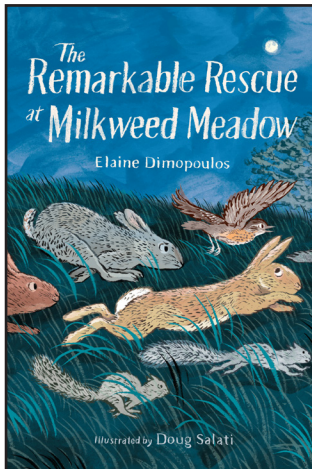


# The Remarkable Rescue at Milkweed Meadow

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



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### About the Book

Butternut lives in the burrows of Milkweed Meadow with her nine rabbit brothers and sisters. Together they practice strategies for survival and tell stories. With disastrous scenarios blooming in her mind, Butternut embraces the lesson of her families' stories: stick to your own rabbit-kind. But Butternut begins to question what she has been taught after befriendng an irrepressible robin and a wounded deer.

When the three friends discover other animals in crisis, Butternut must decide whether she can help, rally her friends and family, and be as brave as the heroes in the stories she tells.

### About the Author

Elaine Dimopoulos is the author of *Turn the Tide* and *Material Girls*. She served as the Associates of the Boston Public Library Writer-in-Residence and teaches writing for children in the Boston area. Elaine lives in Belmont, MA. [www.elainedimopoulos.com](http://www.elainedimopoulos.com)



### About the Illustrator

Doug Salati is the illustrator of several books for children, including *Pip and Zip* and *Lawrence in the Fall*. He is also the author and illustrator of the picture book *Hot Dog*. [www.dougsalati.com](http://www.dougsalati.com)

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Use these questions to kick off classroom discussion, guide pre-thinking and post-reading responses, or inspire a writing assignment!

### About Storytelling

- Why do you think *The Remarkable Rescue at Milkweed Meadow* begins with the story about Blue and the robin's egg? What do you learn about the setting from this story? What tone does this set for the rest of the book?
- Occasionally the narrator speaks in second person. Who is she talking to? How do you know?
- Why is storytelling so important to Butternut's family? What are some of the things Butternut learns about storytelling from her mother and grandmother?
- What are Butternut and her family doing when they first hear the coyote howl? Why does it remind them of their grandmother's "unspeakable story"? How does this "unspeakable story" have so much power in Butternut's family when her grandmother never actually tells it?
- In chapter eight, Butternut tells a story about a rabbit who becomes a constellation. Are you familiar with other origin stories about constellations? (For example, the Greek story of Orion and Scorpio, the story in the Mahabharata about the origin of the Big Dipper and the Pleiades, or the Navajo story of Coyote tossing the stars.) Does Butternut's story remind you of other myths, legends, or traditional stories you have heard? Why do you think so many cultures tell stories about the stars?
- Discuss Kale's story about the rabbit that fell down a well on page 88. What would you say is the lesson of this story? Why does it make Butternut feel better? Do you think Butternut would have learned something different from the story if she heard it in a different context?
- What do Butternut's mother and grandmother think of her story about the three mice and the quartz stone? What do you think of it?
- At Butternut's road test, she thinks of a story her grandmother tells about a tornado that picks up a female human and takes her away to another world. Do you know what story this is referencing? Have you ever wished you could go to Oz, or Narnia, or some other world?
- Discuss the ending. How does this story's structure circle back on itself? Why do you think the human girl can hear Butternut's voice?
- Think up a story as if you were one of Butternut's siblings. What message or messages do you want to convey with your story? What creatures appear in it?

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### About Friendship & Family

- What is Buttercup's family life like? How are her relationships with her siblings Kale and Goosegrass?
- How has Grandmother Sage's history with humans affected her behavior and the way she raises her children and grandchildren? What are the three rules she teaches?
- What is the significance of milkweed in Grandmother Sage's worldview? Does hearing this part of the story change what you think of the title of this book?
- Why does Butternut go on a one-rabbit recovery mission in chapter five? How is this related to her friendship with Piper?
- Why does Piper want to find the fawn? Do you agree with his declaration that "All creatures crave company!" (pg. 68)
- In chapter twelve, Butternut has a small crisis when Piper calls her family's safety rules "silly." Do you agree with Piper that taking a risk is sometimes worth it?
- How are Winsome's mother and Butternut's mother similar? How are they different? Why do you think they have such disparaging attitudes toward the other species in Milkweed Meadow?
- What does Butternut mean by her "brambles"? Have you ever felt similarly? How does her attitude towards her own fears and anxieties change over the course of the book?
- Discuss Kale and Butternut's argument in chapter sixteen. Does Kale have a good point about the risks Butternut is taking? Do you agree with Butternut that "Helping a creature is a good reason to take a risk"? (pg. 110)
- How does Piper's trick with the peanuts work on Blue? Have you ever made friends with someone who was unfriendly at first? What strategies did you use?
- Why does Winsome decide to leave Milkweed Meadow? What do you think of her choice to leave? How does the rescue plan change without Winsome's help?
- When Butternut asks her family for help, Grandmother Sage finally tells her "unspeakable story." What do you think of it? How does Butternut react? Did the story have more power when it was spoken or unspoken? Why does Butternut's mother decide to help?
- What do you think of Blue's apology to Mother Firstfledge? What do you think of how she accepts it? What about her advice for finding a mate ("Be kind. Don't boast. Listen more than you talk.")? Do you agree with her exclamation that it's "simple" to make a friend or find a partner?

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### About the Meadow Community

- Why does Buttercup’s mother say that Blue has no dignity? What do you think of the older rabbits’ attitudes toward the other animals in Milkweed Meadow?
- How does the robin naming system work? What does this tell you about the robins and what they value?
- What is the cause of the three-species standoff in chapter nine? Discuss Butternut’s observation “That it was hard to watch the deer suffer and do nothing, even if your elders said that doing nothing was the right thing to do.” (pg. 65) Why does the human girl’s mother tell her not to help the fawn? Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to help and a parent or authority figure told you not to?
- Does Winsome seem more upset about the pain of her injury or about how it makes her leg look? Why do you think Winsome is so upset by the prospect of being “ugly”?
- What do we learn about Blue at the end of chapter sixteen? What do you think of Piper’s idea to keep telling stories where Blue can hear? Do you think Blue is redeemable?
- Discuss Butternut’s description of the dead coyote. How does the author use sensory details to create an impactful description of this moment? Why do you think she doesn’t just say outright that there was a dead coyote in the road?
- How does Butternut justify rescuing the coyote pups to herself? Do you agree with her reasoning? Can you think of examples where someone or something might seem threatening in one context but deserving of help in another?
- How do all the creatures in Milkweed Meadow contribute to the rescue? Why do you think they agree to help? What is Blue’s surprising contribution?