



# Otis Grows

## Discussion Questions: Older Teens & Adults

### Language

1. There's a little bit of a paradox in effect here, because the language is very playful but the themes are somewhat sophisticated. Does this qualify as a children's book?
2. Do kids need to know the definitions of every word contained here to garner their own meaning for the story? How do the illustrations, for example, contribute to the language of the text?
3. Robert Frost once said that free verse poetry is like playing tennis without a net. How do you feel about that? How do you think Frost would feel about this book?
4. Is there a passage where the language particularly surprised you or broke convention?

### Characters

1. The Yes-Chums are Nuh-uhs may be representative of family strife, but what else might they represent? Did they remind you of any allegiance or struggle in your own life?
2. Crystal is a prime example of a *deus ex machina*, or an unexpected power that solves the problem at hand. Do you see her as contrived? What other role might she be playing? For example, how do you feel about her being emblematic of storytelling in general?
3. Do you recognize any of the individuals alluded to in the painting? What observations can be made about them as a group?

### Setting

1. The premise of this story—that a red onion could be the son of a yellow chicken and a blue flower—is absurd. Does absurdity like that bother you, or do you find value in it?
2. Colors are relied on a lot in this story, both in the text and in the illustrations. How do the primary colors—red, blue, yellow—differ from “colliding” colors in the painting?

### Plot

1. What do you see as the future relationship for Otis's mom and dad? Why?
2. Otis grows in this story, but he also recognizes his dad growing older. When did you first go beyond egocentric growth to recognize the continuum of time around you? Can you remember?