



The Tiger Rising Discussion Guide

GRADES 4- 6

Before using this book with your class or recommending the book to students, we suggest reading the book closely to determine if it is a good fit. Consider saying to your students:

"This book contains topics that may be sensitive. Not all books fit all readers. If you are uncomfortable with this book, you have the right to stop reading it, but please pick another."

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Have students complete the [Anticipation Guide](#) to prepare for understanding and connecting with the deeper themes and messages of the story.
- Frontload vocabulary with the [Vocabulary Guide](#).

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 1 - 30

- Rob imagines his feelings as an overstuffed suitcase he sits on to keep shut. What clues on these pages tell you what he is trying not to feel?
- Rob has a rash on his legs that itches and won't heal. His father says it will itch less if he doesn't think about it. Why might the author connect the rash to Rob's feelings rather than to a real illness?
- When Sistine boards the bus in a pink dress and says she hates the South, how do the other students react and what does Rob do differently from them?

Chapters 31 - 62

- Willie May tells Rob he is keeping his sadness "down low, in your legs" and that he has to "let that sadness rise on up." In your own words, what is she telling him to do?
- Rob's father shot a bird once "to prove I can," and afterward told Rob not to cry over it. What does this memory reveal about how Rob's family handles feelings?
- When Rob whispers his mother's name, "Caroline," the text says the word was "as sweet as forbidden candy." Why has saying her name become forbidden for Rob?

Chapters 63 - 101

- Willie May had a caged bird named Cricket that she set free — and it likely died. Why does the author place this story right before Rob decides what to do with the tiger?
- Beauchamp owns the tiger and pays Rob to feed it in secret. What does the way Beauchamp talks to Rob tell you about the kind of adult he is?
- Willie May says: "there ain't nothing you can do for this tiger except to let it be... Sometimes right don't count." Sistine disagrees. Whose view do you find more convincing here, and what in the text supports you?



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During Reading Cont: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 102 - 121

- Rob and Sistine call themselves the tiger's "emancipators." Why do they believe freeing the tiger is the right thing — and what does Willie May fear will happen?
- After his father shoots the tiger, the text says Rob "opened his suitcase" and the words "sprang out of it, coiled and explosive." Connect this moment to the suitcase image from the very first pages. What has finally changed in Rob?
- At the burial, the sun comes out and Rob notices he feels "much lighter, as if he had set something heavy down." His rash is never mentioned as a problem again. What is the author suggesting about grief through these details?

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- The tiger dies, yet Rob ends the book lighter and closer to his father. Is this a sad ending, a hopeful one, or both? Use evidence to defend your answer.
- Think about the title. In what ways does something "rise" in this story besides the tiger? (Consider Rob's sadness, his voice, and the sun.)
- Willie May, Sistine, and Rob's father each teach Rob something about feelings. Choose one and explain what Rob learns from them.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.