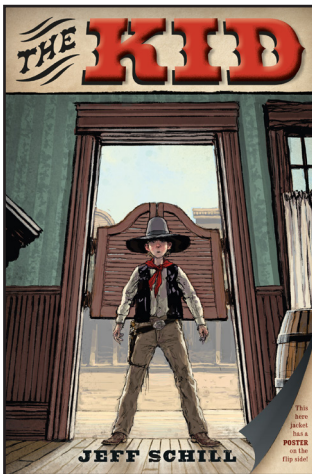




## DISCUSSION GUIDE



978-1-62354-364-8 HC

### About the Book

It's 1881 in Destiny, Colorado. Fourteen-year-old Henry Upton's parents have died, and he's trying to keep his three younger brothers together on the farm. Henry writes fearsome stories about The Kid, the fastest draw in the West, to keep people away from their parts. But when all-too-real gunslinger Snake-Eye Sam decides to hunt down The Kid to get his own turn on the magazine covers, Henry will have to think fast and enlist the unlikely help of his city-slicker editor to save himself, his family, and his town.

Pull up for a tall frothy glass of sarsaparilla and enjoy this engaging and satisfying Western tale, full of quirky characters, snappy dialogue, and heart.



### About the Author

Jeff Schill is a debut author who wishes he could drink a glass of sarsaparilla while working on more novels. He's the vice president of training at the Crisis Prevention Institute. He lives in Wisconsin.



Find fun activities, a book trailer,  
and more at [www.charlesbridge.com/TheKid!](http://www.charlesbridge.com/TheKid!)



## Discussion Guide

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

- Who is The Kid? Is he a fictional character, an alter ego, a pen name, a tall tale, a legend, or something else entirely? Why does Henry Upton begin writing stories about The Kid? How does Henry's relationship to The Kid change over the course of the book?
- Why do you think this book starts with a story from *Gunslinger Magazine* about The Kid?
- This story is set in 1881 in the fictional town of Destiny, Colorado. What do you know about this time period? Where did you learn it? What was happening in the world and in the US during the 1880s?
- What genre would you say *The Kid* is? What distinguishes a Western from other kinds of stories? Where do the conventions of the Western come from?
- What is sarsaparilla? What is the significance of this drink to Henry and his brothers?
- Have you ever wanted to be famous? Why is being famous so important to Snake-Eye Sam?
- Discuss the imagery used in chapter 4 to describe Herbert (such as "Herbert's breath got as heavy as a sack of flour," or "Herbert, you have nothing more than a cornstalk for a spine"). Why does the author choose these images to paint the first picture of Herbert?
- What would you pack if you were traveling across the country today? What would you pack if you were traveling across the country in 1881? How does your packing list compare to Herbert's packing list on page 49? What does Herbert's packing list reveal about his priorities?
- What do you think of the deal Henry strikes with Sheriff Quigley? What is at stake if the deal falls through?
- Why doesn't Henry scold Ethan for trying to run away? How would you react if you were responsible for a sibling and they tried to run away from home?
- Why is it so important to Henry to keep the farm running? What are some sacrifices he and his brothers make to hold on to that goal? Would it have been better to notify the state and find foster families for the boys? Why or why not?
- Compare what we learn about Henry in chapter 10 with what we know about Herbert from chapters 4 and 8. What do Henry and Herbert have in common? Have you ever felt like there was a mismatch between what you're good at and what the people around you value?
- Discuss the conversation Snake-Eye Sam has with his cousin Cal in chapter 16. Do you agree with the distinction Cal draws between "evil" and "mean"? What does it mean to call someone "evil" or to say they have evil in them? Does learning more about Sam's childhood affect how you perceive his actions and choices?
- What does Herbert learn about Baked Beans Bart in chapter 17? Do parts of their conversation about city vs. country life sound familiar or resonate with what you hear today about urban and rural areas?



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- Why do other characters in this story believe The Kid is real? What do they find so captivating about the stories about The Kid? What activities do fans of The Kid engage in to express and share their love of these stories? How are they similar to or different from fan community activities in our own world?
- Do you agree with Herbert's assessment of Destiny, Colorado, or with Miss Jameson's, both on page 168? What do you think someone who had never been to your own town or city would think of it at first glance?
- Discuss the final showdown between Henry and Snake-Eye Sam with Herbert as the moderator. Did it go the way you thought it would? How did the author build tension leading up to this showdown? Do you feel like you understand each character's motivation going into this confrontation?
- Herbert says, ". . . as the editor of The Kid tales, I am somewhat of an expert on these stories, and people read them to see how The Kid outsmarts the criminals, not just outshoots them." (page 202) Do you agree? Why do you think a quick-witted hero has more appeal than a quick-shooting hero?
- Gun violence plays a major role in this story. What were guns and gun laws like in the United States during this time period? How does each character feel about guns or other weapons (for example, Miss Jameson's throwing knives)?
- What is a legacy? What kind of legacy do each of the three main characters want to leave? At the end of the story, have they achieved that legacy?