

# Sparking Dialogue with Skateboard Sibby



## Discussion Guide Suggestion:

Before diving into the chapter, first ask participants to describe the setting and the mood. What are indicators as to what the characters are feeling? For example, has their language or tone changed? Has something happened to suggest a change in confidence or a feeling of sadness? Are they supporting each other in the chapter or are they self-focused?

### Chapter 1: Starting New

1. Picture the last time you started something new, were you afraid or worried or anxious? What did you do to help yourself feel better? Is there something you could do to help someone else feel better in that same situation?
2. When Sibby bangs into Charlie and he drops his bag on her foot resulting in a scuff, what is she feeling when she sees the scuff? What does this scuff represent for her?
3. How is Charlie feeling when he sees Freddie get out of line and come toward him and Sibby?

### Chapter 2: Hello Trouble

1. We don't know yet (in this chapter) why Freddie is being mean to Charlie. But do you think Freddie really cares that Charlie wears sweater vests? Regardless of the reason, is it ever okay to bully someone because you are feeling bad? Have you?
2. What could Jake have done to make things better for everyone experiencing Freddie be a bully?

### Chapter 3: In or Out?

1. Sibby is an excellent skateboarder. However, in the very first scene she is describing the fact that she has been underestimated because she is a girl. Has there ever been a time when you have felt that someone thought you couldn't do something because of your gender?
2. How can we challenge our assumptions about people so that we stop underestimating them?
3. Despite initially staying quiet, Jake welcomes Sibby by fist pumping. How might you be kind to someone who is new to your class?
4. Sibby reacts with frustration when Charlie starts telling Freddie her story. Why do you think she reacts this way?

**5.** Sibby feels less confident without her skateboard. Is there something you do, either sports or music or some other outlet, that makes you feel confident?

#### **Chapter 4: It's Not About A Sweater-vest**

- 1.** When Sibby agrees to the competition with Freddie, what does Charlie do (unintentionally) that undermines her self-confidence?
- 2.** When Sibby starts using words like “stupid” and insisting that she won’t be living in Halifax for long, what are the emotions you think she might be feeling? What happened to bring up those emotions for her?
- 3.** Why does Sibby feel so strongly that Charlie should wear his sweater vests?

#### **Chapter 5: Ghost Board**

- 1.** How does seeing the Ghost Board in the classroom change how Sibby is feeling? Why? If you were in the class, what could you do that would make Sibby or someone new to your class feel a little less lonely?
- 2.** What do you think it means to be empathetic? How do you practice this in your own environment?
- 3.** Why do you think Freddie is having a hard time being empathetic toward Sibby?

#### **Chapter 6: My Summer? Don't Ask**

- 1.** Why do you think Ms. Anderson wants to stress the importance of happy memories to her class?
- 2.** Are you someone who likes to talk it out when you are having a hard time or do you keep it in? Is one way better than the other?
- 3.** Do you think Sibby has any empathy for Freddie at this point in the book? If not, why do you suppose that is?
- 4.** Sibby notices that Ms. Anderson’s smile isn’t a real smile. Have you ever noticed when someone has smiled with only their mouth and not their eyes?

#### **Chapter 7: Lunchroom Drama**

- 1.** Why does Sibby try to help Jake and the others by telling them the secret to getting a Jackson Jo review?
- 2.** Sibby understandably gets really upset when Freddie purposely spills water on her prized shoes in the middle of a busy lunchroom. Do you think Sibby handled this well?

## Chapter 8: Snake Sense

1. If you were Sibby, would you have “borrowed” the ghost board? Why did she?
2. Should Sibby have gone skateboarding without a helmet? Why do you think she was okay with breaking her promise to her parents? Is it a good enough reason to break a promise?
3. Why do you think Sibby decided to confide in Hannah?

## Chapter 9: High Stakes

1. On the way to the skatepark, Esther and Charlie Parker Drysdale talk to Sibby about the fact that Freddie is a very good skateboarder. Although true, the focus on Freddie’s ability contributes to Sibby’s self-doubt. How could they do things differently to help her become more mentally prepared to skate against Freddie?
2. Sibby gives Charlie a hard time about continuing to tell people things she doesn’t want to hear said aloud, like her father being out of work. Do you think it’s wrong of Charlie to tell people this? Is he doing it to be mean?
3. Why did Freddie increase the bet to be that a win for him would mean he gets Sibby’s shoes? Does he need a new pair?

## Chapter 10: It’s On. No, It’s Off

1. Sibby is not feeling confident as she starts the competition? What do you think were all the things that led to Sibby’s lack of confidence?
2. What is happening to Sibby as she is skateboarding? Do negative thoughts often get in your way?

## Chapter 11: Time for Talking

1. Sibby is dealing with lots of emotions in this chapter. What do you think are the hardest ones for her to understand and articulate?
2. Why do you think she ends up yelling at Esther and Charlie? What is happening to her that she explodes? How does it make Esther and Charlie feel?

## Chapter 12: Changes are Hard

1. What do Sibby’s Nan and Pops do to help Sibby calm down and start to find a way back to being more like herself?
2. What does Nan tell Sibby about why she can’t just yell at people?

**3.** What do you need to help you calm down when you are upset and start to act in angry ways? What helps you find your way back to feeling better?

### **Chapter 13: It's Me or Freddie**

**1.** Hannah understood what happened to Sibby by looking at her face. Why do you think Hannah was so tuned in to what Sibby was feeling?

**2.** Do you think Sibby was right to delete part of Jake's video? What did she compromise about herself by doing this? Was it worth it?

### **Chapter 14: Scary Stuff**

**1.** Sibby and Charlie Parker Drysdale have very different communication styles. He likes to talk things out, she likes to keep things in. Which style is most like yours?

**2.** The teacher, Mr. MacDonald, says it's important to acknowledge, at least to yourself, what you are most afraid of. What do you think about this idea?

**3.** Jake is called out for taking a video of Sibby without her knowledge. Should he have done that? Would you like it if it was done to you?

### **Chapter 15: Owner of the Ghost Board**

**1.** In this chapter, Sibby decides Charlie's ability to talk has advantages. Why did she come to that conclusion?

**2.** What does Sibby realize about Esther that help her understand Esther better and, by doing that, not take what Esther was saying so personally?

**3.** How does Sibby not taking what Esther was saying personally cascade into helping her talk more openly with the others?

### **Chapter 16: Skaters Know Their Boards**

**1.** Being back on a board helps Sibby think better and process all that's happened. Is there an outlet you have that allows you think more clearly?

**2.** What does Sibby learn in this chapter about what you sometimes have to do in order to keep moving forward?

### **Chapter 17: Sudden Death**

**1.** What is happening for Freddie? What is he feeling for most of this chapter?

**2.** What does Sibby see in Freddie that helps her understand him better?

3. Understanding Freddie and what he is afraid of helps Sibby see that his actions and his bullying, while not okay, are all about him and what he was dealing with. When she realizes this, she is able to show empathy. How does she do this?
4. What does Sibby decide that helps her get back to skateboarding the way she knows how?
5. What is different for Sibby in this chapter that allows her to use positive self-talk when landing the skateboard tricks?

### Chapter 18: Making Things Right

1. Despite not having a board, Sibby is determined to return the skateboard she just won back to Freddie. Why do you think she wants to do this? What would you do?
2. What is bothering Freddie the most about the competition?
3. In this chapter, we see that Sibby is no longer relying on Vera's advice for making friends. She learns something that builds on Vera's rules. What was it that she learned about how to make friends?
4. What does Sibby offer Freddie that helps him open up to her and ask about her opinion of him?

### Chapter 19: It Takes More Than Once

1. Charlie, Hannah, and Esther are still unsure of whether or not to trust Freddie at the beginning of this chapter. How does he show he wants their friendship?
2. What do you think about Freddie now? Is he a bully?

### Chapter 20: Go Again

1. Are their resources at your school to help prevent bullying?
2. What happens to Sibby at the very end of the story that tells her she'll be just fine no matter what changes come her way?

## General

Sibby has a mom and a dad and is living with her grandparents, Freddie was living with his grandfather but now lives with his aunt, and Charlie Parker Drysdale has two moms. These are just some of the kinds of families that exist around us.

1. What kind of family do you have?
2. How can we make sure we don't assume that all families are exactly like ours?