



# BIRD BRAIN

## Discussion Guide



### About the author

Joanne Levy is the award-winning author of a number of books for young people, including *Double Trouble*, *Fish Out of Water* and *The Book of Elsie* in the Orca Currents line and the middle grade novels *The Sun Will Come Out*, *Small Medium at Large* and *Sorry For Your Loss*, which was nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award and won the Canadian Jewish Literature Award. Joanne lives in rural Ontario with her husband and several pets, including Gabby, the Timneh African Grey parrot.

Find out more about Joanne at [joannelevy.com](http://joannelevy.com)

When Arden's Uncle Eli asks her to look after his African Grey parrot, Ludwig, while he's out of town, she is not pleased. Parrots bite. But soon Ludwig proves himself to be not only unusually smart but also incredibly loyal, as he helps Arden deal with a bully who's been standing in her way. Ludwig may not be the pet Arden wanted, but he might turn out to be exactly the pet she needed.

### Key Themes

Pet ownership | Animal behavior | Bullying | Friendships | STEM

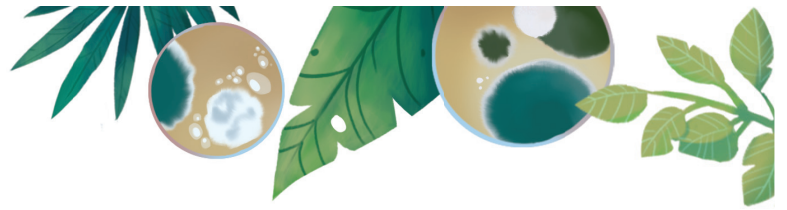
### Suggested Passages to Read Aloud to Class:

- **P. 11:** We learn about Ludwig, the parrot that Arden will be looking after. Start with, "I have a new parrot in the lab at the college..."
- **P. 23:** We are introduced to Marni, Arden's classmate. Start with, "What are you doing here?"
- **P. 99:** Arden is thinking about her fight with Cabbage when he arrives. Start with, "That night I must have composed about thirty texts to Cabbage and erased every single one of them..."



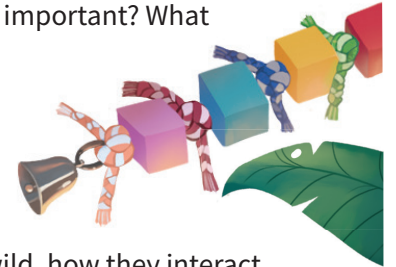
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## Discussion Questions

1. What is the main theme of *Bird Brain*?
2. In the book, Arden feels unsafe around Marni, even though Marni hasn't hurt Arden physically. Discuss why Arden might feel this way. Have you ever been in a situation like what Arden experiences? What did you do about it?
3. Cabbage realizes he could have been a better friend and ally to Arden. Discuss what he could have done to make her feel more safe and supported.
4. If you could have a conversation with an animal, what animal would it be and what would you talk about?
5. Arden is desperate for a pet. Do you have a pet? What type of pet is it, and what is your responsibility for its care? If you don't have a pet, discuss if you wish you did and what would be the ideal pet for you.
6. Arden and Cabbage are excited about competing in the Science Bowl. Do you enjoy competing? What is your favourite type of competition? Why?
7. Arden's uncle leaves for an extended trip. Have you ever had a close friend or family member go on an extended trip? How did it make you feel?
8. Arden makes an error when giving Ludwig his vitamin powder. Do you know the difference between a teaspoon and a tablespoon? Can you think of other situations where measurements are very important? What might happen if a recipe or directions aren't followed exactly?



## Activities

1. Create a new book cover for *Bird Brain*.
2. Research African Grey parrots. Find out where they are from, what they eat in the wild, how they interact with one another. Check out the Alex Foundation at [alexfoundation.org](http://alexfoundation.org) to learn more about Dr. Pepperberg's real research.
3. Write and perform a commercial about bullying and why it is harmful.
4. Arden mentions the scientific method in the book. Create a poster outlining the method and all its steps.
5. Similar to Arden's project, write a speech about your pet (real or imagined).
6. Write or videotape a book review of *Bird Brain*. You can include a brief plot summary (no spoilers!), what you like/don't like about the book and why, how you feel about the characters and the plot, how the book made you feel or whatever you feel inspired to say about the book.
7. Assemble a playlist for the book.
8. Using old magazines, make a collage that represents themes, scenes, and/or characters from the book.

