



A Discussion Guide

from



Illinois
AGRICULTURE
in the Classroom





CHAPTER DISCUSSION GUIDE

SUMMARY OF TEXT

Deja and Josiah are seasonal best friends. These high school seniors have worked together at the local pumpkin patch every fall for years, and tonight is their last night on the job. In an action-packed series of events, these two decide to turn their last night on the job into an adventure with more twists and turns than the corn maze. This colorful and lively story is about friendship, food, and fall, but it's also about speaking your truths and being willing to feel discomfort in difficult moments and come out on the other side with newfound knowledge and appreciation for those around you.

AITC PUMPKIN LESSONS AND RESOURCES

- Read the IL Ag in the Classroom Pumpkin Ag Mag, available at www.agintheclassroom.org.
- Pair the Pumpkin Ag Mag with the Ag-Venture With Pumpkins Worksheet to help strengthen student non-fiction reading skills.
- Include STEM in your curriculum by completing our Pumpkin Catapult activity.
- Increase scientific inquiry skills and introduce chemical changes by completing the Exploding Pumpkin activity. This is best done as a demonstration.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND EXTENSION IDEAS

- How do pumpkins decompose? Place a small pumpkin into a clear container with a tight-fitting lid and place in a sunny location in your classroom. Observe the process of decomposition over the next few months.
- Watch this video to see how Illinois pumpkins are harvested: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Ac98DrsKmY&t=511s>
- Watch this video of an IL pumpkin farm that specializes in growing giant pumpkins: <https://vimeo.com/458739398>



CHAPTER DISCUSSION GUIDE

CHAPTER 1: LAST NIGHT AT THE PATCH

- Look closely at the map of the pumpkin patch on the inside cover of the book. What kinds of things does this farm offer for its guests? “Agritourism” is the practice of touring agricultural areas to see farms and participate in farm-related activities. What types of “agritourism” is available in your area? Have you ever been to a farm like the one shown here?
- Chapter 1 is only a few pages long. What have we learned about the setting (time and place) so far? What do we know about Josiah and Deja, our two main characters? What details did we learn from their dialogue? And what details did we learn from the images?

CHAPTER 2: PANIC AT THE PIE PALACE

- A “literary allusion” is a reference in a text to a person, thing, or event, or to a part of another text. What “allusion” is created when Deja references the “one ring.” What literary work(s) is she referencing? What message is she trying to convey with this allusion?
- How do the words and images work together in this chapter to show emotion with the characters, and in particular, Josiah’s emotions?

CHAPTER 3: NEXT STOPPE: FUDGE SHOPPE

- Look closely at the panels in this chapter. How does the illustrator create “movement” in these panels, even though they are stationary images?
- Now, look closely at the perspective in the panels of this chapter. Notice how some panels are “zoomed in” on the characters, and other panels are “zoomed out” and show the entire scene. Why do you think the illustrator chose to draw the panels in this way? How does it impact our reading of the text and the meaning we get from it?

CHAPTER 4: EX MARKS THE SPOT

- At the top of p. 37 the author/illustrator have three skinny panels right next to each other. What is the effect of this artistic choice? How do we interpret it differently than if it were one big panel?
- Describe the character of Jess. How do the author and illustrator work together in this chapter to create this character in so few panels? How do they develop her personality and other characteristics so quickly?



CHAPTER DISCUSSION GUIDE

CHAPTER 5: STOP, THIEF!

- Identify some examples of onomatopoeia in this chapter. What are some other examples that you've seen in comics or graphic novels you've read?
- This is a very short chapter. Why include this scene? What do we learn about Josiah and Deja and their relationship in these pages?

CHAPTER 6: S ' MORE PROBLEMS

- Both Chapter 4 and this Chapter's titles are puns, or jokes that exploit the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are words that sound alike but have different meanings. Unpack these puns and explain their humor. Can you think of any other puns?
- Why does Josiah throw the kid's marshmallow on the ground? What message is he trying to send to Deja?

CHAPTER 7: DEJA VU

- Many of the panels in this chapter are drawn with a black background color, and then others are drawn with a full background behind them. Why do you think the illustrator made this artistic choice? Does this choice change how we "read" these panels?
- Look closely at Deja's expression in the final panels of this chapter. She doesn't say anything in dialogue, but she seems to be saying something to herself. What do you think Deja is thinking in these panels?

CHAPTER 8: PSL (PUMPKIN SPICE LIFE)

- The external conflict in this story is obvious: Josiah and Deja are trying to find "Fudge Girl" so Josiah can actually talk to her. But both of these characters are also dealing with internal conflicts. What conflicts are they facing internally? What internal conflict(s) does this chapter seem to be highlighting?
- The chapter ends with the goat rampaging through the pumpkin patch. Why add these panels at the end? How does it contribute to the story?

CHAPTER DISCUSSION GUIDE

CHAPTER 9: COOL, COOL, COOL

- Notice the panel in the middle of p. 85. Why do you think the illustrator chose to draw the background as the park map? What do we gain, as readers, from this artistic choice?
- How do the text and images work together in this chapter to show emotion in the characters? How would this be different if this book were written as a typical “novel” and not a “graphic novel”?

CHAPTER 10: SUCCOTASH–TROPHE

- In what ways are the actions of Deja and Josiah tonight different than how we’ve been led to believe they would “normally” act?
- Many of the chapters in this book are very short. Some are more like individual scenes than chapters. Why do you think the author chose to write it in this way? How does this choice affect the story? How would the story be different if the chapters were longer and included more “scenes”?

CHAPTER 11: MAKE LIKE A TREE AND LEAF

- This chapter has no dialogue. If we could imagine what is being said in these panels, what dialogue do you think has been left out?
- Why draw/write the chapter this way? Notice the panel shape/size as well as the absence of dialogue.

CHAPTER 12: TOUR DE PUMPKIN

- What are some ways the illustrator shows action and movement in the illustrations in this chapter?
- How does the “mission” for Josiah and Deja continue to evolve? Are they actually on the same mission they started out with?

CHAPTER 13: CHEESY COME, CHEESY GO

- Look closely at the speech bubbles of the child in the corn maze. Why are they drawn differently? What is being conveyed to the reader with this choice?
- What are some ways the author has tried to create some humor in this chapter?

CHAPTER DISCUSSION GUIDE

CHAPTER 14: MAIZED AND CONFUSED

- Look closely at the split screen panel at the top of p. 138. Why did the illustrator draw this panel in this way? How are we supposed to “read” this panel?
- What are your thoughts on the discussion about fate, coincidence, and choices. Who do you agree with more? How have these ideas played out in your own life?

CHAPTER 15: LAST CHANCE, JOSIE

- Josiah and Deja split up for the first time in this chapter. Why do you think she decides to stay back?
- What do you think the purpose is of Todd showing up in this chapter after being mentioned previously in the text?

CHAPTER 16: CARPE HAYRACK!

- Josiah finally makes it to “Fudge Girl”, but the conversation doesn’t go as planned. What is surprising to Josiah about his “fateful” conversation with Marcy?
- Josiah seems to have a revelation at the end of this chapter, but he doesn’t verbalize his thoughts. What do you think he has realized? Why is he going “back” so soon?

CHAPTER 17: PUMPKIN BOMB

- There has been action in the background of many panels throughout the book. The side story of the goat finally makes sense in this chapter. How does the goat become a more important character in the story in this chapter?
- Were you surprised with how the story ended? What did Josiah and Deja realize about themselves, their friendship, and their last night at the pumpkin patch?
- What was the “climax” of the story? Now that you’ve reached the end, what are still wanting to know about these two characters’ stories? What “loose ends” do you wish were tied up at the ending?