

# Knucklehead

Recommended for Grades 4-8

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## **Book Summary: Knucklehead**

Jon Scieszka tells the adventures of his childhood with five brothers and the mischief they all got into. In short episodes, he recounts his experiences in school, his parents, watching his brothers and reflecting on the wild times he shared with them. He uses the story to answer the question of where he gets his ideas, most of which come from the mischief he and his brothers got into.

## **Author Biography: Jon Scieszka**

Jon Scieszka was born September 8, 1954 in Flint, Michigan. He graduated from Albion College in Michigan with degrees in both Science and English. He then went on to get his Master of Fine Arts in 1980 in Columbia University. He began teaching, initially as a first grade assistant teacher until he gradually began teaching through eighth grade. While teaching, he decided that he'd like to write and wrote *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, which was rejected three times before a publisher bought it. He also went on to found Guys Read, to motivate boys to become lifelong readers.

In 2008, the Library of Congress named him the first National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. His books have won numerous awards, including winning him the University of Southern Mississippi Medallion for lifetime contribution to children's literature in 2013.

He and his wife, Jerilyn, currently live in Park Slope, Brooklyn with their children Casey and Jake.



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## Discussion Questions: Knucklehead

1. Jon Scieszka uses this autobiography to demonstrate how he got some of his story ideas. Why are real events sometimes the best for creating stories? Is this true for fantasy and science fiction stories as well? Why or why not?
2. What are some of the benefits of being the one to tell a story?
3. Since Jon had five siblings, he always had to share a room with his oldest brother. What are some good things about sharing a room? What are some downsides?
4. One of the things Jon dealt with when he was younger was a job chart. How does your family divvy up the responsibilities around the house? How do you keep the tasks fair?
5. How do you think Jon's parents influenced him into the person he is today? How have your parents influenced you?
6. How is Jon's school different from yours?
7. Why was Jon unable to identify with the Dick and Jane books? What kinds of books do you identify with? Should a person only read familiar books or try new ones? Why?
8. Jon and Jim named their youngest brother after their neighbor so they'd get to play with his cool toys. Should kids get to name their siblings? Why or why not?
9. Do you think it was a good idea for Jon and Jim to babysit their younger brothers? Why or why not? What are some of your experiences babysitting siblings or other kids?
10. What lesson do you think Jon learned after buying the toy soldiers from the comic book ad? Did he have a good solution for fixing the problem? Why or why not?
11. What do you think some of the downsides of being the younger brothers in the Scieszka household were? What were some downsides of being the older brothers? Think about your birth order. What are some positives and negatives that you have?
12. Jon had a September birthday and always ended up on getting school supplies. Why do you think his family gave him these things? Do you think your birth month should dictate the gifts you receive? Why or why not?
13. Why do you think going to school away from home was good for Jim and Jon?
14. Do you think Jon and his brothers get into the same mischief today? Why or why not?



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