

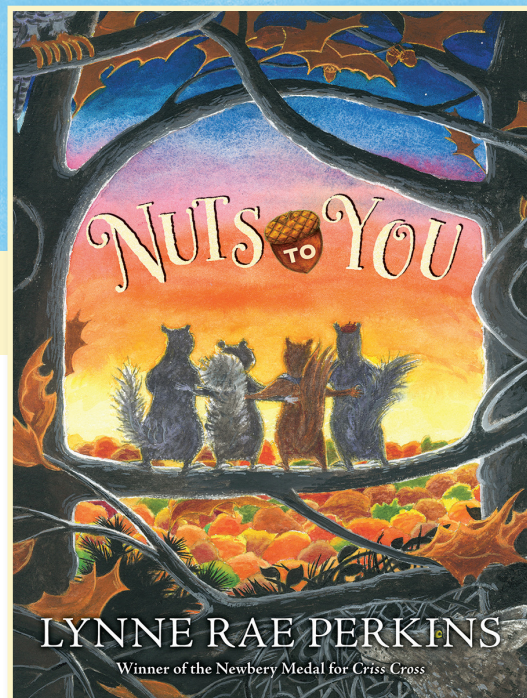
NUTS TO YOU

LYNNE RAE PERKINS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Squirrels Jed, TsTs, and Chai are the very best of friends. So when Jed is snatched up by a hawk and carried away to another realm, TsTs and Chai resolve to go after him. New communities are discovered, new friends are made, huge danger is encountered, and the mysteries of squirrel culture are revealed. (Did you know that squirrels are steadfast and fun-loving?) *Nuts to You* is illustrated in black-and-white on every page by the author and includes an introduction, an epilogue, and funny footnotes throughout. It is a lively, thought-provoking story about the power of friendship and the importance of community.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jed and TsTs are good friends with distinct personalities. Describe what each of them is like. Discuss their similarities and differences. What do they like about each other?
CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.3
2. Chai and TsTs set off together to try to find Jed, but they have different feelings about the quest. Describe the attitude of each and how it is conveyed in the dialogue. How do Chai's feelings about the adventure change? *CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.4*
3. When Jed meets the red squirrels, Chuck believes his tale and helps him. Describe Chuck and how he's different from the other red squirrels. How do the red squirrels compare to the gray ones? Discuss why the author chose to have the red squirrels speak in dialect. *CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.4*
4. How do the squirrels and humans interact in this novel? Find evidence about whether the workers cutting the trees are helping or hurting the squirrels. How do the squirrels and tree-cutting people communicate? Discuss what the Author's Note and Author's Endnote add to the novel, including what they show about human and animal interaction. *CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.2*
5. The three friends and Tchke brainstorm about how to convince the squirrels to move. What does each one of them contribute to the plan? How do their contributions reflect their personalities? *CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.3*
6. The friends come up with the game Move to save their community. Describe the game, how teams are chosen, and how it's played. How do different squirrels react to the game? How does the game succeed in getting the squirrels to move?
CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.3
7. Storytelling plays an important role in *Nuts to You*. Find specific places in the novel where characters tell stories, such as Jed re-telling his adventure with the hawk (p. 72). Describe how the various stories make a difference in what happens. Discuss the meaning of the squirrel saying, "Story first, fight later" (p. 226).
CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.2
8. "Nuts to you" is a negative expression among humans. Find examples that show what the phrase means to squirrels and how they use it. Why do you think the author chose it for the title? Choose some of the chapter titles and discuss how each relates to what occurs in that specific chapter.
CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.4
9. The narrative voice in this novel uses several devices to pull in readers. For example, find places where the narrator asks questions, and analyze what the questions add. Why do you think footnotes are used? What about italicized sections? The narrative voice sometimes addresses the reader as "you." Find examples of this and discuss the effect it has on the reader.
CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.4



Discussion questions continued on the next page . . .

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10. Unlike many novels, *Nuts to You* is filled with illustrations that add to the story. Choose some illustrations that you especially like and discuss what they add in terms of setting, character, plot, mood, and other story elements. Do the pictures reflect your own vision of the story, its characters, and its setting? **CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.7**
11. In a fast-moving scene, Chai and TsTs chase each other through the tree-tops (pp. 54–55). Analyze how the author uses language and sentence structure to make the scene exciting. Look also at the verbs earlier in the chapter and how they convey the action. What are the consequences of the chase on the plot? **CCSS: RL.4.1, RL.4.4**
12. Keep track of unfamiliar vocabulary words as you read. See if you can understand new words in context, then look up the definitions to see if you understood the words. Below are some possibilities. **CCSS: RL.4.4**
- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| + whorl (p. 10) | + cavities (p. 105) |
| + tactic (p. 19) | + redundant (p. 110) |
| + persimmon (p. 56) | + hastily (p. 139) |
| + vermilion (p. 81) | + stealthily (p. 162) |
| + tumult (p. 93) | + triumphant (p. 209) |
| + morbid (p. 96) | + aft (p. 226) |

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. **Let the Games Begin.** Have students take one of the squirrel games, besides Move, named in the story (p. 192) and describe in a few paragraphs how squirrels might play it, including the rules. They should decide whether it's played alone, in pairs, or in two or more teams; if it's physical, or more like a board game; if it requires equipment, implements, board pieces, and the like; and whether it's competitive, and what it takes to win. **CCSS: W.4.2**
2. **Fact or Fiction?** *Nuts to You* is fiction, but the author drew on many facts about squirrels, including their habitat, food, and more. Have students research squirrels using at least one print source and one internet source. They should then identify parts of the story that are factual and share their findings in a group discussion that refers to both their research and specifics in the novel. **CCSS: SL.4.4**
3. **Fill in the Gap.** In the Author's Endnote, the reader learns that the squirrel who tells the story now lives near condos because, he says, "The forest left me" (p. 247). Have students describe in a few paragraphs what they imagine has happened to the squirrel's territory, how he lives now compared to in the story, and why that change is an important part of the book. **CCSS: W.4.1, W.4.3**
4. **Picture This.** *Nuts to You* uses many metaphors and similes to paint pictures for readers. Have students make a list of five examples of figurative language from the narrative. Then have a discussion in which students share the images and talk about the comparisons the metaphors or similes use. Have each student choose one example and illustrate it to add to a class "Picture This" bulletin board. **CCSS: RL.4.4; SL.4.1**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynne Rae Perkins is the creator of several acclaimed children's books. She was awarded the Newbery Medal for her novel *Criss Cross*, and its companion, *All Alone in the Universe*, was named an ALA Notable Book, among other honors. Her recent novels include *As Easy as Falling Off the Face of the Earth*. She has written and illustrated six picture books, including *Snow Music* and *Home Lovely*, both Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Books. She is also the illustrator of *Seed by Seed*, a picture book biography of Johnny Appleseed, by Esmé Raji Codell. Lynne Rae Perkins lives with her family in northern Michigan.



Photo by Lucy Perkins

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