



Vermont Reads

Bread and Roses, Too

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Adapted from the [Houghton Mifflin *Bread and Roses, Too* teacher's guide](#)

1. What does the title of this novel refer to?
2. How would you describe Rosa Serruti? What is important to her? How would you describe Jake Beale?
3. Compare and contrast Rosa's school day in Lawrence before the strike with your own experiences of school.
4. What role do families play in this story? How are Rosa and Jake's families similar and different?
5. What are the workers angry about? Do you agree with their decision to strike?
6. Discuss some examples of prejudice and stereotypes in this novel. Why do you think the author included these?
7. How do the immigrant women support one another and their families? What is their role in the strike? Which woman in the story do you admire most?
8. Rosa notices that "the madder Mamma got, the less American she sounded." What does she mean? Rosa also says that she wants to change her name, marry a "real" American and have "real" American children. What makes someone a "real" American in Rosa's eyes?
9. Discuss the importance of the sign Rosa paints for the demonstration at the train station. Why does everyone in the room react to the saying on the sign the way they do? Do you agree with the meaning of "Bread and Roses, Too"?
10. Why are the children of strikers sent to New York City and Barre, Vermont? Why does Rosa cry about this situation, while Jake considers it an opportunity?
11. How would you describe Mr. Gerbati's approach to life? Why does Mr. Gerbati make Jake go with Mr. Duncan instead of having him arrested when he finds him breaking into the safe? In what way does Mr. Gerbati affect Jake, and in what way does Jake affect Mr. Gerbati?
12. The role of caring adults outside of one's family is important in this book. Discuss the examples of caring adults in this book.

13. Just as the strike brings about large-scale changes in terms of labor laws, it also changes individuals. Who changes in this story and how?
14. Throughout the story Rosa thinks about whether she is cowardly or brave. What do you think? Discuss examples of fear and bravery in the book.
15. Do you think that a story like this could take place today? Why or why not?

Additional Ideas for a Dynamic Discussion

- Use a facilitator, preferably someone who loves literature, has experience leading discussions, and has taken the time to read and research the book carefully. They should be prepared with a list of stimulating questions (the above list is a good start) and should try to include everyone in the conversation. Refer to additional resources for historical context about the book and biographical information about Katherine Paterson.
- Make every attempt to seat people in a circle. If the group is too large for this configuration, ask people to speak loudly and clearly so that everyone can hear, or, as appropriate, ask them to stand and face the group when talking.
- Don't forget the introductions! Be creative — in addition to stating their names, people might briefly share their general impressions of the book, their reason for attending, or something about the book for discussion.
- Discussion facilitators should end the discussion with some kind of “closer.” One example is asking everyone (or, if the group is large, volunteers) to share a final thought about the book or the experience they've just had discussing it. Or ask volunteers to read their favorite sentence or paragraph from the book.
- Serve refreshments!