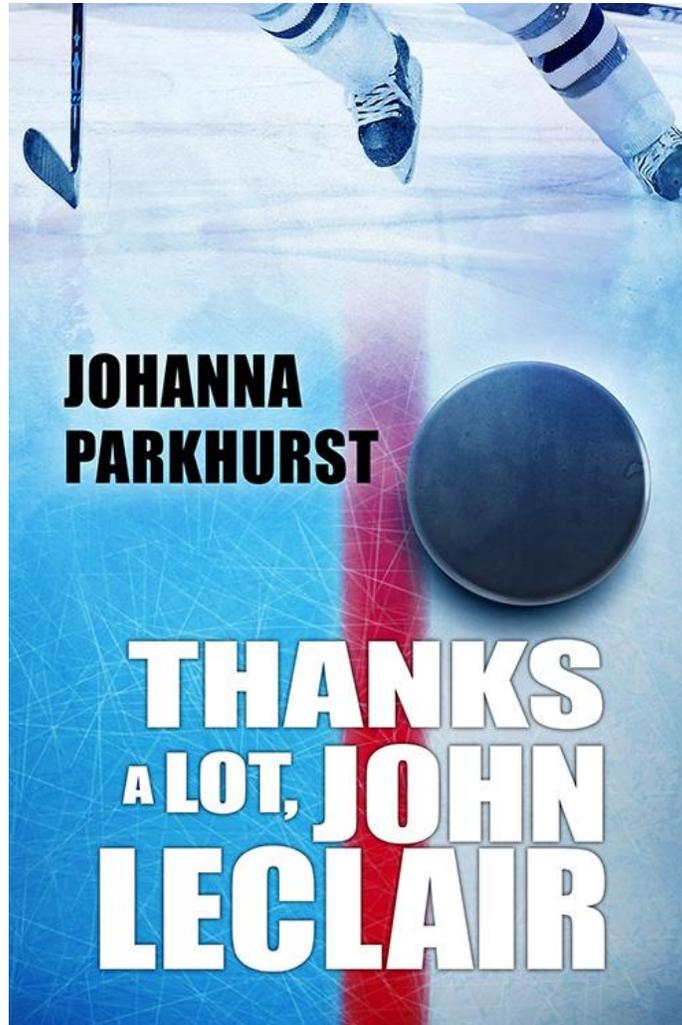


# DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY GUIDE



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Standards cited are taken from the Common Core State Standards/English Language Arts & Literacy/College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/>

# Discussion Guide

(Covers standards CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1- R.6)

*Questions for CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.*

1. In the first chapter of the novel, Emmitt says, “For years, every horrible and wonderful thing that happened to me lived in the pages of one of those notebooks, stuck somewhere between my life and John LeClair’s.” Why do you think Emmitt develops such a strong attachment to someone he has only met once?
2. As you read this novel, did you believe Emmitt would overcome the obstacles facing his hockey career? Discuss the evidence that led you to believe he would or would not.

*Questions for CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.*

3. What are some different lessons various characters in this book learn? How do those lessons relate or not relate to one another?
4. What larger themes or messages do you believe the author was trying to create in writing this book?
5. If you had to summarize this book in five sentences or less, what would your summary be?

*Questions for CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.*

6. What are the greatest conflicts Emmitt faces throughout this novel? How do these conflicts interact with one another?
7. How does Emmitt change over the course of this novel? Would you characterize his changes as positive or negative?
8. Of all the characters surrounding Emmitt in this novel, who do you think has the most impact (positive or negative) on how Emmitt changes and grows? Why?

*Questions for CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.*

9. Discuss any new words, terms, or phrases you learned as you were reading this novel. (Include any new hockey terms and hockey slang you learned!)
10. At the end of the first chapter, Emmitt says, “When I first saw Dusty, it was like a million goal lights went off in my brain. And they’ve been going off ever since.” What does the figurative language in this line help the reader immediately understand about Emmitt and Dusty?

*Questions for CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.*

11. Why do you think the author introduces certain chapters with certain letters? What relationship do you see between each letter and the chapter it sets up?

12. How does the author use the letters to develop various characters in the story?

*Questions for CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.*

13. Why do you think the author chose to write this book in first-person point of view? How would the book have been different if it had been told from an omniscient or limited third-person point of view?

14. The companion to this novel, *Here's to You, Zeb Pike*, is told from Dusty's point of view. How would this book have been different if it had also been told from Dusty's point of view?

# Activities Guide

(Covers standards CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1- R.9)

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

**Directions:** Answer TRUE or FALSE for each question below.

\_\_\_\_\_ Everyone needs a hero or someone they can look up to.

\_\_\_\_\_ It's normal for your family to disappoint you.

\_\_\_\_\_ It should not matter to an athlete whether their teammate is straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered.

\_\_\_\_\_ Athletes have no right to privacy because they choose to put themselves in the public eye.

\_\_\_\_\_ Lies have no place in any relationship.

\_\_\_\_\_ LGBT people are treated equally in our society today.

*(Note to educators: should you choose to have students publicly discuss the answers to these questions, be sure you have first established a classroom culture in which all students know how to respectfully agree and disagree with one another and have a way to easily express themselves if/when they feel disrespected in some way.)*

## ACTIVITY #1

### Standards Covered:

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.*

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.*

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.*

**Directions:** As you read, create a timeline for each chapter. On your timeline, record the following:

- Major plot events. Mark these on your timeline with a \*\*\*.
- Key character changes. Mark these on your timeline with a ☺.
- Emerging themes. Mark these on your timeline with a !!!.

**For each event/character change/theme you record, also note the line in the text that signified it was occurring. See the example below.**

\*\*\*

Emmitt realizes specific people are not at one of his important games.

“It’s too bad there are a few key things missing from this scene. A couple of key missing people keep this from being one of those great moments in my life.”

## ACTIVITY #2

### Standard Covered:

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.*

**Directions:** Use the table below to keep track of any new words, phrase, or hockey terminology you encounter as you read the novel. An example has been done for you.

| <b>Word/Phrase</b>     | <b>Sentence where I found it</b>                          | <b>I think it means...</b>                   | <b>How it add meaning to the story</b>                                       |
|------------------------|---|--|--|
| <i>Example: Duster</i> | <i>“And you’re about to become a duster, O’Sheridan.”</i> | <i>A hockey player who sits on the bench</i> | <i>Shows us the Coach doesn’t support disrespectful players on his team.</i> |
|                        |   |  |  |
|                        |   |  |  |
|                        |   |  |  |
|                        |   |  |  |
|                        |   |  |  |
|                        |   |  |  |

### ACTIVITY #3

#### Standard Covered:

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.*

**Directions:** Imagine you were tasked with turning this novel into a movie. What scenes would you cut? Which would you include? To make your vision of this movie come alive, complete one of the following activities.

- a.) Create a storyboard showing which scenes you would include in your movie. Include a short written explanation of which scenes you cut and why.
  
- b.) Write an essay explaining which 3-5 scenes you would include and which 3-5 scenes you would cut from the movie. Be sure to explain why you included and cut those scenes.

### ACTIVITY #4

#### Standard Covered:

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.*

**Directions:** Re-read the letter that opens Chapter Two, where Emmitt writes about when he and Dusty first met. Then read pages 62-65 of *Here's to You, Zeb Pike*, where Dusty shares that experience from his point of view. Create a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences you notice in the two points of view.

## ACTIVITY #5

### Standard Covered:

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7*

*Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.*

**Directions:** Throughout the book, Emmitt references the You Can Play organization. Do further research on You Can Play by visiting [www.youcanplayproject.org](http://www.youcanplayproject.org), and watch at least two of their videos. Then complete one of the following activities.

- a.) Write and direct a video that you believe Emmitt would create for the You Can Play website.
- b.) Complete further research on the You Can Play organization using other sources. Then write an essay analyzing the goals of the You Can Play organization and evaluating whether or not they have achieved those goals.
- c.) Research any organization in your area which, like You Can Play, supports LGBT people or causes. Analyze the goals of the organization and evaluate whether or not they have achieved those goals.

## ACTIVITY #6

### Standard Covered:

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.*

**Directions:** In the Author's Note of this novel, the author discusses the publication *OutSports*. Go to [www.outsports.com](http://www.outsports.com) and read at least three articles from the website. Then write an essay comparing and contrasting the experiences of the athletes in those articles to Emmitt's experiences in the novel.

## **POST-READING ACTIVITY**

**Directions: Look back at the pre-reading activity you completed before reading this book. Have your opinions changed since then? Why or why not?**

# Letter to Parents and Guardians

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In the coming weeks, your child will be reading the book *Thanks a Lot, John LeClair*. This book deals with some difficult topics, including divorce, sexual orientation, homophobia, relationships, and self-identity. We will be discussing these topics openly in class, and we encourage you to do the same at home with your child. Should you wish to read the book along with your child, we will be more than happy to provide a copy for you.

We here at \_\_\_\_\_ believe it is extremely important that children and young people read books about a variety of different characters so that they can build empathy for everyone around them, regardless of their similarities or differences. As such, we strive to select reading material that showcases diverse people in diverse environments. We are excited to share this book with your child, and we look forward to the rich and important discussions we hope it will create.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Best,

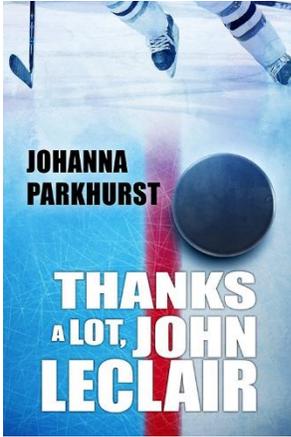
Name

Organization

Phone

E-mail address

## About the Book



Sixteen-year-old Emmitt LaPoint has secretly been writing letters to his hockey idol, John LeClair, for years. So it's probably only fitting that Emmitt's small Vermont town seems desperate to make him the next LeClair. After all, Emmitt is about to lead his high school hockey team to the state championship, he has a near-perfect GPA, and he's liked by almost everyone.

But even golden boys have problems, and Emmitt has more than his share. His father's back in town to breathe down his neck. He's happily dating his coach's nephew, Dusty, but almost nobody knows he's gay—and that secret is getting harder and harder to keep.

When Emmitt discovers Dusty is keeping secrets of his own, he's forced to decide exactly what kind of golden boy he wants to be.



Johanna Parkhurst grew up on a small dairy farm in northern Vermont before relocating to the rocky mountains of Colorado. She spends her days helping teenagers learn to read and write and her evenings writing things she hopes they'll like to read. She strives to share stories of young adults who are as determined, passionate, and complex as the ones she shares classrooms with.

Johanna holds degrees from Albertus Magnus College and Teachers College, Columbia University. She loves traveling, hiking, skiing, and yelling at the TV during football and hockey season.