

# THE INFAMOUS RATSO'S

Kara LaReau

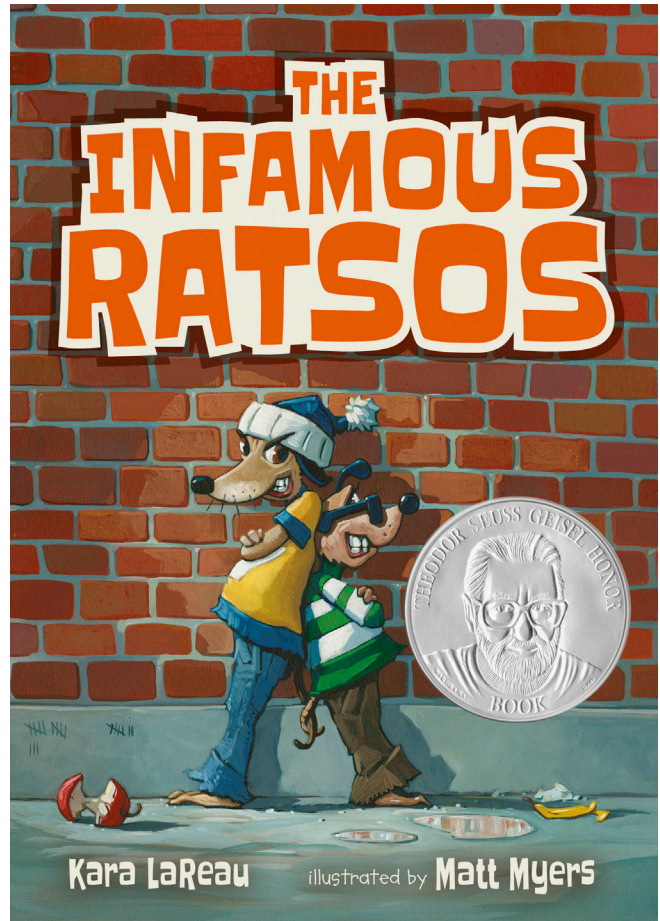
*illustrated by* Matt Myers

## About the Book

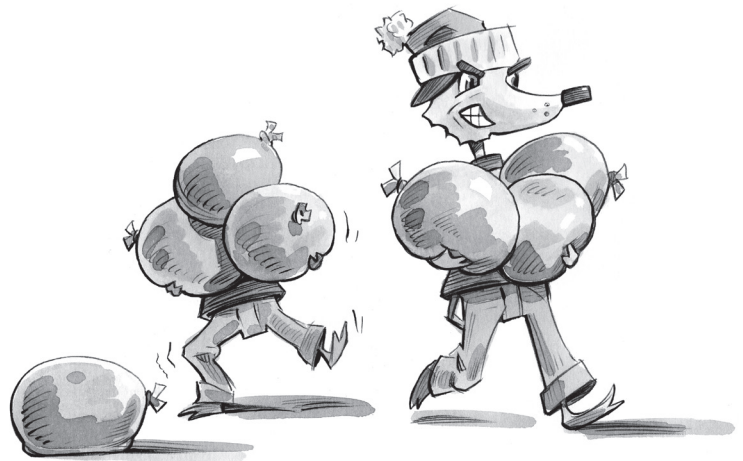
Louie and Ralphie want to be tough, tough, tough, just like their father. But every time they try to act tough, they end up looking like softies. Why are the Ratsos so bad at being bad? This very funny book will have beginning readers looking at toughness in a whole new way.

### Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used as writing prompts for independent work.



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Also available as an e-book



## Discussion Questions

1. The Ratso brothers are no good at being bad. Why do their nasty plans always turn into good deeds?
2. “There are two kinds of people in this world,” Big Lou says to his sons (page 2). “Those who are tough, and those who are soft.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Take a closer look at the drawing of the Ratso apartment (page 3). What does it tell you about Louie and Ralphie? What does it tell you about Big Lou?
4. Chad Badgerton’s head is way too big for Tiny’s hat. Why did he take it? What do bullies really want?
5. Like many bullies, Chad picked on somebody who is smaller than he is. The Ratso brothers are also much smaller than Chad. Why do you think they decide to pick on him?
6. What is the difference between being a bully and being tough? Are the Ratso brothers bullies? Why or why not?
7. Louie and Ralphie are growing up without their mother. How do you think their lives would be different if Mama Ratso were still around?
8. What do you think is the difference between looking tough and being tough? Do the Ratso brothers want just to look tough, or do they want to be tough?



9. If the Ratsos were girls instead of boys, would they still want to look tough? Is it hard for boys to show their soft sides? Is it hard for girls to show their tough sides?
10. Louie and Ralphie think that they want to be more like their father. Why does their father want to be more like them? Do you agree that “being tough all the time is so . . . so . . . tough” (page 49)? Why or why not?
11. Louie is the older brother. He considers himself to be the smarter one, too. Do you agree? What does Louie keep getting wrong?
12. The Ratso brothers didn’t intend to help Mrs. Porcupini, yet when she thanks them for soaping her windows, the boys stick around to rinse off the windows until they sparkle. Why?

13. “Life is tough enough,” says Big Lou (page 55). “We might as well try to make it easier for one another, whenever we can.” How have other people made your life easier? How would you like to make the lives of others easier?
14. “Big Lou is a man of action, not words” (page 7). What actions does he take to show his love for his sons?
15. What are the advantages of being a softie? By the end of the book, how do you think Big Lou would answer that question? How would his sons answer it?
16. At the very beginning of the book, Louie is pictured holding a water balloon. What happens to that balloon at the end of the story? How does it end up doing something good?
17. What does it mean to be infamous? Do you think the Ratso brothers deserve to be called infamous? Why or why not? What other words describe them?



### About the Author

**Kara LaReau** is the author of several picture books, including *Ugly Fish*, *Mr. Prickles: A Quill-Fated Love Story*, and *Otto: The Boy Who Loved Cars*, all illustrated by Scott Magoon. She lives in Providence, Rhode Island.



### About the Illustrator

**Matt Meyers** is the illustrator of *Pirate's Perfect Pet* by Beth Ferry and *E-I-E-I-O: How Old MacDonald Got His Farm (with a Little Help from a Hen)* by Judy Sierra, as well as many other books for young readers. He lives in Charlotte, North Carolina.