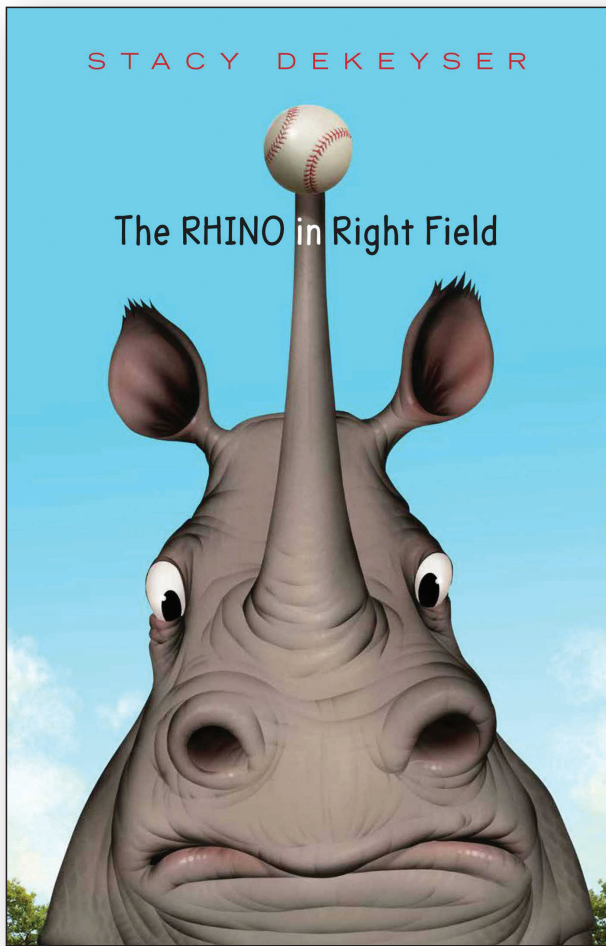


DISCUSSION GUIDE

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The RHINO in Right Field

BY
STACY DEKEYSER

Author of *One Witch at a Time*
and *The Brixen Witch*

IT'S 1948, AND 12-YEAR-OLD NICK wants to change his life. He's always done what his hard-working, Greek-immigrant parents want him to do. Now he's found his own American dream: The local baseball team is having a batboy contest. More than anything, Nick wants to be Mudpuppy for a Day!

But the contest is on a Saturday—the day Nick has to work in his father's shop. There's one other problem: a rhinoceros named Tank. Nick and his friends play ball in the city zoo, and Tank lives just beyond the right field fence. After a few too many

close encounters with Tank, Nick freezes up every time a fly ball comes his way. How's a lousy fielder going to win the contest?

Nick hatches a plan that includes lying to his parents and blackmailing his uncle. All while dodging the school bully, who's determined to win the contest even by playing dirty.

Nick will need to keep his eye on the ball and find the courage to face his fears—and stay one step ahead of Tank—in this fast, funny story about a game that can throw you some curveballs—just like life!

★ "Laugh-out-loud funny with a wonderful cast of characters. A winner in every way."
—Kirkus Reviews, starred review

"DeKeyser based this funny and good-hearted story that warmly portrays life as the son of Greek immigrants on her father's childhood growing up in Milwaukee. Details such as the five-cent charge for new shoelaces bring the era to life, and the conclusion hits the story out of the park."—Publishers Weekly

simonandschuster.com/kids

















stacydekeyser.com




The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions and activities in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit corestandards.org.

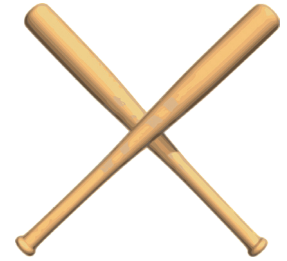
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

All discussion questions are aligned with the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1

-  Describe Tank. How do Nick and Tank interact as the story opens?
-  Where does Nick spend Saturdays while most of his friends are playing ball? What are Nick's responsibilities until 5:00 pm every Saturday?
-  Who is Joe Daggett and what does Nick realize about Mr. Daggett when he gives Nick a baseball?
-  What does Nick's father, George, share with Mr. Daggett about his life as an immigrant?
-  Why do you think that Nick's parents send Nick to Greek school in addition to his regular school day?
-  Pete Costas and Nick have a long history together. What type of person is Pete? Describe the relationship between Pete and Nick.
-  Nick's friend Ace says about the girl who caught Nick's baseball, "Did you see the arm on that girl?" Who is this girl? What is her background?
-  What surprising news from Mr. Daggett is announced in the newspaper? How do Nick and his fellow baseball players react to the news?
-  What challenges does Nick face in entering the contest?
-  What is Nick's father's opinion of Spiro? What is Spiro's secret plan and how does it reveal his true personality?
-  What does Spiro tell Nick to help Nick understand why his father is so stern and old-fashioned?
-  What dishonest things does Nick do to guarantee that he will be able to participate in the bat boy contest?
-  Playing baseball in a field next to a zoo can pose a few problems. What rules do the boys have about retrieving the baseball from Tank's enclosure? What happens to Ace when he ignores these rules?
-  What is involved in the competition to be Mudpuppy for a Day? What twist does Joe Daggett spring on the kids on the day of the competition?
-  Joe Daggett wants to make Opening Day extra special. What special event is combined with Opening Day?
-  How is Penny Lonergan treated during the Mudpuppy for a Day contest? How does Joe Daggett ultimately reward Penny's efforts?

-  Nick had to tell more than one lie in order to enter the Mudpuppy for a Day contest. What problem would he face if he wins?
-  How does Nick save the day at the baseball game when Tank makes a surprise appearance?
-  What does Nick learn about his mother and father on Opening Day?



ACTIVITIES

Pick Me!

As part of his application for the bat boy contest, Nick has to write an essay of 100 words or fewer explaining why he would be the best choice as Mudpuppy for a Day. Think of a job you would really like to have. Why does it interest you? What are your qualifications? Use these to create an essay of 100 words or fewer that would convince your future employer that you would be the best person for this job. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1](#)

Batter Up

Even though Penny is a very talented ballplayer, she is not allowed to compete to be Mudpuppy for a Day because of her gender. She learned how to play baseball from her sister, Josie, who plays professionally for the Kenosha Comets. The Comets were an actual team in the All-American Girls' Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL). Research this women's baseball league, why it came into existence, and who played in it. Compile your research into an informative report.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2](#)

Book in a Box

From the baseball that Joe Daggett gives to Nick to Uncle Spiro's frozen custard, there are many objects or things that are significant in *The Rhino in Right Field*. Design a Book in a Box to showcase the story's important objects, themes, and characters. Decorate a shoebox or other small container with illustrations, magazine clippings, and words to represent *The Rhino in Right Field*. Fill the box with at least five objects that pertain to different aspects of the book. Use pictures or toy versions of the objects if the items are too big for the box. For each object, fill out an index card with the name of the object at the top, followed by a few sentences about how the object is an important representation of the story. Meet in small groups to share and discuss your Book in a Box projects.

[CCSS ELA: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#)

The discussion questions and activities in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both master's and doctoral degrees in education with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

NAME: _____

MAKING CONNECTIONS



Think carefully about *The Rhino in Right Field* and the connections you can make between the book and yourself, the book and other things you've read, and the book and the larger world. Record your connections below.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9

Text to Self

(Connections you can make between the story and your own life experiences)

Text to Text

(Connections you can make to other things that you have read—stories by the same author, or stories from a similar genre or with a similar plot)

Text to World

(Broader connections that you can make to something that you have learned from television, movies, newspapers, or magazines)

NAME: _____

YESTERDAY AND TODAY



The Rhino in Right Field takes place in Milwaukee in 1948. So much has changed in our country since that time. Complete the chart using examples from the story that show what life was like in 1948 America. Add information to the chart describing life as it is today. As a class, discuss how the 1948 setting affects the story overall.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3

Life in 1948		Life today
How people get their news		
How people dress		
What people do for entertainment		
What types of transportation people use		
What slang words people use		


NAME: _____


WHAT'S IN A TITLE?


NAME: _____


The chapters in *The Rhino in Right Field* are untitled. Work with a partner to review the first ten chapters of the book. Discuss the main ideas in each chapter. Use the main ideas to help you create titles for chapters 1–10.


CCSS ELA: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#)


CHAPTER



CHAPTER



CHAPTER



CHAPTER



CHAPTER


CHAPTER


CHAPTER


CHAPTER


CHAPTER


CHAPTER


BOOKMARK

Print this page on card stock using a color printer and cut out the bookmark.
Use it to keep your place when you read!



Michaela Ristaino

Stacy DeKeyser based the character of Nick in *The Rhino in Right Field* on her father, who as a twelve-year old in the 1940s lived two blocks from the zoo in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His parents were immigrants from Greece, and he shined shoes in his father's hat shop and went to regular school and Greek school. Stacy is a second-generation children's book author. Her mother, Dori Chaconas, has written several popular picture books for children. Stacy lives with her family in Connecticut.

Also by Stacy DeKeyser



One Witch at a Time

ISBN 978-1-4814-1352-7 • PAPERBACK

"A clever blend of folkloric elements with fast-paced action."

—*School Library Journal*



The Brixen Witch

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★ "Fresh and satisfying for middle-grade readers."

—*Kirkus Reviews*,
starred review