

EDUCATORS' GUIDE



SPARK AND THE LEAGUE OF URSUS

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COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Spark and the League of Ursus is a heartwarming and epic tale of adventure and intrigue. This curriculum guide, with connections to the Common Core, includes an array of language arts activities, book discussions, vocabulary instruction, and more to accommodate the learning needs of most students in grades 4–7. Students are asked to be careful readers without jeopardizing the fun of reading.

Noted throughout the guide are correlations to the discussion questions and activities to specific Common Core Language Arts Standards. For more information on standards, visit the Common Core website: corestandards.org.

QUESTIONS TO SPARK DISCUSSION

1. What is the League of Ursus? What does the league do?
2. What is a *dusa*? Why is it important for a bear to have one?
3. List two traits of each of these characters from *Spark and the League of Ursus*: Spark, Sir Reginald, Loretta, Matthew, Zed, Rana, Lulu, Ozzie, and Jakmal.
4. In your own words, explain how Jakmal became a monster.
5. How does a teddy bear come to life? What is a teddy bear's "final light" and how do they reach it?
6. Why is Loretta the main target of Jackmal?
7. Why are movies so important to Matthew and Loretta?
8. After Sofia and Matthew go missing, why does Loretta insist on making the movie with Darcy, Jisha, and Claire?
9. Look back through *Spark and the League of Ursus* and find three words and their definitions that the author made up for his book.
10. How did Spark get her name? Do you think it fits her? Why or why not?
11. Choose two characters from *Spark and the League of Ursus*. Compare and contrast them by answering the following questions: How are they alike? How are they different? How do they act when confronted with a scary situation?
12. How do the structure of the book and its language add to the excitement of the story?
13. Explain how *Spark and the League of Ursus* contains all of the following types of story elements: adventure, dark, and heartwarming.
14. Which character from *Spark and the League of Ursus* do you think is the most heroic? Why? Use passages from the book to support your reasoning.
15. Sir Reginald always told Spark: "Things change. Things move on." How do these words ring true for both Sir Reginald and Spark?
16. According to *Spark and the League of Ursus*, why do children need teddy bears? Why do teddy bears need children?
17. What happened to Sir Reginald at the end of *Spark and the League of Ursus*? What do you think happens to him next? Use evidence from the book to back up your theory.

The Questions to Spark Discussion address the following Common Core State Standards for Reading Literature:

Reading Literature
Key Ideas and Details

Grade 4 – RL.4.1-3
Grade 5 – RL.5.1-3
Grade 6 – RL.6.1-3
Grade 7 – RL.7.1-3

Craft and Structure

Grade 4 – RL.4.4-6
Grade 5 – RL.5.4-6
Grade 6 – RL.6.4-6
Grade 7 – RL.7.6

Integration of
Knowledge and Ideas

Grade 4 – RL.4.9
Grade 5 – RL.5.9
Grade 6 – RL.6.9
Grade 7 – RL.7.9

Range of Reading Level
of Text Complexity

Grade 4 – RL.4.10
Grade 5 – RL.5.10
Grade 6 – RL.6.10
Grade 7 – RL.7.10

WARRIOR-WORTHY VOCABULARY

Review this list of vocabulary words found throughout *Spark and the League of Ursus*. First, ask students if they can guess each word's meaning by rereading it in the context of the story. Then have them use dictionaries to check themselves and/or define the word. Also have them use each word in a sentence of their own. Given the number of vocabulary words, you may choose to review them over a few class periods and assign some for homework. You can also use them for your weekly list, daily word study, or spelling exercises.

CHAPTER 1

fluttered	eternal	refuge
waddled	encased	bestowed
portal	pincer	nitpicked
sheared	hastily	dissolved
squinted	slither	grimaced

CHAPTER 2

despite	cluttered	whirring
hastily	clump	precariously
vaulted	stow	latched
stubby	venture	plummeted
jester	parody	
daze	ovation	

CHAPTER 3

characteristics	stammered	snooping
anonymous	sulked	latching
inference	cowardly	rafters

CHAPTER 4

overwhelmed	etching	crude
genetic	generations	jostled
mode	storyboards	

CHAPTER 5

musty	crevice	sacred
resented	deemed	particle
tempted	slab	boldly
conquering	blacksmith	descendant
mechanism	forged	bounded

CHAPTER 6

rumors	parallel	amid
perch	deadline	muffled
superstitious	swivel	revising

CHAPTER 7

sequel	horizon	habit
recalled	deliberately	poised
incident	backdrop	unfazed
wrangling	solitary	tentacles
neglected	preserved	sleuth
predicted	traits	congregation
intruded	scoliosis	shrewdness
doughy	eavesdropping	sarcasm
sleek	confiscated	sheathed

CHAPTER 8

eerie	slung	skittering
enmeshed	tension	platoon
slumped	threshold	

CHAPTER 9

prompting	barricade	desperation
charcoal	trance	
inevitable	linoleum	
rummaged	audacity	

CHAPTER 10

unspooled	peered	canyon
ruckus	socket	metallic
unclasped	dominance	unlatched
spool	recoiled	innards
scabbard	musty	dodged
cyclops	tinsel	pried
unwinding	engulfing	arrogant

CHAPTER 11

exposing	carve	lunged
grunted	chasm	cocked
brandished	unstable	void
crisscrossing	plastered	discarded

CHAPTER 12

stalked	fray	conjure
screech	retreated	reinforcements
sacrifice	ascended	blotting
pledged	allies	horde
fellowship	resembled	regrouped
snarled	alliance	

CHAPTER 13

treachery	fortress	tenderly
beacon	turrets	conceal
raggedy	labyrinth	shudder

CHAPTER 14

unsettled	methodically	reassuring
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CHAPTER 15

slinking	burrowed	groove
giddy	cloaked	groggily
hauled	twitch	aura
bewildered	mock	otherworldly
heap	sodden	
soot	oozed	

CHAPTER 16

bleach	corridors	recapped
pinging	orderlies	impersonating
strewn	intersection	grizzled
blur	dazed	ember

CHAPTER 17

clenched	wring	strategically
insurance	grille	dimension
gibberish	chamber	possessed
swollen	relentlessly	panicking
doddered	sedan	

CHAPTER 18

sledgehammer	glistened	dangle
rigging	caked	

CHAPTER 19

tinny	wielding	technicality
combing	distress	stubby
intervene	oath	
debate	defenseless	

CHAPTER 20

strategy	siege	rallied
rift	trenches	recover
arises	embedded	isolated
fortifying	scaling	mote
ramparts	artillery	

CHAPTER 21

loping	clatter	erupted
rappelled	trudged	

CHAPTER 22

marveled	fruitless	midway
ogled	doze	establishing
raspy	makeshift	foreground
cunning	sprouted	
bona fide	sprawling	

CHAPTER 23

indestructible	merely	earnestly
accommodate	bluff	giddy
documentaries	climactic	unsheathed
noble	vanquishes	

CHAPTER 24

ritual	trespassed	aimlessly
reined	brandished	limp
fetched	diversion	revelation
coincidence	scrunched	jumbled
fiddled	snout	rippled
filtered	slumped	stray

CHAPTER 25

distinct	hovered	skidding
wafted	bloodcurdling	retrieved
mirage	agape	asphalt
unison	caromed	shimmied
clanking	unfazed	

CHAPTER 26

zigzagged	chain mail	lashed
wasteland	pierced	projection
fuse	hacking	frothing
thudding	viper	porcelain

CHAPTER 27

vaulted	abomination	diagonally
ominous	agony	slithered
yanked	avalanche	vertical

CHAPTER 28

ricocheted	hallucinating	delirious
pinpoint	coiled	toppled
descend	crater	suspended
tremor	peered	alert
mortar	dormant	eased
siren	wick	
gaped	arcing	

CHAPTER 29

N/A

CHAPTER 30

jimmied	gelled	tense
peppered	paced	captive
convoy	mumbling	

CHAPTER 31

blared	trickled	creases
speculated	spectators	milled
dilapidated	hypnotized	reintroducing
wrought iron	dusk	
alleged	oblivious	

CHAPTER 32

famished	dispersed	lingered
curry	staggered	popped

CHAPTER 33

clunked	asphalt	wistful
gazed	whimpered	slung
intently	carted	

After your class is familiar with the vocabulary list, invite them to choose 20–25 words to use for writing their own adventure story or movie script starring Spark.

The Warrior-Worthy Vocabulary lists address the following Common Core State Standards for Language:

Conventions of Standard English

Grade 4 – L.4.1-2
Grade 5 – L.5.1-2
Grade 6 – L.6.1-2
Grade 7 – L.7.1-2

Knowledge of Language

Grade 4 – L.4.3
Grade 5 – L.5.3
Grade 6 – L.6.3
Grade 7 – L.7.3

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Grade 4 – L.4.4-6
Grade 5 – L.5.4-6
Grade 6 – L.6.4-6
Grade 7 – L.7.4-6

LEAGUE OF URSUS

APPROVED LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITIES

MOVIE MAGIC

Matthew and Loretta's love of filmmaking is a prevalent theme throughout *Spark and the League of Ursus*. Ask students to pick one of the real movies mentioned in the book, watch it, and then write a review from the point of view of one of the characters from the book. Encourage them to study the way the character they chose speaks and acts in order to make their reviews sound authentic. As a class, talk about some of the elements a movie review should include: cast information, plot synopsis, and a critique of the movie. Invite students to share their reviews with the class.

CUDDLY ADVENTURES

Spark is a teddy bear sworn to protect her owner. Ask your students to write an adventure story featuring one of their own teddy bears or favorite childhood toys. Encourage them to think like the author of *Spark and the League of Ursus* by incorporating (not plagiarizing) their favorite elements from his book into their narratives. Invite students to read their stories to the class.

NEWS SPARK

Many of the events that happen in Loretta and Matthew's life during *Spark and the League of Ursus* are newsworthy. Ask students to choose one event and write a newspaper article about it. Encourage them to act like real reporters, asking and answering who, what, where, when, and why questions. Have them write catchy headlines and combine facts from the book with quotes they believe the characters would say to a reporter. Invite students to share their articles with the class.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

Not only does the plot of *Spark and the League of Ursus* read like a movie, it would make a great movie as well! Have your students play the role of casting director for a movie based on the book. Ask them to think of actors and actresses to portray each character or character's voice in the movie version. Have them list all of the characters from the book, write a brief description of them, name who they'd cast, and explain why. After casting is complete have them create a movie poster advertising the film.

LM² LIVE!

Loretta and Matthew have a YouTube channel called "Loretta and Matthew Love Movies," or LM² for short. Ask your students to create a YouTube video for LM². Have them reread Chapter 4 of *Spark and the League of Ursus* to jog their memories of the type of content Loretta and Matthew usually post. Then ask students to outline, write, and film a video fit for LM². Encourage creativity by asking students to imagine how Matthew and Loretta would feel about their favorite movie or the events in *Spark and the League of Ursus*. Invite students to share their videos with the class.

NIGHTMARISH NOTIONS

Like all good teddy bears, Spark protects her dusa from the things that go bump in the night. Explain that most dark stories have roots in spooky folktales, then have your students choose a scary story or urban legend and research its origins. Direct them to use the internet to research the monsters featured in the story, the story's elements, and its evolution. Invite them to present their findings to the class.

LEAGUE LOVE

In order to defeat Jakmal, Spark called upon her fellow teddy bears help her. However, she also enlisted the help of some other toys, such as Rana and Zed to join the juro. Ask your students to design a toy they think would be an asset to Spark’s juro. Have them draw the toy and write a bio describing the ways it would help in battling the monster. Ask students to share their creations with the class.

DARING DIORAMAS

Have your students re-create a scene from *Spark and the League of Ursus* as a diorama. Ask them to use their own (or their siblings’) toys as the characters from the book to depict their favorite part of the story. Instruct them to write a paragraph explaining what’s happening in the scene they chose and why it’s important to the plot; they should list the main characters somewhere. Have students be prepared to present the project to the class.

The League of Ursus Approved Language Arts Activities address the following Common Core State Standards:

Writing:

Text Types and Purposes

- Grade 4 – W.4.1-3e
- Grade 5 – W.5.1-3e
- Grade 6 – W.6.1-3.e
- Grade 7 – W.7.1-1c, 2-2d, 3-3e

Production and Distribution of Writing

- Grade 4 – W.4.4-6
- Grade 5 – W.5.4-6
- Grade 6 – W.6.4-5
- Grade 7 – W.7.4-6

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- Grade 4 – W.4.7-9b
- Grade 5 – W.5.7-9b
- Grade 6 – W.6.7-9
- Grade 7 – W.7.7-9a

Speaking and Listening Comprehension and Collaboration

- Grade 4 – SL.4.1-2
- Grade 5 – SL.5.1-1d
- Grade 6 – SL.6.1-2
- Grade 7 – SL.7.1

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- Grade 4 – SL.4.4-6
- Grade 5 – SL.5.4-5
- Grade 6 – SL.6.4-5
- Grade 7 – SL.7.4-5

ABOUT THE BOOK



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Ages 9 to 12 | Grades 4 to 7

Toy Story meets *Stranger Things* in this epic tale of warrior teddy bears and the children they protect.

Spark is not your average teddy bear. She's soft and cuddly, sure, but she's also a fierce warrior. At night she fulfills her sacred duty: to protect the household from monsters. But Spark's owner Loretta is growing up and thinks she doesn't need her old teddy anymore.

When a monster unlike any other descends on the quiet home, everything changes. Children are going missing, and the monster wants Loretta next. Only Spark can stop it. To do so, she must call upon the ancient League of Ursus—a secret alliance of teddy bears who are pledged to protect their human friends. Together with an Amazon-princess doll and a timid sock monkey, the bears are all that stand between our world and the one that lies beneath. This will be a heroic chapter in the history of the League . . . if the bears live to tell the tale.



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ROBERT REPINO is the author of *Mort(e)*, *Culdesac*, and *D'Arc*, which make up the critically acclaimed War with No Name series (Soho Press). Robert holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Emerson College and teaches at the Gotham Writers' Workshop. By day, he's an editor at Oxford University Press.