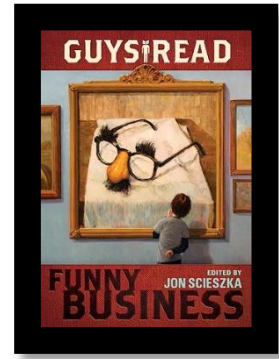


Title: Guys Read: Funny Business
Author: Jon Scieszka
Grade Level: 5th Grade



SUMMARY

Guys Read: Funny Business is a collection of 10 short stories by some of today's greatest writers for children, such as Jeff Kinney, Christopher Paul Curtis, and Jack Gantos. Jon Scieszka, noted author and funny man, has devoted much of his time and work in getting boys to read, which has resulted in the Guys Read series. The stories in this book are hilarious and ideal for an engaging family read aloud. This book is a buffet of stories; 5th graders will be able to taste these authors' styles and know where to begin future reading to satiate their new appetite.

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- elaborate (pg. 6)
- plummet (pg. 7)
- dwindle (pg. 32)
- groping (pg. 51)
- tried-and-true (pg. 58)
- culprit (pg. 67)
- enabled (pg. 73)
- symmetry (pg. 102)
- collared (pg. 153)
- bestowed (pg. 169)
- projectile (pg. 183)
- meddle (pg. 202)
- feral (pg. 245)
- revoltingly (pg. 260)

You might use a question like:

In the book, what does the word "elaborate" mean? How does the story help you understand what it means?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

1. The first story, *Best of Friends* by Marc Barnett, begins with the description of a group of 4th grade boys all described as nerds – Ernest is chief among them. For two very different reasons, Dean the story's narrator, and Ernest attempt to become best of friends. Consider the perspective of each boy and the title of the story – *Best of Friends*. After talking about this with your child, explain that the author has used the literary device of irony. The implied meaning of the title is actually very different than it first appears. Continue to look for examples of irony in this book and other stories.



2. In the stories *Will* by Adam Rex and *Kid Approval* by David Lubar, some of the characters appear to have super-human powers. Compare with your child how these two authors use this notion of physical power. Talk about how this can make a story stronger.
3. It seems that every family has one or two stories that get shared over and over because of their humor or shock value. Eoin Colfer shares one such recycled family story in *Artemis Begins*. Talk about the stories your family or friends still tell and compare them to *Artemis Begins*. What elements do they both share? For example, do both of them contain something shocking, or an injury, or humor?
4. Expert readers make connections between events in a story. One way to awaken this kind of thinking is to look for a cause/effect relationship between story events. *My Parents Give My Bedroom to a Biker* is an excellent story to begin this kind of reading and thinking. After you have shared the story, reread it to uncover the relationship between the events. Some of these will be obvious; others will require a little more thinking.
5. Nearly all of these stories involve groups of boys, both friends and brothers. Many of them describe members of their tribe as “idiots,” “nerds,” and “geeks.” Ask your child how these misfit characters enhance these stories. Talk about the characters and the stories you read. Ask yourselves if these characters are necessary. How would the stories be different without them? Finally, trace the progression of each of the stories and talk about whether these characters still have their geek status at the end. Did things change? Why or why not?
6. Jon Scieszka put these 10 stories into a collection because they all share one common trait—humor. Spend some time talking about a few of the stories and what made them funny for you. As a family, talk about what stories you found funniest. Where were the moments you laughed the most? Revisit those pages and talk about how the author used his or her craft to make you laugh.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. After talking about question #6 (above), try writing about a funny event from your life and borrow a few writing tricks you identified in these stories (like including oddball characters). Share your writing with others and get their feedback on your use of humor in writing.
2. Read the *Artemis Fowl* series – at least the first one – to see if you can find connections to Donal and Colfer’s brothers. Your child might very well be engaged by this fabulous series and want to read more!
3. Jon Scieszka has created a web site to support his Guys Read series. Simply search for “Guys Read” on the Internet and you will have a wealth of reading suggestions and supports at your fingertips.