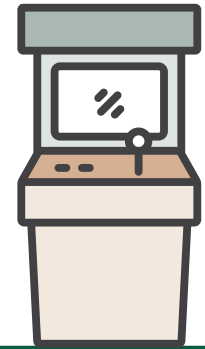


THE ONE AND ONLY IVAN: NOVEL DISCUSSION GUIDE #1



Encourage critical thinking and support your students' literacy development by asking questions during reading. Here are some questions you can ask your readers to engage them in a discussion. **Sample answers**

Chapters: hello - the exit 8 big top mall and video arcade

Comprehension

- ✦ **Who is Ivan?**
Ivan is a 400-pound silverback gorilla who lives in captivity. He is the narrator of the story and tells about his solitary existence at a circus-themed mall. People think that he is an angry and fierce gorilla, but he does not show his anger to the visitors. Instead, he is easygoing, thoughtful, and artistic.
- ✦ **Where does Ivan live?**
Ivan lives at the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade. He lives there because he is "too much gorilla and not enough human" to continue living at Mack's house.
- ✦ **Describe Ivan's domain.**
Ivan's domain is made of thick glass, rusty metal, and cement. Three of the walls are glass, and there is a jungle scene painted on one of the domain walls.
- ✦ **Who is Mack?**
Mack is Ivan's owner and the boss at Big Top Mall. He kept Ivan in his home when Ivan was a baby but put him in the mall when he got too big. Because the mall is not making much money, Mack is mean and impatient.
- ✦ **Who are Ivan's dearest friends?**
Ivan's dearest friends are Stella, who is an elephant, and Bob, who is a dog.
- ✦ **What is wrong with the picture of Ivan on the billboard for Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade?**
The billboard has a drawing of an angry gorilla with fierce eyes and messy hair. The image is meant to represent Ivan, but Ivan is not an angry animal.

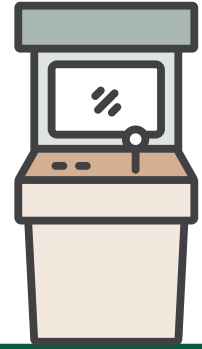
Analysis

- ✦ **What does Ivan mean when he says that "humans waste words"?**
When Ivan says that "humans waste words," he means that humans speak too much and make a lot of noise, saying things of little importance.
- ✦ **How is Ivan's home different from wild gorillas' homes?**
A wild gorilla lives in a jungle, usually with its family or troop, and eats fruit, leaves, and plants, but Ivan lives in a cage where humans are able to watch his every move. Ivan is the only gorilla at the Big Top Mall, and he's on display for humans' entertainment.
- ✦ **Why does Mack decide to show Ivan as angry and fierce on the sign for the Big Top Mall?**
Mack portrays Ivan as an angry and fierce gorilla on the billboard because he wants to attract visitors to come to see Ivan. When visitors come to see Ivan, they bring their business, which makes Mack money.

Personal Connection

- ✦ **Some people think all gorillas are angry, but Ivan knows that's not true. How would you feel if others believed something about you that you knew wasn't true? How would you handle that situation?**
Student answers will vary.

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Chapters: the littlest big top on earth - the nature show

Comprehension

- ✦ What are some things Ivan has in his domain?
In the domain, Ivan has a tire swing, a baseball, a tiny plastic pool filled with dirty water, an old TV, his stuffed toy gorilla, and a few art supplies.
- ✦ Describe Ivan's stuffed toy. Where did he get it and what did he name it?
Julia gave Ivan the stuffed toy gorilla that he sleeps with every night. The gorilla has empty eyes and floppy limbs. Ivan calls the toy gorilla Not-Tag. He shares that his twin sister's name was Tag.
- ✦ How did Ivan learn to draw?
Julia gave Ivan his first crayon and piece of paper, and he knew what to do with it because he'd watched Julia draw.
- ✦ Why does Ivan enjoy drawing?
Ivan enjoys drawing because he never gets bored with it. When he draws, he only focuses on drawing, and he doesn't worry about where he is or what has happened in the past or will happen in the future.
- ✦ Why does Mack want Ivan to draw?
When Mack realizes that people will pay for a drawing made by a gorilla, he encourages Ivan to draw. He sells Ivan's art at the gift shop.
- ✦ How long has Ivan been at the mall?
Ivan has been at the mall for nine thousand eight hundred and fifty-five days, which is 27 years.

Analysis

- ✦ Why do you think Ivan states that he learned to not get his hopes up?
Ivan has lived in his domain for so long without much change in his life. Living in a cage without his family or troop, he probably feels lonely and helpless. If he feels hope that his life could be different, he might feel more upset about his life. He tries to focus on "what is, not what could be."
- ✦ Why do humans want to buy Ivan's art even when they don't recognize what he drew?
Humans probably want to buy Ivan's art because it's rare that a gorilla creates art. Even though they don't recognize what he drew, they still think it's special to have art made by a gorilla.
- ✦ What is the importance of the television in Ivan's cage?
As he lives such a lonely and quiet life in a cage, Ivan's TV is his window to the world. Prior to seeing the nature show on TV, Ivan believed he was the last gorilla on earth, which made him sad. When he saw a gorilla on the nature show, he began thinking about life and the world beyond his domain.

Personal Connection

- ✦ Ivan says that even though he draws the same things over and over again, he never gets bored with his art. What is an activity you never get bored with? Explain why you feel this way.
Student answers will vary.

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Encourage critical thinking and support your students' literacy development by asking questions during reading. Here are some questions you can ask your readers to engage them in a discussion. **Sample answers**

Chapters: stella - mack

Comprehension

- ✦ Who is Stella? Describe her history and personality.
Stella is older than Ivan, and she brings wisdom to the Big Top Mall as she remembers every detail of her past. She shares stories of her childhood and her experience performing in a traveling circus. Stella has scars on her legs from chains, and she has a lingering injury from her time in the circus.
- ✦ Why is Mack in a bad mood?
Mack is in a bad mood because there have been no visitors in two days and the Big Top Mall is losing money.
- ✦ Who is Bob? Describe his history and personality.
Bob, a tiny, nut-colored, big-eared stray dog, was tossed out of a truck onto the freeway with his three brothers and two sisters, but he's the only one who survived. Soon after, he found a spot in Ivan's domain. Bob is so speedy and sneaky that mall workers are unable to catch him. He's not part of the Big Top Mall circus. Bob eats food from the trash and off the ground.
- ✦ Why does Ivan draw a banana?
Mack gives Ivan a yellow crayon, so Ivan tries to think of something to draw that is yellow. Ivan has spent so much of his life in his domain that he can only think of what is right in front of him—a banana.
- ✦ Describe Julia. Why does Ivan think Julia likes to sit by his domain?
Julia sits by Ivan's domain while her father, George, cleans the mall each night. Julia has black hair and a big smile, and she is kind to the animals. Though Julia is supposed to be doing her homework, she sometimes falls asleep or reads her books. Mostly, she draws pictures and talks about her day. Ivan thinks that Julia likes to sit by his domain because they both like to draw.

Analysis

- ✦ What does Stella mean when she states that "old age is a powerful disguise"?
Stella means that humans think she is too old to cause trouble.
- ✦ What is Ivan's plan to get more visitors? Why won't his plan work?
Ivan's plan is to eat more since he thinks humans enjoy watching him eat. This plan won't work because increasing the amount of food costs money and Mack's main concern is losing money.
- ✦ Why do you think Ivan always looks sad in Julia's drawings?
Julia recognizes that Ivan is not an angry animal like the billboard shows him to be. Julia spends a lot of time with Ivan and probably understands that he is lonely and sad in his domain.

Personal Connection

- ✦ Ivan respects Stella and thinks of her as a special friend. Who is a special person in your life? What are they like, and what makes them special?
Student answers will vary.

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Chapters: not sleepy - lucky

Comprehension

- ✦ What does Stella do when she can't sleep?
Stella tries to remember a good day when she can't sleep.
- ✦ Why does Stella say that "memories are precious"?
Stella says that memories are precious because they help tell us who we are.
- ✦ Who has taken care of Ivan the longest?
Mack has taken care of Ivan the longest.
- ✦ How do Ivan and his friends know a new animal is coming?
Ivan and his friends pay attention to the humans and sense that change is coming. They listen, watch, and sniff the air.
- ✦ How does Stella feel about the possibility of a baby elephant coming to the mall?
Stella is sad that the new animal will be a baby elephant. She can hear a baby elephant crying for her mother, and she is worried about the life this new baby elephant will have in captivity at the mall.
- ✦ How does Stella describe a zoo?
Stella describes a good zoo as a large domain and a wild cage. She says it's a safe place with room to roam and humans who don't hurt animals. She adds that a good zoo is how humans make amends.
- ✦ Who is Jambo?
Jambo is a silverback living in a wild cage at a zoo. When a young boy lost his balance and fell into the cage, Jambo examined the boy and stroked the child gently. He stood to watch over the boy until he was rescued.

Analysis

- ✦ Describe the importance of memories in your life, community, and the world.
Student answers will vary, but may include references to learning from the past and other people's experiences in both the community and the world.
- ✦ How did the people react when the child fell into Jambo's enclosure? Why did they react that way?
When a young boy fell into his cage, the humans yelled for the child to stay still. The humans were scared and felt certain that Jambo was going to hurt the boy. They probably believed that all gorillas are angry and fierce.
- ✦ Why is Ivan surprised by the way people reacted to Jambo?
Ivan is surprised because he understands that silverbacks are not inherently angry. He knows that they protect others when necessary, which is what Jambo did for the little boy.

Personal Connection

- ✦ How do you feel when you know something in your life is about to change? Explain.
Student answers will vary.