

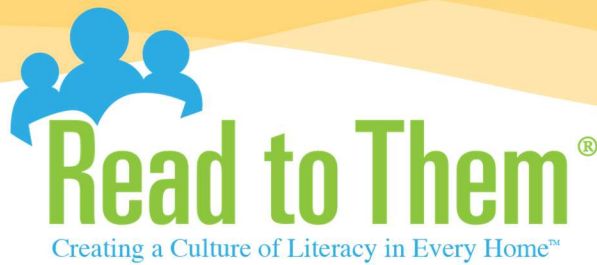
Discussion Questions
J.D. and the Great Barber Battle (2021)
by J. Dillard

Chapter 1 – A Crooked Fade (pp. 7-14)

1. In J.D.'s family, none of the kids get their haircut before the age of nine. When was the first time you got a haircut? What do you remember about it? Is there a specific thing in your family that can't be done until a certain age, such as getting your ears pierced, sitting at the grown-up table, or having a later bedtime?
2. Hair and how we wear it is a big theme throughout *J.D. and the Great Barber Battle*. Do you have strong opinions about your hair? Why do you think our hair is so important to us?
3. "Well, two months turned into two years." (p. 12) What does J.D. mean by this?
4. J.D. gets his room because his sister sleeps with his mom and his little brother loves sleeping with his grandparents. What is the sleeping arrangement like in your house? Do you share a room or have your own? Which is better?
5. J.D.'s mom tries to cut his hair before the first day of school, but it looks terrible! Have you ever had a situation happen before a big event that was as terrible as a bad haircut? How did you handle it?

Chapter 2 – The Nervous Breakfast (pp. 15-19)

6. J.D.'s grandma calls breakfast "fuel for the day," and likes to make everyone eat it. How about your family? Do you usually eat breakfast together or separately? What is a typical breakfast like for you in the mornings?
7. Why is J.D.'s granddad so insistent he take off his hat at the table?
8. "...and I would need EXTRA-tough skin to make it through the ride to school." (p. 19) When was the last time you felt like you might need some extra-tough skin to make it through something?



Chapter 3 – The Most Horrible First Day (pp. 20-26)

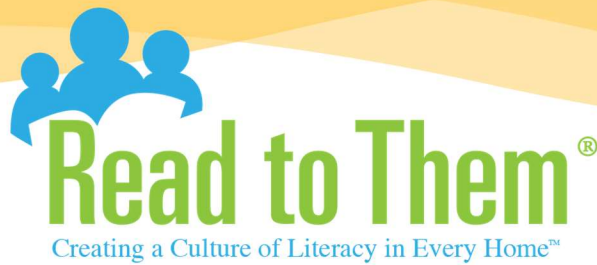
9. Jordan's pretty harsh on J.D. – he knocks his hat off his head, tosses it around the bus, and points out that Jordan doesn't have the money to get his hair fixed. Yet, J.D. refers to Jordan as his best friend. Do you think this behavior is best-friend worthy?
10. J.D. is taking a fair amount of teasing from everyone when they see his hair. But, when Jessyka says, *"Yeah, J.D., you looked better with your braids"* (p. 22), it makes him feel really embarrassed. Why do Jessyka's comments sting more than the others?
11. Jessyka's really fast and is not only a track star but is also on the peewee football team. Do you know any boys or girls who are breaking gender norms and playing a sport that's not normally designed for them? Maybe a girl playing football or competing on your school's wrestling team? Or a boy who takes dance lessons, cheers, or does gymnastics?

Chapter 4 – Jordan's Magical House (pp. 27-31)

12. There are a lot of things J.D. likes about Jordan's house: multiple video game consoles, junk food, cable television, and no curfew, just to name a few. He also likes the fact that they are a family of Creasters – people who only go to church on Christmas and Easter. Can you think of a family that reminds you of Jordan's? What is it about that family that you like? Anything in particular that you don't?
13. At Hart & Son, they only know how to cut "Caesars, baldies, and fades," according to Jordan. Why does this bug the boys? Do you think it's good that Hart & Son sticks with tradition? Or should they be changing with the times?

Chapter 5 – Another Bad Hairstyle (pp. 32-37)

14. J.D. uses his mom's hair relaxer kit to try and improve his own terrible haircut. Have you ever taken something that was someone else's, hoping it was going to help you? How did the other person react? Was their reaction fair?
15. Ms. Scott is the one teacher that lets J.D. keep his hat on. Do you think she made the right call? Should she have asked him to take it off? Do you think she would have let any of the other students leave their hats on?



Chapter 6 – Me vs. the Clippers (pp. 38-44)

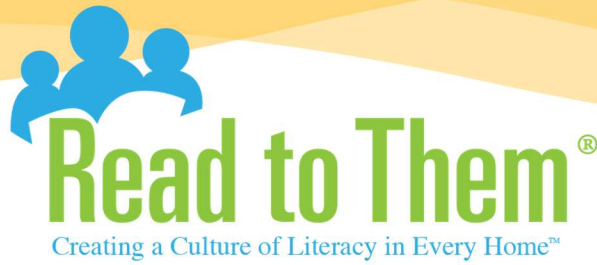
16. J.D. makes a bold move and decides to cut his little brother's hair (even though we all know that no kid in the Jones family gets their hair cut before they turn nine). How do you think his mom is going to react? His grandparents? Would you have taken a risk like that? Why do you think J.D. was willing to do that, knowing there may be consequences?
17. "Making Justin happy with something I did filled me with a warm feeling. Like I'd just finished a plate of fried fish and French fries that my mom made every Saturday in the summer." (p. 41) Justin's happiness over his new haircut makes J.D. feel great. Can you think of a time you did something for someone else that made you feel this way?
18. As it turns out, J.D.'s mom isn't upset that he cut Justin's hair. Why do you think she doesn't punish him?

Chapter 7 – The Grand Reveal (pp. 45-46)

19. Jessyka tells J.D. she likes his new haircut and Ms. Scott tells him it looks nice. Do some people's opinions of us matter more than others? Why?
20. J.D. mentions that he got an 'A' on his Reading test. Earlier in the book, we learn that J.D. is in honors classes. Do you think doing well in school is important to J.D.? Is it important to you?

Chapter 8 – My First Client (pp. 47-52)

21. "*No one could crack on me anymore.*" (p. 47) Now that J.D.'s looks good, no one teases him. What makes something "teasable" and another thing not? Can the way your hair looks have that much influence on how others treat you?
22. Is there something you've been teased for? Is there a certain person that you like to tease?
23. "*What else do you need besides a bed and a mirror?*" (p. 48) J.D.'s mom says this to him whenever he asks for new things. Is she right – or do you think J.D. needs more than a bed and a mirror? What's in your room you could live without? What things are necessities for you?
24. "*My first instinct was to make fun of him, like he had done to me.*" (p. 48) When Jordan shows up at J.D.'s house, his hair was a "jagged pile of mess." But J.D. doesn't tease him about it. Why not? Would you?



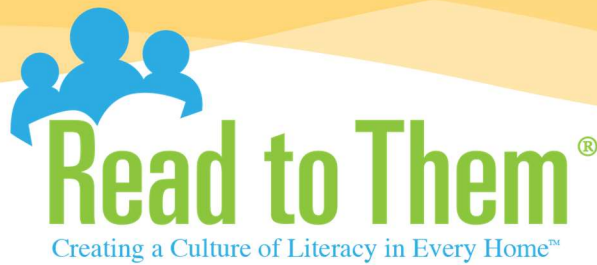
25. Jordan tells J.D. he is good with things in his hands. Are you? What is something that you are good with? Have other people noticed it?
26. Jordan tells J.D., *“At least you know people like you for you, not your things!”* (p. 50) Do you ever worry about why people like you? Is it for your “things” or for you?
27. “Sometimes being a good friend was about talking, but other times it was about listening.” (p. 50) Do you agree? When is it best to listen to a friend? When is it best to talk?
28. Jordan pays J.D. three dollars for his haircut, which is less than half what they charge at Hart & Son. Do you think this is a fair amount?
29. J.D. thinks about all the things he can do with three dollars – buy candy, go to the movies. What would you do with it?

Chapter 9 – The Start of a Business (pp. 53-59)

30. J.D. sets up his barbershop in his room. He must improvise with some of the equipment, but still he manages. Have you ever tried to run your own business? What was it? How successful were you?
31. *“Jessyka could teach all of us about throwing shade.”* (p. 59) What does J.D. mean by this? How is Jessyka different from J.D.’s other friends? How is she similar?

Chapter 10 – Henry Hart Jr. Has a Problem (pp. 60-63)

32. Why does Henry Hart Jr. show up at the peewee football game? Does he have a right to be there?
33. J.D.’s mom is at the football game because she took a night off studying for her exams to watch him “in action.” Do you think it’s hard for J.D. that his mom has to study so much and can’t always be there for him? Or do you think he’s happy when she can make it?



Chapter 11 – The Visit (pp. 64-66)

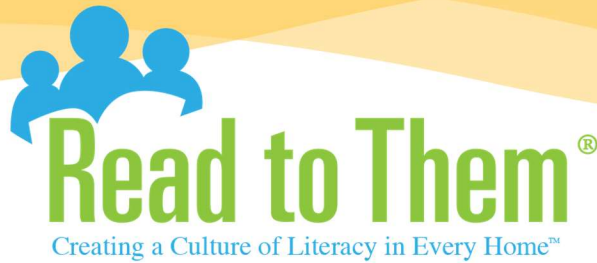
34. Henry Jr. calls J.D. by the name “Jay Jay,” which J.D. doesn’t like. Is there a nickname people call you that you don’t like? Is there one you do like? If you could pick any nickname for yourself, what would it be?
35. J.D. says that Henry Jr. always seems “kinda out of breath.” (p. 65) Why do you think that is?
36. Henry Jr. threatens to call the authorities and have J.D. shut down since he doesn’t have a license. J.D. doesn’t see how this is possible, given that half the kids he knows get their hair cut at home. Who do you think is right?

Chapter 12 – Henry Jr. Makes Good on His Threat (pp. 67-71)

37. Xavier doesn’t think it’s fair that Jessyka is on the team since she’s the only girl. But Jessyka is really good at football. Do you think she should be on the team? Is it “unfair,” as Xavier suggests?
38. When the health inspector shows up, J.D. tells him his grandparents aren’t home, but the inspector barges in anyway. Do you think that was appropriate? If not, what should the inspector have done instead? Why did he think it was okay to enter without permission?

Chapter 13 – The Little Barber Strikes Back (pp. 72-76)

39. *“How did she always know when something was bothering me?”* (p. 72) J.D.’s mom can tell something is wrong. Who is the person that can always tell when something is wrong with you? How can they tell?
40. Though J.D. is happy his mom isn’t mad about his business, he isn’t too excited about getting a new set of hand-me-downs from Uncle Hal. Why do the hand-me-down boxes bother him? Would they bother you?
41. J.D. buys a new video game console with some of his barber shop money. He also has been buying candy, video games, and comic books. What would you do with the money? Do you think J.D.’s purchases were wise?



- 42. J.D. is bothered, thinking about all the things he won't be able to buy if his business gets shut down. He also says that it makes him feel special. Why? Which do you think is more important to him – the things he can buy, or the way his business makes him feel?
- 43. *"I needed to team up with someone to think of something great."* (p. 76) Do you like working with other people on projects? Or do you prefer to work alone?

Chapter 14 – The Plan (pp. 77-79)

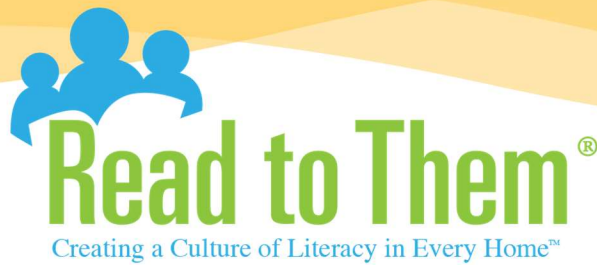
- 44. J.D. says that the tent in Jordan's backyard is "the best place for thinking." (p. 77) What about you? Do you have a favorite place to go when you need to think hard about something?
- 45. *"Ain't gonna work."* (p. 78) This is Jordan's response to each of J.D.'s suggestions. How do you think that makes J.D. feel? How do you feel when someone shuts down your ideas? Does it make you try harder, or do you get frustrated?
- 46. Sometimes Jordan seems like a good friend to J.D. and other times, not so much. How do you feel about Jordan at this point in the book? Is he a genuine friend to J.D., or is he just worried about getting cool haircuts?

Chapter 15 – The Challenge (pp. 80-82)

- 47. J.D. types his note to Henry Jr. because he thinks it will look more serious. Do you agree? Do you think there are certain ways to communicate with people that make them take you more seriously? Are there different ways to communicate when you don't want to seem serious at all?
- 48. Henry Jr. checks the "Yes" box in J.D.'s note. Were you surprised? Did you think he was going to accept the challenge or not?

Chapter 16 – The Rules (pp. 83-87)

- 49. *"This was just the boost I needed!"* (p. 87) What is the "boost" that J.D. is referring to? Why does he need a "boost" anyway?
- 50. At the end of the chapter, Henry Jr. agrees with J.D.'s rules and says, *"I'm going to teach you a lesson about trying to act grown."* (p. 87) What does he mean? What kind of lesson is he going to teach J.D.? Do you think J.D. needs to learn that lesson?

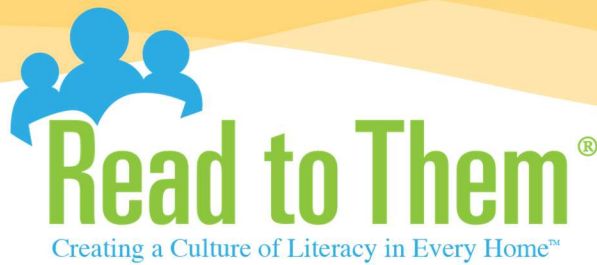


Chapter 17 – Spreading the Hype (pp. 88-91)

51. Mrs. Holiday makes it clear that she and Mr. Holiday are going to judge the contest fairly and not give J.D. any special treatment just because she knows his grandmother. Do you think J.D. was hoping otherwise? Have you ever been in a situation where you thought you were going to get “special treatment” because of your connections? Did you?
52. J.D. is super confident that he’s going to win the barber competition. Do you think he should be? Would you be as confident as J.D. if you were in his position?

Chapter 18 – The Night Before (pp. 92-96)

53. J.D. says that “on the night before the competition, the competitors can’t sleep.” (p. 92) Is this true for you? Do you have a hard time sleeping before big events? Or are you like J.D. and can “sleep like a baby?”
54. Despite his good night’s sleep and his “confidence of almost-certain victory,” J.D. wakes up “in a mood.” (p. 92) What do you think changed for him? Why is he suddenly feeling different about his ability to win?
55. “*What a messy start.*” (p. 93) After his bad mood, J.D. forgets his backup clippers at home! Can you think of a day when you woke up and everything was going wrong for you?
56. J.D.’s mom gives him a pep talk to make him feel better. She ends it by making him laugh. When someone gives you a pep talk, does it help if they make you laugh at the end? Or do you prefer to stay focused and serious? Humor can help lighten a mood. When does it make it worse?
57. At the last minute, Mrs. Holiday changes the rules and decides that she will pick the models, instead of J.D. and Henry Jr. How does this affect J.D.’s plan? How do you react when someone changes the rules in a contest, game, or in your classroom or home? Can you adapt easily? Is it hard for you when rules change?

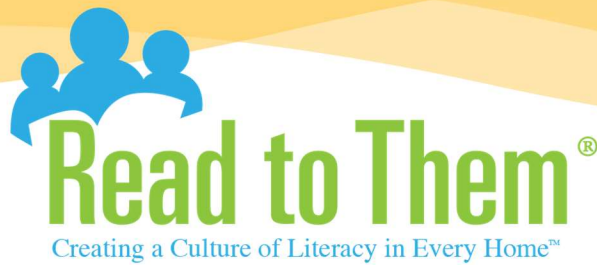


Chapter 19 – The Barber Competition (pp. 97-104)

58. J.D. wakes up the morning of the competition feeling worried on the inside but looking “as clean as a star at his movie premiere” on the outside. (p. 97) Can you think of a time you felt this way? Is it important to look good on the outside, even when you don’t feel so good on the inside?
59. Poor J.D.! The first time he ever performed in front of a crowd by himself, he dropped the fake baby Jesus during the Christmas play. Recount a time something like this happened to you!
60. When J.D. goes over to his family (who are sitting in the front row) Vanessa has a weird look in her eyes. What is she thinking?
61. *“Everyone I cared about had come out to cheer me on.”* (p. 99) Do you think J.D. is more nervous now that so many of his family and friends are there? Or is their presence giving him more confidence? How about you? Do you feel more pressure to perform at something if your family is there, or does it give you the added boost to perform your best?
62. Mrs. Holiday mentions that her two models grew their hair out, just for the barber competition! Would you grow your hair out and then trust someone you didn’t know to cut it? What’s the most daring haircut you’ve ever gotten?
63. Mrs. Holiday invites Henry Sr. to make the final selection. Why does she do this?
64. At the end of the competition, J.D. tells us, “I focused on the haircut the way I did when I got sucked into my drawings.” (p. 104) What is it about cutting hair and drawing that both spark the same interest in J.D.? Do you have something in your life that reminds you of that feeling? That when you do it, you get “sucked in?”

Chapter 20 – The Winner? (pp. 105-107)

65. J.D. cuts the word “Winner” into the back of his last model’s head. What word would you want cut into your hair?
66. J.D. wins the barber competition and feels amazing! But something shifts when he sees Henry Jr.’s wife crying. Why does her crying affect *his* mood?

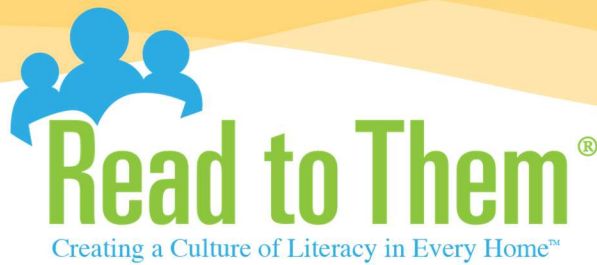


Chapter 21 – A Real Job (pp. 108-113)

67. After the competition, J.D. has so many clients that he doesn't have time to spend his money! Is this a good or bad thing? Would you rather have more money or more time?
68. *"Well, good boy, save your money."* (p. 109) This is J.D.'s grandma's advice. Do you think he's going to follow it? What about you? Do you like spending or saving money more? How about giving money to others?
69. J.D. is so excited to go out to eat with his family. Does your family eat out very often, or only for special occasions? What's your favorite restaurant?
70. Henry Jr. approaches J.D.'s family at the restaurant. What do you think he's going to say?

Chapter 22 – Let's Make a Deal (pp. 114-118)

71. *"I'm asking right here, in front of your whole family, to get your mom's and grandparents' permission."* (p. 114) Is it hard for Henry Jr. to ask J.D. to come work for him? Why does he choose to do it this way? Have you ever asked someone to do something for you in front of other people because you thought it would help?
72. *"...I knew I had to always TRY to be nice, even if someone had been unkind to me first."* (p. 115) Do you believe this is true? Is it your duty to be nice, even when someone hasn't been nice to you?
73. J.D. tells us that he learned this concept of "being nice" because of his grandparents, church, weekly Bible study, and his mom. Where do you learn stuff like this? Who or what are your biggest influences?
74. J.D. has his own idea of how both he and Henry Jr. can "win," but he lets Henry Jr. go first. What do you think J.D.'s idea is?
75. *"Could I convince my family to let me do it?"* (p. 118) Have you ever had to try and convince your family to let you do something? How did you do it? Did it work?

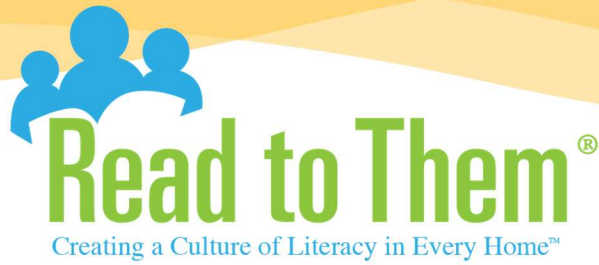


Chapter 23 – Off to Work? (pp. 119-121)

76. J.D.'s grandma says she's not sure if it's a good idea for J.D. to be "down there getting in grown folks' business." (p. 119) What does she mean by this?
77. J.D. decides to try and talk to his granddad while he's alone watching *The Young and the Restless*. Why do you think he chooses this time? Are there certain times that are easier for you to talk to a certain grown-up in your life?
78. Though his granddad says he will encourage his mom to let him try working at Hart & Son, he also says, "don't forget where you come from." (p. 121) What does he mean by this?

Chapter 24 – My New Competitor (pp. 122-126)

79. On J.D.'s first day at the barber shop, he doesn't get to take breaks to play his video games or turn on cartoons. He says it feels like "work." What could J.D. do to make work more fun, while also being respectful and getting his job done?
80. "*I couldn't wait to sleep.*" (p. 122) Have you ever felt like this? Have you ever felt so tired from doing something that all you want to do is go to bed?
81. In the town of Meridian, no one locks their doors. How about in your town or neighborhood? Is it common to leave doors unlocked?
82. Were you surprised that J.D.'s mom said it was okay for Vanessa to take over his room? How would you feel if your parent did that?
83. "*We were really different.*" (p. 124) J.D. isn't sure he could work with Vanessa. Could you work with your sibling? Would you be willing to try in order to keep your money in your family?
84. Some people have businesses that have been in their family for many generations. Do you know anyone like this? What are the advantages of working with family members? Disadvantages?
85. "*Did I need to help HER with her dream, too?*" (p. 126) Does he? Do we have an obligation to help our family members achieve their dreams?



End of the Book

86. Author J. Dillard finishes the book with, “I knew this wasn’t over!” (p. 126) Why does he end it like this? What do you think might happen next?
87. Do you think J.D. should continue to work for Hart & Son, team up with Vanessa, or go back to working alone? Why?