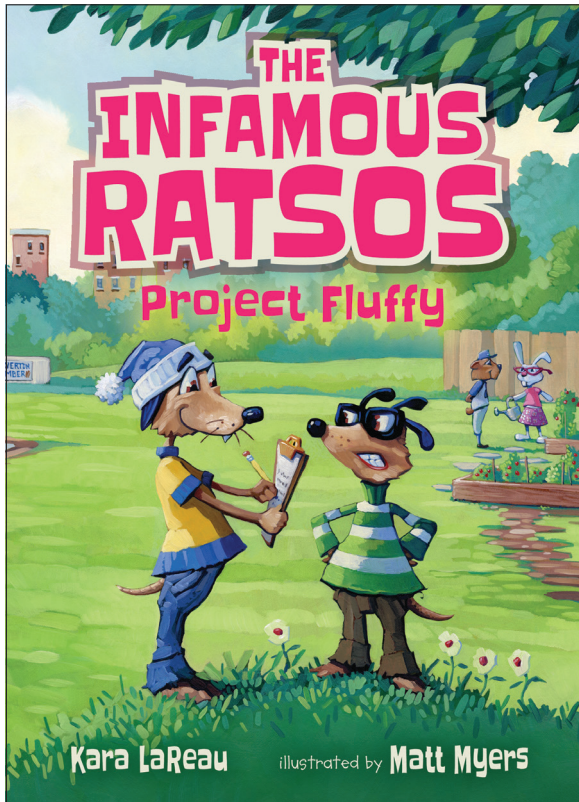


THE INFAMOUS RATSO: PROJECT FLUFFY

Kara LaReau

illustrated by **Matt Myers**



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Also available as an e-book

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 in writing prompts for independent work.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Chuck Wood is the most popular kid in school, and Louie Ratso can't believe that Chuck has asked him for help! Chuck likes Louie's friend Fluffy Rabbitski, and he wants Louie to help him get Fluffy to notice him. As for Ralphie Ratso, *he* can't believe that his brother wants to spend all his time with Chuck instead of with him. Meanwhile, despite Louie and Chuck's attempts to get Fluffy's attention, she has eyes for only one thing: her garden. But there may be hope. As their father, Big Lou, tells his boys, the best way to get someone to like you is to show that you're interested in what *they* like. After all, that's how Big Lou won over Mama Ratso years ago. Can Louie help Chuck find a way into Fluffy's heart? And will Ralphie find a way to let his brother know how much he misses him?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kara LaReau is the author of numerous picture books, as well as the middle-grade series *The Unintentional Adventures of the Bland Sisters*. She lives in Providence, Rhode Island.



Photo by Katherine Kirchner

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

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



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. When Principal Otteriguez announces the Poetry Contest in chapter 1, the characters have many different opinions about poetry. How do you feel about poetry? What is your favorite kind of poetry?
2. Louie has a plan to use the Poetry Contest prize money to buy himself and his brother skateboards. What would you do with the prize money if you won the contest?
3. Fluffy loves having her own plot in the community garden so she can plant fruits and vegetables. What are three things you would plant in a garden? Why?
4. Louie helps Chuck try to get Fluffy to notice and like him by completing a plan with six phases. What did Louie plan in each phase? Did it work for Chuck? Why?
5. In order to get Fluffy to like him, Chuck Wood *should* have tried to figure out what Fluffy liked. If he had been paying attention to her, what would Chuck have noticed about Fluffy?
6. Big Lou gives his boys a lot of good advice. What advice does he share with his boys about girls? Do you think this is good advice to follow? Why?
7. In chapter 8, Ralphie tells his brother that “Fluffy is a *person* and not a project,” and Big Lou adds that “women aren’t projects, or objects” (page 64). What do you think they were trying to tell Louie? Did Louie understand? How do you know?
8. What are some of the things that Big Lou, Ralphie, and Louie remember about Mama Ratso? What did she like? What is something that someone you know loves?
9. In chapter 9, Louie tells Ralphie, “All that time I was trying to figure out what Chuck needed to get Fluffy’s attention, and I wasn’t paying attention to what *you* needed” (page 75). Think about a time when someone was too busy to pay attention to you. How did you feel? What did/could you do about it?
10. Louie considers himself “the smart one” (page 11), but Ralphie outsmarts his brother at the end of the story. What does Ralphie do? Why is Louie surprised by what his little brother does?
11. Louie tells Chuck to buy Fluffy all kinds of gifts that “it’s, like, a fact” girls would like. Did Fluffy like any of the gifts she received from Chuck? Why? Have you ever received a present that was not what you really wanted? How did it make you feel? Have you ever given someone a present that was something *you* wanted and not what *they* may have wanted? Why is it important to think about what the person you are giving a gift to likes?
12. Character traits are words used to describe what someone’s personality is like. For example, Louie is helpful and Chuck is athletic. What character traits would you use to describe Ralphie? Big Lou? Fluffy? Chad? What character traits would you want your friends to recognize in you?

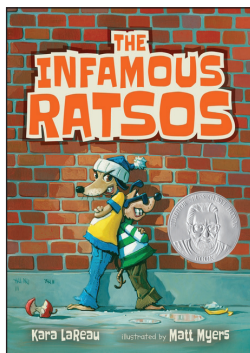
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



13. Why does Big Lou think it is so important to tell the people you love how you feel about them? Why does he make sure to tell his boys every day that he loves them?
14. In chapter 9, Louie tells Chuck, “When you like someone, you need to pay attention to what *they* want” (page 82). What does Chuck do for Fluffy once he gets this advice? Does it work? Why?
15. Sometimes when readers don’t know the meaning of a word, they can look at the words and sentences around the unknown word and figure out its meaning. Look at the words *confiscate* (page 44) and *serenade* (page 52). What context clues around those words help you to understand their meaning? What do you think each word means?
16. Many of the characters in *The Infamous Ratsos: Project Fluffy* have hobbies (activities they like to spend time doing). Chuck plays baseball, Fluffy gardens, Chad eats sweets, and Ralphie plays video games. What hobbies or interests do you have? What hobby would you like to have or learn more about? Why?
17. Chuck learns a lot about Fluffy, and they agree to be friends. What is something that you would want new friends to know about you?
18. Tiny tells Chad that he thinks he is cool (page 49), Millicent illustrates Tiny’s poem about Chuck to show how awesome she thinks he is, and Big Lou thinks it’s important to let people know you like or love them. Do you think it is important to tell people how you feel about them? Why?
19. *The Infamous Ratsos: Project Fluffy* started with a poetry contest. Think of some words that rhyme with these words and try to write a poem about your friends using your rhyming pairs:

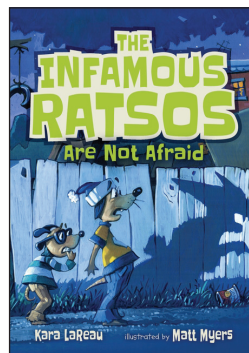
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|-----------|--------|------|--------|
| best | friend | hero | strong |
| cool | glad | like | sweet |
| every day | good | love | team |

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This guide was prepared by Michelle A. Gajda, an elementary school teacher and reading specialist. She is the recipient of the 2017 Massachusetts Reading Association Sylvia D. Brown Scholarship Award for action research in the field of literacy as well as the 2018 recipient of the MACURE (MA College and University Reading Educators) Celebrate Literacy Award for her contribution to improving literacy across the Commonwealth.