

UNDERCOVER CHEFS



ERIN FRY

Family Reading Guide

Activities to help readers
enjoy this book with family and friends

The activities and discussion questions provided here are meant to help adults and kids enjoy this book together. They can also be used by a teacher or librarian to guide a literature circle.

Though the activities and questions often correlate to Common Core State Standards, they are mostly designed to engage a reader and allow for discussion and enjoyment of literature.



About the Author and the Story

Summary

Isaac's overbearing mom wants him to focus on his running, but he'd rather be baking. Jane copes with her learning disability, her difficulty making friends, and the loss of her mom by drawing and making her favorite recipes. With his awesome scooter skills, J.C. knows he can get a sponsor, if he wasn't so busy taking care of and cooking for his brothers.

These three sixth graders are unexpectedly brought together by a bright orange flyer and the promise of a cupcake contest.

For the next few weeks, with the help of the oddly lovable Dr. Gus, they share their love of cooking, and commit to making two-hundred cupcakes to win two thousand dollars for their school and hopefully convince their principal NOT to tear down the school's ancient kitchen.

Then, Dr. Gus disappears, an assistant principal seems determined to make them fail and the pressures of the contest start to boil over. Isaac, Jane and J.C. must figure out a way to make a winning cupcake, save Room 212, and protect their secret before the judges cast their final votes.

About the Author

Erin Fry has a couple of things she loves: writing books, teaching kids, hiking mountains, and tracking weather.

For seventeen years, Erin has taught 6th-grade English and history at a middle school in southern California, where she also coached cross country, and mentors a Young Authors Club.

Erin has three books for young readers—LOSING IT, SECRETS OF THE BOOK, and UNDERCOVER CHEFS—and one book for teens, THE BENEFACTOR. She also writes curriculum guides for her books.

Erin loves to hike with her husband and 3 kids, and considers summiting Mt. Whitney—the tallest peak in the continental United States—the hardest, most amazing thing she's ever done.

Visit Amazon or <http://www.5050press.com/> to learn more about Erin's other books.

About the Book

My son, Jake, decided he wanted to be a chef when he was five. He had to climb on a stool to reach the counter, but he had better knife skills than most adults. When he was in middle school, he was put in charge of making two hundred cupcakes for a contest being sponsored by a local bakery. My son worked tirelessly, but his Heath-It-Up did not impress the judges.

However, the owner of the bakery loved the flavors in his cupcake. She invited him to her store where she gave him cupcake frosting lessons AND replicated his cupcake, which became a best-seller for the month of February. His experience inspired this book and the contest that Jane, Isaac, and J.C. enter.

Today, Jake works in a restaurant and is going to college where he is majoring in Hospitality Management. He hopes to be a chef and plans to open his OWN restaurant. I can only hope that his Heath-It-Up cupcakes might be on the menu.

For more information and recipes, visit www.undecoverchefs.net.



Before You Read

What Do You Do Well?

In this story, the characters all have something that their friends and family know they do well. Few people know they can cook, however.

Fill in the speech bubble and the journal with your own thoughts.




Everybody knows that I'm good at . . .

What Happens Next?

Each situation below occurs in *Undercover Chefs*. Shade in what you think each character will do.

Isaac should be training for his first race. But he sees a flyer for a cupcake contest at school. What will Isaac do?

- Go the contest meeting
- Focus on his running

J.C. is supposed to meet with his assistant principal at lunch for coming late to class. What will J.C. do?

- Show up for the meeting
- Hide on campus

Jane wants to sit with some popular girls at lunch, but she is too nervous to approach them. What will Jane do?

- Sit with them
- Eat alone

Rocky, Paper, Cupcake?

Isaac, Jane, and J.C. find inspiration for their cupcake by looking at rocks.

- Visit <http://www.undercoverchefs.net/> and click on the tab labeled *Dr. Gus's Rocks*.
- Under each rock listed below, write or draw the first food you think of when you look at it.

Agate

Benitoite

Quartz

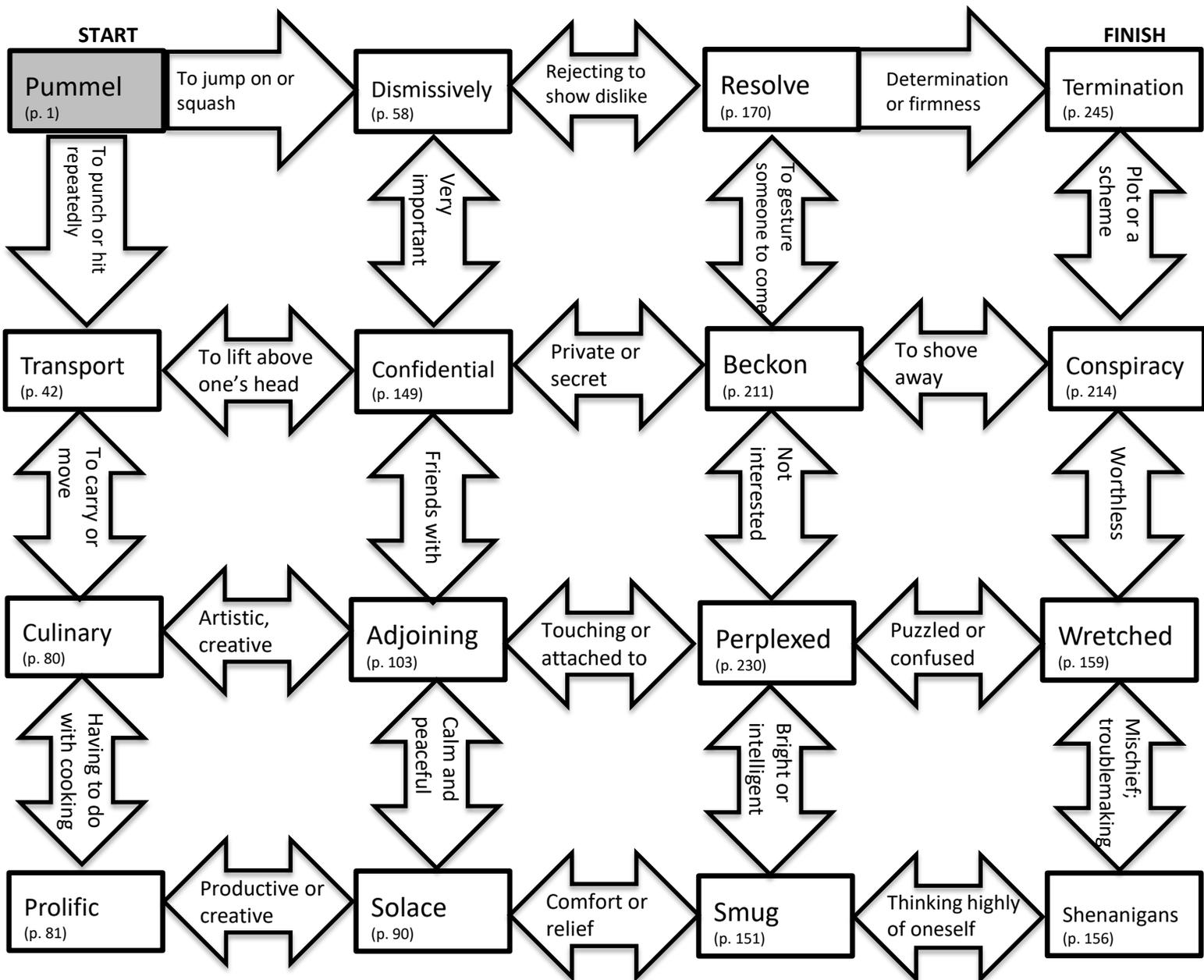


New Words to Explore

Word Maze

Start in the upper left-hand corner of the maze. Color in the first word. Then, decide its correct definition. You may need to look back to the page noted to find the word, or look it up in a dictionary. Color in the correct definition, which should lead you to a new word.

Once you are finished, you should have the answer to this riddle: *I'm in you, but not in him. I go up, but not down. I'm in a puzzle, but not a riddle. What am I?*



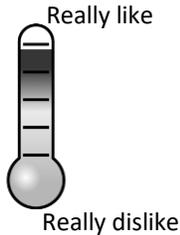


As You Read

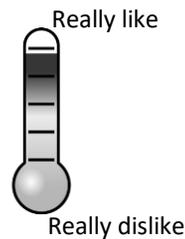
Chapters 1-3

To the left of the figures below, write one thing you know about that character. Then, mark an X on the thermometers below to show how much you like these characters after reading these chapters.

ISAAC



JANE



J.C.



Share what you've written with an adult or friend.

Chapters 4-6

Fill in the chart below.

Character	Attends the contest meeting because . . .	Is this a good or bad idea?
Isaac		
J.C.		
Jane		



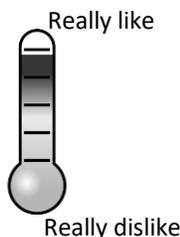
Share what you've written with an adult or friend.

Chapter 7

Write one word to describe Dr. Gus and Mrs. Rappaport. Then, choose something from the book that they did or said that made you pick this word. Finally, mark an X on the thermometers to show how much you like them.

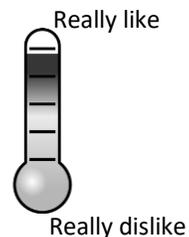
Dr. Gus is _____

I think that because he _____



Mrs. Rappaport is _____

I think that because she _____



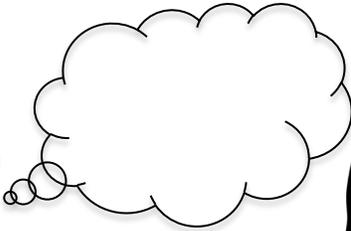


As You Read

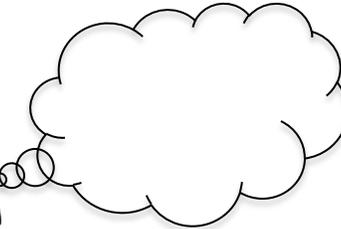
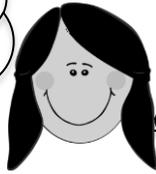
Chapters 8-10

In the speech bubbles, finish the character's thought: *I'm really worried that . . .*

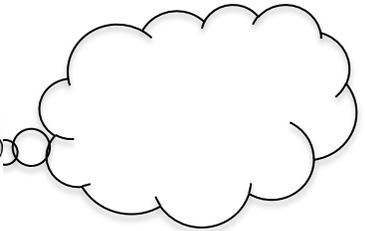
ISAAC



JANE



J.C.



Can you relate to any of these worries? Share what you've written with an adult or friend.

Chapters 11-13

Writers sometimes use descriptive language called *figurative language* when they write stories. Draw the image each sentence creates in your mind.

He felt his mom's stare, a laser trying to beam into his brain.



He looked . . . at the row of mountains that towered over his school like sentinels. [A sentinel is a guard.]



How do you picture the Home Ec room that Dr. Gus shows the kids? Would you want to cook there?



Why does Dr. Gus want to win this cupcake contest so badly? Do you agree or disagree with his reason?

Chapters 14-18

The middle of a story often contains what writers call the "rising action," where the main characters face more and more problems trying to accomplish their goal. In each hurdle below, explain what problem each character is facing. In the last hurdle, write what problem all three characters are facing.

ISAAC

JANE

JC

ALL



As You Read

Chapters 19-22

Both J.C. and Isaac are torn. They feel like no matter what decision they make, they are letting someone down. In each thought bubble write one reason each boy should choose the activity shown.

Running **ISAAC** **Baking** **Scootering** **J.C.** **Baking**

Why is Jane upset about going to see her counselor? Can you understand how she feels?

What warning to the 3 kids get in the note from Dr. Gus? What do you think he means?

Chapters 23-27

In these chapters, all three characters—Jane, J.C., and Isaac—are being pulled away from the cupcake contest. In the diagram below, list what is making the cupcake contest more difficult for each of them to do.

ISAAC

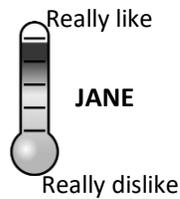
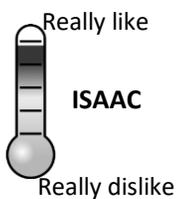
JANE

JC

Does J.C. deserve to get his scooter back? How might this affect the cupcake contest?

Why do you think Isaac's mom insists that he run? What would you do if you were Isaac?

Have any of your *Likability Thermometers* changed after reading these last few chapters? Mark on each meter below how much you like each character right now.



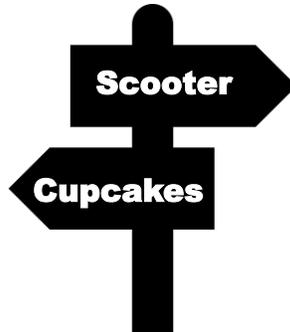


As You Read

Chapter 28

What should J.C. do? Fill in a reason that he should consider both decisions. Then, put a checkmark in the box below the one you think he should do.

J.C. should make cupcakes because



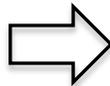
J.C. should compete in the scooter competition because

Chapter 29

Jane started this story feeling anxious and uncertain. Being in the cupcake contest changed that. In this chapter though, she starts to feel the same way she did in the beginning of the story. Write an event from the story that made Jane feel each emotion below.

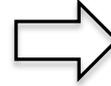
Anxious

Beginning of the Story



Confident

After Joining the Cupcake Contest



Worried

Sitting in the Hospital

Chapters 30

Fill in the speech bubbles below to show the biggest thing Isaac learned from his mom and grandma in this chapter.



I want you to know that



I want you to know that



As You Read

Chapters 31- 32

Fill in the names of the three people who secretly made sure that each character got a cupcake contest flyer.



Hi, I'm Isaac's

I know Dr. Gus because we



Hi, I'm Jane's

I know Dr. Gus because we



Hi, I'm J.C.'s

I know Dr. Gus because we

Chapter 33 - 35

Mark an X on the spectrum below to show how likely you think it is that Isaac, J.C., and Jane will win the contest.



Will Definitely Not Win

Will Definitely Win

If you were a judge, how would you score their cupcake in these categories?

TASTE: _____ / 20 points

PRESENTATION _____ / 10 points

ORIGINALITY _____ / 10 points

What do you think J.C. will do? Share your prediction with a friend or an adult.



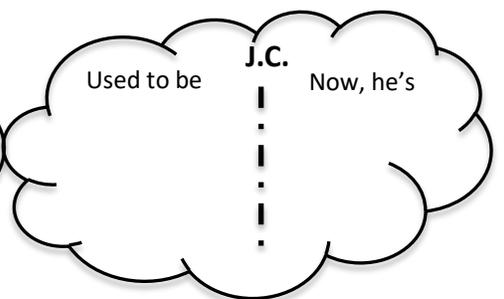
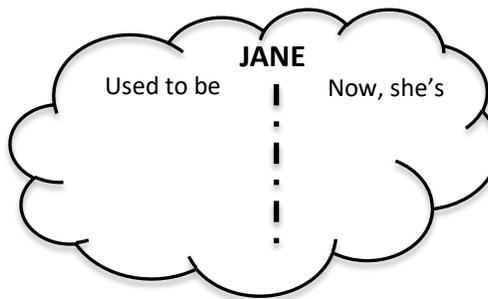
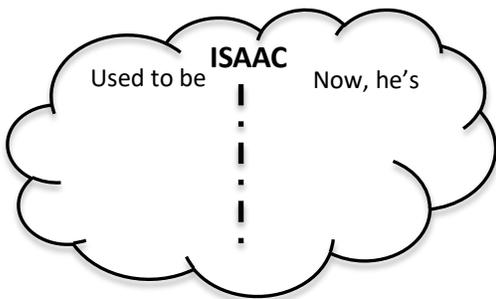
Do you think Jane and Isaac made the right decision to let J.C. be part of the contest again?



Are you surprised about the outcome of the contest?

Chapters 36-37

How did these characters change because of the events that happened in this book?



Dr. Gus served as a mentor to the 3 kids during the cupcake contest. Do you think he was a good one?



How might the relationship between Isaac and his mom change? Between J.C. and his mom? Between Jane and her grandfather?



Why do you think the last chapter is written from Dr. Gus's perspective?



After You Read

Cook Like An Undercover Chef

Visit www.undercoverchefs.net and click on the tab labeled *Recipes*. Choose one of the recipes listed and, with an adult, follow the directions to make that item. Post a picture of yourself and your creation on Instagram and tag @UndercoverChefs.

Rock Hunting

Find a cool rock. Take a picture of it or find a picture of it using Google Images. (Make sure you check with an adult before using the Internet.) Post your picture and tag @UndercoverChefs on Instagram and tell us all what food it reminds you of. Feel free to include a picture of the food as well.

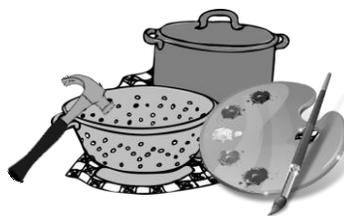
Sports vs. Arts

Mrs. Rappaport believes that a Sports Complex would benefit the school. Dr. Gus believes that a place where students can learn how to draw and cook and create things out of wood would be a better idea. Who do you agree with? Circle your choice and then write (or discuss with a friend) why you chose what you did.

SPORTS COMPLEX



CENTER FOR THE ARTS



Going Undercover

The title of this book is *Undercover Chefs* because the characters keep their cupcake contest a secret from their friends, and in some cases, their family, too. Do you think they made the right decision to do that? How might the book have been different if the characters had been open about what they were doing?

People Change

All three of the main characters—Isaac, Jane, and J.C.—change during this book. But who do you think changed the most. Place each character's name on the spectrum below to show who you think changed the most and the least because of their involvement in the cupcake contest.



Share with a friend or an adult why you placed each name where you did.