

Discussion Questions for
Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library (2013)
by Chris Grabenstein

Chapter 1 (pp. 1-6)

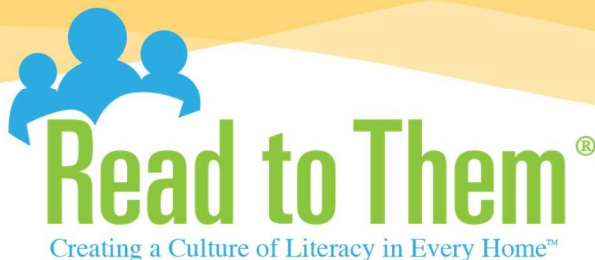
1. When Kyle and his brothers are bored, their mother suggests they play a board game. Do you like playing board games? Which is your favorite? When's the last time you played it? What is the best part of the game?
2. Kyle is one of three brothers. Mike is "the Jock." Curtis is "the brainy bookworm." And then there is Kyle, who's trying to figure out what he is good at. Do you have a role in the family? Are you comfortable with the role you have or was it assigned to you unfairly?
3. Kyle and his brothers are quite competitive. Are you competitive with your siblings? With others? What role do you think Kyle's competitive nature will play over the course of the book?
4. In his hurry to reach his father's coins, Kyle breaks the basement window. To what lengths would you go to win a game or competition? Do you think Kyle went too far?
5. Kyle Keeley is punished for breaking a basement window. What's a fair punishment? Should kids have to pay when they break things? Expensive things? What about grounding? What constitutes legitimate grounds for...grounding?

Chapter 2 (pp. 7-11)

6. Why do you believe there was so much secrecy around the construction of the new library? Why keep the construction crews in the dark, yet allow Dr. Zinchenko to know everything?
7. Alexandriaville's new public library is a stunning feat of architecture and technology. How does it compare to your public library? If you could have one feature of the Alexandriaville library incorporated into the library you frequent, what would it be?

Chapter 3 (pp. 12-17)

8. Kyle claims that he isn't big on books, not unless they have to do with video games. What is your view on books? Do you like them? What kind of books do you read the most? Which sort of books do you dislike?



9. Kyle is grounded for breaking the basement window. Have you ever been grounded? Was your “sentence” as severe as Kyle’s? Did you learn any lessons from being grounded and, if so, what were they?
10. Curtis says that he prefers to be called a “geek.” If you had a word to describe yourself, what would it be?
11. Kyle asserts: “Friends don’t gloat to friends.” (p. 16) Do you agree?

Chapter 4 (pp. 18-23)

12. Kyle writes his essay on the bus while, across town, Charles uses the aid of a college-student. What is the purpose of putting these scenes back-to-back? What do these sequences tell you about Kyle and Charles as characters?

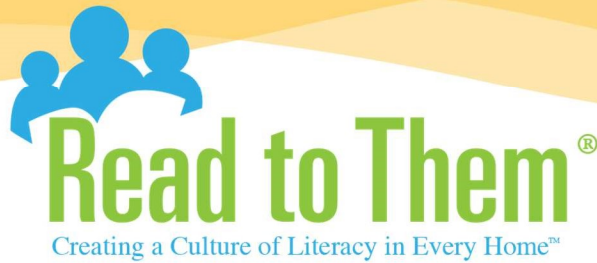
Chapter 5 (pp. 24-28)

13. Libraries were a saving grace for Luigi Lemoncello when he was a child, and he wants to pass along the magic of libraries to others. It’s obvious that Chris Grabenstein, the author of *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello’s Library*, loves libraries. Go around the room asking your students how they have benefited from libraries, or books, outside the realm of their schoolwork.
14. Kyle and his friends learn that Mr. Lemoncello is from Alexandriaville and that, when he was young, he frequented the library. They even learn that Mr. Lemoncello is the one who paid to rebuild the new public library. What is a place in the community that is significant to you? If you had the funding, how would you help improve or reconstruct this place?

15. From page 27:

“Like you said, this is just a Move Back Three Spaces card. A Take a Walk on the Boardwalk when someone else owns it. It’s a chute in Chutes and Ladders. A detour to the Molasses Swamp in CandyLand.”

Even when things seem dire for Kyle, he remains optimistic. Do you find you’re someone that hopes for the best like Kyle or do you tend to anticipate the worst? If you want to improve your attitude, how do you think you can do so?



Chapter 6 (pp. 29-31)

16. Kyle's email didn't go through to Mr. Lemoncello. If you were Kyle, what would be your next step? How else could you try to get in touch with Mr. Lemoncello?

Chapter 7 (pp. 32-35)

17. Dr. Zinchenko states that the kids in Kyle's class have gone their entire lives without a library in their community. How did you react to this? How would the lack of a library have changed your childhood?

Chapter 8 (pp. 36-40)

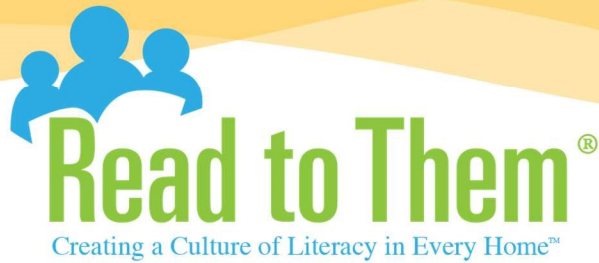
18. Mr. Lemoncello, from the first moment he steps on stage, makes a lasting impression on both the students and the reader. What about his speech or his appearance was the most attention grabbing? When you meet someone, what sort of impression do you hope to leave?
19. When Kyle's name is called, were you surprised? Did you expect a different outcome? Why or why not? Why do you think Mr. Lemoncello chose Kyle?

Chapter 9 (pp. 41-45)

20. Kyle decides to divide his five-hundred-dollar gift card up so each of his family members gets one hundred dollars. Would you have done the same as Kyle? What would your family say if you were to share your prize with them?
21. Charles and Kyle have a brief interaction in the game store. What is the reason for Charles acting so rudely to Kyle? Do you think there's a justification for his rudeness? If so, what?
22. Kyle's family is very appreciative of Kyle for sharing the gift card with them. How do you show your appreciation of your friends and family? Do you compliment them? Give gifts like Kyle?

Chapter 10 (pp. 46-50)

23. Kyle attends the library's grand opening gala wearing a comfortable set of clothes. If you were invited to the gala, what would you wear? Describe your clothes of choice.
24. Do you think there's any significance to the library cards having different books on their backs?



25. Dr. Zinchenko’s number one rule is: “Be gentle. With each other, and most especially, the library’s books and exhibits.” (p. 49) What does ‘gentle’ mean for human-to-human interactions? Can one be gentle, honest, and firm – all at the same time? What is the number one rule you live by? How does it aid in the way you treat yourself and others?

Chapter 11 (pp. 51-56)

26. A lot of emphasis is placed on the vault door—it’s both a symbol of safety for one’s thoughts and a way to secure valuables. What other purpose do you think the vault door will serve? Do you think this is an example of foreshadowing?
27. Kyle notices a book about football that makes him think of his brother, Mike. If you were at the library, what book would make you think of your sibling? If you don’t have a brother or sister, what book might you consider checking out for your friend or other family member? Why that particular book?
28. The Chiltonington Family philosophies include “Knowledge is power” and “We eat losers for breakfast.” How can these two sets of “words to live by” come from the same family? Discuss with your students their opinion on the Chiltonington family philosophies, and if they have any family philosophies of their own.

Chapter 12 (pp. 57-61)

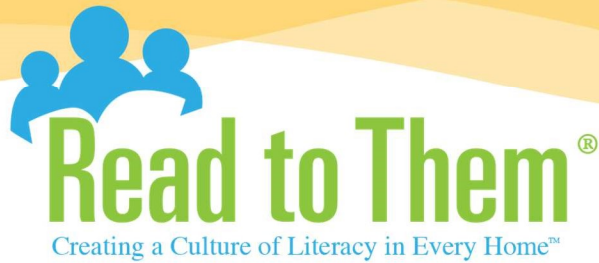
29. The kids are asked a number of trivia questions that range in a variety of topics—history, sports, and entertainment being just a few. What’s a topic you’re knowledgeable in? What is a topic you’d love to learn more about?

Chapter 13 (pp. 62-66)

30. The second task of the night is research-based. Have you ever researched anything before? What was it? What did you learn? What advice would you give Kyle in looking for information about dessert?

Chapter 14 (pp. 67-71)

31. Akimi asks if Kyle would want to work as a team for the second task. Do you prefer to work alone or with a group? If you prefer to work alone, what do you think can be gained by working with a team?



32. By thinking outside the box, Kyle and Akimi manage to solve the second task. Would you have followed their lead or joined the others on the second floor? Where else do you believe your research for this task would've led you?
33. If given the same opportunity to explore the Electronic Learning Center, what simulation would you want to take part in? Think creatively.
34. Kyle realizes that he and the others have been locked in Mr. Lemoncello's library. What would you do? What would your first reaction be? To freak out? To look for an exit?

Chapter 15 (pp. 72-75)

35. Mr. Lemoncello explains to each of the parents that their children are playing a new game where "the entire library will be the game board. Your children will be the game pieces." (p. 73) What would your family do if you were on a game show like Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library? Would they encourage you to participate or have you withdraw?

Chapter 16 (pp. 76-81)

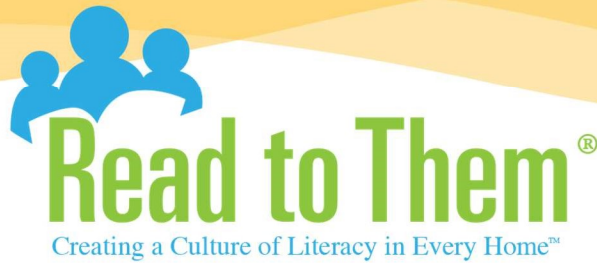
36. Charles is someone who "was never very nice when there weren't any adults in the room" (p. 76). Why do you think this is? Do you know anyone like Charles? What do you believe Charles is trying to achieve by behaving in such a way?
37. At the end of the chapter, Kyle points out that security cameras are watching them. Would you want to be in Kyle's position? Could you handle constantly being recorded? Would you act differently if you knew you were on camera?

Chapter 17 (pp. 82-87)

38. Mr. Lemoncello gives the kids a chance to stay and play his game or to leave the library. What would you do? What kind of prize would sway you to play Mr. Lemoncello's game?

Chapter 18 (pp. 88-93)

39. Each contestant has their own way of researching a way out of the library. Some go to the Stacks while others begin to research on tablets and computers. What would your strategy be?



40. Already tensions are high in the library. Charles fakes Yasmeen out of the competition, and Andrew accuses Miguel of stealing his idea for escape. If you were participating in the game, what do you think your mindset would be? Would you be calm and easy-going? Fierce and ready to beat the other players? Somewhere in-between?
41. Do you believe Kyle's plan to escape out of a window will work? Is it too easy?

Chapter 19 (pp. 94-98)

42. Akimi tells Kyle that his plan to hoist himself out the window is dangerous and that he could fall. Is winning worth compromising your safety? Do you think Kyle should listen to Akimi?
43. After hearing Haley scream, Kyle rushes to help her, but Charles says that "you should never help your competition." (p. 98) Do you agree with Charles? Would you have gone to help Haley? If Charles were the one in danger, do you think he'd change his mind?

Chapter 20 (pp. 99-103)

45. Charles calls Kyle a loser, and while he doesn't say it out loud, he thinks it twice. How did reading those lines make you feel? Is Charles in the wrong? If you could talk to Charles, what would you say?
46. This chapter is entirely from Charles Chilton's perspective. After being in his head for a few pages, do you better understand him? What do you think was the author's intention of suddenly switching to Charles' point of view after the early parts of the story revolved around Kyle?

Chapter 21 (pp. 104-108)

47. When Kyle asks if Haley's hurt, she accuses him of trying to beat her by sending her home. Was this Kyle's intention? If you were Haley, how would you have reacted to Kyle and Akimi helping you? What do you think about Haley not thanking her rescuers?



Chapter 22 (pp. 109-113)

48. Haley reveals that she only pretends not to be smart, acting like “a ditzy princess made getting what she wanted a whole lot easier.” (p. 110) Did this surprise you? How does it change the way you view Haley as a character? Would you rather someone overestimate or underestimate you?
49. From page 112:
- The box was filled with all sorts of confusing knickknacks: hand-whittled prototypes for game pieces; a star-spangled, red-white-and-blue “H-H-H-Humphrey” button; a battered clasp envelope sealed up with tons of tape.*
- What do you make of the clues Haley finds?

Chapter 23 (pp. 114-117)

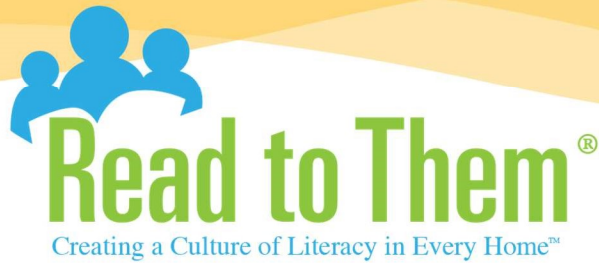
50. Did you guess that the library echoed Bewilderingly Baffling Bibliomania? If you did realize this before it’s revealed, what gave it away? Point out a specific section in the text.

Chapter 24 (pp. 118-123)

51. Kyle admits that he isn’t the one who knew a lot about Bewilderingly Baffling Bibliomania—it was actually his brother. Why is it important to give others credit for using their knowledge?
52. Bridgette has to list four books by ten different authors in two minutes. Have you heard of any of these authors? Which ones? Do you think you’d be able to win this challenge? What authors would you want on the list if you were in Bridgette’s shoes?

Chapter 25 (pp. 124-130)

53. What do you think Andrew has planned? Do you believe he’d really try to get Miguel kicked out of the game? Should Kyle be as worried as he is?
54. Kyle says, “he definitely needed to start a reading list soon so he could catch up with everybody else.” (p. 130) After your time in Mr. Lemoncello’s library, would you be encouraged to read more? Why or why not? Are there any books mentioned so far that have sparked your interest?



Chapter 26 (pp. 131-137)

55. Charles blatantly admits to the reader that he is manipulating Andrew in order to win. At this point in the book, do you think Charles is capable of changing for the better? Do you think he even wants to be a better person?
56. Charles has distant relatives that arrived in America on the *Mayflower* and Andrew has a relative who was once on a game show. Do you have any distinct relatives? What are they known for?

Chapter 27 (pp. 138-142)

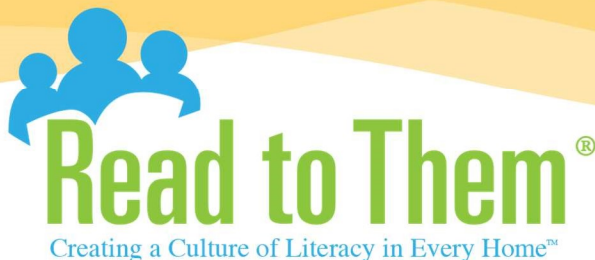
57. Miguel wavers between joining Kyle's team and flying solo before deciding to join Kyle. Do you believe Miguel has plans to double-cross Kyle? Would you be as welcoming to another member of your group?
58. Do you think the risk of the kids losing their library cards outweighs the chance of winning the discarded library cards? Would you participate in Let's Do a Deal or find another way to gather information? Explain your decision.

Chapter 28 (pp. 143-149)

59. Mr. Lemoncello has Kyle's team solve a rebus in sixty seconds. A rebus is a puzzle solved when "you figure out the words in a phrase by looking at pictures and symbols" (p. 143) Did you try to solve the rebus on your own? Were you successful? Did any part of the rebus in particular give you trouble?
60. Charles gets Haley to join his team. Would you have made the same choice as Haley? What, if anything, would've swayed you to join Charles?

Chapter 29 (pp. 150-155)

61. Kyle's team has nine library cards, all of which have two different book titles on their backs. Do you notice any patterns with the book titles? The authors? Can you find any significance in the clue that might help Kyle and his team?



Chapter 30 (pp. 156-161)

62. From page 158:

“It’s a science?” said Akimi. “Where do they keep the chemicals?”

“In the library paste,” joked Sierra, who was loosening up. She hadn’t read one page of a book in hours.

When you need to unwind, what do you do? What’s your favorite relaxing activity? How often do you need to loosen up like Sierra?

63. Now that you’ve got a glimpse at team Kyle and team Charles’ clues, do you see any connections between the two? Do you think if the teams worked together, the clues would make more sense?

Chapter 31 (pp. 162-166)

64. Kyle and his team plan to use Sherlock Holmes’ “famous ‘deductive reasoning’” (p. 165) to make sense of all the random clues they’ve collected so far. Have you ever heard of Sherlock Holmes? What do you know about him? How effective do you think this ‘deductive reasoning’ will be in winning the game?

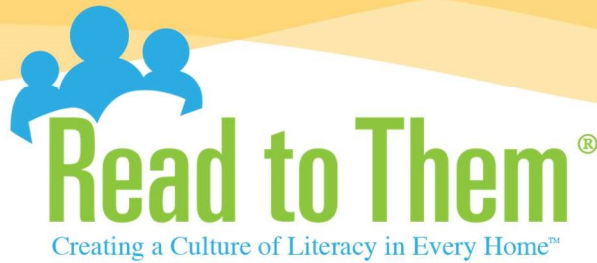
Chapter 32 (pp. 167-170)

65. It’s believed that Mr. Lemoncello “left a couple different paths to the same solution.” (p. 169) Does this complicate things further for the teams or make the game easier to solve? Would you rather have a single way to solve a problem or have multiple ways of finding a solution? What’s your preference?

Chapter 33 (pp. 171-174)

66. Charles has figured out that Haley is smarter than she acts. Should Haley be concerned? What might she do to protect herself from Charles’ competitive streak?

67. In the previous chapter, Kyle’s team found a clue that warned: “Thou shalt not steal.” (p. 170) Charles, however, claims he and Andrew need to get the clues from Kyle’s team. What do you think Charles is planning? If he steals from Kyle, what kind of consequences do you believe he’ll face?



Chapter 34 (pp. 175-179)

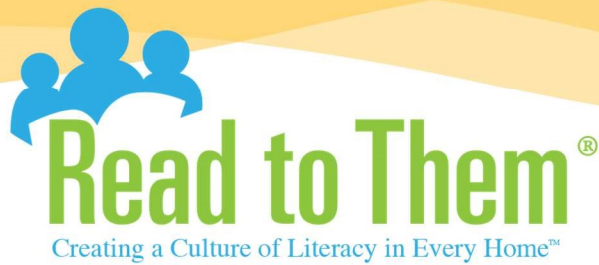
68. Haley realizes that her team and Kyle's teams are on two paths that are "going to collide" (p. 175). How long do you think it will take for this to happen? When the teams do collide, who do you believe will come out on top?
69. "Never bolt your door with a boiled carrot." What do you think this saying means? How does it relate to Haley and her relationship with Charles?
70. Haley decides to keep her clue from Charles and Andrew. Was this wrong of her? Do you think Haley has a good reason not to share the clue with the rest of her team?

Chapter 35 (pp. 180-186)

71. In the grand scheme of the game, can you guess where blackbirds fit into escaping the library?
72. The white Bengal tiger makes a second appearance, though no one on Kyle's team sticks around to see if it's a hologram or not. Is there an animal like the Bengal tiger that scares you? What animal is it? What about that animal do you find scary?

Chapter 36 (pp. 187-194)

73. Do you prefer fiction or non-fiction when reading for pleasure? Why?
74. Charles threatens to spread mean things about Andrew on Facebook and Twitter because Andrew wasted game time. Do you think Charles should face repercussions for this? If you were present, how would you have reacted to Charles' words? Would you have defended Andrew?
75. When offered the option to play a game where losing means suffering the consequences, Charles doesn't hesitate to play. Should he have thought through his decision first? What could have changed if Charles had consulted Andrew before agreeing to play Mr. Lemoncello's game?
76. Why, of all the kids on Kyle's team, does Charles target Sierra?



Chapter 37 (pp. 195-199)

77. Charles is turning Andrew against Haley while Haley is keeping a clue from Charles and Andrew. As an outside observer of this team's dynamics, how long do you think it'll take before this team dissolves? Who do you think will be the one to break up the team?

Chapter 38 (pp. 200-204)

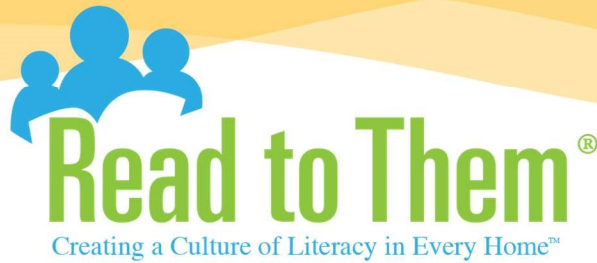
78. Charles tries to tempt Kyle into breaking off from his team to go upstairs and play video games. Kyle, however, turns down the offer. How does Kyle's choice demonstrate his growth over the course of the book? What is something you like enough that you would've considered going with Charles?
79. The kids get seven versions of *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* and assume that Mr. Lemoncello wants them to read the book together. Before reading *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library* together, have you ever participated in a book club? What did you read? What was your favorite element of reading one book with a group of people?
80. With Haley's new clue, do you have any guesses as to how the teams might escape from the library?

Chapter 39 (pp. 205-210)

81. Kyle is excited to read more Sherlock Holmes stories. Have you ever read a book that excited you to keep on reading? What was the book? What about it made it so enticing to read?
82. Kyle is able to talk to Curtis as Curtis is considered a literary expert. Who would you have asked to speak to? Why? What about this person would've aided your journey to escape the library?
83. Kyle's brother, Mike, briefly appears to cheer Kyle on. How do you go about supporting your friends and family? Do you use your words like Mike?

Chapter 40 (pp. 211-214)

84. Sierra seems to have had a breakthrough in gathering call numbers after Kyle and Curtis' call. What do you think she's found? Can it be helpful to have an outside perspective when you are struggling with a problem?



Chapter 41 (pp. 215-218)

85. At what point in the text did you realize the Wonder Dome was a clue to escaping the library?
86. Sierra is able to find more call numbers to help her team. How do you think she felt when she figured out the Wonder Dome's significance? When you're finally able to solve a problem, how do you feel?

Chapter 42 (pp. 219-222)

87. Charles continues to pressure Andrew with the threat of calling him mean names across Facebook and Twitter. Have you ever been pressured into doing something you don't want to do? How could Andrew convey his discomfort to Charles? Do you think, if Andrew took this step, Charles would listen to him?
88. Andrew switches Sierra's library card with his. What repercussions do you think this will have on Andrew? Do you think he'll be caught?

Chapter 43 (pp. 223-226)

89. Kyle mentions the phrase "the eleventh hour" (p. 224). Have you ever heard this saying before? What does it mean to you? What is something you might wait until "the eleventh hour" to do?

Chapter 44 (pp. 227-230)

90. Andrew gets caught cheating, but he only cheated because Charles pressured him. How do you think the author wants you to feel about the situation? Whose side are you supposed to take? Who, if you were present, would you try to defend?
91. Charles denies that he bullied Andrew. Why do you believe it's so easy for Charles to lie? What can be learned from reading about Charles' actions and mannerisms?
92. Haley switches from Charles' team to Kyle's. Does this surprise you? If you were Haley, would you have joined Kyle earlier in the text? Why or why not?



Chapter 45 (pp. 231-234)

93. Mr. Lemoncello asks if Charles would like to join Kyle so the remaining contestants are all working together. Should Charles join Kyle? What prevents Charles from saying yes to this offer? At this point in the book, do you believe the contestants will all join together?

Chapter 46 (pp. 235-239)

94. On page 239, Charles claims he “knew the top library expert in all of America, maybe the world. Someone much more important than Dr. Yanina Zinchenko.” Do you have any guesses who this person may be?

Chapter 47 (pp. 240-243)

95. Kyle’s team is only missing the books on the back of Charles’ library card. Can you see any kind of pattern with the books now? If so, what is it? Can you see how the titles relate to the clue about the bank robbers?
96. At the close of the chapter, Mr. Lemoncello offers Team Kyle an Extreme Challenge. Why? What do you believe the prize will be if Kyle and his team can win this challenge?

Chapter 48 (pp. 244-247)

97. Knowing now what the Extreme Challenge is, would you have accepted it? Do you have any idea how to solve this challenge? If Kyle doesn’t get it right, what do you think he’ll lose?

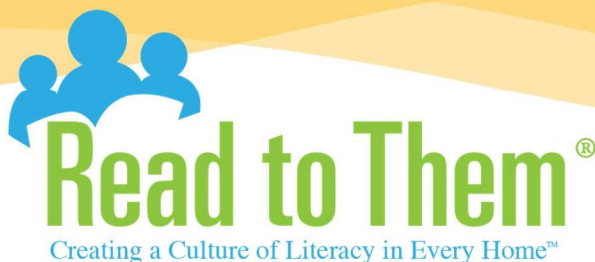
Chapter 49 (pp. 248-250)

98. From page 249:

Charles watched him tilt back the head on a bust and press a red button in the middle of what would have been the man’s neck. A door-sized section of the bookcase swung open. Mr. Lemoncello stepped into the darkness. The bookcase swung shut.

Where do you believe Mr. Lemoncello went? Do you think Mr. Lemoncello intended for Charles to see him step ‘into the darkness’?

99. Charles’ uncle is the head librarian of the Library of Congress. What do you know about the Library of Congress? Why do you think Charles is so confident in his uncle? Do you share Charles’ confidence?



Chapter 50 (pp. 251-256)

100. The sequence in which Kyle has to dodge shelving units is tense and fast-paced. How does the author achieve this tension? What details in the text really aid in crafting the scene?

Chapter 51 (pp. 257-258)

101. Charles cannot get in contact with his Uncle Jimmy. What do you think is stopping Charles' Uncle from getting through? Do you believe Uncle Jimmy will eventually get in touch with Charles?

Chapter 52 (pp. 259-264)

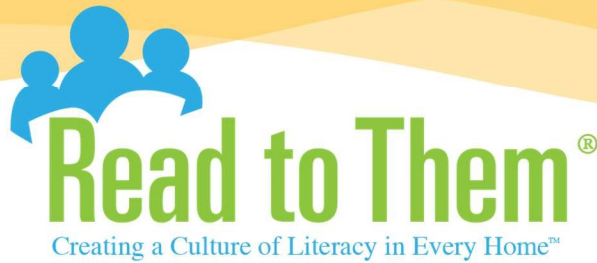
102. Mr. Lemoncello's first game encouraged friends to send each other secret messages. Have you ever sent secret notes or messages to someone? Who? Were you caught? How effective is Mr. Lemoncello's code?
103. Team Kyle has worked out the library card clue... almost. Have you? Is the answer to escaping Mr. Lemoncello's library becoming clearer?

Chapter 53 (pp. 265-267)

104. Through the efforts of each member, Team Kyle realizes escaping the library hinges on the Dandy Bandits. What can be gained from listening to multiple perspectives? How could Charles learn from watching Team Kyle instead of playing solo?
105. Akimi insists Team Kyle will win— but, do you think it's too soon to say?

Chapter 54 (pp. 268-275)

106. Charles doesn't wait for his uncle to stop speaking before bolting up to the 300s section. Would you have let Uncle Jimmy finish talking? Might Charles' place in the competition have changed if he'd been patient?
107. Were you satisfied with the way Charles was removed from the competition? How did you feel when all of Charles' awful deeds were brought to light?



Chapter 55 (pp. 276-283)

108. Charles, in the previous chapter, is removed from the library. Were you surprised he did not get to have any last words? If you could reimagine the scene, what do you think Charles would have said?
109. Mr. Lemoncello tells Kyle that Akimi wrote part of her essay about Kyle and how much she wanted to tell Kyle how cool the library was. How have you noticed that Kyle and Akimi's friendship has grown over the course of the book? What are some ways you show your friends they're important to you?
110. The last game is an anagram puzzle. Did you expect it to be something more challenging?

Chapter 56 (pp. 284-288)

111. From page 288:

"Who knew spending time in your local library could be such a rewarding experience?"

Kyle's attitude toward libraries and reading has changed dramatically since the first chapter of the book. What lesson from competing in Mr. Lemoncello's game would you say has impacted Kyle the most? Which lesson has impacted you the most?

End of the Book

112. **Lemoncello Library Effect** – At the start of *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library*, Kyle is not a reader in the least. He just "wasn't big on books." By the end, he is talking about starting a reading list. Ask your students what books they might want to read next – now that they have read *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library*.
113. Each member of Team Kyle demonstrates traits that make the trio well-rounded. Looking back at the book, brainstorm the strengths shown by Kyle, Akimi, Miguel, Haley, and Sierra. How do the members of Team Kyle complement one another? If you were in Mr. Lemoncello's competition, what would you bring to Team Kyle?
114. At the back of *Escape From Mr. Lemoncello's Library*, there is a list of books, stories, and periodicals that are mentioned throughout the book. Take a moment to look over this list, and select a handful of titles you'd like to further explore. It's always said never to judge a book by its cover, but looking just at the name, which titles intrigue you? Looking back at the text, which of the mentioned books would you like to read?