

# MONSTER vs. BOY

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



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### About the Book

Dawz wants to practice Recipes of Extreme Greatness for the Bakers' Brawl competition. He wants to forget all about his mom, who left him and his sister, Jayla, with their uncle years ago and never came back. He does not want to see a monster in his closet that no one else can see.

Mim the monster wants to explore her closet's nooks and crannies and listen to stories through the door. She does not want to share her space with the horrible boy outside the closet.

When Mim leaves Dawz's closet for the first time, the two learn they're connected in ways neither can explain. While Mim searches the world for a friend, Dawz searches for a way to get rid of his monster so that he can be normal. Can they break free of each other without losing who they are?

**"A heartfelt tale of meeting your monsters and setting them free."**

—Linda Urban, acclaimed author of *A Crooked Kind of Perfect*



### About the Author

Karen Krossing wrote comics and poetry as a kid and dreamed of becoming a published writer. Today she is the author of many books for young readers, including picture books *Sour Cakes* and *One Tiny Bubble* and novels *Bog*, *Cut the Lights*, and *Punch Like a Girl*. She holds an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from the Vermont College of Fine Arts and regularly teaches writing workshops.



## Discussion Guide

Use these questions to kick off classroom discussion, guide pre-thinking and post-reading responses, or inspire a writing assignment!

- In the first couple of chapters, both Mim and Dawz believe that the closet is theirs, not the other's. Whose closet do you think it is?
- Why does Mim want to learn how to read?
- Dawz has a complicated relationship with his mother and has been adopted by his uncle, Pop. What are some different kinds of family in *Monster vs. Boy*? How does Dawz feel about his family? How does his relationship with his mother affect his feelings about himself and his other family members?
- Do avocado-marshmallow waffles with blackberry drizzle sound tasty to you? Discuss the judging criteria Dawz describes at the start of chapter five: "The Bakers' Brawl judges preferred strange and delicious combos, but not too strange" (pg. 21). Is there a strange and delicious combo that you like to eat? How does the idea of "strange and delicious, but not too strange" resonate with other ideas in this story?
- Why doesn't Dawz want Jayla to enter the Bakers' Brawl?
- Discuss some of the imagery used to describe emotions in this book, such as ". . . Dawz's insides were bubbling like a pot of Pop's pasta" (pg. 33). Why does the author use these images instead of straightforwardly saying that a character is anxious, or envious, or lonely?
- The town of Morsh has a tourism industry based on monsters and cryptids. What is a cryptid? Do you have a favorite cryptid from our world?
- The world of *Monster vs. Boy* includes made-up places such as Morsh and real places such as Puerto Rico. Why do you think the author chose to blend real and made-up places? Can you think of other stories that take place in our world, but in a fictional town or city?
- Why does Dawz hesitate to think of the monster as "she" instead of "it"?
- Make some predictions about why Dawz is the only human who can see Mim at the start of the book and compare your predictions with others.
- Some of the residents of Morsh believe in monsters, and some don't. What reasons do they have to believe or not believe?
- Discuss Mim's interactions with the dog and the cat named Sparkle. Why do you think animals are able to see Mim when humans aren't? What are some other things animals can see or sense that humans can't?
- Mim begins to grow when she leaves the closet. What do you think causes this? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt you didn't have the space to grow?
- "Was a friend still a friend if she rumbled with an enemy?" (pg 82). What do you think? Why does Mim perceive Dawz as an enemy?



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- What does Pop say happened to Dawz’s mom? How was this foreshadowed earlier in the book? Why does Dawz come out of this conversation blaming himself for Mim’s appearance?
- What does Dawz discover at Dr. Lin’s clinic? Do you think Pop should have told Dawz the whole truth? Why or why not?
- What happens to Mim when she touches Dawz? Why is she upset by this development? What does she learn about her own origins from this incident?
- What role do rumors and legends play in *Monster vs. Boy*? How does Dawz struggle to separate the truth from fiction, hearsay, and gossip? Have you ever had to figure something out from unreliable sources? How do you know what’s true and what isn’t?
- Discuss Luiza’s story about the maze. Are you familiar with the legend of the minotaur? Do you think Luiza’s story is credible? Why or why not?
- Why does reading to Mim stop her during the showdown at Atlas’s house?
- How does Dawz’s relationship with his sister, Jayla, change throughout the book? What traits define Jayla’s character?
- How does reading figure into the final showdown with Mim at Dawz’s house? What does Dawz discover about Mim’s origins during this showdown? How does understanding Mim’s origins change his opinion of her and the adults’ plan for Mim’s future?
- At the end of the book, many questions about Dawz’s mother remain unanswered. Why do you think the author chose to leave those mysteries unresolved?