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Family Reading Guide for "J vs. K"

Conversation starters for parents and children

Getting Started

What This Book Is About

"J vs. K" follows two rival 5th graders competing to win their school's Creative Storytelling Competition. J is a talented artist who tells stories without words, while K is a gifted writer known as "The Word Wizard." As their rivalry intensifies, J and K discover that winning may require them to team up with the person they least expect — each other.

Key Themes Your Child Will Encounter:

- **Healthy vs. unhealthy competition:** The story explores when rivalry pushes us to do our best, and when it gets in the way
- **Combining strengths:** J's art and K's words are shown as more powerful together than apart
- **Collaboration over conflict:** The story models what it looks like to set aside rivalry for a shared goal
- **Different kinds of talent:** The book celebrates both visual and written storytelling as equally valuable

Note for Parents: This is a lighthearted, visually engaging story with no difficult content — a great choice for talking with your child about competition, teamwork, and appreciating different kinds of talent.

Discussion Questions

About J and K

- What makes J's way of telling stories different from K's?
- Why do you think winning the competition matters so much to both of them?
- How do J and K's feelings about each other change over the story?

About Competition and Teamwork

- What are the benefits of competing against someone? What are the downsides?
- Why might combining J's and K's strengths make a better story than either could make alone?
- What does it take to work well with someone you don't naturally get along with?

Conversation Starters

- Do you prefer telling stories with words, pictures, or both? Why?
- Have you ever had a rival who became a friend or teammate?
- What's something you're really good at that's different from a friend's talent?
- What would your entry look like if you were in the Creative Storytelling Competition?

Discussion Activities

Storytelling Together

- Write a short story together as a family, taking turns adding a sentence
- Try illustrating a story your child has written, or vice versa



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- Talk about a time your family worked together on something despite different ideas

Exploring Talents

- List the different talents in your family and how they could work together on a project
- Look up the real-life collaboration between Kwame Alexander and Jerry Craft

Conversation Tips for Parents

Talking About Competition and Collaboration

- Ask your child about a time competition helped them try harder, and a time it made things harder
- Encourage seeing rivals or people who are different from us as potential collaborators
- Celebrate both artistic and written storytelling as equally valuable forms of expression

Questions by Reading Level

Accessible Entry Points (for any reader)

- What is the Creative Storytelling Competition, and why do J and K both want to win?
- How are J and K different from each other?
- What happens when J and K decide to work together?

Deeper Analytical Questions

- How does the graphic novel format itself reflect the book's message about words and pictures working together?
- What does the story suggest about the value of rivalry versus collaboration?
- How do J and K each have to change in order to work together successfully?

Activity Ideas

Creative Projects

- Create your own two-person comic strip, splitting writing and drawing duties
- Design an award ribbon for the Creative Storytelling Competition
- Write a short scene showing J and K's first successful collaboration

"J vs. K" is a fun, visually rich story about discovering that our biggest rivals might make our best collaborators. Use it to talk with your child about healthy competition, appreciating different talents, and what it means to create something bigger than yourself.