

THE ASTOUNDING BROCCOLI BOY

By Frank Cottrell Boyce

DISCUSSION GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK

Rory Rooney likes to be prepared for anything. That sort of planning pays off when you're the smallest kid in your class. Rory is even prepared (mostly) for Tommy-Lee, his nemesis, who starts most days by throwing Rory out of the back of the school bus. *Don't be scared, his favorite book says, be prepared.* And Rory aims to be. What's more heroic than that?

But Rory *isn't* prepared when he suddenly and inexplicably turns green and finds himself stuck in an experimental hospital ward. The doctors are just as baffled as Rory is, and that's when he begins to wonder: What if this isn't caused by his genes, or a virus, or something he ate? What if it's something even more extraordinary? After all, more than a few superheroes' careers began when they turned green. Could this be a sign that he's meant for something greater? Rory is going to find out—and he'll start by escaping from the hospital.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

The Astounding Broccoli Boy takes place in London, and the characters sometimes use words for objects that are called by different names in England than the ones we use in America. Familiarize yourself with British English by looking up the meanings of these terms: *car park, lift, lorry, lolly ices, milk float, petrol, telly, wheelie bin.* [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.4](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

1. What advice does Rory get from each of his parents about dealing with a bully? Why doesn't the advice of either of them work for Rory's situation at school? How do his parents react when Rory turns green? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.1](#)
2. What events lead to Rory saying, "I wasn't scared of Grim anymore. Not even a bit" (p. 132)? What has changed in the relationship between the two boys at that point that makes Rory stop fearing his nemesis? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.1](#)
3. What does turning green mean to Rory, to Tommy-Lee, and to Koko? How does each of them react to their condition? What do their reactions tell you about each of their personalities? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.3](#)
4. Discuss the reactions to the children's condition by the hospital staff. Why is Dr. Brightside so interested in them? Why is Nurse Rock so unpleasant to them? What are the reactions of the people Rory and Tommy-Lee meet the first night they leave the hospital? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.3](#)
5. What are the qualities of a true hero? Discuss the sentence, "Every good superhero team needs a mixture of talents" (p. 209). Name the attributes that make Rory, Tommy-Lee, and Koko unique. Which of them would you call a hero? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.2](#)

6. Discuss the title of the book Rory refers to, "*Don't Be Scared; Be Prepared.*" How many ways does that phrase help Rory to face the strange situations he encounters? Is it the book title or his inner resourcefulness that helps him deal with each challenge? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.2](#)
7. At the end of the book, Rory says: "When you thought about it, a city was nothing but heroes. Heroism is everywhere" (pp. 356–357). Compare this quote to the first sentence: "Every story has a hero" (p. 1). How has Rory's concept of heroism changed throughout the course of the story? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.2](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (cont.)

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

8. Discuss the words Rory uses to describe how he feels about turning green and the words he uses that describe superheroes. How do the words affect his perception of himself and his acceptance of what has happened to him? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.4](#)
9. What are the differences between this story and a comic book story about a superhero? Why does Rory imagine himself in a comic book version of his life? How does that help him accept his situation? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.5](#)
10. What makes the boys think their green skin relates to the qualities of superheroes? How would the story be different if Tommy-Lee were the narrator? How would it be different if it were told from a third-person perspective? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.6](#)

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

11. Make a list of the comic-book superheroes that Rory and Tommy-Lee refer to in the course of this story. What are the qualities that make each of these characters a superhero? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.9](#)
12. Compare this story and its theme of heroism to the heroes of ancient Greek mythology. Are there differences between the heroes of present-day comic books and those of traditional myths and folktales? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.9](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frank Cottrell Boyce is the author of *Cosmic*, *Framed*, and *Millions*, the last of which was a *New York Times* bestseller and was made into a movie by Oscar-winning director Danny Boyle. His books have won or been nominated for numerous awards, including the Carnegie Medal, the *Guardian* Children's Fiction Prize, and the Whitbread Children's Book Award. Frank is also a screenwriter, having penned the scripts for a number of feature films as well as the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics. He lives in Liverpool with his family.

GUIDED READING LEVEL T

ALIGN WITH COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR GRADES 3–7

Discussion guide written by Connie Rockman, youth literature consultant and adjunct professor of children's and young adult literature.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. **London Travelogue.** Many familiar sites in London are mentioned in this book. Pretend you are planning a trip to London and find a picture of each of these sites that you might visit: Trafalgar Square, Buckingham Palace, Green Park, Pall Mall, The Shard, Tower Bridge, the London Eye, and 10 Downing Street. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.3](#)
2. **Picture Your Adventure.** Using an actual map of London, follow one of the excursions that the children in this story take in the city. Trace their route from one site to another. Choose one of these sites to research, and write a paragraph about historic events that happened there. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.9;](#) [W.3-7.2](#)
3. **Show and Tell a Story.** Draw your own version of one of Rory's, Tommy-Lee's, and/or Koko's adventures in London as if it were a comic book. Write dialogue for your characters and sketch out the places they visit. Share your version of the story with your class or in small groups. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3-7.7;](#) [SL.3-7.5](#)

USEFUL WEB SITES

- www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/british-american.htm
- www.visitlondon.com/discover-london



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