

THE SPOT CLUB: DISCUSSION GUIDE

For families and classrooms

These questions are designed to spark meaningful conversation for families reading together, elementary classrooms, or anyone who enjoyed the book. Pick and choose the questions that work best for you.

The Storytelling Tradition

- The Spot Club started as stories a father told his children at bedtime in the 1980s and they have been passed down for decades before becoming a book. Why do you think stories get passed down in families?
 - *Tip: Connect to the My Family's Stories activity (available for download from thespotclubbooks.com).*
- If YOU were going to tell a story to someone younger than you, what would it be about? Who would the characters be?

Before you read...

- Look at the cover. What do you notice? What do you think this book is going to be about?
 - *Tip: Encourage children to look at the title, the two dogs, and the spot border.*
- The title is The Spot Club. What do you think a Spot Club might be? Who do you think could be in it?
- Have you ever moved to a new place or started a new school? How did it feel to be somewhere new where you didn't know anyone?
 - *Tip: This question will connect children personally to Chip and Hogan's experience arriving in a new neighborhood.*



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Chapter 1 & 2: Coming Home / The Great Confusion

- Nick names his dog after his favorite wrestler, and Chelsea names hers after her favorite cookie. If YOU got a new pet today, what would you name it and why?
- Woody the woodchuck is grumpy when Chip and Hogan arrive. Why do you think he feels that way? Have you ever felt grumpy when something new or unexpected happened?
 - *Tip: Woody has been blamed for Big Bruno's holes all week. His grumpiness makes sense once you understand his situation.*
- Rocky the raccoon mistakes Hogan for Chip and Woody makes the same mistake in reverse. Why does this confusion happen? How do Chip and Hogan feel about it?

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Chapter 3 & 4: Big Bruno's Warning / Charles the Catfish

- Big Bruno threatens Baxter and spreads the word to stay away from the Spot Club picnic. Have you ever seen someone try to stop others from being friends? What happened?
 - *Tip: This is a good moment to discuss peer pressure and how it can stop people from doing what they want to do.*
- Nobody shows up to the Spot Club picnic because of Bruno's threat but Chip, Hogan, Woody, and Rocky decide to have their picnic anyway. Why do you think they did that? How were they feeling?
- Charles the Catfish saves Woody even though he doesn't have to and even though Woody was a stranger. Why do you think Charles helped? Would you have helped?
 - *Tip: A key theme is about helping someone even when it's inconvenient or when you don't know them.*
- The Spot Club says anyone who is friendly and lives in the neighborhood is welcome to join. What would the rules of YOUR club be?



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Chapter 5 & 6: Jealousy / The Mystery of the Missing Spots

- Big Bruno watches the Spot Club and becomes more and more jealous. Have you ever felt jealous of someone else? What did that feel like?
 - *Tip: Help children name jealousy as a normal feeling and recognize that it's what you DO with that feeling that matters.*
- Bruno uses Al the Fox to make Chip and Hogan lose their spots. Why does Bruno think removing their spots will destroy the club? Do you think he's right?
- When Chip and Hogan lose their spots, animals start cancelling their Spot Club memberships. Why do you think that happened? What would YOU have done?
 - *Tip: Is the Spot Club really about spots? What is it actually about?*
- The whole club works together through the night to paint Chip and Hogan's spots back on. Has anyone ever helped you when you really needed it? How did it feel?



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Chapter 7 & 8: Second Chances / Summer's End

- Chip and Hogan's plan to help Bruno by leading him to Mrs. McMurdo's house is an act of kindness toward someone who was mean to them. Why do you think they did it? Could you do that?
- Rocky says Big Bruno was probably just lonely and jealous and didn't know how to belong. Woody says that doesn't excuse what he did. Who do you agree with more - Rocky or Woody? Why?
 - *Tip: There is no wrong answer here. Both perspectives are valid and worth exploring.*
- At the end of the book Bruno apologizes and joins the Spot Club. Do you think he deserved a second chance? Is there anyone in your life you might want to give a second chance to?



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After you read:

- At the very end, the book says: “They had a club. They had a family. They had each other. And in the end, that was better than any spots could ever be.” What do you think that means?
- The Spot Club has all kinds of different animals, including dogs, a woodchuck, a raccoon, a catfish, a turtle, a frog, chipmunks, birds, and an opossum. Why do you think they work well together even though they're so different?
 - *Tip: Connect to real life - what makes a good group of friends or a good community?*
- The book says the most important thing a good neighbor can offer is a second chance. Do you agree? Are there times when someone doesn't deserve a second chance?
- Bruno had to apologize and make promises before the club accepted him. What do you think makes an apology real and not just words?



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Vocabulary to explore:

- **Dalmatian:** A breed of dog known for its white coat and black spots.
- **Woodchuck:** Another name for a groundhog, a small burrowing animal.
- **Recruitment:** Inviting new members to join a group or club.
- **Jealousy:** Feeling unhappy because someone else has something you want.
- **Second chance:** An opportunity to try again after making a mistake.
- **Belonging:** Feeling like you are part of a group where you are wanted and valued.
- **Forgiveness:** Choosing not to stay angry at someone who has hurt you.

Curriculum Connections:

- **Social Emotional Learning:** Friendship, empathy, belonging, conflict resolution, forgiveness, managing jealousy.
- **ELA:** Character development, plot structure, point of view, dialogue, vocabulary in context.
- **Oral Tradition:** Storytelling across generations, how stories change and survive over time.
- **Community Studies:** Neighborhoods, cooperation, civic responsibility, looking out for others.