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## Family Reading Guide for "No More Gnomes"

*Conversation starters for parents and children*

### Getting Started

#### What This Book Is About

"No More Gnomes" follows Herbert, the politest kid in town (medal and all), whose good manners are put to the ultimate test when his afterschool nanny Ms. Goat brings home a very rude garden gnome. Herbert tries to stay polite—but then another gnome arrives. And another. And another. The story is a funny and surprisingly wise exploration of how we say hard things kindly, and what we do when being polite means staying silent about something that really bothers us.

#### Key Themes Your Child Will Encounter:

- **Politeness vs. honesty:** Herbert's challenge is one children face regularly: how do you say something true and important without being unkind?
- **Setting limits kindly:** The story models that it's possible—and necessary—to speak up about what bothers you while still being respectful
- **Escalating frustration:** The gnomes keep coming, and Herbert's patience keeps shrinking—a situation any child (or adult) will recognize immediately
- **Finding the words:** The heart of the story is Herbert's search for a way to say "no more" with kindness intact

**Tip for Parents:** This book is a wonderful springboard for talking about the difference between being polite and being a pushover. Good manners matter—but so does honest communication. Herbert's journey shows that you can have both, and that finding the words to say something hard is worth the effort.

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### Discussion Questions

#### About Herbert and His Problem

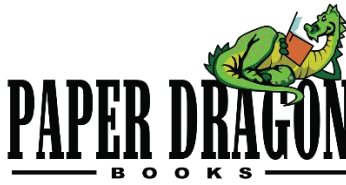
- Why does Herbert try so hard to stay polite about the gnomes?
- How do you think Herbert feels inside when the third gnome arrives? The fourth?
- Do you think Ms. Goat knows how much the gnomes bother Herbert?
- What do you think Herbert should do?

#### About Politeness and Speaking Up

- Is there a difference between being polite and not telling the truth about how you feel?
- What would YOU say to Ms. Goat if you were Herbert?
- Can you think of a time you had to tell someone something that was hard to say?
- Is it ever okay to tell someone something they might not want to hear? When?

#### Fun Conversation Starters

- If you had to design the RUDEST gnome imaginable, what would it do?
  - If Ms. Goat could bring home any pet (real or imaginary) that WASN'T a gnome, what should she pick?
  - What would YOUR medal say if you had one for something you're good at?
  - What's the hardest polite thing you've ever had to say?
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## Discussion Activities

### Practicing Kind Honesty

- Role-play Herbert's situation: pretend you're Herbert and practice saying something honest but kind to "Ms. Goat"
- Come up with three different ways to say "I don't like this" that are polite but clear
- Discuss: What's the difference between being rude and being honest?
- Talk about a real situation where your child needed to speak up—what words worked?

### Gnome Appreciation (or Not)

- Look up garden gnomes together—where did they come from? Why do people have them?
- Design your own gnome character: is it polite or rude? What does it look like?
- Make a "politeness medal" for someone in your family who does something exceptionally kind
- Draw Herbert's face through the different stages of gnome arrivals

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## Conversation Tips for Parents

### Talking About Feelings vs. Manners

- Acknowledge that Herbert's frustration is completely valid—normalize the feeling of being bothered by something
- Explore the difference between FEELING something (always okay) and SAYING it (requires thought about how)
- Ask: "Can you be honest AND kind at the same time? How?"
- Share a time you had to say something hard and how you found the words

### Building Communication Skills

- Practice "I feel" statements with your child: "I feel frustrated when \_\_\_ because \_\_\_."
- Role-play hard conversations in low-stakes situations so children build the skill
- Celebrate when your child speaks up honestly—especially when it was difficult
- Model speaking up kindly yourself: let your child see what this looks like in real life

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## Questions by Age Group

### For Younger Readers (Ages 4–6)

- What is Herbert's special medal for?
- What does Ms. Goat bring home?
- How does Herbert feel about the gnomes?
- Does Herbert find a way to talk to Ms. Goat?

### For Older Readers (Ages 6–8)

- Why is it so hard for Herbert to say something about the gnomes?
  - What does the story teach about the difference between being polite and being honest?
  - What would have happened if Herbert had just stayed quiet forever?
  - What advice would you give Herbert at the beginning of the story?
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## Activity Ideas

### Creative Writing and Drama

- Write the conversation Herbert finally has with Ms. Goat—what does he say?
- Act out a scene where Herbert has to tell Ms. Goat his feelings as kindly as possible
- Draw "before and after" pictures of Herbert's face—with the first gnome and the last
- Write a short story from the gnome's point of view—is the gnome aware it's rude?

### Social Skills Practice

- Make a class or family "Kindness and Honesty" charter—when should you speak up?
- Practice giving honest compliments AND honest concerns to a stuffed animal
- Create a "feelings thermometer" to help identify when frustration is building
- Role-play with puppets: how would a puppet handle a situation like Herbert's?

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"No More Gnomes" is a small and funny book about something genuinely important: the courage it takes to say an honest thing with kindness. Herbert's struggle is one every child will recognize—that feeling of wanting to be good and also wanting to say "ENOUGH." Beth Mills gives young readers permission to feel both things at once, and shows them that speaking up doesn't have to mean being rude. That's a lesson worth far more than any politeness medal.