

Kenny & the Dragon

Discussion Guide



About the Book

What do you do when your new best buddy has been designated a scourge in the community and marked for imminent extermination? Just ask Kenny Rabbit. When the simple folks in the sleepy little village of Roundbrook catch wind that there's a dragon running loose in the countryside, they get the wrong idea, and the stage is set for a fight to the death. So it's up to Kenny to give his neighbors front-row seats to one of the best known battles in history—the legendary showdown between St. George and the Dragon—

without losing a friend in the fray. *New York Times* bestselling author Tony DiTerlizzi puts a fun-filled, theatrical spin on Kenneth Grahame's classic tale of subterfuge and showmanship with this lighthearted romp.

Visit DiTerlizzi.com
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Kenny & the Dragon,
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Discussion Questions



1. Are we meant to think that Kenny's solution to the battle between George and Grahame is deceptive and tricky or a clever and courageous act to save his friends?
2. Is Kenny's "book smart" knowledge better than his father's "street smarts"?
3. Does Grahame's love of the theater have any influence on Kenny's plan to save his friends?
4. Does the king know in advance that the battle is an act?
5. How does the game of chess mimic life?
6. How can Grahame be so sure "there will be no exterminations—imminent or otherwise"?
7. How was Kenny inspired by his friends to solve the problem of fighting to the death?
8. Are we meant to think Grahame is a coward for refusing to fight George?
9. Grahame described his fellow dragons as being "earnest." What does this mean? How did that apply to his life?
10. Does Kenny or any of his friends show any growth in their characters by the end of the book?



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Word Scramble



FIRST, unscramble each word below. To make it a little easier, all of the answers can be found in the word bank to the right. Once you've found all of the answers, write the letters in the circles in the blank spaces at the bottom of the page to answer the question.

WORD BANK

| | | |
|----------|----------|-------------|
| bane | earnest | insolent |
| bantling | exploit | oblivious |
| carnage | libation | sprightly |
| chide | imminent | reciprocate |
| codger | impudent | urchin |

a g r a n c e _ _ ○ _ _ _

n a b e _ _ _ ○

d i c e h _ _ _ _ ○

t o n e s i l n _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ○

t i n g l a n b _ ○ _ _ _ _ _

r i c h u n _ _ _ _ ○ _

t e m p i d u n _ _ _ _ ○ _ _

t i m m i n e n _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ○ _

t a b i l i o n _ ○ _ _ _ _ _

p i e c r a t e o r c ○ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

t r e e n a s _ _ _ _ ○ _ _

d o g r c e _ _ _ _ ○ _

o x l e p t i _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ○

o o v s i l i u b ○ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

l i p s y h r t g _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ○ _ _

What do Kenny and Grahame
enjoy doing together?

_ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _

reading together
reciprocate
sprightly
oblivious
imminent
urchin
exploit
insolent
codger
bantling
earnest
carnage





Kenny & the Dragon

Literary Strands



These literary strands fall within the guidelines of the IRA/NCTE National Standards.

1. *Kenny & the Dragon* is based upon the story *The Reluctant Dragon* written by Kenneth Grahame. Using a chart, compare Kenny to the Boy, Grahame to the Dragon, and George to St. George. How closely do the characters compare? What differences are there? If there are any differences, why do you think those differences were made?
2. What's in a name? The author pays homage to *The Reluctant Dragon* through the use of names. Discuss why the author uses the names Kenny, Grahame, and George.
3. *Kenny & the Dragon* is set in the time of knights, dragons, and armor. Go to the library and research the different types of armor worn by knights. Research the coats of arms that knights had inscribed on their shields. What did the coat of arms mean? In battle, how did knights recognize their enemies from their fellow knights? Have the students make up their own coat of arms.
4. Discuss the various themes from the book including friendship, tolerating differences, responsibility, honesty, pacifism, and knowledge.
 - a. Kenny believes in being honest by correcting *The King's Royal Bestiary*, yet he is willing to deceive the townspeople to save his best friends. Is it possible to be honest all the time? Are there times when it is appropriate to tell lies?
 - b. The idea of responsibility occurs several times in the story. What exactly is responsibility? How does one become responsible? An example of teaching responsibility is Kenny's parents' insistence that he do his homework and wash the dishes before investigating the dragon. Grahame refuses to try to stop the fight and insists that Kenny handle the details of stopping the conflict. Is Grahame neglecting his responsibilities? Father was prepared to drag his family from their home due to the dragon's presence, yet he allows Kenny to investigate the dragon by himself. What is the parents' responsibility in caring for their children?
 - c. Preconceived differences can influence people's behavior. Kenny and his classmates have different opinions on school. How does this difference of opinion affect the way his classmates treat Kenny? Have the students discuss ways Kenny could be accepted by his classmates.



Both George and Grahame have preconceived ideas about each other. How do these impressions cause conflicts in the story? How do they resolve their disagreements?

What was the townspeople's preconceived impression of Grahame? Examine why the people felt Grahame was a danger to the town.



Discuss how one is able to change the impression of others. Consider how difficult it may be to stand up for one's beliefs, especially when it is the opposite of what the majority believes.

d. Define pacifism. Explain Grahame's resistance to fighting to someone who is a conscientious objector.

e. Explore different types of knowledge. Kenny is book smart: he loves academia yet learns that there are different kinds of knowledge. At the end of the story Kenny finds out that his unschooled father is actually very wise. His father is able to "read" the people, discover the leader of a crowd, and is able to "herd" them to do what he wants them to do. Does Kenny learn how to use this technique? If yes, then how? If no, then how could he have used this knowledge to his advantage?

f. Friendship is a strong theme in this story. Kenny is drawn into a dramatic conflict between his two best friends. Is it possible to stay friends with someone if you have different beliefs on some topics, or must friends always think alike?

5. Explore the titles mentioned in the book, including *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *King Lear* by Shakespeare, *Grimm's Fairy Tales* by the Brothers Grimm, and stories by Hans Christian Andersen. What elements found in these stories make them classics?
6. Have the students write an adaptation of *Kenny & the Dragon* as a play, then have them edit and rewrite it. Have the students design and make scenery, gather costumes and props, and arrange for sound effects for their play. Make a videotape of the play ahead of the performance so students may critique their play and make changes if necessary. Perform the play for an audience.
7. Introduce new vocabulary words in context to see if the students are able to determine their meaning.
8. Grahame the dragon loves poetry. Have the students write a poem describing the dragon.
9. Discuss ballads and their importance in history. Have the students write a ballad describing the battle between George and Grahame.

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10. Have the students read passages out loud from the story, making sure they pronounce words correctly and use appropriate expression.
 11. Discuss different cultural beliefs concerning dragons. For instance, in China the dragon is revered, while in England dragons are considered dangerous, evil, and pestilent. Consider different cultural beliefs, then discuss if dragons exist.
 12. Write a composition from Kenny's point of view describing what it feels like to know that one or both of his best friends could be seriously injured or killed if the fight between St. George and Grahame is allowed to happen.
 13. Discuss the different character traits of Kenny, Grahame, and George. Chart the different traits for each character. Write the results of the discussion and have the students provide proof from the story to back up their claims.
 14. Chess plays an important part in the story, as shown by the chessboard in George's bookshop. Research the history of chess. Understand the necessity of planning, organizing, and checking for problems, variables, and possibilities, then preparing for them; then discuss how Kenny's plan to save his friends used some of the same techniques as chess.
 15. Try writing an introduction to the story that doesn't start at the beginning of the story. This is a technique for learning to organize events in sequential order.
 16. Retell the story from the point of view of Porky's dad. Does the story change because of the person telling the story?
 17. Take one of the illustrations in the story. Closely observe the illustration for one minute. Remove the illustration and try to recall as many details as possible. Share what is remembered with the class. Look again at the illustration for another minute, then write a description of the illustration including as many details as possible.
 18. To help the students understand point of view, have two students read out loud a section of the book that has a conversation. After they read, have the students describe the voice of the person they were reading. For example, was the person speaking in a happy, scared, confused, frustrated, or calm voice?
 19. Ask the students to come up with solutions to the problem of a dragon who has taken up residence near their town. Choose two students to debate what should be done about the dragon. Make sure they take opposing sides and can substantiate their reasons for their argument.

About the Author



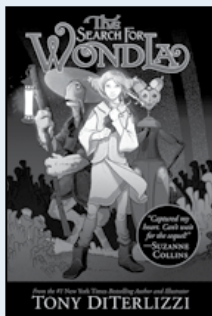
Photo credit © Kim Pila

TONY DITERLIZZI is the author of *The Search for WondLa* and *A Hero for WondLa*. He is also the co-creator and illustrator of the bestselling *Spiderwick Chronicles*, and the author and illustrator of *Jimmy Zangwow's Out-of-this-World MoonPie Adventure*, as well as the Zena Sutherland Award-winning *Ted*. His brilliantly cinematic version of Mary Howitt's classic *The Spider and The Fly* earned Tony his second Zena Sutherland Award and received a Caldecott Honor. Tony's art has graced the covers of such well-known fantasy writers as Peter S. Beagle, J. R. R. Tolkien, Anne McCaffrey, and Greg Bear. He has also made significant contributions to *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Wizards of the Coast's Magic: The Gathering*. His first chapter book, *Kenny & the Dragon*, debuted as a *New York Times* bestseller. He lives with his wife, Angela, and their daughter in western Massachusetts and Jupiter, FL. Visit Tony on the web at www.diterlizzi.com.



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