

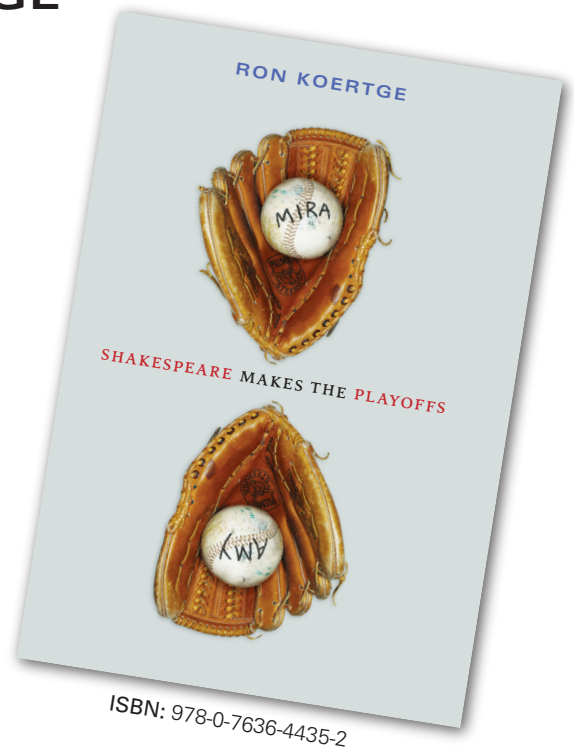
SHAKESPEARE MAKES THE PLAYOFFS

RON KOERTGE

“I’m basically a good kid. But imperfect enough to be interesting.”

ABOUT THE BOOK

In this much-anticipated sequel to *Shakespeare Bats Cleanup*, fourteen-year-old Kevin Boland has it pretty good. He’s got a cute girlfriend named Mira, his baseball team is headed to the playoffs, and he seems to have a real knack for writing poetry. So why isn’t he happy? Maybe it’s because his cute girlfriend can’t tell a sonnet from a sestina and doesn’t show up to any of his games. So when Kevin meets fellow poet Amy at an open mike reading, it’s love at first refrain. But Amy has a boyfriend. And Kevin has Mira. What’s a budding poet to do?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. After reading the first five poems, list everything you know and everything you suspect you know about the main character, Kevin Boland. Do you think the poetry format makes it easier or harder for the reader to get to know Kevin? Why?
2. How does Kevin compare poetry to a bully in “Poetry 101” (page 10)? Can you find any “perfect” mistakes in the poems in this book too?
3. Why is Kevin’s glove really important to him? Is there any object that is very important to you? Why?
4. Kevin’s parody of Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha* (page 18) is set in his school. Is that school anything like yours?
5. How do Kevin and his dad deal with their grief? How does Kevin personify grief in the poem “I Know What Dad’s Going Through” (page 25)?
6. Who is Mr. B? Would you like to be in his class or not? Why? What does he teach Kevin about poetry?
7. Write your own nightmare poem inspired by “Nightmares About Different Kinds of Gals” (page 46). How does Kevin’s poem reveal what he thinks about his dad’s dating again? What would be the hardest part of that for you?
8. Kevin admits, “I take refuge in poetry” (page 51). What or who gives you refuge?



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9. Describe Kevin's relationship with Mira. Is it enviable? What makes a good relationship?
10. Explain how Kevin's friendship with Amy develops. How is it different from his relationship with Mira?
11. Kevin loves baseball and poetry. Which one gives him more confidence? Why?
12. What does Amy's haiku reveal about her in only seventeen syllables? Can you write one just as revealing?
13. How do Amy and Kevin's poems go public? Would you put yourself out there at a reading or on a website? Why or why not?
14. How does Kevin plan to use "hard work, cold water, and no girls" (page 119) to advance his career? How much time would you have if you could give up thoughts of romance?
15. Amy seems to enjoy dating the handsome and popular Trevor. What would be difficult about being with someone like him?
16. What poetic forms are discussed in the novel? Which one do you think is the most difficult? The most interesting? Which of all the poems that Kevin and Amy write is your favorite? Why?
17. Creating and sharing poetry with Amy seems more intimate than the things Kevin shares with Mira. What can poetry reveal that other things cannot?
18. Who is Morton Gluck? What is the best way to deal with a bully like him? There are bullies in every school. How can schools help students deal with them?
19. Do you think Kevin should have revealed to Mira that he was going to the monster movies with Amy? Would it be worse for Mira to find out or for Kevin to tell her?
20. In the end, do you think Kevin is better off? Why does Amy, at first, want to remain friends? Is it a valid concern? Predict what you think will happen between them.

“If anyone asks me the secret to my success, I’ll tell them:
hard work, cold water, and no girls.”

ABOUT RON KOERTGE

Ron Koertge is the author of many acclaimed novels for young adults, including *Stoner & Spaz* and *Strays*, both winners of the PEN Literary Award. A faculty member for more than thirty-five years at Pasadena City College, where he taught everything from Shakespeare to remedial writing, Ron Koertge also writes poetry for adults and currently teaches at Hamline University in the MFA in Writing for Children Program. He lives in South Pasadena, California.

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