



HC: 9781536214673
Ebook: 9781536247619

★ “Bunns’s journey is filled with wonders, dangers, and a growing understanding of her powerful capacity for love and empathy.”

—*Booklist* (starred review)

Instructional Standards

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the instructional standards for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.

BUNNS RABBIT

ALAN BARILLARO

ABOUT THE BOOK

For anyone who has ever felt different, Academy Award winner Alan Barillaro tells the deeply moving tale of a brave rabbit who sets out on a quest to save her home and family—no matter what it takes.

When Bunns is born with small but perfectly functional rabbit ears, the warren is abuzz with auguries. Surely such short ears spell bad luck for the community. Sheltered in her family’s burrow, Bunns listens to the rhythm of her mother’s heartbeat—*Thump, thump, thump*—a song of home and belonging. Her father explains that unlike a rabbit’s words or thumping feet, a heartsong cannot lie. But the unknown world of the meadow, the sounds and smells above, call to Bunns. When at last she’s ready to brave the staring and whispering of neighbors who fear her because she’s different, and the disapproving elders who threaten to banish her family, she finds a world beyond the warren where myths and riddles, magic voyages, and important new friends await. Can the “bad omen bunny” follow her own heartsong to a destiny—a wish—meant just for her? Academy Award–winning director, writer, and animator Alan Barillaro’s graceful storytelling, warm illustrations, and dramatic graphic panels weave light and dark into a seamless tapestry to enchant children and adults alike.



CANDLEWICK PRESS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the epigraph from Marcus Aurelius relate to the story? Why do you think the author opens with the prologue “The Warren”? What do the epigraph and prologue foreshadow about the story? The book ends with a section labeled “The next season . . .” How is it similar to the prologue? What do you learn in it? What does it suggest about Bunns’s future?
2. Talk about the family that Bunns is born into. What are her parents like? How about her siblings? Describe their burrow and the meadow where they live. Who else lives there? Why is the meadow a safe place to live?
3. Early on, Mother starts explaining to Bunns, “I always say, the secret language of our heartsong is—” and Bunns and her siblings complete the sentence with “What makes a rabbit so special!” (page 16). Talk about what “heartsong” means in the story. Whose heartsongs can Bunns hear? What is unusual about that? When does she lose her heartsong? On page 227, why does she wonder “What makes me *me* if I don’t have a heartsong?”
4. Why is Bunns called “Bad Omen”? Why are the rabbits so afraid of Bunns’s short ears? Discuss Father’s statement “Any difference among those in the meadow will be punished” (page 48). Why isn’t her family afraid of Bunns? How do the elders treat Bunns and her parents? What are some other examples in the story of animals who fear differences? What do you think causes a fear of differences?



5. After Bunns is born, she hears her mother’s heartbeat as “a song of belonging” (page 10). Why is belonging important to her? Why does she later believe that long ears will lead to belonging? Is she right? Why does it seem to her that she will only belong once she isn’t different? Discuss Bunns’s realization that “her own voice was the loudest and cruelest” of the voices mocking her for being different (page 284).
6. When does Bunns first meet Fox? What is her initial impression? What does she learn about Fox from her family? When do they next encounter each other? Why does Bunns think Fox will help her? Describe some of their encounters and why Bunns becomes frightened of Fox. How do you think she disappoints Fox?

7. Who are the Monarchs? What are their interactions with Bunns? In the end, what does she realize about how they are related to Fox? Discuss the riddles the Monarchs sing to Bunns, including the one that begins “Find what flutters but cannot fly” (page 265). What ideas do her siblings have about what it might mean? What does Bunns finally figure out it means?
8. Some chapters relate Bunns’s dreams. When are her dreams important in the story? What effect do they have on Bunns? Other chapters tell legends handed down over time. What are some of the legends and how do they relate to Bunns’s journey?
9. How do Bunns and Bee become friends? In what ways is Bee a good friend? What does Bunns learn from her? Give examples that show what kind of personality Bee has. Why is Bee separated from all other hummingbirds? When does that change? What are things like for her in the final section about the next season?
10. When does Bunns first meet Stag? What is he doing then? When does she encounter him next? Why does his heart sing “a song of deep regret” (page 285)? After the Monarchs are restored to Fox and Stag’s herd is on the move, why do you think he asks to stay with Bunns? Why is her answer “I’d love that” (page 307)?
11. Discuss how the illustrations give you a sense of the different settings. What do you learn about the meadow, forest, lake, and other places from the pictures? What atmospheres or moods are conveyed by the pictures? How do the illustrations use the size and arrangement of panels to show the pace of different scenes?
12. Describe the ways that the characters are portrayed in the illustrations, both individually and how they interact with each other, using specific examples. Find pictures that especially convey emotions and talk about how the artist creates those feelings.



ABOUT ALAN BARILLARO

Alan Barillaro is the creator of the acclaimed debut *Where the Water Takes Us* and *Bunns Rabbit*. The Academy Award-winning writer and director of the animated short film *Piper*, he has been supervising animator on numerous other popular theatrical releases, including *The Incredibles*, *Incredibles 2*, *WALL-E*, and *Brave*. He began his career in animation at the age of sixteen and spent more than twenty-five years at Pixar Animation Studios. Alan Barillaro lives in California.



CANDLEWICK PRESS