



Morris Gleitzman

Fun in the Classroom

The teachers' notes for these seven novels are designed to capitalise on the enjoyment experienced by readers through the wonderful humour, crazy characters and clever plots that are classic Morris Gleitzman! Students' appreciation of the novels can be further enhanced through in-depth exploration of the author's literary style and writing techniques. The sets of questions that follow, aim to develop your students' skills of reading comprehension and analysis using prediction, inference, deduction and reasoning.

The reader is encouraged to respond thoughtfully to the stories through a series of questions that vary in degree of difficulty. Some require simple answers easily identified in the text, while others ask students to draw on their own knowledge or experience. Students are also invited to share opinions and theories, finding and citing evidence from the novel or from real-life examples to support their viewpoints.

Using the notes

Chapter by chapter questions and activities can be used in numerous ways:

- Individual written work in response to reading one or more of the novels.
- Paired or small group activities using questions as the focus for discussion or written presentations.
- Discussion group tasks – speaking and listening in conjunction with reading aloud, or in 'book club' format of sharing responses with a group of students who have read the same text.
- The 'Optional extras' that follow each novel's list of questions are adaptable and open-ended. They can be utilised for written or art work, drama, oral presentation or group discussion, whole class or individual response activities.

Further suggestions

- Author study. Set students a target or goal involving reading and response to several Morris Gleitzman novels. Their work will form the foundations for an interesting and stimulating author study. You can design this project, or students can set their own agenda. Factors to be considered could be:

- § The author's use of humour
- § Character development in the stories
- § How relationships evolve in plots
- § Comparative analysis of beginnings or endings

- § Distinguishing features/characteristics of Morris Gleitzman's writing
- § Use of language (such as puns for chapter headings, metaphors and descriptive style etc.).

- Book Reviews. Make more of an old favourite! Add interest and challenge by asking students to come up with reviews for different purposes or audiences. For example:

- § Reviews that would appear in a newspaper or magazine
- § Synopsis of the novel for a catalogue or book club flier
- § Nomination of the novel for a literary or popularity prize
- § Promotional and advertising materials designed to encourage readers to try Morris Gleitzman's books
- § Interview with the author – dramatised for presentation as a radio or TV segment.

- Drama. These novels are ideal to use for dramatic activities! Characters and events can be selected from the text for tasks such as:

- § Role-play – of a scene, an incident, a reaction, a meeting between characters
- § Improvisation – what would you do if? How would you solve a certain dilemma or situation faced by a character? What if a character selected from one novel met with a character chosen from a different story?
- § Mime and movement – show the facial expression, the body language, slow-motion replay, soundless role-play, freeze-frame shots of a certain character or scene from a novel
- § Dialogue – conversations between characters from the same or different novels; soliloquies of particular characters expressing their thoughts, doubts, fears or resolutions.

- Technologies. Morris Gleitzman's website is a fantastic source of information, ideas and activities. The address: www.morrisgleitzman.com/

Teachers and students can access this site to do any or all of the following:

- § Read letters from Morris and send him emails
- § Use information to help with an Author Study
- § Get some advice about writing techniques
- § Find out more about his books
- § Look at the way the website is designed and presented
- § Download text and images from the site for further projects (see suggestions below)

There's loads more information and inspiration for investigation! Also offering insight into the background and bounty of Morris Gleitzman is the website of his publisher, Penguin Books. The address: www.penguin.com.au

- Other Resources. As these websites point out, several of Morris Gleitzman's books are available now on audio tape. This is a fabulous resource for listening activities, for borrowing, for shared group discussion, to inspire reluctant readers and to use as a model for students to make their own recordings.

A video about Morris and his work has also been released. This is ideal for teachers who are keen to find out more about the quirks and talents of this author with a view to using Morris Gleitzman's novels in their literacy programs. Students too can make use of the video to complement their explorations and gain insight into Morris Gleitzman's world.

- Incorporating Learning Technologies. The tools of technology offer an exciting and interesting alternative through which students learn. Many of the activities listed – including student responses to question sets – lend themselves to presentation using these tools. While it is ideal to be equipped with the hardware and software referred to below, be adaptable and innovative if it is

lacking. Use what you can, where you can. Encourage those with equipment at home to extend and expand on their school projects – and to make use of both the Penguin and Morris Gleitzman websites (addresses supplied above). Below is a broad and basic collection of ideas that make use of learning technologies. Use them as a springboard and a stimulus in your language program!

- § PowerPoint presentations – to share author studies, book reports, novel reviews, collection of media reviews, writing tips and technical advice from the author; or focus on an aspect of the text (eg: humour, perspectives of narration, titles and headings, descriptive language) and provide examples as part of a literature analysis.
- § Digital Camera – make your own book covers; photograph ‘characters’ and label for a classroom or hallway display (eg: a la police line-up or character in classic pose); capture several scenes re-enacted to make a book/flowchart/event sequencing diagram; simply photograph readers with a Morris Gleitzman novel and an expression which sums up their response – display with a written explanation/book review and recommendation or ranking.
- § Scanners and Graphics programs – make use of the book covers or your digital camera shots together with graphics programs to redo covers; design posters for advertising or promotion; come up with ‘dummies’ for your own website featuring you as the author!
- § Word-processing programs can obviously be used in a multitude of ways in conjunction with the ideas in these teacher notes.
- § Concept mapping programs (such as MindMaps and Inspiration) can enrich activities relating to analysis of Morris Gleitzman’s novels – focus on characters or unfolding events, the author’s technique in developing a character’s voice or relationships and their influences. Map out students’ ideas in relation to their own storywriting – consider plot, setting, characters, climax, twist, endings etc.
- § Internet and website use – research into the author can be carried out by students using the Internet. By identifying different sources and sorts of information, a collection of useful links can be built up, reviewed and annotated for others to use. Websites can also be analysed in terms of content, graphics and appeal. Students can develop critical skills by reviewing sites used for their work and use this knowledge in creating their own purposeful, customised web pages.

THE OTHER FACTS OF LIFE

Chapter 1

- What could be troubling Ben?
- How does Morris Gleitzman create suspicion about just what Ben is up to?

Chapter 2

- How do Ben’s parents feel about the job of discussing the ‘facts of life’? Do you think they are in touch with the reality of Ben’s feelings on the subject?
- What do you think Ben is telling the reader when he refers to his dad as the ‘busiest man in the world’?
- What is the ‘BIG’ question Ben wants answered?
- How does his father react and handle the situation?
- What would you have done?
- Ben’s friends also react in ways that surprise him. Why do you think people find these sorts of questions so challenging?
- How does it make you feel if issues of importance to you are not seen as important by others?

Chapter 3

- How do we get an insight into Claire's personality and current issues?
- Consider Di's 'lot' in life. What sort of role do you think she plays in the family?
- What does Ben think adults are obsessed with and how does he reach this conclusion?

Chapter 4

- What is Ron's 'lot'? What issues is he dealing with at this stage of his life?
- How does Ben feel about his dad?
- Identify the avoidance tactics adults use in response to Ben's demands.

Chapter 5

- Read the paragraphs describing the BBQ at the Guthrie's. Discuss your impressions of the people there and the roles they play.
- What do you think about the comments made by Barry? How would you respond to someone like him?
- Ron and Di finally realise they have a problem! What does Ben do to achieve this? Why?

Chapter 6

- How does Ron react? What do you think Ben's parents should do?
- What makes you think that the psychiatrist might not be the answer?

Chapter 7

- On pages 48 and 49 Morris Gleitzman's writing reveals more than what is obviously stated! Read these pages aloud with inflection and expression that really captures Di and Ron's thoughts as they ingratiate themselves with this 'important' couple.
- What do you think of Ben's tactics for attention? What does he achieve?

Chapter 8

- 'You can chain my body but you can't chain my mind.' Can you think of other examples of people who have felt this way in fighting for causes? (eg: historical figures, contemporary protest groups, high-profile campaigners for certain causes etc)
- Ron and Di turn to friends for support, but what sort of advice do they get?
- Do you think ignoring Ben is a good option? Have your parents ever tried that with you? Is it an effective strategy in your opinion?

Chapter 9

- What do you think people in public places would make of Ben?
- What tactics does Ben resort to in this chapter? What issues is he trying to highlight for his parents?
- Who is winning the battle – Ben or his parents?

Chapter 10

- What is 'the subtle method' and how effective does Ben find it?

Chapter 11

- Esme is on her own crusade. What does she take issue with and how does she get her point of view across?
- How do people react to Esme?

Chapter 12

- Describe the range of emotions Ben feels as he follows Esme through the chicken-freeing adventure!

Chapter 13

- Ben feels happy at last! What has led to this?
- What piece of advice do Ron and Di's friends offer up next?

Chapter 14

- 'Ben stared at his mother through the wire fence, his fear gradually being replaced by a horrible, cold suspicion.' What is the fallout from the parents 'plan' – for Ben and for his parents? What do you think about what they did?

Chapter 15

- Where does Ben head for and why do you think he is drawn there?
- Why is what he finds such a shock to him?
- What does Ben learn about commitment to ideals?

Chapter 16

- In this chapter, Di gives Ben a photo that enables him to make a discovery about his dad. Do you think this will have an impact? If so, in what way?

Chapter 17

- How does Morris Gleitzman create a sense that something is going to happen? What hints does he give and how does he build the suspense?

Chapter 18

- 'Ben looked at his father steadily for a long time. Two desires took shape inside him. I want to keep Dad safe and I want to make him happy. Ben knew that if the first was to happen, the second wouldn't always be possible.' Have you ever faced this dilemma – in a situation with your parents or someone who means a lot to you?
- What course of action does Ben decide to take – and what is the outcome?

Chapter 19

- What plans do you think Di and Ben have for Ron's return home?
- Does Ron have similar ideas?

Chapter 20

- Do you think Ben is serious about their mystery destination? What are your thoughts about this ending?

Optional Extras

- Explain your understanding of the title now that you have read the whole story.
- Write down all the chapter headings. What do you notice about them? What term is given to language cleverly used in this way? Why do you think Morris Gleitzman named the chapters as he did?

GIFT OF THE GAB

Chapter 1

- It is Rowena's 'voice' that narrates this story. The way she tells things also reveals a lot about her. Write a description of Rowena as you see her, based on how the first chapter unfolds.
- Why is Anzac Day special for Rowena and for her dad?
- Do you think her perceptions of the crowds' response to her dad are right? Explain your reasoning.

Chapter 2

- What do you think of Rowena's 'revenge'?
- Did Dermot deserve it? What would you have done in Rowena's situation?

Chapter 3

- 'The human heart's almost as weird as the human brain. It does exactly the same skip when you feel love as when you feel fear.' What situations has Rowena found herself in in this chapter that have made her heart skip?

Chapter 4

- What do you think the TV people might want from Rowena?

Chapter 5

- Rowena relies on sign language and writing to communicate. What other forms of communication does she talk about in this chapter?
- Explain how the title of the book comes about.

Chapter 6

- How does Rowena handle stress?
- Do you do something in times of stress that gives you a way of coping? Can you share what it is and why it helps?

Chapter 7

- What is it that the TV people are really there to document? Do you think Rowena's reaction to this news is justified?

Chapter 8

- A dreadful fear creeps into Rowena's mind. What is she thinking?

Chapter 9

- This is a very emotional chapter as the truth is revealed. Describe how you think Rowena's dad feels about all his important keepsakes and about sharing them with Rowena for the first time.

Chapters 10 and 11

- Rowena hears her mum's voice for the first time. What impact does it have on her?
- What does it inspire her to do now?

Chapter 12

- How would you describe Rowena's grandfather? Is her meeting with him a success – why or why not?
- What do we find out about relationships within the family?

Chapter 13

- The TV crowd and the local paper are after Rowena's dad now. What would you do if you were in his situation?
- Can you recall any similar examples of 'media persecution' in recent times?

Chapter 14

- What objects in Rowena's luggage reveal the plans she's been making?
- What is troubling her at the moment?

Chapters 15 and 16

- Rowena is in France at last. What is going through her mind as she takes in her new and very different surroundings?

Chapters 17 and 18

- Why do you get the feeling that there is more to the story than has been revealed already?
- What sort of treatment do Rowena and her father receive? Do you have any ideas as to why they are so warmly welcomed?

Chapter 19

- Do you think Rowena jumps to a reasonable conclusion? Why is she thinking what she's thinking?

Chapter 20

- Dad's songs have always got a story to tell. Skim back over the story so far to find the other songs Rowena has talked about. Read aloud the 'plots' of each song and share your thoughts about why Morris Gleitzman has included them.

Chapters 21 and 22

- Where do the sausages seem to fit into the picture Rowena is gathering?

Chapters 23 and 24

- What do you think Mr Didot has to do with the events surrounding Rowena's mother's death?
- How do they overcome the language barrier in communicating?

Chapter 25

- What does Rowena learn in her encounter with the old man at the cemetery?

Chapter 26

- There's more bad news for Rowena's dad. What is it and why do you think he feels the way he does?

Chapter 27

- How is Rowena feeling at the end of this chapter? What situation is she in?

Chapter 28

- There's good news and there's bad news. Explain which is which for Rowena in this chapter.

Chapter 29

- How do you feel when you find out the truth?
- Do you think Rowena's father did the right thing in protecting her from the facts?

Chapters 30 and 31

- 'I wanted to hug him but something was stopping me. What if I put my arms around him and it didn't feel right? What if even though my brain knew it wasn't his fault about the spray, my guts wouldn't let me forgive him?' Why do you think Rowena is in such a dilemma?
- What happens to help her make up her mind?

Chapter 32

- The last few chapters involve a significant deal of 'resolution' – not just for Rowena. Explain how other characters in the story have been able to resolve personal dilemmas as events have unfolded.
- What is yet to be resolved for Rowena and her dad once they return home?

Optional Extras

- Create a story map with Rowena as the centre point. Using a diagram of your own design, represent all of the other important characters (and minor players if you wish) and their relationship to Rowena. The map should enable its audience to make connections, understanding how the plot has evolved to involve characters in Australia and France, whether or not they have read the book.
- You are a journalist for the local paper in Rowena's hometown OR Paige Parker, the TV reporter. Put together a piece for your readers/audience about this story. Decide what your focus will be – the spraying issue, the fan of Carla Tamworth on Anzac Day, the true story of Rowena's mum's death in France. Use the text to help with dialogue and factual support. You may wish to do an interview, a documentary, a feature article, a piece for *The Farmers Times* news...be creative and innovative!

ADULTS ONLY

Chapter 1

- The opening chapter contains a dream sequence that reveals a great deal about the main character and his environment. What do you discover about Jake? Use quotes from the text to expand on your findings.
- In Jake's shoes, how do you think you would feel? Consider the positives and the negatives of being in such a situation.
- Dreams can tell us a lot about our own feelings and fears. Can you think of a dream you have had recently that may have been triggered by a certain emotion or experience playing on your mind? Write about it or compose a fictional dream sequence that reveals something about the dreamer.

Chapter 2

- What writing techniques does Morris Gleitzman use to enable Jake to voice his feelings? (Hint: think how the tale is narrated and how a solitary character communicates when there are few other humans to interact with.)
- Use the evidence in this chapter to explain the title of the story and put it into context.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages Jake sees in having a friend with a 'sewn-up mouth'?

Chapter 3

- What role does Jake decide to take on and what does he do with it? Share your thoughts on the mystery of the girl with the pink dress.
- Explain the problem Jake's parents are facing. Can you see a way out for them?

Chapter 4

- Evaluate Jake's plan! Weigh up the pros and cons to reach a conclusion about whether you think it is a good idea.

Chapter 5

- What would a good review mean to Jake's parents?

Chapter 6

- List the positive comments the magazine people make about Jake's parents' place on first impressions.
- List three things they reveal that they do not like.

Chapter 7

- Review this chapter to come up with a simple recounting of the steps in the drama – Jake’s efforts to save the magazine people. What works and what goes wrong?

Chapter 8

- Jake certainly perseveres when things get tough! Describe the roller-coaster of emotions he goes through in this chapter.
- How do you feel when his parents accuse him of lying? Were they fair on Jake? Share your opinion considering both sides of the situation.

Chapter 9

- Until the last moments in this chapter, what do Jake’s parents’ actions tell us about their relationship with Jake and their roles in running the retreat?

Chapter 10

- What conclusion does Jake jump to when he sees those ‘three little words’?
- Do you have any predictions about who the ‘someone else in the house’ is?

Chapter 11

- Jake has his first good feeling in a while. What is it that he feels good about?
- What do you think about Mum’s gesture in giving Crusher to the magazine people? Why would she do it?

Chapter 12

- What do you think is going on with Gwen and Mabel? Are they a figment of Jake’s imagination? What are they looking for?

Chapter 13

- How do you react when you discover what is in the cellar and the sad history of the house? How do your feelings compare with Jake’s?

Chapter 14

- What qualities are already evident in the relationship developing between Jake and Gwen? Use examples from the chapter to support your ideas. (eg: there is an obvious degree of trust when Jake agrees to go ‘the fun way’ through the water tunnel.)

Chapter 15

- Consider all the things Jake is trying to ‘take in’. List them and discuss Jake’s mental reasoning about what is going on as Gwen and Mabel’s story unfolds.
- How do you think you would react if you discovered your ‘first ever real live friend was a ghost’?

Chapter 16

- Why do you think the ghosts of all these children have gathered on the island?

Chapter 17

- The truth is revealed. What is it? Does it solve all Jake’s problems?
- What remains to be resolved?

Chapter 18

- What does Jake’s action of giving Crusher to Mabel say about him?
- Do you think the magazine people’s offer is a good one? Why or why not?

Chapters 19 and 20

- How does the future look for Jake as he leaves the island? Explain your thinking using examples

from the text and making predictions based on what you have learned about Jake in this story.

Optional extras

- What about a 'Kids Only' Holiday resort?! Write about the perfect getaway for kids – or illustrate it and include explanatory labels. What sort of environment would it be in? What activities would be on offer? What would be the ideal menu? Would there be any rules (such as No Adults Allowed!)? Use your imagination and let your fantasies of such a place be brought to life!
- Imagine you are a guest at Jake's parents' retreat on the island and will be writing a review for a travel magazine. What sorts of things would you need to consider? (eg: room décor, facilities, food, things to do...) Decide on a rating based on your imagined experiences there. Be as creative as you like – use the facts you already know, or make up your own to give readers an insight into just what it is like staying there!

TOAD RAGE

Chapter 1

- What a start to the story! Discuss the tactics Morris Gleitzman uses in this first chapter to suck the reader straight in.
- What would your answer be to Limpy's question – 'Why do humans hate us?'

Chapter 2

- Morris Gleitzman uses a great sense of humour – even when the subject matter is really quite serious! Find some examples of this and give your view of what you think Morris Gleitzman is trying to achieve.

Chapter 3

- What impression do you get of Goliath? Use information from this chapter to explain your answer.

Chapter 4

- Try doing an illustration of Ancient Eric. Re-read the description and take into account all of the things Limpy observes about Eric's physical features and behaviour.

Chapter 5

- What is Limpy's mission and why does he choose to do it?

Chapters 6 to 8

- Is Limpy realistic – about his mission and his hopes for humans?
- What does his first experience of humans reveal and how does he rationalise it?
- What do you think of his idea about disguises?

Chapters 9 and 10

- How do you feel when you read about the teenagers and their reaction to seeing Limpy?
- The ecstatic crowd, the Kookaburra, the Echidna and the Platypus – what is actually going on?

Chapters 11 and 12

- Do you relate to Limpy's issues – is it important to be liked? Explain your philosophy.
- Animal cruelty is illustrated in a sequence here. What are your views on what happens? Is your perspective altered when you 'know' the animal (as we are getting to know Limpy as a 'real' character)?

Chapters 13 and 14

- What challenges does Limpy face in these chapters? How does he overcome problems?
- What qualities does he need to boost his chances of survival?
- How does Limpy think he can achieve his goals?

Chapters 15 and 16

- Describe the environmental shock Limpy experiences when he lands in the city.
- If Uncle Preston's last words were 'Never trust a human being', what are you thinking when the girl picks up Limpy and Goliath and puts them in her sports bag?

Chapters 17 and 18

- What was Uncle Roly's advice? How does Limpy put it into practice?
- What happens to make that very difficult?

Chapters 19 and 20

- The reader meets an array of animal and insect characters as Limpy follows his quest. Skim back through the story so far to identify some conversations that take place between these characters. What do they highlight (eg: assumptions and judgements about others, social 'order' or hierarchy etc)?

Chapters 21 and 22

- What is Limpy's next plan and what are its limitations?
- How does Limpy get his 'simple but brilliant' idea across?

Chapters 23 and 24

- What problems do Goliath and Limpy have in trying to find their ideal sport?
- What do they eventually come up with? Do you think it has promise?
- The cane toads face further discrimination at the end of Chapter 24 – what is the issue this time?

Chapters 25 and 26

- How do the toads feel about being described as ugly? What can you deduce about their self-image prior to this revelation?
- Limpy feels he has failed and been thwarted at every turn. What happens to motivate him to try one more thing?

Chapters 27 and 28

- 'Stack me, thought Limpy. I think they like me.' (p142) When Limpy does appear to have achieved his goal he creates another problem. What is it?
- How do they ensure people revert back to the original problem, putting them 'right off the idea that cane toads (are) lovable'?

Chapters 29 and 30

- What has Limpy learned from his big adventure?
- What does he apply in a more practical way and what is he quite philosophical about?

Optional Extras

- Write your own paragraph or story from the perspective of a 'creature' – an endangered, adored, feared or dangerous animal or insect. Consider the issues Limpy has raised about intolerance, misunderstanding and human responses. How does your creature feel about these issues?
- Compose a conversation between several creatures to explain their perspectives about the world – theirs or ours.

- Make a map or design some sort of pictorial representation of Limpy's travels. You could choose something symbolic of each place or important event and place it on a 'roadmap' of the journey; or you could choose one particular place or scene you think worthy of a large-scale illustration. Create your own option if you prefer!

SECOND CHILDHOOD

Chapter 1

- What are your first impressions of Mr Cruickshank and of Mark Smalley?

Chapter 2

- Mark rehearses how he will prepare his parents for the bad news of a 'D' on his school project. Have you ever been in a similar situation where you have had to tell your parents something you weren't keen to? What were your strategies?
- Why was Bob Smalley, Mark's dad, a happy man?
- What theme is recurring in the conversation Dad has with his boys?

Chapters 3 and 4

- What evidence can you find that Mark is a sensitive boy, aware of other people's feelings?
- What is your response to Annie's revelation about herself? Do you have a view about the things she discusses, such as reincarnation?

Chapter 5

- What sort of a relationship do you think Annie has with her parents? Explain your view.

Chapter 6

- Mark stocks up with a huge selection of videos! What is his plan?

Chapter 8

- Why is Mark's dad so passionate about his boys doing well? How do you think Mark feels about his dad's expectations? What does he want to achieve?

Chapter 9

- Who was Henry Ford?
- What happens to bring Mark crashing down from his high?

Chapter 10

- How do Pino and Rufus find out who they were in their previous lives? What do you think about their methods?!

Chapter 11

- Mark, Rufus, Annie and Pino discover 'negative sides' to their historical roles and/or contributions. Use selections from the text to support your argument and explain why the kids are now more depressed than elated about their projects.

Chapters 12 and 13

- How do they go about 'making up' for what was done?
- What sorts of things do they choose to do and why?
- What would you choose to do to make up for one or more of these situations?

Chapter 14

- ‘What’s the point of apologising if you can’t make things better?’ Share your views in answer to this question Mark poses.
- Are you surprised by Bob’s reaction to finding Mark’s project (marked ‘D’)?
- How do you think he handled the situation? What is the outcome for Mark?

Chapters 15 and 16

- Make a point form list showing how the action, suspense and excitement builds as the kids put their plan into action!

Chapter 17

- How do you think Mr Cruickshank is feeling when the kids call him to come forward?
- Despite the relative success of their plan, what happens?

Chapter 18

- What do the kids feel they have learned from history that is so important to share?
- In the excitement of ‘the big finish’, how is Mark feeling? How is Bob feeling?
- Can you imagine what might have happened after this ending? (What sort of a mark could Mr Cruickshank give their efforts on this project!)
- What is your definition of ‘being a somebody’?

Optional Extras

- Have you ever been told that you look like someone famous? Do you have any significant things in common with a well-known figure from history? Share your story – or identify someone famous you would like to be compared with.
- Make a list of the issues that are highlighted in this story (eg: environmental, social, historical). Choose one as a focus and prepare a statement about what you think the key problems are. What do you believe can be done to address the pressing issues in your world today?

BUMFACE

Chapter 1

- What is it about the opening paragraph that grabs the reader immediately? Why do you think Morris Gleitzman wrote in such a way?
- What can you deduce about the main character Angus and others such as Miss Lowry and Russell Hinch as this chapter unfolds?

Chapter 2

- Explain Angus’ relationships with his siblings. What does he do for them and how do they appear to feel about him?
- Why does Angus play the family role he does?

Chapter 3

- Contrast the TV role Angus’ mother plays with the ‘mother role’ played by Angus at home. What is so different? Is there anything similar?
- How does Angus explain her absence to his younger siblings?
- How do you think he really feels about his Mum?

Chapter 4

- What are your impressions of Angus’ father?
- Does Angus like being referred to as ‘My Mr Reliable’? Give reasons for your answer.
- How do you feel at this stage of the story about the degree of maturity displayed by the adults

and shown by the children?

Chapter 5

- What is keeping Angus motivated?
- Discuss Angus' complaint – 'When a kid has an idea and tells it to a grown-up, the grown-up takes over.' Do you agree?
- What is so ironic about Miss Lowry's comment to Angus? – 'What you need to do, young man, is grow up.'
- Why do you think adults misjudge Angus?

Chapter 6

- What qualities do each of the dads (Numbers 1, 2 and 3) display?
- How do you think each child feels about his/her father?

Chapter 7

- Describe the range of emotions Angus goes through in this chapter as he comes to terms with giving up something so important to him.
- Why do you think he won't tell the truth about his situation – to Miss Lowry and others?

Chapter 8

- What becomes Angus' focus in this chapter?
- What is it he fears and why?

Chapter 10

- What sorts of reactions and responses does Angus get from the adults he turns to for help?
- 'Sometimes it was a real pain being a parent.' What leads Angus to this conclusion?

Chapter 11

- Why is Angus suspicious of Rindi?
 - How does Angus feel about having a go on the rope – before he attempts it and afterwards?
- What does this tell you about his life?
- What do you think Rindi's situation is?

Chapter 12

- Apart from innocently stating the truth about everything (whether appropriate or not!), Leo seems very perceptive for a small boy. Skim back over this chapter and what you have read so far to find examples of this. Use the text to support your views in building a picture of Leo's character. What role do you think he plays in the story?

Chapter 13

- Miss Lowry advises Angus that 'part of growing up is doing things you don't really want to do.'
- What sorts of things does Angus already do that suggest he is already grown up?
- Can you think of experiences in your own life where this advice seems relevant?
 - What do we find out about Rindi's situation and her fate?

Chapter 14

- How does Angus' mum respond to his efforts to tell her about Rindi?
- What theme seems to be recurring in Morris Gleitzman's portrayal of the adults in Angus' life?

Chapter 15

- Why is it such a struggle for Rindi to come to terms with what her parents want her to do?
- What do you think about the actions of Rindi's parents?

Chapter 16

- What was Angus and Rindi's plan in bringing their families together?
- Explain the different agenda of each character in the chapter.

Chapter 17

- How does Patel react to Rindi's misbehaviour?
- What are your impressions of him so far?

Chapters 18 and 19

- How would you describe Rindi and Angus' relationship?
- What are the pros and cons of this latest plan?

Chapter 20

- Why is 'Bumface' a bit of a saviour for Angus?

Chapter 21

- List all the positives that come out of the situation Angus creates in the middle of the school play.
- What is the main message Angus really wants his parents to hear?

Chapter 22

- Is it a compliment for Angus to hear his mum say he is 'the most grown-up, responsible, dependable 12 year old in Australia?' Explain your thinking.
- What is your opinion of the actions of Angus' mum and dad in this chapter?

Chapter 23

- How do you feel about 'Bumface's' actions at the end of the story? Share your ideas about what is likely to happen to Angus beyond this point.
- Why do you think Morris Gleitzman portrayed adults the way he did in this story?

Optional Extras

- If you could give Angus' parents a list of rules or guidelines about what parents in their situation are 'supposed to do', what would you write? Think of ten fundamentals – or more if you really get on a roll!
- Create your own 'Bumface' – that is, a character who has all the qualities and the lifestyle you'd love to have as a second option. This character would be who you could call upon in times of challenge and crisis – to give you advice, to take your mind off things, to remind you of the importance of being and acting your age! Consider a good name for your second self – it might be as straightforward as Angus' or more subtle!

TOAD HEAVEN

Chapter 1

- Have you met Limpy and Goliath before (in *Toad Rage*)? If so, what do you know about their relationship and their personalities. If not, what are your first impressions of these two characters?
- What use is dead Uncle Nick being put to?
- What gives you the idea that Limpy may have a problem?

Chapter 2

- Ancient Eric seems to be the leader of the family. Can you illustrate an imaginary family tree of Limpy's cane toad connections? Consider the relatives already spoken of in the story and the

'hierarchy' that seems to exist.

- Why does Limpy stand up to Uncle Eric? What is the issue and how do both sides handle it?

Chapter 3

- Find evidence of the fact that the best of plans can actually be the worst of plans in the wrong hands!
- The threat reappears. Without knowing what or who it is, can you gauge the feeling of the cane toads towards this figure? Use the text to support your contentions.

Chapter 4

- 'Then Malcolm's eyes went cloudy like lizard blood in water and his face split into a smile as wide as a buffalo's bottom crack.' (p26) Morris Gleitzman uses some hilarious and colourful imagery in his writing. Can you find some other examples of similes you like or find interesting?
- Discuss Malcolm's theory about how 'a leader never risks his own life. Because his ideas are too valuable to the whole community.' Do you agree? Can you think of any real life examples that support or refute such a claim?
- What is Malcolm's problem with Limpy? What sort of tactics does he use to get his way?

Chapter 5

- What metaphor does the author use when describing the four wheel drive? Why?
- Look through the chapter and identify further descriptive phrases or sentences that add to this metaphor.
- Can you picture the human Limpy meets up with? Why is the 'plumage' familiar and where have you spotted it yourself?

Chapter 6

- What do *you* think has happened to Limpy through the actions of this 'conservationist'?
- Why does Limpy get so excited about this encounter?
- What happens to change his joy to despair?

Chapter 7

- What problems does Limpy face now? Describe the different emotions you think he is feeling. Use supportive examples from the text to explain your ideas.

Chapter 8

- What is Malcolm up to? Does his language and crafty scheme remind you of anything in the 'human' world?

Chapter 9

- Compare and contrast the attitudes of Limpy and the sheep he meets in this chapter. Who reflects determination and who resignation? Why do you think this is the case and how has it come to be that way?

Chapter 10

- What would you say to travelling companions who'd be ending up as Sunday roasts?!
- What split-second dilemma does Limpy face at the end of this chapter?

Chapter 11

- How do Charm and Goliath react to Limpy's news?
- What does Limpy mean when he refers to the 'round metal things that humans give each other for being brave'?

Chapter 12

- Limpy is embroiled in a constant battle to maintain his safety! List the dangers he has encountered so far in the story and explain how he has escaped from each situation.
- What sorts of words does Limpy use when he speaks about Charm? What does this say about his feelings towards her?

Chapter 13

- Over the next few chapters, add to your list of the dangers faced by Limpy and his friends as things evolve.
- Where do you think the cane toads are?

Chapter 14

- What is Charm's view of herself? How does that influence her feelings towards Malcolm?
- Describe the National Park they are in. Is it what they were dreaming of? Why or why not?

Chapter 15

- Read through Limpy's description of what he is seeing in the underwater national park. Do an illustration – a pencil sketch or a detailed, colourful drawing – and compare it with a friend's image of what you have read.

Chapter 17

- What is the irony inherent in the souvenir shop's cane toad merchandise?
- What do you think this chapter says about the tendencies of human beings?

Chapter 18

- What worries are weighing Limpy down?
- What constitutes 'Toad Heaven'?

Chapter 19

- Who is thinking about what – how does this new discovery impact upon the priorities of each of the main characters?
- What terrible realisation dawns upon Limpy?
- Do you agree with the lizard's analysis of what is fair about eating and being eaten?

Chapter 20

- Why do you think the 'national park residents committee' is so loathe to accept the toads and their families?
- What happens to really ruin their chances of acceptance?

Chapter 21

- Explain Limpy's thoughts – 'I'm the luckiest cane toad in the universe... Even though I'm also the unluckiest.' Use examples from the story so far to support both sides of this troublesome equation!

Chapter 22

- How is it that the crocodile encounter is actually a blessing?
- Is the prejudice displayed by humans (and by the toads) towards the crocodile reasonable?

Chapter 23

- What is the fear Limpy, Goliath and Charm are facing in this chapter?

Chapter 24

- What do you think of Malcolm's proposal? What does it say about Malcolm and the cane toads generally, and leaders and followers in particular?

- Describe Charm's actions in this chapter – and your views on how she handles things.

Chapter 25

- Do you agree with what the cane toads did for the humans? Why or why not?

Chapter 26

- Why are Limpy and Goliath so happy at the conclusion of the story?

Optional extras

- Create a list of rules that may have been issued by Charm in her new role as leader. Some suggested topics as focus could be: Roads and Toads – behaviour guidelines for collecting food safely; Modifying Malcolm – directives for his new role in the cane toad community; Social Skills – ideas about tolerating and communicating with other species!

- Design 'toad heaven' – a place that would be the ideal environment for cane toads. You would need to consider food supply and ease of access to that, minimising dangers from vehicles and humans, and the comforts creatures like Limpy and Goliath would value for themselves and their families. You could write, draw, sketch and annotate, build a small-scale model ... be inventive!

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