

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Loser**

Chapters 1-7, pages 1-33

Discussion Questions

1. Which character in the book is the author describing in the first chapter?

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2. Do you think winning is important? Explain the nature of competition and whether or not there is such a thing as "healthy" competition.

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3. What does the author mean when he says, "Not yet," on page 7 of the novel?

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4. What does Miss Meeks call her students? Why do you think she chooses this term?

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5. Review the time when the 4<sup>th</sup> grader tells Zinkoff that the giraffe hat does not belong to him. How does Zinkoff respond? The 4<sup>th</sup> grader? Why do you think the 4<sup>th</sup> grader gives Zinkoff his hat back?

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6. Zinkoff comes to enjoy wearing Miss Meek's button. Why do you think he enjoys being punished?

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**Loser**

Chapters 8-10, pages 34-59

**Discussion Questions**

1. What deal does Zinkoff make with his mom?

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2. Do you agree or disagree with Andrew's reason for not wanting to come out of his room? Why?

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3. What is Zinkoff's first response after the first soccer game ends? Why does he change his response? Which response do you think is the most sportsmanlike?

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4. What do you learn about Zinkoff's character when he offers his trophy to Andrew?

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5. Describe Mrs. Biswell. Would you want to have her for a teacher? Why or why not?

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6. Why does Mrs. Biswell tell Zinkoff to leave the classroom and never come back? Do you agree or disagree with her behavior?

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## Loser

Chapters 13-15, pages 78-100

### Discussion Questions

1. Why does Zinkoff's mother say, "Heaven help me," so often while Zinkoff is home recovering from surgery?

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2. On page 83 of the novel, Zinkoff has "an urgent need to play with his baby sister." What causes this feeling?

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3. What test does Zinkoff give himself? Does he pass his test? Would you pass a similar test that required you to face one of your own fears?

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4. Discuss the role that Mr. Yalowitz plays in Zinkoff's life. Has anyone ever affected your own life in a similar way?

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5. What does the author mean by "big-kid" eyes? Do you think it is better to have "little-kid" eyes or "big-kid" eyes? Explain.

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## Loser

Chapters 16-17, pages 101-118

### Discussion Questions

1. On Field Day, why doesn't Zinkoff's team want to give him much of a chance to compete? What do you think about their behavior?

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2. Why does Zinkoff's dad offer to take him for a ride?

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3. In the fifth grade, Zinkoff's peers continue to call him a loser. What does Zinkoff think of himself? What do you think about Zinkoff's attitude?

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4. What are two of Zinkoff's favorite places to visit on Clunker One? Why?

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5. Why would it be cruel for Zinkoff to pretend to be the Waiting Man's brother?

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6. What do you think Zinkoff will discover is missing from his life?

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7. Organize a field day for your class. Brainstorm different games and races in which to participate.



**Loser**

Chapters 18-20, pages 119-142

Discussion Questions

1. What is Zinkoff's definition of a best friend? Do you agree or disagree with his definition?

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2. Why does Zinkoff choose Hector Binns to be his best friend? What does Hector seem to think of the arrangement? How would you have reacted to Zinkoff's proposal if you had been Hector?

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3. Describe Hector's characteristics. Predict whether or not you think he will come to appreciate his "best-friendship" with Zinkoff?

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4. How do you think Zinkoff feels after he earns an A on his geography test? What does this say about his character?

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5. What problem does Zinkoff face when he finds out Gary Hobin is in his group for Field Day? How does Zinkoff resolve the conflict? Do you approve of the way he deals with the situation? Why or why not?

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## **Loser**

Chapters 21-22, pages 143-160

### Discussion Questions

1. Zinkoff enters the old lady's house because he is lonely. Why do you think the old lady invites Zinkoff inside in the first place?

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2. Why does the old lady's slow pace seem to bother Zinkoff so much?

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3. Why does Zinkoff tell the old lady so many details about his life?

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4. How does Gary Hobin respond to winning on Field Day? What does this say about the type of person Gary is?

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5. What kind of "last minute...final test" does Zinkoff perceive on Graduation Day? How does Zinkoff think he will do on this test? How does he actually do, and how do you think that makes him feel?

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## **Loser**

Chapters 23-26, pages 161-186

### Discussion Questions

1. What is ironic about how Polly responds when she loses at Monopoly?

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2. Many times, an author will write about an experience that many readers can relate to, even though they are not the main character. What is universal about the author's description of Zinkoff's first days at Monroe Middle School?

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3. By the winter, Zinkoff "vanishes" into "nobodyness". But even though others rarely notice him at school, the author says, "Like everyone else, he is the star of his own life" (p. 169). What does the author mean by this statement? Do you agree or disagree with him? Why or why not?

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4. What motivates Zinkoff to look for Claudia? What does this say about his character?

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5. The author states, "a kid runs to be found and jumps to be caught" (p. 185). What does he mean? Explain why you agree or disagree with him.

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## Loser

Chapters 27-30, pages 187-218

### Discussion Questions

1. How does the author use a different type of writing to describe Zinkoff's last hours in the snow looking for Claudia? Why did he choose to write this section that way?

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2. As the story progresses, how are readers able to tell what time of night it is?

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3. Why do Zinkoff's mother and some of the other visitors give him a half-sad sort of smile after they discover he was out looking for Claudia?

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4. What do the good athletes do with Zinkoff to amuse themselves on the teacher in-service day?

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5. After Bonce and Tuttle pick football teams, Zinkoff does not leave even though it is clear he is a "leftover." Discuss what this says about Zinkoff's character. Refer to the author's description on pages 217-218. Discuss whether or not you think it is good to be unaware of things like Zinkoff is.

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6. Why does Bonce end up calling out "Zinkoff"?

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2. The Waiting Man is waiting for  
A. the Oh Mailman lady.  
B. his brother.  
C. his mother.  
D. the mailman.
3. This is the type of instrument Zinkoff plays in band. \_\_\_\_\_.
4. At the beginning of the book, what does Donald want to be when he grows up?
5. This is the name of the teacher who placed Donald in the front row in 4<sup>th</sup> grade:  
a. Mrs. Krabapple.  
b. Mr. Meeks.  
c. Ms. Meeks.  
d. Mr. Yalowitz.
6. What is the name of the little girl on the leash? \_\_\_\_\_.
7. On page 161 of the book, Spinelli writes: "Zinkoff...puts away his memories of graduation day." This is a \_\_\_\_\_. (Hint: another way to say this would be: "A memory is something that can be put away.")

**Short Answer.** For each of the following questions, write at least one paragraph (a minimum of 5 sentences).

8. Why do you think Zinkoff is positive all the time? Is this a good attitude to have?

9. Has anyone ever called you a name you didn't deserve to be called? How did this make you feel? How would Zinkoff respond to being called this name?

10. Why do you think Spinelli wrote a book about this "loser?" What's the point? What are we supposed to learn from this book?