

# THE INFAMOUS RATSO ARE NOT AFRAID

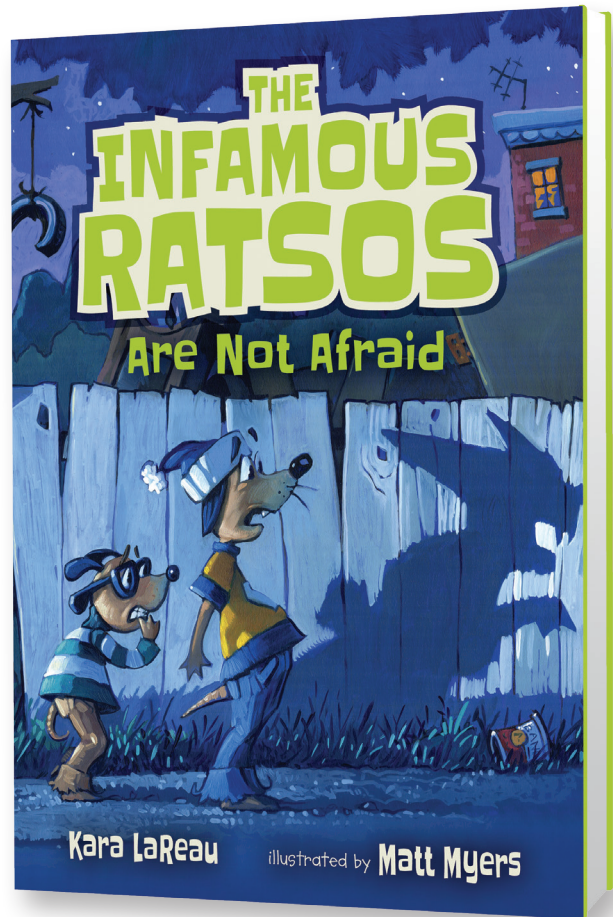
Kara LaReau

illustrated by Matt Myers



## ABOUT THE BOOK

When Louie and Ralphie Ratso set out to transform a cluttered lot into an arcade, they end up conquering a few fears along the way. Will Louie be able to stop the goose bumps he gets every time he looks at the haunted house next to the lot? Will Ralphie be able to stop the rumors swirling around school and concentrate on helping with the arcade? This surprisingly touching chapter book, the second about the Infamous Ratsos, proves that sometimes the things you fear most aren't at all what you thought—and might be exactly what you need to feel better.



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Also available as an e-book



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Kara LaReau** is the author of many books for young readers, including the middle-grade novel *The Unintentional Adventures of the Bland Sisters*. She lives in Providence, Rhode Island.



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Matt Myers** is the illustrator of *Pirate's Perfect Pet* by Beth Ferry and *E-I-E-I-O: How Old MacDonald Got His Farm (with a Little Help from a Hen)* by Judy Sierra, as well as many other books for young readers. He lives in Charlotte, North Carolina.

## Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups as well as individuals, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) 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 as writing prompts for independent work.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover of the book. What do you notice? What mood does the cover art create? How did the illustrator create that mood? How does it match the story's title?
2. The Ratso brothers love junk, especially someone else's old junk. Look at the illustrations on pages 6, 7, and 11. Is there any junk in the piles that you would want to collect? What would you do with it?
3. The Ratso brothers and their friends have many ideas for what to do with the lot next to the haunted house. What are some of their ideas? What would you want to turn the junk lot into? Why?
4. Big Lou tells his boys, "I'm the boss of me, not my fears" (page 37). How does Louie show that he is his own boss? How does Ralphie?
5. Big Lou gives his boys a lot of good advice. What other advice does he share with his boys? How does this help them?
6. The Ratso brothers don't want to appear afraid of things in front of their friends. What do they do to cover up their fears? What do they do to pretend they are not afraid in front of their friends?
7. The book title calls the Ratso brothers "infamous." What does *infamous* mean? Do you think that Louie and Ralphie are infamous? Why?
8. Ralphie started a rumor about Millicent and thought it was funny, but then his classmates start teasing *him!* How does that make him feel? What does it make him realize about what he did to Millicent?
9. Ralphie says to Millicent, "Let's be brave together" (page 75). Is it easier to be brave with someone else? Why?
10. Appearances are often not what they seem. How did Louie have to change his thinking about the "ghost" and the haunted house? What did he discover?
11. Louie says, "It's OK to be afraid. Being brave is hard" (page 80). When have you had to be brave? Were you also afraid? What did you do to get through it?
12. Ralphie learns that he has to take ownership of a mistake he made. What was the mistake that he wanted to make right? What did he do to fix it?
13. Almost all the characters in the story have to be brave to conquer a fear they have. What is each character afraid of? What do they do in the story that shows their fear? What do they do to conquer their fear?
14. In chapter 7, Louie walks to the haunted house to retrieve the bell. Which of his actions show that he is afraid? Which ones show that he is trying to be brave?
15. In chapter 7, the words *DING*, *CRASH*, *rattle*, *clatter*, and *creak* are set in italics. Why does the author do this? What clue is she giving readers?
16. In this story, the Ratso brothers do many things to help others. What is one thing they do to help, and why do they do it? Who does it help?
17. The Ratso brothers are helpful. What other words would you use to describe them? Why?
18. Do you think Big Lou is proud of his boys? Why?
19. The Ratso brothers don't want to show their fear because they believe boys should always be brave. Do you agree with this? Why? Is it OK for boys (and girls) to show they are afraid at times? Why?

This guide was written by Michelle Gajda, an elementary school teacher, reading specialist, and recipient of a Massachusetts Reading Association Sylvia D. Brown Scholarship Award for action research in the field of literacy.

