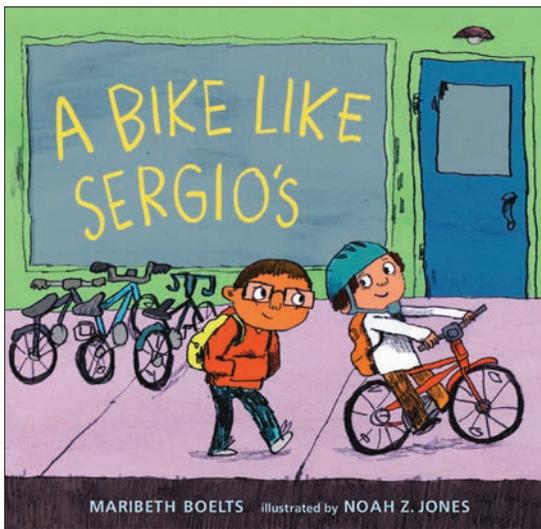


# A BIKE LIKE SERGIO'S



Maribeth Boelts illustrated by Noah Z. Jones



HC: 978-0-7636-6649-1

## ABOUT THE BOOK

More than anything, Ruben wants a bike. It seems to him that everyone else, including his friend Sergio, has a bike. But Ruben knows his family doesn't have much money. One day when a woman at the local grocery store drops some money, Ruben picks it up and keeps it, thinking it's a dollar bill. But it's not! It's a *hundred-dollar* bill, more than enough to buy a bike like Sergio's. What should Ruben do? He's a good kid facing a hard choice. This appealing story with vibrant pictures presents a dilemma that anyone can imagine facing. *A Bike Like Sergio's* will get students talking about hard choices and what really matters in life.

### Common Core Connections

*A Bike Like Sergio's* is the rare picture book that presents an ethical dilemma at a level elementary students can understand and discuss. The main character, Ruben, believes he has picked up a dollar bill in a store, only to realize it's actually a hundred-dollar bill. He knows it could buy him a bicycle, which his parents can't afford. Many students will empathize with Ruben's struggle to do the right thing. Appealing pictures set the story in an urban neighborhood, showing Ruben at the corner store, local school, and his family's modest apartment. In this guide, you'll find questions for discussing Ruben's ethical quandary, his emotions, and his relationship with family and friends, questions that reflect the close literary study called for by the Common Core Standards. Suggested classroom activities aligned to the standards center around the use of *A Bike Like Sergio's* as a mentor text. The book's universal theme and strong writing provide excellent models for students to practice writing narratives of their own.



CANDLEWICK PRESS  
www.candlewick.com

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Correlates to Common Core ELA Reading Standards for Informational Text for Key Ideas and Details RI.1–5.1, 1–5.2, 1–5.3; Craft and Structure RI.1–5.4; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RI.1–4.7; and ELA Speaking and Listening Standards for Comprehension and Collaboration SL.1–5.1.

1. In what ways can money be important to a family? What else in life is as important, or more important, than money?
2. Before reading the story, talk about the book's cover and title and what they tell you about the story. Who might the main characters be? Where do they live? What else might be important in the book?
3. Stop after reading the first line: "Every kid has a bike but me." Based on the line and the picture, what do you think the narrator is feeling, and why? How did the sentence make you feel as a reader? Predict what the book might be about.
4. What is the difference between Sergio's birthday and Ruben's? What does it tell you about their families?
5. Why is Ruben mad when he goes to buy bread at Sonny's and is standing behind the lady in the blue coat?
6. Ruben doesn't tell the lady in the blue coat when she drops the money. Instead he keeps it for himself, thinking it's a dollar. Why do you think he made that decision? Do you think he would have told her if he'd seen that it was more money? What would you do?
7. How does Ruben feel when he sees that the money is a hundred-dollar bill? Why are his hands shaking? How did you feel when you realized that's what he'd taken?
8. When his father comes to say good night, why does Ruben squeeze his "eyes shut and stay still as a stone"?
9. Sergio doesn't know about Ruben's hundred-dollar bill. If he did, how do you think he would have responded?
10. What do you suppose Ruben's mom is thinking when she's walking her fingers through the cash in her wallet? Why does she cross things off her list?
11. Ruben also seems to be thinking about something as he watches his mom count her money. What could he do with the money at that point?
12. What does it mean for Ruben to "feel the sweat" when his mother mentions Sonny's? Why would that be his reaction to hearing Sonny's mentioned?
13. When Ruben can't find the money, he says that "rain and tears feel the same." Discuss what he is thinking and feeling as he sits on the stairs.
14. Why doesn't Sergio notice when Ruben's walking "hunched and draggy"? How is Ruben feeling at that point? Could Sergio be a better friend to Ruben? What could he do?





### COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Correlates to Common Core ELA Reading Standards for Informational Text for Key Ideas and Details RI.1–5.1, 1–5.2, 1–5.3; Craft and Structure RI.1–5.4; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RI.1–5.7; ELA Speaking and Listening Standards for Comprehension and Collaboration SL.1–5.1, 1–5.2; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL.1–5.4, 1–2.5; ELA Writing Standards for Text Types and Purposes W.1–5.3; and Production and Distribution of Writing W.3–5.4.

15. When Ruben thinks back to when the money seemed to be lost, the memory is “like a hot blast.” What feeling does that phrase give you? Why might Ruben feel that way?
16. Ruben feels empathy for the woman in the blue coat. What does the word *empathy* mean? Have you ever felt empathetic toward someone because of something you’ve gone through yourself?
17. After Ruben gives back the money, he says, “I am happy and mixed up, full and empty, with what’s right and what’s gone.” Talk about his feelings in this scene and why the author chose these words to describe them.
18. Why are Ruben’s parents proud of him? Why does Ruben also feel proud?
19. Describe Ruben as a person, based on his feelings, words, and actions. What do you like about him and why?
20. What do you know about Ruben’s house and family life from the text and the pictures?
21. Describe Ruben’s relationship with his mother, pointing to evidence in the story and pictures. Describe his relationship with his father and explain how you know about it.
22. What information about Ruben’s school and classroom do you get from the pictures and story?
23. Where does the story take place? How much does the setting matter to the story? Could it have taken place in a different state or even a different country? Why or why not?

## MENTOR TEXT: *A Bike Like Sergio's*

*A Bike Like Sergio's* offers many curriculum connections that focus on writing, making it a potential mentor text for the classroom. The activities below draw on aspects of the story that can help students grow in their own writing. The book's themes about values and family speak to students and can spark ideas for writing about their own values. Close readings reveal literary elements that students can imitate in their own work, such as a catchy opening, well-chosen words, and varying sentence length. *A Bike Like Sergio's* is particularly strong at showing a variety of emotions, a strategy for involving readers that students can incorporate into their stories. The first five activities prepare students to write their own stories modeled on *A Bike Like Sergio's*.

### WHAT MATTERS?

Ruben learns that honesty is more important to him and to his parents than material possessions like a bike. Have the class brainstorm what's important to them other than money. Each student should make a list of ten things that matter to them. This can include certain people, places, things, emotions, values, and so on. Students can make a small poster with their list, decorate it, and post it to share with the class.

### CATCHY OPENINGS

As the narrator, Ruben states his problem in the first sentence, one that draws in readers right away: "Every kid has a bike but me." Talk to your students about the importance of an effective lead to a story or essay. As a class, collect strong first sentences from classroom books, library books, or books that students bring in from home. Create a bulletin board for "Catchy Openings," where students can put up good first sentences, along with the titles and authors of the books.

### EXPLORING FEELINGS

In *A Bike Like Sergio's*, Ruben experiences a range of feelings, conveyed in the text and illustrations. Have students reread the story in small groups and list all of Ruben's feelings, noting how these feelings are described in words or shown in pictures. Then pair the groups together for a game of Feelings Charades, in which the groups alternate acting out an emotion on the list for the other group to guess.

### WORDS THAT WORK

The author chose vivid words and phrases that make the text come alive. Have students find five words or phrases they especially like and write them down. Then ask them to come up with one or two less interesting ways to say the same thing. For example, Ruben says "my feet are frozen" instead of "I stood still" and "Rain and tears feel the same" instead of "I felt sad." Have students write up each example and post it on a "Vivid Words Wall."

### LONG SENTENCES, SHORT SENTENCES

A feature that makes this story good for reading aloud or independently is the variety of sentence length and the use of dialogue. Have each student take a few pages of the story and identify the different types of sentences, writing down a few examples. Then gather as a class to share the examples and discuss the effect of having varied sentences and including dialogue. As an added exercise, students could rewrite a few pages from the book using only short sentences with no dialogue to see the effect.





### IN YOUR OWN WORDS

As a class, list the book's main events in order. Ask students to work alone or in small groups to write their own story about honesty or another important value, modeling the structure after *A Bike Like Sergio's*. The stories should have a strong lead, use vivid words, vary sentence length, and convey emotions. After the stories are written, read them aloud to the class. The following organizer can be used:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Characters             |  |
| Setting                |  |
| Problem around a value |  |
| Resolution             |  |

### *A Bike Like Sergio's* PART TWO

What's next for Ruben after the story ends? Have students use the previous writing strategies to craft a sequel for *A Bike Like Sergio's*. Does he get his bike? How might that happen? Have students turn the stories into books with covers and illustrations, adding more information and emotions through their pictures. Spread the books around the room and take time for everyone to read their classmates' work.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

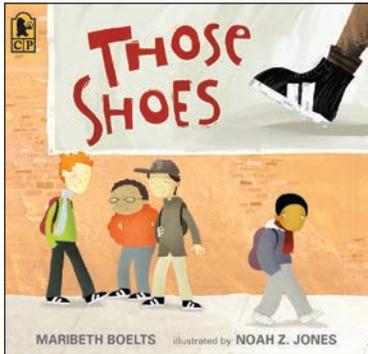
Maribeth Boelts has always loved books. She has been writing stories since she was in kindergarten, and she wrote stories for her own three children when they were young. Her books draw from her experience raising her children and interacting with her grandchildren. Maribeth Boelts is the author of the picture books *Those Shoes*, illustrated by Noah Z. Jones, and *Happy Like Soccer*, illustrated by Lauren Castillo, as well as easy readers, a novel, and nonfiction. She likes to visit schools to explore reading and writing with students from preschool through high school. She loves nature, and she and her husband enjoy beekeeping. Maribeth Boelts lives in Iowa.



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Noah Z. Jones has illustrated many children’s books, including *Those Shoes* by Maribeth Boelts, *Not Norman* by Kelly Bennett, *The Monster in the Backpack* by Lisa Moser, and *Welcome to the Bed and Biscuit* by Joan Carris. He also does animation for television, including Disney’s *Fish Hooks* series. Noah Z. Jones lives in California.

Look for Maribeth Boelts and Noah Z. Jones’s first collaboration, *Those Shoes*.



Teachers' Guide available online

★ “In this witty, wise picture book Boelts presents a kid’s-eye view of a consumer fad that rages through school at gale force.” — *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books* (starred review)

“Boelts blends themes of teasing, embarrassment, and disappointment with kindness and generosity in a realistic interracial school scenario.” — *Kirkus Reviews*

“Whether children are on the shoe-owning or the shoe-envying side of the economic line, they can sympathize with Jeremy and rejoice in the way he eventually resolves his problem with his too-small shoes.” — *The Horn Book*

“A poignant, thought-provoking book.” — *School Library Journal*

---

This guide was prepared by Kathleen Odean, a school librarian for more than fifteen years, who presents workshops on new books to young people, teachers, and librarians. She served as chairperson of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and is the author of several guides to children’s books, including *Great Books for Girls*, *Great Books for Boys*, and *Great Books About Things Kids Love*.

---