” when he brought over the plant to the Lee family?

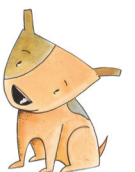
11. Mr. Pritchard loses his business after the Lee family begins their bakery business. Did you feel bad for him? Why or why not?

Rules and Rule Breaking

12. Why do we have rules? How are they supposed to help people?
13. Do you think that Tako should have been punished for breaking the one rule he needed to follow? Why or why not?
14. Think about a time that you broke a rule. Why did you break it? What kind of consequence was there? Are some rules more important than others?
15. If someone breaks a rule, does that mean that they are a “bad” person? Do “good” people break rules?
16. Part of growing up is learning how to make decisions on your own—especially when adults are not nearby. What do you think about when you are trying to make good decisions on your own? How do rules help us make good decisions? Is there any advice you have gotten from adults about how to make thoughtful and productive decisions?

Real Life Application: Stay in the Yard

Eric’s mom needs to make an important phone call. Before she starts the call, she tells Eric he may play outside in the yard with the new family puppy as long as he follows one rule: He’s must stay inside the yard. The yard is fenced in and there is a front gate. Eric promises he will stay in the yard, and he goes



outside with the puppy. They play for a while, but to Eric's surprise the puppy finds a hidden hole under the fence and squeezes through. Eric tries to call the puppy back into the yard, but the puppy is too excited and just runs around on the other side of the fence. Eric wants to go get his mom, but it's a long way to the room where she's on the phone, and he's afraid that while he's getting his mother puppy might run away and get lost. Should Eric go outside the gate by himself, breaking the rule, catch the puppy and bring him to safety quickly? Or should he go get his mom and risk that the puppy will run away and get lost?

