

**Discussion Questions for**  
***Save Me a Seat (2016)***  
**by Sarah Weeks and Gita Varadarajan**

**Monday – Chicken Fingers**

Chapter One – Ravi (pp. 3-8)

1. Mrs. Beam assumes that Ravi needs help with his English. Why do you think that is? If you were in Ravi’s shoes, would you have spoken up? Has someone ever assumed something incorrect about you?

Chapter Two – Joe (pp. 9-15)

2. Joe says, “My brain and noise don’t get along.” (page 10) What does he mean?
3. Do you think it was right of Joe to hope Dillon would pick on Ravi instead of him? Have you ever wished something bad would happen to someone else? How did you feel about thinking or saying this?

Chapter Three – Ravi (pp. 16-21)

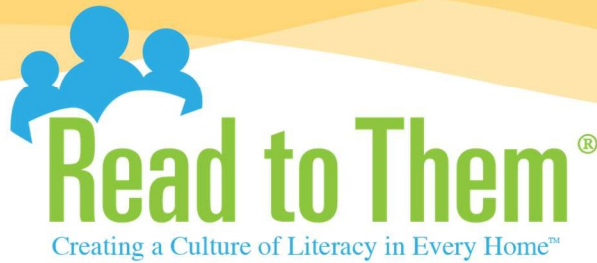
4. Ravi and Joe both describe their first impressions of each other. How do they differ? How are they the same? Are there any details they’ve gotten wrong? What are they?
5. Knowing what you do about Dillon’s character, how do you think Ravi befriending Dillon will actually go?

Chapter Four – Joe (pp. 22-29)

6. Dillon targets Joe – why? Is there a reason for Dillon’s bullying? Even if it is, can any form of bullying be justified? Why or why not?

Chapter Six – Joe (pp. 35-39)

7. Mr. Barnes says, “The world is full of Dillon Samreens, Joe. The trick is not to let them get to you.” (page 37) How should Joe go about doing this?
8. Joe is embarrassed by his mother blowing him a kiss at school. Has your family ever done something to make you feel like this? Did you tell them how you feel or keep it bottled up like Joe? Which option made you feel better?



Chapter Seven – Ravi (pp. 40-42)

9. Ravi is assigned the first chapter of *Bud, Not Buddy*, but he enjoys it so much, he reads through chapter eight. Have you ever liked a story so much, you couldn't stop reading? What was the book? What did you like most about it?
10. Have you read *Bud, Not Buddy*? If so, do you agree with Ravi?

Chapter Eight – Joe (pp. 43-46)

11. Is Joe being too harsh on his mother?

**Tuesday – Hamburgers**

Chapter Nine – Ravi (pp. 49-52)

12. Amma tells Ravi, "First impressions matter" (p. 50) Do you agree with this statement? Have you ever changed your mind about someone even after a good first impression? What about after a bad first impression?

Chapter 10 – Joe (pp. 53-55)

13. Because of his Auditory Processing Disorder, standing in front of the class makes Joe nervous. When you get called on to answer a question, do you get nervous? Do you have any tips Joe might use to overcome his anxiety? If so, what are they?

Chapter Eleven – Ravi (pp.56-60)

14. Does the dynamic between Joe and Ravi's characters in this chapter surprise you? Where is the animosity coming from? What will it take for them to talk to each other?

Chapter Twelve – Joe (pp. 61-63)

15. Now that you know Joe was only trying to help Ravi, and that Dillon stole Ravi's mechanical pencils and tripped Ravi, how has your view of the situation changed? What will it take for Joe to speak up and tell Ravi the truth? Will Joe speak up?

Chapter Fourteen – Joe (pp. 70-77)

16. Do you find it hard to pronounce names that are from a different language or country of origin? Should we be sure to try harder to get them right? Why or why not?

Chapter Fifteen – Ravi (pp. 78-85)

17. On pages 81-82, Ravi admits that he would like to:
1. *Announce Victory*
  2. *Pump Fist*
  3. *Take Bow*

But instead feels:

1. *Embarrassed*
2. *Ashamed*
3. *Defeated.*

Are there other contexts that can produce this opposing range of emotional reactions? Invite students to share tales, stories, anecdotes...

18. “Assumptions are often wrong,” says Miss Frost. (page 85) Do you have any examples of this? If so, share them.

**Wednesday: Chili**

Chapter Seventeen – Ravi (pp. 93-98)

19. Ravi’s mother tries to get rid of “the curse of the evil eye” (p. 93) that has fallen on Ravi. Do you think this will be a turning point for Ravi or that it’s nothing more than a superstition? Are there superstitions that you believe in? What about older members of your family?
20. Ravi’s mother makes his favorite cookies, naan khatais. When having a tough time, what kind of food always cheers you up? What makes your choice so special to you?

Chapter Nineteen – Ravi (pp. 104-107)

21. Ravi’s efforts to impress and befriend Dillon continue. How long do you believe it will take before Ravi realizes Dillon’s true character?

Chapter Twenty – Joe (pp. 108-112)

22. Joe notes girls pick kids for teams because they feel sorry for them. Is this true? Why or why not? If you think it’s true, is it a good or bad thing? Annoying? Both?



Chapter Twenty-One – Ravi (pp. 113-117)

23. Joe saw Dillon hit Ravi with the baseball on purpose, but Dillon insists it was a complete accident. Have you ever known someone that is deceitful like Dillon? Have they ever faced consequences for their actions?
24. The chapter ends with Ravi sitting down at Dillon’s table. Do you have any predictions as to how their interaction will go? What part, if any, do you think Joe will play in the exchange?

Chapter Twenty-Two – Joe (pp. 118-123)

25. Joe claims, “This might be one of the all-time greatest moments of my life” (p. 122) when he finds a way to keep Dillon from getting to him: by laughing. Was this the way you expected Joe to curb Dillon’s bullying? What power does laughter hold in your life?

Chapter Twenty-Three – Ravi (pp. 124-129)

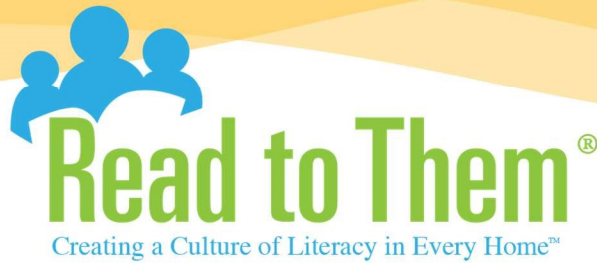
26. Though it’s difficult to read, Ravi finally sees the person Dillon really is. Has there ever been a time in your life when you saw someone’s true nature? How did you feel?
27. Dillon hurls a number of insults at Ravi. If you were in the lunchroom, how would you have reacted to this scene? Would you have come to Ravi’s defense?

Chapter Twenty-Four – Joe (pp. 130-131)

28. On page 131, Joe notes: “It’s not easy being a zebra.” What does he mean?

Chapter Twenty-Five – Ravi (pp. 132-133)

29. Why does Ravi compare himself to Ramaswami? Why does Ravi say he’s become the picked-on boy in America? Do you think Ravi deserves “getting a taste of [his] own medicine?” (p. 133)



### **Thursday: Macaroni and Cheese**

#### Chapter Twenty-Six – Joe (pp. 137-143)

30. Joe's mother asks Joe if he's "ever tried sitting down with Dillon and telling him how you feel" (p. 139) while Joe's father claims this method doesn't work. Who do you agree with? Is there ever a time when using your words isn't the answer?

31. From page 142-143:

*"I hate that kids think I'm dumb and that teachers don't like me. I hate being afraid to raise my hand even when I know the answer. I hate that I'm taller than everyone else in my class, including my teacher, and that the only real friend I have is a dog. Most of all I hate Dillon Samreen, because he never, ever lets me forget who I am."*

Joe finally tells his parents how he really feels. Do any of his feelings resonate with you? If you're comfortable with sharing, which ones? How might Joe's parents move forward with this new knowledge?

#### Chapter Twenty-Seven – Ravi (pp. 144-149)

32. Ravi declares that he quits Einstein Elementary. Have you ever been so frustrated that you want to give up? If yes, describe your example. Did you give up or push through? What should Ravi do?

#### Chapter 29 – Ravi (pp. 154-159)

33. On page 157, Ravi makes a soul-searching admission: "But now after three days at Albert Einstein Elementary School, I am no longer the same person I used to be." (page 157) Why does he feel this way? Have you ever experienced this kind of confusion before?

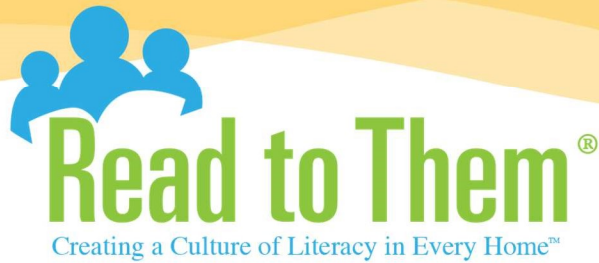
### **Friday: Pizza**

#### Chapter Thirty – Joe (pp. 163-167)

34. Did you expect that Joe's mom would quit her job? Have you ever made a grand gesture like this for someone you care about? How did they take it?

#### Chapter Thirty-Two – Joe (pp. 171-174)

35. Dillon's mom's license actually says, "Envy Me." What are your thoughts on this? Do you see it as a problem? Do you think Dillon's mother influences any of Dillon's behavior?



36. Joe and Ravi’s class is assigned to do a personal reflection assignment. If you had to pick an object that represents *you* what would it be? In one or two sentences, how would you describe that object’s significance to you?

Chapter Thirty-Three – Ravi (pp. 175-176)

37. Ravi saw Dillon take something off Joe’s desk. Though Joe never spoke up about seeing Dillon steal from Ravi, do you think Ravi will act differently?

Chapter Thirty-Five – Ravi (pp. 179-181)

38. Ravi says he feels a sense of redemption when he helps replace Joe’s mystery object M&M. What does he mean? Why does he feel this way? What is he atoning for? (Think: Ramaswami) And have you ever felt a sense of redemption?

Chapter Thirty-Seven – Ravi (pp. 185-189)

39. Another version of the Chapter Twenty-Nine quote: “I don’t know who I am anymore.” (page 188) Why does Ravi say this? Do you know ‘who’ he is? What would you tell him?
40. Ravi says that he misses his home in Bangalore. Have you ever had to move? What was the worst part about going somewhere new? What did you learn from the experience? Even if you haven’t moved before, do you understand the feeling of missing the way things used to be?

Chapter Thirty-Nine – Ravi (pp. 191-193)

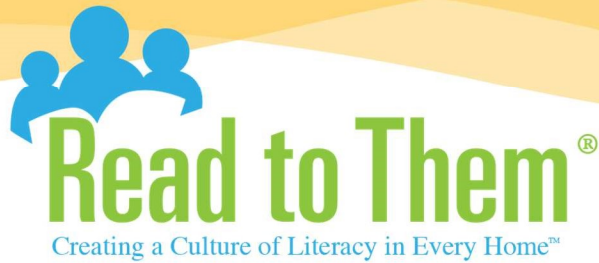
41. From page 193:

*As Dillon starts to climb down, he happens to glance over at Big Foot’s desk. When he sees the blue candy in the bowl, his eyes grow very wide and a look of pure shock comes over his face.*

What do you think is going through Dillon’s head at this moment? How will those thoughts translate into actions in the next chapter?

Chapter Forty – Joe (pp. 194-195)

42. Joe observes a “mushy moment” (p. 195) between Lucy and Ravi. Why do you think Lucy was so touched by Ravi knowing her name?



Chapter Forty-One – Ravi (pp. 196-198)

43. On his personal reflection card, Ravi writes: “Quitting is not an option.” (p. 197) How does this phrase reflect his growth throughout the book?

Chapter Forty-Three – Ravi (pp. 201-203)

44. Ravi tells the class about his family’s history working “to protect the tea pluckers from wild animals” (p. 201) What makes Ravi such a compelling storyteller? What details stood out to you? Describe them using the text.

Chapter Forty-Four – Joe (pp. 204-205)

45. Do you know what Joe is planning? What about the blue M&M is so inspiring to him?

Chapter Forty-Six – Joe (pp. 208-209)

46. On page 209, Joe thinks: “Zebras have to stick together?” Why? This isn’t the first time he’s thought this phrase to himself. How has its meaning developed through the story?

Chapter Forty-Seven – Ravi (pp. 210-212)

47. Ravi learns the meaning of “*There is more to me than meets the eye*” (p. 211) from Joe. Do you have someone who has taught you an important lesson? Who are they? What is the lesson? How has that lesson changed your life?

Chapter Forty-Nine – Ravi (pp. 215-216)

48. Ravi concludes that winning is sometimes “about sharing the light with someone who has been waiting in the shadows all along.” (page 215) Do you understand what this lesson means? Can you share a personal example of this?

End of the Book

49. *Save Me a Seat* takes place over the course of one week. Have you ever had a memorable week like Joe and Ravi? What happened? How were you changed by it?
50. By the close of *Save Me a Seat*, Joe and Ravi have overcome their differences and become friends. How are you and your friends different from one another? How are you the same? How do both your differences and your similarities come together to create a stronger friendship?