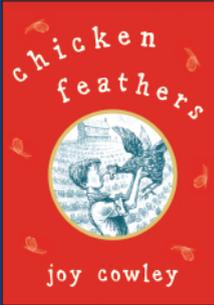


DISCUSSION GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK



ISBN 978-0-399-24791-0 (HC)
Ages 9-11 • \$15.99

A talking chicken! Josh knows it sounds ridiculous, but that's just what Semolina is. And she's not just a talking chicken . . . she's a spirited, sarcastic, and sassy talking chicken who will only talk in front of Josh. But when Semolina tells him that a fox is sneaking into the hen house at night, it's up to Josh to get his dad to believe in Semolina before it's too late.

Chicken Feathers introduces one the most original, endearing new characters to ever peck her way onto the page. In the tradition of *Charlotte's Web*, this

book is full of tender moments and sparkling humor and is sure to be well-loved by young children everywhere for years to come.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JOY COWLEY is the author of many books for children, including the beloved classic *Mrs. Wishy-Washy*. Until recently, she and her husband, Terry, lived in the Marlborough Sounds in the South Island of New Zealand with their own "farm" of sorts: sheep, chickens, ducks, eight cats, a dog, and visits from thirteen grandchildren! Visit her at www.joycowley.com

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



DAVID ELLIOT is an award-winning New Zealand children's illustrator and author. He is the current illustrator of the well-known Redwall series by Brian Jacques as well as The Great Tree of Avalon series by T.A. Barron. David lives in Dunedin with his wife and two daughters. Visit him at www.davidelliott.org

chicken feathers



joy cowley

with illustrations by david elliot



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While reading *Chicken Feathers*, ask your students to think about the following questions. Answers can either be written individually or discussed in groups to make for an interesting classroom conversation.

COMPREHENSION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does Semolina become Josh's pet?
- What is Semolina's special talent? Why is it embarrassing for Josh?
- What is the problem with the number-three henhouse?
- Why does Josh think there is a fox on the farm? Why doesn't his father believe him?
- Who is Annalee Binocette? How does Josh feel about her? How do you know?
- What does Grandma find on the kitchen table that upsets her? Why does she feel this way?
- In chapter three, what does Josh mean when he calls Annalee's face a "closed door" and says that they live "on different planets?" Have you ever felt this way about someone?
- What does Semolina want in exchange for information about the fox? Do you think she is being fair to Josh?
- In chapter five, Semolina tells the story of Tarkah. Who is Tarkah? What does this story remind you of?
- What does Josh learn about the hole in the number-three henhouse? How does this explain the problem with disappearing eggs?
- Why is Semolina nervous about the fox coming near her?
- Throughout the story, Josh works hard to make a boat. How does Josh know that the other children are impressed when he finally shows it to them? Why do you think Josh is so proud of the boat?
- In chapter six, Josh suddenly realizes that Semolina is lost. How do you think he is feeling at this moment? How would you feel if you were Josh?
- What does Elizabeth tell Josh about "sad and happy?" What are the "sad and happy" things happening in Josh's life at that moment?
- Why is the cereal box a fitting box for Semolina's feathers?
- How did Semolina save herself in the fight against the fox?
- What does Josh mean when he thinks that "Grandma and Semolina didn't get on because they were alike?"
- Why doesn't Tucker believe that a fox attacked Semolina?
- What happens as the chickens are singing the egg song?
- The story ends with Semolina finally speaking in front of Josh's family and friends. Imagine the reactions of Tucker, Elizabeth, Grandma and Annalee. What do you think they said and did when they finally heard Semolina speak? How do you think Josh felt?

ACTIVITIES

- Wouldn't it be fun if animals really could talk like Semolina? Imagine a world where this is true! What would they say? Would they talk to everyone or just special people, the way Semolina would only talk to Josh in the beginning of the story? Write a short story using your ideas.
- Josh believes that Semolina has learned to speak by picking up new words along the way. Make a list of new words that you have learned recently, starting with any you might have found while reading *Chicken Feathers*. One of the best ways to figure out what an unknown word means is to look for "context clues" in the sentence the word is used in. You can do this by using the other words in the sentence as clues to define the unknown word. Write a sentence using each new word. Share your sentences with a partner and see which words you can teach each other. Try to combine your sentences to create a story. Share your finished tale with your classmates by taking turns reading the sentences with your partner!
- In chapter five, Semolina tells Josh that she has "family" because she adopted him. Think about someone, such as a pet, a neighbor or a good friend, who you consider a family member even though he or she is not actually related to you. Write a paragraph about why this person or animal is so important to you. What does it mean to be "family?"
- To help Josh remember all of the good times he and Semolina shared together, Elizabeth makes a "collage" by covering cardboard with photos of the hen. Look through old photos, magazines, and newspapers (ask a parent or teacher if you need help) and make your own collage. It can feature anything that is special to you: your favorite sport, words that represent you and your hobbies, a place you love to visit. Create a collage with a special friend or family member in mind and give it as a gift, just like Elizabeth did for Josh.