

Discussion Guide

- **Friendship:** What are the qualities of a good friend? How do you see those qualities in Duke, Charlie, Roxy, Tommy?

Duke and Charlie

In math class, Duke has an unexpected interaction with Charlie, which blooms into a sudden friendship (Page 33).

Have you ever made a connection with someone outside of your “clique” that was not anticipated?

What social constraints and expectations make this difficult?

Duke and Tommy

Initially it seemed unlikely that Duke and Tommy would become friends. What do you think was the moment where their friendship began?

Tommy and Roxy

Have you ever tried to rekindle a dissolved friendship? If not, is there one that you would?

Tending to relationships

On 164, Nan says that she believes that “taking time to tending to the roses is a sacrifice worth making for the beauty.”

How do you know what friendships/relationships are worth the energy that you put in? How did the characters figure this out?

On page 28, Tommy learns that Roxy has been pulling mice from the glue traps in an effort to free them. Do you see Roxy more like the mouse or the glue?

In what ways are Roxy’s glue traps and Nan’s pruning practices similar?
How are they different?

- **Romantic Relationships** Duke and Kristy’s relationship starts out under false pretenses, which Duke was willing to abide by because he thought he was making the “right decision” by supporting Kristy. Throughout the story, Duke realizes that he doesn’t want to keep hiding from people because he feels bad.
Have you ever been in a relationship that hurt you, but you stayed in it? Why?
Did you leave? How?
Why do you think Duke stayed for so long?
What was the “last straw” that prompted Duke to leave the relationship?
How long would you have stayed if you were Duke? What might have been the “final straw” for you?
- **Loyalty** Oftentimes in the novel, Tommy is Roxy’s “secret keeper”. In an effort to protect her, he supports decisions she is making even if they appear reckless to the reader.

When Roxy cuts herself carving pumpkins (Page 85), Tommy agrees to administer first aid instead of seeking help.

Did you ever cover for anyone even though you thought they needed help? Why or why not?

Out of growing concern, Pop's talked to Roxy's parents about Roxy's safety in their house, which resulted in the end of Roxy's friendship with Tommy. Pop's didn't tell Tommy about this discussion with them.

Who was Pop's trying to be loyal to at that moment? Do you agree or disagree and why?

- **Peer Pressure:** On page (Page 91), Duke steals Tommy's truck to gain entrance into the party.

Was there a time you went with the crowd, or did something to save face, and felt shame?

When was a time you stood up to peer pressure? Were there repercussions?

Eventually, Duke tries to fix the damage he causes to Tommy's truck (Page 120).

Have you ever tried right a wrong that you did in someone's life?

Thinking back, is there a wrong you did that you wish you had righted? How would you have done that?

- **Persistence** Tommy learns that Roxy is trying to save mice from the glue traps that her parents set (Page 28).

What is something you have been or are committed to that others may see as stupid, frivolous, or childish?

Why do you do it?

Did you give it up? Why or why not?

Is there someone you know who engages in what others think is stupid, frivolous, or childish. Why do you think they do it?

- **Siblings** Jayla is a supportive sister who Duke knows "has his back" even if, at times, he seems annoyed with her.

Do you have any siblings or close friends that offer you this relationship?

What do you think are the benefits of having this type of relationship?

- **Guidance** Coach requires that Duke attend tutoring with Tommy to better his chances for college (Page 2).

Who is an adult in your school career who pushed you to excel? How did you respond?

As a result, Duke helps Charlie by asking Tommy to tutor her as well.

Have you offered help to a peer?

Has a peer encouraged you to seek support or help? How did you respond?

Sometimes what we want for others is not a good fit for what they want or need.

What is the difference between what Tommy wanted for Roxy and what Roxy wanted for Roxy?

Have you ever been offered help that was not well received?

In hindsight, have you offered help to someone else that was not a good fit for them? How do you know?

- **Appearances** Duke and Charlie have a conversation about Tommy's lack of friends (Page 146). Duke believes Tommy is lonely and Charlie thinks he is content.
 - Do you think Tommy was lonely?
 - What is the difference between loneliness and popularity?
 - Can you be popular *and* feel lonely?
- **Influence**. A major theme in *Duke & the Lonely Boy* is how we indirectly impact people.
 - Has there been a time when someone has impacted your life and they did not know about it?
 - If you wrote a letter to them, what would it say to them?
 - Imagine if you received a letter from someone from your past about a way that your interactions with them made a difference. Who would you want it be from?
 - What would you want it to say?