

Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Chocolate Fever* by Robert Kimmel Smith.

List all the sweets Henry eats on the Friday morning he gets chocolate fever.

Why does Henry tell the gang of boys in the schoolyard that chocolate fever is “most horrible and catching” and that they could die if they caught it too?

Describe how the dogs’ jumping and licking Henry allow Mac to foil and capture the hijackers.

Why do you think Henry feels so comforted by Nurse Molly Farthing?

5. Examine the reasons Henry runs away from Dr. Fargo’s office. What do you think he was afraid of?

Have you ever been afraid of a doctor’s, nurse’s or dentist’s office? If so, describe why you were frightened and what you did to get over your fear? If not, explain how it is you’ve been so brave!

Even though Henry has ugly brown spots all over his face, Mac treats him well. Why? What is it that Mac’s experienced in his life that helps him understand what it’s like to be “unique”?

Just as Henry and Mac are about to pull over to call Henry’s parents, Mac’s truck gets hijacked. But modify that scene in the book and describe what might have happened if they had actually called? How might Henry’s parents have reacted? Would they be appreciative of what Mac had done?

Try and predict what might happen to the hijackers once they’re in the hands of the police. Most likely, they will go to prison, but what will happen to them before that? What is the process a criminal goes through before he or she can be put in jail.

Explain what Mac means when he tells Henry “A good child respects his parents...A good child don’t cause his parents heartache or grief.” What is your definition of “respect,” and why, in your experience, is it important not to cause your parents “heartache or grief”?

Compare the different ways all the adults in the book react to Henry’s chocolate fever. Have you ever been sick and had an adult react hysterically? Explain why such behavior might have only made you more upset or afraid?

Perhaps you think of Mac as the hero of the book and the hijackers as the villains. But try and think of some of the characters that don’t fall easily into one category or the other, such as Dr. Fargo or Mrs. Kimmelfarber. These characters obviously care about Henry but

perhaps have trouble showing it. Describe what you think their motivations are for the way they treat Henry and how you feel about these characters; be more descriptive than simply saying whether you like these characters or not.

12. *Chocolate Fever* is a work of fiction, and there's no such thing as chocolate fever. But describe the consequences of eating too many sweets? And how does a person *really* get freckles?

What do you think Robert Kimmel Smith wants us to learn from his imaginative story about Henry? What kind of lesson or message did you get from the book? Describe how you might apply this lesson to your own life, to your interactions with other kids your age, to other adults?

Activities:

Have you ever had too much of a good thing, a food that you once loved but because you ate it too much it now gives you the willies just to look at it? If so, write a little story about how that happened. If not, write an imaginative tale what might happen if you ate too much of that food?

Take a poll of people's favorite foods — your friends, your parents, your teacher. Keep track of how many of those items are junk foods! But also pay attention to foods you've never tasted or maybe even heard of, like sushi, or Ethiopian food, or Korean Kim Chi! What do some of the foods have in common? Are they salty foods, sweet foods? Are they the kinds of foods you eat for special occasions, like roast turkey on Thanksgiving, or ice cream sandwiches you eat on a hot summer day?

Now choose one of those items and promise yourself to try it. Ask your parents if they'll buy this food from the supermarket, cook it for dinner, or take you out to try it at a restaurant. Be creative. Suggest to your school cafeteria that they try and make it, or maybe they already do!