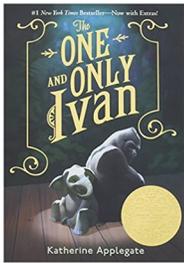


Books by the Stack



The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate

Ivan is an easygoing gorilla. Living at the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade, he has grown accustomed to humans watching him through the glass walls of his domain. He rarely misses his life in the jungle. In fact, he hardly ever thinks about it at all. Instead, Ivan thinks about TV shows he's seen and about his friends Stella, an elderly elephant, and Bob, a stray dog. But mostly Ivan thinks about art and how to capture the taste of a mango or the sound of leaves with color and a well-placed line. Then he meets Ruby, a baby elephant taken from her family, and she makes Ivan see their home—and his own art—through new eyes. When Ruby arrives, change comes with her, and it's up to Ivan to make it a change for the better.

Why you'll like it: Friendship, hope, art, kindness

About the Author: Katherine Applegate was born in Michigan on July 19, 1956. She writes science fiction, young adult romances, and pop-up books. She is the author of the Making Waves, Making Out, and Roscoe Riley Rules series. She writes the Animorphs, Everworld, and Remnants series under the pen name K. A. Applegate. She also writes under the pen names of C. Archer, Catherine Kendall and Elizabeth Benning.

Questions for Discussion

1. What does Ivan mean when he says, “In my size humans see a test of themselves” (p. 4), and “I am too much gorilla and not enough human” (p. 7)? Why does the sign for the Big Top Mall show Ivan as angry and fierce? Why doesn't Ivan express any anger in the beginning of the story?
2. What are the characteristics of Stella and Bob that make Ivan call them his best friends? Why is each of them important to Ivan? What do Ivan and Stella have in common?
3. What does Stella mean when she says, “Old age is a powerful disguise” (p. 31)?
4. Why is Julia different from all the other children who come to see Ivan's shows? Why do people pay for Ivan's drawings if they don't recognize what he has drawn?
5. What is the importance of television in Ivan's cage? What does he learn from watching the television? What would you say is the most important thing television has taught Ivan? What has it taught you?
6. Why is Bob so independent? What makes him trust Ivan enough to sleep on Ivan's stomach?
7. What is Ivan's initial reaction to the arrival of Ruby? How does her arrival affect all the other animals at the mall?
8. Why does Ivan promise Stella that he will take care of Ruby when he knows how hard it will be to keep that promise?
9. What is the turning point in the story? When does Ivan start to believe that he will be able to help Ruby, and perhaps himself as well?

