



THE DOLLAR KIDS

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ILLUSTRATED BY RYAN ANDREWS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the first scene of the book is depicted in comic panels rather than in prose? How does the way a story is told—in words, in pictures, or both—affect how you read it?
2. Abe's death has a profound effect on Lowen's ability to draw. What does that show you about how mental health and emotion can impact other areas of our lives? How is grief similar to a physical injury (like breaking a bone), and how is it different?
3. Think about the first morning the Grovers spend in Millville before the lottery. How do their first observations of the town and interactions with its residents compare to their experiences over the next few months?
4. If you lived in Millville, how do you think you would feel about the Dollar Program? What if it happened in the place where you live now? How do you think others in your community would react?
5. During the lottery, Lowen notices that there aren't any people of color in Millville. How does that make moving to a new town different for his family and Sami's family?
6. Whenever Lowen hears Luna playing her cello, the guilt he carries becomes easier to live with. Has a particular song or type of music ever made you feel a certain way? Why does some art affect our emotions?
7. Lowen thinks he deserves to live next to a funeral home, to "be reminded every day that dead is dead" (page 49). How do his feelings about the funeral home change over the course of the book?
8. Why do the residents of Millville seem to think they're doing the Dollar Families a favor, even though the program is an initiative to save their own town?
9. How does the move to Millville affect Lowen's relationships with everyone in his family, especially Clem and Annethe?
10. Making ends meet in Millville is always at the back of Lowen's mind, especially when the pasty shop struggles more than the Grovers expected. What other parts of Lowen's life does worrying about money affect?



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11. The Grovers' fate is dependent on the success of the Cornish Eatery, which faces resistance from the Busy Bee at every turn. What does their rivalry teach you about how competitive it can be to run a business? How much of the competition seems reasonable, and how much was due to jealousy and unkindness on the part of Mrs. Corbeau?
12. Lowen doesn't want to befriend Sami or anyone else, believing he's a "dangerous friend" to have (page 125). What would Sami say if she knew that?
13. Suppose Lowen were to bury his regrets like he saw Ms. Duffey doing. How would the regrets he might bury in the middle of the book be different from the regrets he would bury at the end?
14. It seems to Lowen that Clem adjusts to life in Millville more easily than the rest of the Grovers. Why do the brothers have so much trouble connecting after their move?
15. How does Lowen's anxiety—about soccer, about school, about the shop—make his first year in Millville more difficult? Would the year have been different if he had been able to talk to someone about his worries?
16. As the year goes on, the Dollar Families get to know the citizens of Millville better. Did any of them surprise you?
17. On Thanksgiving, Sami talks about how strange it is that in a country of immigrants, everyone is expected to celebrate by eating the exact same thing. How does food represent a culture? How might it feel to be told that the type of food you eat is wrong or un-American?
18. What does their project on the mill's history help Sami and Lowen better understand about the people of Millville?
19. Lowen's not sure what happens when someone dies, and his comics show how his ideas about heaven change over the course of the book. Do you think Lowen was conscious of the way his perspective was changing?
20. At first, Lowen finds Dylan so similar to Abe that it's painful to consider befriending him. In what ways is Dylan actually a lot more like Lowen?
21. The Dollar Kids come up with the crowdfunding project to help Mr. Avery, even though he made life so difficult for them. Think about the difference between helping people you like and helping people you dislike: it's much easier to help out people you get along with. But does that mean that others—people who disagree with you, or come from somewhere else, or don't look like you—don't deserve your help?
22. Helping raise money for Mr. Avery is what finally makes the Dollar Families feel like they're part of the community in Millville. Have you ever done a service project in your community, or started one by yourself? How did it make you feel? If not, can you think of any way, big or small, that you could make a difference in your community?
23. Lowen doesn't send Mrs. Siskin a letter until more than a year after Abe's death, and even then he's still certain she won't forgive him for what happened. Did her response surprise you the way it surprised Lowen?
24. If you were to make a comic of an important moment in your life, what would you draw? Why?
25. If, at the end of the book, Lowen were to go back in time and give himself one piece of advice before his family moves, what do you think he would say?



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