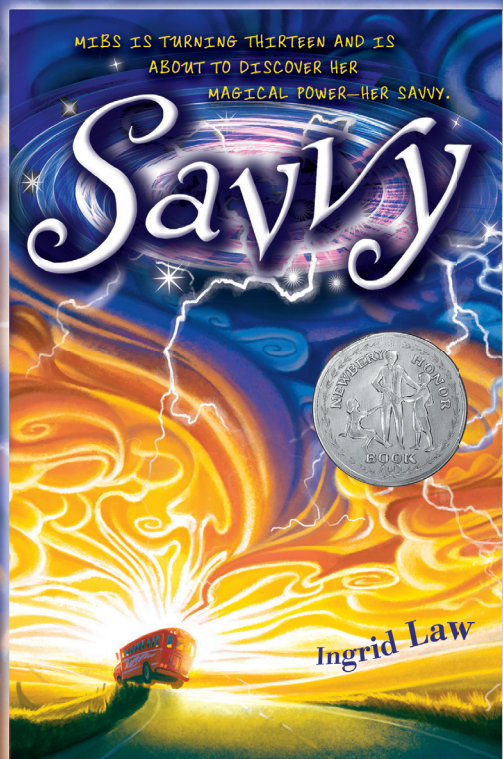


A Discussion Guide for *Savvy* and *Scumble* by Ingrid Law

Two Savvy Adventures Perfect for the Classroom

978-0-8037-3306-0 (HC) • \$16.99 • 978-0-14-241433-0 (PB) • \$7.99 • Ages 9–11 • Grades 9 up



Savvy

Mibs can't wait to turn thirteen, the age when all Beaumonts discover their supernatural power—their savvy. But when Poppa is hurt in a terrible accident just before her birthday, Mibs needs more than fantastic magic: it will take new friends, strong family, and an extraordinary adventure to set things right again.

- ★ "... wholly engaging and lots of fun."
—*Booklist*, starred review
- ★ "... [a] marvel-laden debut."
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review
- ★ "... a vibrant and cinematic novel."
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

SCUMBLE

It's been nine years since his cousin Mibs had her extraordinary savvy journey, and Ledger Kale has just turned thirteen. This birthday should have meant he'd inherit an amazing power—instead he can break little things apart. But when the Kales decide to attend a family wedding in Wyoming, Ledge's savvy grows to monumental proportions. Worse, his savvy disaster has a witness: Sarah Jane Cabot, eagle-eyed reporter and daughter of the local businessman. Now Ledge must stop Sarah Jane from turning savvies into headlines, stop her father from foreclosing on Uncle Autry's ranch, and start scumbling his savvy into control . . . so that someday, he can go home.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

INGRID LAW is a huge fan of words and stories, of small towns and big ideas. Born in New York, Ingrid moved with her family to Colorado when she was six years old. Now the mother of a teenage daughter, Ingrid still lives in Colorado, where she writes full-time.

Visit Ingrid at www.ingridlaw.com

Q&A WITH INGRID LAW

Q: What was the best part about receiving a Newbery Honor citation for *Savvy*?

A: *Savvy* was a joy to write. But while Mibs was learning to trust her own voice, I was too. Pink buses? Talking tattoos? When I was writing about these things, I sometimes doubted whether or not anyone else might find them interesting, special, or fun; but I kept writing anyway. The Newbery Honor was a wonderful validation of the courage it took to be myself and write the things that felt important to the story I wanted to tell. Aside from this personal sense of accomplishment, it is tremendous to know that, because of the Newbery Honor citation, *Savvy* will find its way into the hands of many more young people.

Q: The importance of family is such a deeply rooted part of *Savvy*. Did you always see this particular theme at the core of your novel?

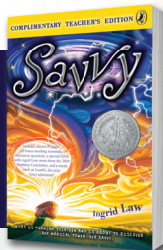
A: Our families, whatever they may look like, always affect who we are and who we become in some way. When writing a story about the challenges of growing up—even one that incorporates fantasy elements—the role of family shouldn't be neglected.

Q: Your second novel, *Scumble*, will be a companion book to *Savvy*. How will this new novel be unique, and why did you choose to further explore the Beaumont family?

A: *Scumble* looks at a “savvy birthday” from an all-new perspective: the Beaumont children's cousin, Ledge. Ledge is different from Mibs in many ways, so the book is somewhat different too. But at the core, both books are less about having magical talents or super-abilities than they are about facing the challenges of growing up; and I wanted to see how an entirely new character might respond to his own set of “savvy” hurdles. Thus, while some of the Beaumonts we know and love do figure in the book, *Scumble* explores a bit more of the family tree, as well as the ways in which different families might deal with the challenges that accompany change.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SAVVY BY INGRID LAW

- Describe Mibs's relationship with her parents and siblings. How is it complicated by their savvies? Do you think the inheritance of a savvy is a curse or a blessing? Why? What have you inherited from your family?
- Momma warned Mibs that “you can't get rid of part of what makes you you and be happy.” What can we infer from Momma's statement? Do you agree with her? Provide some examples from the story to validate her point.
- Mibs considers, “Maybe it's like that for everyone. . . . Maybe we all have other people's voices running higgledy-piggledy through our heads all the time. . . . I began to realize how hard it was to separate out all the voices to hear the single, strong one that came just from me.” What can readers infer about her statement?
- Mibs thinks, “Then I remembered what Lill had said just before falling asleep in the motel the night before. *You never can tell when a bad thing might make a good thing happen.* I realized that good and bad were always there and always mixed up in a tangle.” In what ways is this statement an indicator of Mibs's growth?



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*while supplies last.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *SCUMBLE* BY INGRID LAW

- At the beginning of *Scumble*, readers learn that Ledger's parents have postponed committing to attending Fish Beaumont's wedding due to their fears and apprehension about Ledger's savvy. Of what are they afraid? Do you feel their fear is warranted? Ultimately, do you think they make the right decision to go ahead and attend the wedding?
- Ledger believes his father's biggest dream is that Ledger's savvy will make him lightning fast as a runner. Why does Ledger feel so disappointed when his savvy doesn't give him this extraordinary ability? What does he fear about his father's reaction? Do you think his reaction is appropriate?
- Ledger states, "I'd known for years that something in my blood and guts and brains and bones was poised to turn me tall-tale, gollywhopper weird" (p.2). Considering his attitude, what can be inferred about how Ledger will embrace his savvy? Do you believe his attitude will make things more difficult for him along the way? Why or why not?
- Consider Uncle Autry's ranch, the Flying Cattleheart. What are some specific elements about the ranch that make it so special? Is there a place that you find particularly magical and special? If so, explain what makes your place so important to you.
- Part of being a member of a "savvy" family is that "family rules said keep quiet" (p.4). Why is it so important that this "gift" remain a secret? What might be the consequences of others learning about the special savvies held by family members?
- Consider the savvies of Ledger's extended family; if you could select one of these, which one would you choose? What makes that particular gift appealing to you?
- Ledger's parents decide to leave him and his sister, Fedora, with Uncle Autry for a portion of the summer; what do you believe their motives are in doing so? Do you think they've made the right decision?
- Describe Sarah Jane. Do you find her to be a likeable character? Why or why not?
- What does Mr. Cabot hope to accomplish by foreclosing on businesses throughout the community of Sundance? How is his behavior an indicator of the larger issues with which he is dealing?
- Sarah Jane's newspaper, the *Sundance Scuttlebutt*, is the source much consternation on the part of her father. Why is he so determined to have Sarah Jane discontinue creating her work?
- What can be inferred about Samson Beaumont's choice to use his savvy—why do you believe he rarely "shows himself" to anyone but Grandpa Bomba? What does his willingness to be visible at the end of the story indicate?
- In considering Sarah Jane's newspaper, Sheriff Brown states, "That girl writes whoppers and steel traps where other folks write words and sentences" (p.86). What can be deduced about his feelings about Sarah's work? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- Autry tells Ledger "Dude, you are a bulldozer" and "What a powerhouse. Imagine what you'll be able to do once you finesse that a little" (p. 89). How does Autry's statement foreshadow the ultimate benefits of Ledger's gift?
- Uncle Autry dislikes bugs, yet his savvy draws them to him—why is this significant? What does Ledger learn from his uncle's ability to make peace with his savvy?
- After Ledger's unscumbled savvy brings down the barn roof, Grandpa Bomba states, "A boy's got to fall a few times so he can learn to pick himself up and put himself back together" (p. 94). What does his grandfather understand about what Ledger needs to learn?
- Throughout the novel, readers learn about Noble Cabot's fascination with collecting unusual artifacts and trinkets. What might be his motivation in doing so? In what ways is this telling about his personality?
- In what ways are Rocket and Ledger alike? How do these similarities interfere with their understanding of each other?
- Ledger's sense of worth is largely based on what he believes his family expects of him. What are some specific things he does to slowly begin to believe in himself? How has his attitude been reshaped by the events of the story, and what lessons do you believe Ledger learns along his journey?

USING *SAVVY* AND *SCUMBLE* COLLECTIVELY IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

Sure to be loved by children of all ages, *Savvy* and *Scumble* take readers on an adventure filled with memorable characters, humor, and imagination as they provide educators an opportunity to share richly written stories that will connect and engage every student.

What's in a Word? Beyond their titles, *Savvy* and *Scumble* are peppered with unique words and rich vocabulary. Place students in small groups and assign each group one of the two novels, and then let them hunt for figurative language or other clever and creative vocabulary. After collecting 10 examples from their novel, have groups present their favorite findings to the class via a digital poster, Prezi presentation, or Animoto video trailer.

We are Family: The importance of family is a deeply rooted part of *Savvy* and *Scumble*. Considering both novels, what other themes at the core of these books? Have students select one theme from these novels and explore how each book develops this theme. Offer students the opportunity to create a visual representation which includes textual evidence of how this theme is developed.

Exploring the Possibilities: When discussing the writing of *Savvy* and *Scumble*, author Ingrid Law often asks students the following three questions: First, if you could have any power—real or imaginary—what would it be? Second, what are you good at now in your everyday life? Third, and possibly most importantly, what are you working hard to get better at? Considering any or all of these questions, have students craft a letter to a special someone or themselves sharing a detailed answer.

Hear the Music Play: Grandma Dollop's musical jar plays an important part in family celebrations in both *Savvy* and *Scumble*. Ask students to consider the role of music and how it can be used to help establish the mood of a work. Next, have them create an original musical playlist for either or both of the novels or, alternatively, make a playlist for a favorite character from *Savvy* or *Scumble*. To enrich this activity, have students craft original art for the jewel case and on the interior, and after including appropriate artist information, offer an explanation for the selection of each song.

Ease on Down the Road: For the characters in *Savvy* and *Scumble*, part of the journey from childhood into adolescence is learning to grow as a person by making peace with the special gifts they've been given. Ask students to consider their own journeys. What have been the high and low points of their lives? After drafting a detailed list, allow students to create a visual map of their lives (students could use a game board design or another creative model). Make sure to encourage students to predict and explore what the future holds for them as well.

A Whale of a Tale: Tackling Tall Tales: After introducing the concept of tall tales and providing an understanding of their rich history in American folklore, model a story analysis by reading aloud a picture book which features a well known example (Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, Mike Fink, John Henry, or others). Use the following checklist with students to synthesize students' knowledge of tall tale elements.

Use the following checklist to determine if your story has the characteristics of a tall tale. Check those statements that apply to your story and write a short explanation for each.

- ☐ The story has many exaggerations in it.
- ☐ The main character has a problem to solve.
- ☐ The main character is bigger than life and has super-human abilities.
- ☐ The plot of the story is funny and impossible.
- ☐ In the end, the main character solves a problem, overcomes an obstacle and/or defeats a "bad guy."
- ☐ The story includes lots of action.

After providing this practice, allow students to read the original tall tale that Ingrid Law wrote that was the seed of inspiration for *Savvy* and *Scumble* (available online at the official *Savvy* book website). Discuss the story of "Eva Mae El Dorado Two Birds Ransom." How does her story relate to Mibs or Ledge's experiences? Consider making students a Tall Tale T-chart on which to record their findings. Review the elements of tall tales and have students determine if they believe *Savvy* and *Scumble* fits this description. As an enrichment activity, have students create their own original tall tale. Create original illustrations or embed artwork to accompany the text.

