



DISCUSSION GUIDE for

DANGER AND DIAMONDS

by Elizabeth Levy

with illustrations by Mordicai Gerstein

- thematic connections
- a note from the author
- some discussion questions to use with your classroom or book group
- praise for the book and the author
- “Write Your Own Mystery” tips

*“Elizabeth Levy has great comedic timing and writes with a depth of feeling.”**



Dear Readers,

You may know some things about me from the books I’ve written, but now I have a chance to tell you more about myself. I have been writing for over 30 years and published over 80 books with over 5 million sold. Writing is always an adventure. FIGURING OUT WHY YOUR DETECTIVE AND THE READER CARES IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO ME WHEN I WRITE.

I love to share tips and to write mysteries with classes and kids. Learn what a red herring is? Go to my “write a mystery” link on www.elizabethlevy.com

Want mystery and adventure and to find out what it takes to be both a detective and a loyal friend? Come on board! **DANGER AND DIAMONDS** is the first in *the Mystery at Sea* series, illustrated by Caldecott Winner, Mordicai Gerstein. We’ve got diamonds, duchesses, parrots and a captain’s son with a royal secret. Best of all we’ve got dogs, taken from real life—my dog Buddy and his best friend Max.

FREE BOOKMARKS: Visit my website, www.elizabethlevy.com, to download free bookmarks. Plus I love hearing from students, teachers, librarians and booksellers – so feel free to write to me (see the WRITE TO ME section of my website). I will personally answer.

All aboard,

Elizabeth Levy
www.elizabethlevy.com

Thematic Connections:

Mystery
Geography
Friendship
Loyalty
Adventure

Discussion questions for *Danger and Diamonds*:

1. If you lived on a cruise ship, where would you want to go? What mysteries do you think you could find there?
2. Philip, the captain's son, misses his homeland. Where is your family's country of origin? Would you like to sail there with your friends? What would you like to show them? And why?
3. Philippa gets to live on a cruise ship: What do you think would be the best and worst things about such a life? For example, every cruise brings a new adventure, but Philippa always has to be polite to the paying customers. Would that be hard for you?
4. Philippa has a wicked sense of humor. Sometimes she can make a joke too quickly, and it gets her in trouble. Do you know someone like that? Are you like that? When can you take a joke too far?
5. Philip's father is the captain of the ship. Philip lives in a huge stateroom and is allowed to have pets. Philippa and her parents live below the waterline. Is it hard to be friends with someone who has so much more than you? How do Philip and Philippa show their loyalty to each other?

6. Philip and Philippa love mysteries and are always willing to do research to solve them. Why is it so important for a detective to be curious? What can you learn from mysteries?

Book reviews:

“...a fast paced story full of intrigue and adventure on the high seas make this series perfect for newly independent readers”.

- *GOODREADS*. ***** 5 stars:

“Elizabeth Levy has great comedic timing and writes with a depth of feeling.”

- *School Library Journal*, Starred Review (on MY LIFE AS A FIFTH GRADE COMEDIAN)*

“(Levy’s) mysteries have enormous appeal because of their combination of humor and sleuthing.” - *Washington Post* (on THE INVISIBLE INC. series)

WRITE YOUR OWN MYSTERY: WHO DID IT AND WHY?

FIGURING OUT WHY YOUR DETECTIVE AND THE READER CARES IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO ME WHEN I WRITE.

Watch out for those red herrings.

1. MYSTERY WRITERS GET TO KNOW HOW THE STORY ENDS: Writers, young and old, always have trouble ending a story. The joy of writing a mystery is that the bad person is going to get his or her comeuppance and your detective is going to save the day! SWEET!
2. YOUR DETECTIVE: Decide who you want to be your detective or detectives: They have to care about right and wrong. They can be messy or very neat; they can love sports or hate sports. Have fun making up your detective. Since I love hanging out with my friends, I often write about best friends working together. Then they can argue and joke together. Best of all, you get to make up two different personalities.

3. **THE SETTING:** Is it a mystery at school? In the classroom or in the playground, or in the backyard? Or do you want an exotic setting? It's fun to do research and find little details that will make great clues. For example, on a cruise ship, I found out that the crew goes back and forth in secret passageways. Feel free to take your detectives on a cruise. Then they can have the run of the ship.
4. **THE MYSTERY: WHAT HAPPENED:** Pick something that gets stolen or taken, such as a pet that is kidnapped or a project sabotaged. The mystery should matter to your detective. For example, in *DANGER AND DIAMONDS*, Philippa cares about Philip even though he is keeping something about himself secret. When he is in danger, she really wants to protect him.
5. The clues and the red herrings! A red herring is something that throws the reader and the detective off the real clues...and they are fun to write. Once I write my first draft of the mystery and I know who did it and why, then I often go back and sprinkle red herrings. By the way, the term "red herrings" originated when fugitives used to rub red herrings across a trail to confuse the bloodhounds who were after them. Sprinkle your red herrings to confuse your reader. It might even confuse you.
6. When you finish a draft, the hardest part is giving it to someone you trust. Listen to what they say, and try to make the story better. That's what a good editor does.
7. Many drafts later VOILA! You have a mystery. Now let your detectives take you on another adventure! Have fun!!