

# The Beloved Dearly

Recommended for Grades 3-6

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## **Book Summary: The Beloved Dearly**

Ernie enjoys coming up with fast money schemes and he decides that nothing would be more profitable than providing pet funerals for grieving owners. He hires a few kids to help him prepare the site, dig graves, build coffins and provide tears.

At first, business is slow but Ernie plays on his good business skills to gradually increase his profit and success. Eventually he and his friends are hosting up to four funerals a day. However, he has to work to keep his business from his dad, Red, who has warned to ground him if Ernie begins any more businesses.

## **[SPOILER]**

Ernie learns that running a business is harder than he thought it would be when the funerals get more elaborate and Swimming Pool accuses him of not taking good care of the people working for him. When he considers ending the business altogether, a customer reminds him that he achieved something more with his funerals –he brought people together.

Red finds out about the business and tells Ernie to end it, but he allows his son to have one more funeral for their departed dog. At the funeral, all the kids they've helped with the past pet funerals are there.

## **Author Biography: Doug Cooney**

Doug Cooney has written plays, screenplays, books and songs in addition to teaching and performing in his own shows. He attended the University of Virginia and the University of Florida. He is a member of several state associations and guilds including The Writers Guild of America. *The Beloved Dearly* is his most well-known book. He lives in Los Angeles, California.



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## Discussion Questions: The Beloved Dearly

1. Ernie is a twelve year old businessman, but no one seems to appreciate his ideas. What does Ernie hope to accomplish with his business ideas? Have you ever tried to start your own business? What happened?
2. After a sudden inspiration, Ernie starts what he considers his best idea yet in offering pet funerals. Why might this be a profitable business? How does Ernie organize his pet funeral business?
3. Compare the kids Ernie hires for his business—Dusty, Swimming Pool and Tony. Why does Ernie need all of them? Why are none of the kids more important than the others?
4. Swimming Pool initially declines the job, but later wants the money to help out her brother. Do you think Swimming Pool had the right motivation for the job? Why or why not?
5. In Chester funeral, Ernie attempts to give a eulogy, but he can't seem to say the right things. How could Ernie have prepared for this situation? How did Swimming Pool save the day?
6. How is Ernie good at organizing his business? If you were running the pet funeral business, how would you run it?
7. Ernie admits that his business is very tiring. It's also difficult to keep his father from finding out. Dusty thinks Ernie's dad wouldn't be as mad when he sees what a useful business it is. Do you think Ernie is right to keep the funeral business from his father? Why or why not? Would his father be mad with him for starting a business that kids appreciate?
8. Ernie and his father usually have very casual dinners, but then Red starts setting an official dinner time where they're forced to talk to each other. What made Red start these dinner rules? What are the dinner rules in your family?
9. Swimming Pool accuses Ernie of not taking good enough care of the people working for him. What has Ernie done to make her think this? Who is right – Swimming Pool or Ernie? Why?
10. Almost all the kids in the neighborhood show up for Mister Doggie's funeral. How do you think Ernie made a difference with his pet funeral business? Should Red have allowed him to keep the business? Why or why not?



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