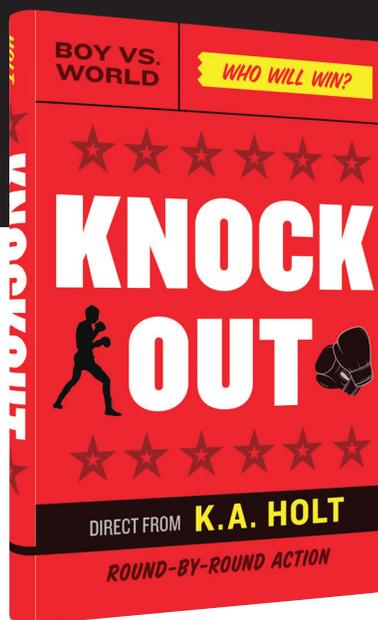




KNOCKOUT

DIRECT FROM **K.A. HOLT**



ABOUT THE BOOK

When formerly sickly Levi discovers his love for boxing, he finds himself in the ring with those who love him most. He knows he's strong enough to fight for his life. But can he convince everyone else to believe in him, too? Told in dynamic shaped verse, this gripping, funny, poignant novel, a companion to *House Arrest*, looks at what it means to be normal—and all the many definitions of strength.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide contains discussion questions designed to spark conversation about themes and ideas raised by this novel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



K.A. HOLT

has thrown a lot of punches, but not at any actual people (yet).

She is a mother of three, a lover of breakfast tacos, and a sucker for poetry of any kind.

Her most favorite thing in the world, other than embarrassing her kids, is to write books

that may or may not embarrass imaginary kids. Kari lives in Austin, Texas.

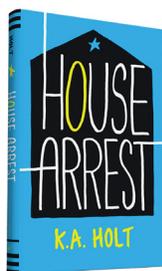
She keeps a punching bag on her porch (in case of emergencies).



For more information or questions about this discussion guide, contact **Jaime Wong** at jaime_wong@chroniclebooks.com.

ALSO BY K.A. HOLT

AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK

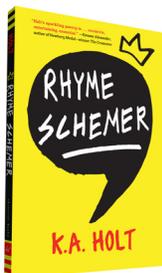


★ **BANK STREET COLLEGE BEST CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE YEAR** ★

★ **STATE READING LIST AWARD WINNER** ★

"Serious and funny, thrilling and touching, sweet and snarky."

—School Library Journal



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"Richly imaginative. . . . Eccentric, entertaining, essential. Versenovels will never be the same."

—Kwame Alexander, author of Newbery Medal-winner *The Crossover*



1. *Knockout* begins with a short introductory poem entitled “Who am I?” What do you learn about the main character of the book, Levi, based on this poem? What are some questions that you have about him?
2. When Levi first introduces Tam, he immediately points out some ways they are alike and some ways they are different. The closest friendships often come from the attraction to and negotiation of important similarities and differences. Compare and contrast Levi and Tam’s personalities and characteristics. Do their differences cause friction? How do they work together to make their friendship stronger?
3. Levi says of his early illness, “It’s all just stories / and it’s very weird / to be the main character of a story / that’s technically yours / but feels more like everyone else’s.” Most of the time we feel as though we’re the stars of our own stories, but this is not the case for Levi. Imagine yourself in Levi’s shoes. What feelings would you have about your family, your past, and your identity if you were the main character of everyone else’s story, a story you yourself do not remember?
4. One special element of this book is the author’s use of concrete poetry, also known as shape poetry. Flip through the book and find a few examples. At what points does the author integrate concrete poetry? Can you find a pattern? How does the concrete poetry contribute to your reading experience?
5. How would you describe the relationship between Timothy, Levi’s mom, and Levi’s dad? Why do you think Levi doesn’t share the same feelings towards his dad?
6. Timothy is the class clown. Why do you think he acts this way?
7. Changes in a friendship—especially for best friends—can be particularly confusing to navigate. How does Levi feel about Tam’s new friendship with Kate? Do you think Levi is being overly sensitive? If you were Tam, what might you do to help Levi understand this new relationship?
8. What are Mr. Davidson’s strengths as a dad? What does Levi get from his relationship with his dad that he doesn’t get anywhere else?
9. Perhaps the most hurtful thing Levi does in the book is dress up like a chicken during school football games. Why does he do this? Does he achieve what he hopes to by dressing up? Why or why not?
10. Timothy finds Levi’s old spaceship blanket and gives it back to him. What does this blanket symbolize? Is it a “baby blanket,” as Mr. Davidson characterizes it, or something more than that?
11. Levi never learned of his brother’s past because Timothy was trying to protect him. Do you agree with Timothy’s decision not to share this history with Levi? Do you think it’s ever appropriate for a brother or sister to keep secrets from siblings to protect them?
12. When Levi goes to visit Xaviers, he immediately feels drawn to the school. What do you think is the most important thing that Levi would gain from admission to Xaviers? Do you think that Timothy and Mrs. Davidson might also benefit if Levi were to leave for boarding school? If so, what would they gain?
13. The two questions Levi is required to answer on the application to Xaviers are “Who am I?” and “How will I impact the world?” These are two very challenging questions. Eventually, Levi finds the inspiration to type his essay—“the story of my year up until now.” Discuss what you think Levi included in his essay and why.
14. Originally, Levi takes up boxing because his dad wants him to pick up a sport. By the end of the book, however, Levi seems to gain much more than his dad expected him to. What does Levi gain from boxing? Can you relate to Levi and his passion for boxing?
15. Several times throughout *Knockout*, a character is asked to “be a man.” “Being a man” can be defined in many ways. How does Mr. Davidson define manhood? What about Timothy? Levi? Do you agree with any of these definitions in particular?
16. One of the biggest struggles of growing up is learning to break free of the preconceptions that parents have of their children. What ideas did Levi’s mom have about him? Does Levi successfully manage to change her idea of him? How? What about Levi’s dad?
17. Imagine the Davidsons one year later. What do you think each of their lives is like?
18. Compare the final poem of the book, “How will I impact the world?,” with the first poem, “Who am I?” What does comparing these two poems reveal about Levi’s growth and transformation over the course of the book? Remember that these are the two Xaviers application questions Levi must answer. If you were asked these questions on a school application, how would you respond?

