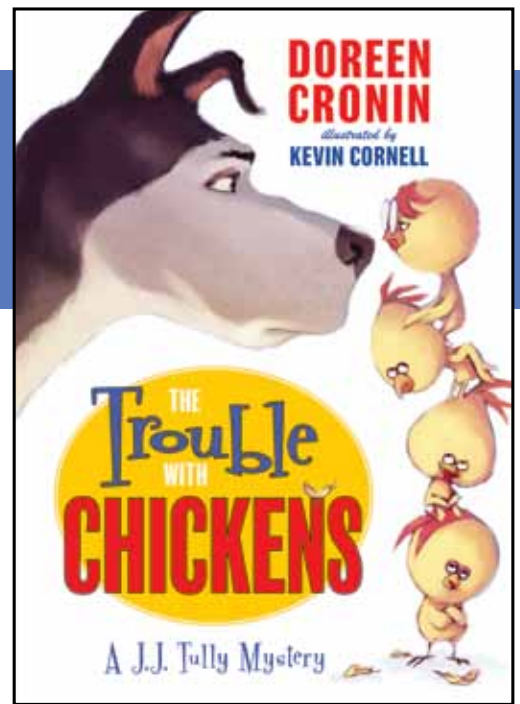


THE Trouble WITH CHICKENS

by DOREEN CRONIN
Illustrated by KEVIN CORNELL
Discussion Guide



About the Book

What's a mother hen to do when two of her baby chicks go missing? Enlist the help of J.J. Tully, of course. For the promise of a cheeseburger, the retired search-and-rescue dog extraordinaire takes on a mystery that is not what it seems. Full of laughs and unexpected twists, *The Trouble with Chickens* introduces readers to a hero who saves the day—with a little help.

Discussion Questions

1. Think about the title. Just what is the trouble with chickens in this book? Do you think the title has multiple meanings?
2. Did anything in the story surprise you? What was it? If you think back, were there any clues that might have prepared you for the surprise?
3. Who is the “bad guy” in this story? Explain. Is there only one bad guy, or are there more than one? Is it easy to tell who the bad guy is, or is it difficult?
4. What three words would you use to describe J.J. Tully? Is he a likable character? Why or why not? What three words would you use to describe Vince? Why do you think Vince acts the way he does?
5. What is a tell (p. 89)? What about Moosh's left foot gives her away to J.J.? Do you think people really have tells? What tells have you noticed in the people you talk to regularly?
6. Do you think J.J. Tully rescues the chicks? Why or why not? What qualities make someone a hero? Does J.J. have these qualities? Are any of the other characters heroes? What makes you think so?
7. How many different characters narrate this story? What clues tell you when the narrator switches? How are the narrators similar, and how are they different? Do you prefer one narrator over the other(s)?
8. Choose your favorite illustration in the book. Why do you like it? How does it relate to the text? Can you picture the book with different types of illustrations? If it were your job to choose an illustrator for the story, who would you choose?
9. What parts of the story make you laugh? Would you call this book a comedy? What other word(s) would you use to describe it?
10. Look back through *The Trouble with Chickens* for interesting words. Did the author use many words or phrases that were new to you? How did you figure out what they meant? What words or phrases did you like?
11. Does J.J. Tully change a lot over the course of the story? How? Do any of the other characters change drastically throughout the story?

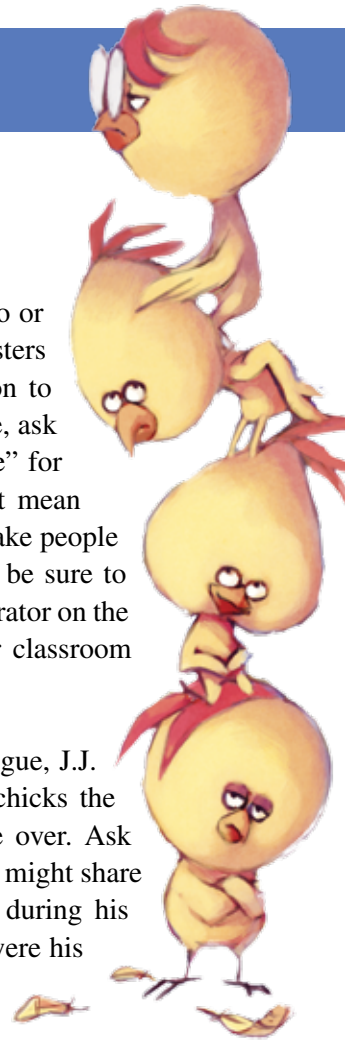


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Extension Activities

1. **Who's that Dog?** Over the course of the book, we learn a lot about J.J. Tully. Ask students to put all this information together and write a biography about him. Have the class break into partners and share their biographies, discussing how their pieces of writing are similar and different.
2. **Ready, Set, Read!** Divide the class into small groups, and have each group choose a scene or chapter to read aloud. As they pick out their scenes, ask students to think about including both conversation and narration. How would the narrator speak? How would each character speak? What sound effects do they need to create? The groups can rehearse and then present their scenes to the group.
3. **Map It!** J.J. Tully draws a map of the house to prepare for the rescue mission (even though the rescue turns out differently than planned). Have students map out the action of what *really* happens from the time J.J. enters the house until the story's end.
4. **Spread the Word.** In groups of two or three, have students design posters to advertise the book. In addition to choosing an illustration to feature, ask them to come up with a "tag line" for the book—just a few words that mean something about the book and make people want to read it. Remind them to be sure to include the title, author, and illustrator on the poster. Hang the posters in your classroom gallery!
5. **The Rest of the Story.** In the Epilogue, J.J. says that someday he'll tell the chicks the story of why his rescue days are over. Ask students to write the story that J.J. might share with the chicks. What happened during his last days as a rescue dog? What were his first days of retirement like?



About the Author

DOREEN CRONIN is the *New York Times* bestselling author of favorite picture books such as *Rescue Bunnies*, the *Diary of . . .* series, and *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*, a Caldecott Honor Book. When she was growing up, Doreen's dogs were Archie and Trapper (named after two of her favorite television characters). She lives in Brooklyn, New York. You can visit her online at www.doreencronin.com.

About the Illustrator

KEVIN CORNELL spends his days writing and drawing from his doghouse outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He can do several popular tricks, including "Sit," "Stay," and "Illustrate Books"—such as *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button: A Graphic Novel* and the upcoming children's book *Mustache!* You can visit him online at www.kevskinrug.com.

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