



**The One and Only Bob by Katherine Applegate**

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## Discussion Questions

1. How does Bob feel about the phrase “man’s best friend,” which he heard on a TV show he watched with Ivan? Why does that phrase make him so angry? Discuss how his early experiences in life shaped his personality. What does Bob mean when he says, “When you’re an animal, it helps to be a realist” (p. 32)?
2. Compare Bob’s character with Ivan’s. How were their early lives different and how were they similar? Why do you think Ivan was so accepting of Bob sleeping on his stomach when he first came to the mall?
3. Discuss the difference between Bob’s friendship with Ivan and Ruby and his interactions with Minnie and Moo, the guinea pigs, and Nutwit, the squirrel. Why does he dislike Snickers, the poodle?
4. According to Bob, what are the biggest differences between dogs and humans? What is the one human feature that he says he would find very useful? What can you learn about other animals that have opposable thumbs?
5. Why does Bob hate to walk past the animal shelter? Describe his feelings about the animals in the shelter. What does he mean when he says, “The shelter harshes my mellow” (p. 77)?
6. Compare Bob’s stories about his conversations with Droolius, when he was a stray, and with Kimu the wolf, when he visits the zoo. How does Bob feel about their different environments and their interactions with humans?
7. Describe Bob’s impressions of the zoo and the animals that live with his friends Ivan and Ruby. What does he mean when he says he is considered “enrichment” at the zoo (p. 102)? Why doesn’t Bob like Kinyani?
8. Why has Bob never told anyone the secret that haunts him? Why does he think he is really a coward? Describe the ways in which Bob shows bravery at the zoo after the tornado and at the animal shelter later.
9. How does Ruby come up with the idea to save the baby gorilla Kudzoo? Why do the other elephants allow Ruby to go with Bob to find Ivan? Why does Bob call Ruby “wise beyond her years” (p. 191)?
10. Why hasn’t Bob told any of his animal friends about Boss? Why did he not look for her on the highway? What does he mean when he says, “There’s a certain freedom that comes with owning your faults” (p. 234)?
11. Compare Boss’s experience of the last several years to Bob’s. How has her life experience affected her feelings about people? What does Boss mean when she says, “I’ve had to forgive myself plenty, just, you know, to get through the day” (p. 256)? Why is it so hard for Bob to forgive himself?
12. Why does Bob go to look for Boss’s puppy? What does he mean when he says to Ivan, “I let her down once, and now, well, I have a second chance” (p. 290)? What is the bravest thing Bob does in his rescue of Rowdy? How have Bob’s feelings about people changed throughout this story?

## **Author Interview**

**Did you know when you finished writing *The One and Only Ivan* that it might have a sequel?**

No! I had no intention of writing a sequel—which may explain why it’s been eight years since that novel came out. When I finished writing *Ivan*, it felt like a very complete story. And also, maybe because I’ve written so many series books [Animorphs; Endling], I really love writing single titles. But on every school visit I make, without fail kids will say, ‘There’s *got* to be a *One and Only Bob*!’ Occasionally someone will suggest I write a book about Ruby—but universally they ask for Bob.

**Was it at all intimidating tackling a follow-up to a novel that won a Newbery?**

I guess I went into it thinking that sequels are almost always disappointing on some level. When readers have a positive experience with a book, in a sequel an author might evoke that experience but never duplicate it. I resisted writing *Bob* for a while, knowing from the start that it might be hard, since Bob’s voice is hugely different from Ivan’s. At the same time, I knew that Bob’s was a fun voice and one I was familiar with. And I of course thought about all the sequels that have been written that *do* really work.

**Once you decided to give the novel a go, was it easy to slip back into the world of Ivan, Bob, and Ruby?**

Yes! This was a really fun book to write—and I don’t always feel that way. I do like revisiting characters. In a way, it is so much easier than creating new characters. I think what I most liked was going back to that weird, first-person narrative style. It lets me write in small spaces, and cherry-pick the best scenes to include. It’s a writing style I am very comfortable with and I was itching to do it again. I think maybe I’m a frustrated poet!

I knew that Bob’s voice and story would be different than Ivan’s. Ivan’s voice of necessity is philosophical and poetic—he uses lots of metaphors. Ivan was essentially imprisoned, and his, by definition, was going to be a quiet story. But Bob’s story is very action-focused, and the characters are out in the world, so I was able to let them cut loose, which was fun. And in terms of his voice, Bob is, well, Bob *is* Danny DeVito! As I was writing, I kept hearing his voice, and as it turns out, DeVito is recording the audio book, and is the voice of Bob in the upcoming Walt Disney Studios film!

**Was it a challenge to cast Bob in a new role and light?**

Bob was an old friend, and his story came easily to me. Though I was a bit worried, since I’d used him for comic relief in *Ivan*, and it was very different to focus on him entirely. I had to delve into his dark side. Bob is still a look-out-for-numero-uno guy, but here he’s not the comic relief in the corner. He sees himself as a coward, since he was too terrified to go back and rescue his sister, Boss, when they were abandoned by the roadside as puppies. He was just a *puppy*, after all, but in his mind, he failed, and that haunts him. Bob is working through it, but

he has to learn how to forgive himself—and the humans who abandoned him and Boss. I open the novel with the quote, “To err is human; to forgive, canine.” Dogs are so tolerant as a species, and for Bob *not* to be that kind of dog made him more interesting to write.

**Bob now has a loving adoptive home, and Ivan and Ruby are living in a wildlife sanctuary rather than a cage in a shopping mall. Yet Bob reflects that he “would give up a mile-high-pile of bacon cheeseburgers” to see Ivan “deep in the jungles of Africa” and Ruby “running across the savanna with a herd of elephants,” but concedes that they all know “it ain’t happening.” What do you hope kids will take from that dose of realism?**

Yes, the characters’ situations are better, but not perfect by any means. Bob wants his friends to be happy in the wild, where they were born. When I do school visits, I am always impressed by how kids understand that nuance better than adults. They seem to understand inherently that, since humans have so extensively encroached on wild animals’ worlds, we have an obligation to care for them, but that we don’t always live up to it. As far as I know, there are no gorilla sanctuaries in the U.S., but there are wildlife sanctuaries—some of which are good, and some not so. I like to think that Ivan and Ruby are in a good one, and I hope that’s the impression I left.

***The One and Only Bob* has garnered some positive pre-pub reviews—including a starred one from PW. Have you had an enthusiastic response from other early readers?**

I have. It is so good to hear from teachers who have read the novel and liked it. I’ve also heard from a handful of teachers who said they are now reading it at home to their own kids, who are enjoying it. Kids are so open-minded, and love discovering new books with new characters, but they are also willing to go back and hang out with old friends, like Bob, Ivan, and Ruby. That makes me happy, since I feel the same way!

## Author Biography

Katherine Applegate is the Newbery Medal–winning and #1 New York Times bestselling author of numerous books for young readers, including *The One and Only Ivan*, *The One and Only Bob*, *The One and Only Ruby*, *Crenshaw*, *Wishtree*, the Roscoe Riley Rules chapter books series, and the Animorphs series. She lives with her husband, who writes as the author Michael Grant, and their children in California.

Retrieved from Teachers Guide on <https://harperstacks.com/products/the-one-and-only-bob-3>

## Reviews

"Bob proves to everyone (and finally himself) that there is a big heart in that tiny chest...and a brave one too. Applegate picks up where her Newbery Medal winner left off, and fans will be overjoyed to ride along in the head of lovable, self-deprecating Bob on his storm-tossed adventure. His wry doggy observations and attitude are pitch perfect." — **Kirkus**

**Reviews (starred review)**

"Ricocheting between entertainment and poignancy, the dog's musings on his past and present give way to an urgent chronicle of survival. Applegate deepens the suspense (while, ingeniously, amplifying the humor) with the appearance of Bob's long-lost sister. The novel's fluid meshing of loyalty, forgiveness, and trust will leave readers hoping that the author has more one-and-only stories to tell." — **Publishers Weekly (starred review)**

"In this story of true friendship, hope, and courage, Bob learns to appreciate and cherish those he loves. Driven by favorite characters from *The One and Only Ivan*, Bob's story is delightfully heartfelt and adventurous. Castelao's illustrations add additional beauty to the story. Readers will be lining up to read this sequel." — **School Library Journal (starred review)**

"Explore[s] themes of forgiveness, redemption, and heroism. A playful canine glossary and expressive spot illustrations further enhance the appeal of this sequel." — **Horn Book Magazine**

"Bob supplies a sharp, lively voice that young readers will enjoy. Fans of the first book will love catching up with cherished friends, and newcomers, too, will enjoy this heartfelt story of survival." — **Booklist**

"Much like Bob himself, this book has an appealing mix of frenetic energy and somber contemplation. Commentary on animal welfare and climate change is carefully woven into the narrative, giving readers food for thought but never overwhelming what is ultimately a tale of friendship and forgiveness." — **Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books**

"Applegate writes that she was delighted when she heard DeVito would be the voice of Bob in the upcoming film adaptation of *Ivan*, and we agree: DeVito's voice is Bob's. This is a heartfelt and entertaining listen." — **Booklist (starred review of audio edition)**

## Activities

1. Man's Best Friend—Really? Bob refers to Hachiko, though he can't remember the dog's name. This is a true story about a dog's loyalty to the man he lived with in Japan. Research information about him through one of the books or websites that tell Hachiko's story. Write a short biography of this famous Japanese dog and compare his life to the experiences that Bob lives through in this book.
2. Animals in Danger. While dogs are not an endangered species, some of Bob's friends are. Find out how different organizations are trying to help animals in the wild and save them from becoming extinct. Check out [www.gorillafund.org](http://www.gorillafund.org) [www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org](http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org) to learn about other efforts to keep animals safe in their native habitats.
3. Building a Better Zoo. Zoos have been changing rapidly in recent years to provide better experiences for the animals and the humans who come to see them. Look up information about some of the best zoos in America and make a list of changes that have been made to improve zoos over the last fifty years. How do they compare with a zoo that you have visited? Draw a map of the zoo as Bob describes it when Julia takes him in her backpack.
4. Stormy Weather. Make a list of the warning signs of a hurricane or tornado and the precautions that need to be taken for people to stay safe during a major storm. Learn about the ways in which various animals can sense a storm approaching better than humans can. What are the tools that humans use to detect and predict hurricanes and tornadoes?