

# Jordan J

## and the Truth About Jordan J

< K.A. Holt >

Book 3 in the Kids Under the Stairs series

### ABOUT THE BOOK

When Jordan J—one of the kids under the stairs—hears that his favorite dance show, *Fierce Across America*, is going to hold auditions in his hometown, it's like a dream come true—until it turns into a nightmare instead. Can this middle schooler find a way to transform his prodigy-level dance vision into a whole new way of looking at himself, his friendships, and his future? Or have his dreams crashed one too many times to make the final cut?

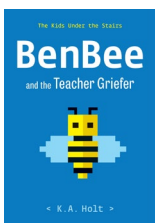
### ABOUT THE GUIDE

This discussion guide contains questions for classroom discussions and young reader book clubs.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

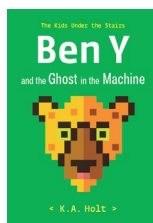
K.A. Holt is an award-winning writer, divergent learner, and video game player who has dedicated her career to making sure that all kids see themselves reflected in the pages of the books they read. Her titles include *Redwood & Ponytail*, *Knockout*, and *House Arrest*.

### Also in the Kids Under the Stairs series



#### ***BenBee and the Teacher Griever***

Selected by the National Council of Teachers of English for their list of “Notable Poetry and Verse Novels, 2021”



#### ***Ben Y and the Ghost in the Machine***

“An excellent addition to ‘The Kids Under the Stairs’ series and one that kids and adults alike will supremely enjoy.”  
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions as whole class discussions, reading check-ins, or writing prompts.

1. In this story, Jordan J has to struggle with a big disappointment. What is it that disappoints him so badly? How does it change his view of himself? How does it change his view of other things? How does Jordan J eventually get past his disappointment? Have you ever had to struggle with a big disappointment? How did you work through it?
2. At the same time that he receives disappointing news, Jordan J also gets a huge compliment from one of his heroes. Why do you think it takes Jordan J so long to accept this praise? Have you ever received mixed feedback that included both favorable and hard-to-hear commentary? How did you react? Did that experience teach you anything about the best way to give feedback to others?
3. As part of the story, the author includes school newspaper articles in which Jordan J reviews the dance team. Jordan sees his critiques as “telling the truth” (p. 5) but Ms J tells him they are not “helpfully constructive” (p. 37). Is it possible to be totally honest and give constructive feedback at the same time? If you had to choose, would you say it is more important to tell the truth or to avoid hurting someone’s feelings?
4. Sometimes when a person believes they are “telling the truth,” they are instead expressing a bias. When a writer shows their bias, that means they are allowing their personal feelings to affect the way they write about something. How does Jordan J’s bias show in the way he reviews the dance team? Does his approach change by the end of the story? If you see a change, what factors do you think make that happen?
5. Jordan J gets upset when his mother praises him after his audition: “She’s SO happy and SO loud and SO surprised, it’s / like I’m watching my own mom figure out IN REAL TIME, IN / FRONT OF ME that I’m good at the thing I’ve always thought / *she already thought* I was good at” (p. 95). Do you understand why Jordan J gets upset about his mother’s reaction? Have you ever responded badly when someone offered you feedback that they thought was a compliment?
6. Jordan J’s mom and dad have different parenting styles. Compare and contrast their styles. Which style do you think is most effective when parenting Jordan J? Think about the different adults who mentor you—family members, teachers, coaches, etc. Which mentoring style do you respond to best?
7. Most of *Jordan J and the Truth About Jordan J* is presented as a novel in verse, a style of writing in which the author uses the techniques of writing poetry to create a book-length story. What did you notice that made you think of poetry as you read the story? What are some reasons that the author might have made the choice to tell her story in this way? Did you enjoy this approach to storytelling? Why or why not?

8. Jordan J struggles with the fact that he gets great feedback for teaching Casey a winning dance routine behind the scenes yet doesn't make the cut as a dancer himself. What different emotions does Jordan J experience because of this? Have you ever been in a situation where your task was to make someone else look good, but you didn't get to be a star yourself? How did that make you feel?
9. Jordan J often uses hyperbole, or extreme exaggeration, when he expresses himself. For example, at one point he says, "The only thing I can / think about is going home and digging a giant hole in the back- / yard and living in that hole forever" (p. 92). Why do you believe the author chose to have Jordan J express himself with so much hyperbole?
10. The author uses the idiom "break a leg" in this story. An idiom is a group of words that has a particular meaning that differs from the literal meanings of the words used in the expression. When a person says "break a leg," they aren't actually telling you to fracture your femur! Instead, they mean "good luck in your performance." Can you think of any other idioms? In your opinion, does including idioms make a piece of writing more interesting or more confusing?
11. Jordan J's friends invent a very creative way to tell him to "break a leg" for his audition. What do they do? In fact, his friends are very supportive throughout the story—but in return, Jordan J lets down one of those friends in a big way. What happens? How could Jordan J have handled things differently so that his friend didn't feel so bad?
12. In many stories, the main character experiences a transformation or inner change as the story unfolds. Do you feel that Jordan J has transformed by the end of the story? In what ways do you think he's different? Does he better understand certain things about himself? Does he better understand certain things about the people around him?
13. At the end of the story, Jordan J says: "And for the first time maybe in my whole life, I have so much to / say, I don't know how to start saying it. / So I say it with dance moves instead of words" (p. 290). Dance is an alternative form of expression for Jordan J. What are some other alternative forms of expression? Are there any that you use?
14. Jordan J makes many lists throughout this story, including pro/con lists. If you were going to make a pro/con list about this story, what would you include on the "pro" side? What would you include on the "con" side?
15. Have you read the other books in the Kids Under the Stairs series? Which book is your favorite and why?

**This guide was created by Lisa Bullard, a longtime writing teacher. She is also the author of the middle grade novel *Turn Left at the Cow* and many other books for children. You can learn more at [www.lisabullard.com](http://www.lisabullard.com).**