

Feiwel and Friends
DISCUSSION GUIDE



THE KNEEBONE BOY

by Ellen Potter

Reading Level

Grades 4 and up

About the Novel

Life in a small town can be pretty boring when everyone avoids you like the plague. But after their father unwittingly sends them to stay with an aunt who's away on holiday, the Hardscrabble children take off on an adventure that begins in the seedy streets of London and ends in a peculiar sea village where legend has it a monstrous creature lives who is half boy and half animal. . . .

In this wickedly dark, unusual, and compelling novel, Ellen Potter masterfully tells the tale of one deliciously strange family and a secret that changes everything.

Discussion Questions

1. At the beginning of the book, Lucia is described as someone “who incidentally looked exactly like her name.” Who are some people that you would describe as looking exactly like their name? Who are some people who don't look anything like their name?
2. The Hardscrabble children find a mysterious letter from their great-aunt Haddie, which serves as a *catalyst* for the protagonists to start a quest to find their mother. Name a *catalyst* in another book that spurs the protagonists to action. Name some other books you've read that involve a quest to find something or someone important to them.
3. Otto wears his scarf everywhere. Do you have something that you always wear? If yes, why do you like wearing it?
4. In Chapter 3, the Hardscrabble children find themselves completely alone in London. “All in all [the Hardscrabble children] were in that gorgeous state of mind in which they felt free and unafraid and sharply aware of how large and exciting the world was.” When was the longest you've ever been away from your parents? How did you feel at first? How did you feel after a couple of days?
5. Lucia, Otto and Max have a special language between them because Otto uses sign language that no adult understands. Do you have a special language or a certain way of communicating with someone?

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6. When the British Hardscrabbles first meet their American great-aunt Haddie, they're disgusted by a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, even though it's a very normal American thing to eat. When have you experienced a similar culture shock when given a common item from another culture?
7. The author chose to not mention the Kneebone Boy until almost the very end. What did you think the title referred to while you were reading the book?
8. How do you describe the relationships between each of the Hardscrabble children?
9. The story of the Kneebone Boy was a legend that was passed down from generation to generation. What are some legends that you are familiar with?
10. At the end of the book, the Hardscrabble children feel "like something more should happen." Why do they feel this way? Do you think that this "is how life works in general"?
11. How do you think the Hardscrabbles' big adventure has changed them from how they were in the beginning of the book? Or are they still the same "Hardscrabble kids who live in Little Tunks with their dad and not their mom"?
12. The narrator of *The Kneebone Boy* is unknown, but the narrator does say that he (or she) is one of the Hardscrabble children. Which one of the children do you think the narrator is and why?

About the Author

Ellen Potter is the author of several critically acclaimed books for children including *Slob* and the bestselling Olivia Kidney series. She lives in upstate New York. You can visit her website at: www.ellenpotter.com.

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