Based on

How to Eat Fried Worms
By Thomas Rockwell

About the Book:
Billy is always taking on any dare or bet that comes his way. He’s spent the night in an igloo and paraded down Main Street in 95 degree heat in a raccoon coat and ski boots. So when his friend Alan challenges him to eat 15 worms in 15 days, all bets are on. And to make it all worthwhile, the wager is as high as $50! Billy just has to win so he can buy a coveted mini-bike, and Alan just can’t let himself lose because his Dad will kill him if he has to hand over $50 from his hard-earned savings. With the help of their friends, Tom and Joe, the 15 days prove to be funny, as well as gross. As the days wind down and the end of the bet approaches, things really start to get out of hand. Alan will go to any length to keep his $50.

Set the Stage:
Use the following to get the students ready to read:

• Ask students: If someone dared you to eat a worm, would you do it? What if they made an actual bet? Would you do it then? Remember to keep it realistic. Don’t say you’d bet $1 million if you can’t pay up!

Now, if you took the bet, how would you eat a worm? Would you boil it, fry it, freeze it, or grill it? These are the things that come up in the book How to Eat Fried Worms.

Review:
After reading the book, discuss the following:

• How does the bet start? Who makes the bet and why?
• What is Billy going to do with $50?
• Joe and Tom act as Alan and Billy’s “seconds.” What does that mean?
• Once Billy took a dare to sleep overnight in an igloo. How did he accomplish this without freezing?
• What is another name for an earthworm? What does Billy think the difference is between the two names?
• Give one way you think Alan and Joe might have cheated.
• What is a cistern and why was Billy’s father so upset when he found Billy near it?
Student Activity (found on the last page of this PDF):
Students are asked to write about/discuss the outcome of each attempt Alan and Joe made to keep Billy from winning. As a bonus, they can talk about which attempts they thought were fair and which of them might be unfair or cheating.

Related Activities:
To extend students’ enjoyment of the book, try these:

• Worm à la Mud: When Billy’s parents get involved, they go all out with recipe ideas. Mr. Forrester looks through Mastering the Art of French Cooking, while Mrs. Forrester creates ‘Whizbang Worm Delight.’ Have the students write up their own worm recipes. Remind them that in the back of the book there are more tame recipes that they can actually create using the suggested gummy worms or string cheese.
• Jumping to Rap: Tom comes up with some fun poetry to try to keep Billy on track and not think about worms. He has Billy focus on the thought of eating fish by chanting:

| Trout, salmon, flounder, perch | Shark, haddock, sucker, eel |
| I’ll ride my mini-bike into church. | I’ll race my father in his automobile. |
| Dace, tuna, haddock, trout | Eel, flounder, bluegill, shark |
| Wait’ll you hear the minister shout. | We’ll race all day ‘til after dark. |

They are almost like jump-rope chants or even rap lyrics. Have the students create their own using a chosen theme (anything from food to other animals).

• In Your Dreams: In chapter 14, the author goes into a dream sequence. This is designed to help the reader understand the level of fear the character is harboring without leaving the comforts of believability. Anything can happen in a dream.

Have the students write down a strange exaggerated dream they might have had recently or have them create a daydream. Help them get started with examples such as:

- On my way to school…
- When my friends and I were playing on the playground…
- When my parents took me shopping…
- I was reading a book when all of a sudden…
- When I answered the phone…
All Bets Are On
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When Alan realizes that Billy could actually eat 15 worms, he knows he has to step in with a plan to change the outcome. He and Joe try several attempts that should cause Billy to lose the bet, but things seem to backfire and all bets are on.

Directions: What was the outcome of each of the following attempts made by Alan and Joe? Write your answers on the lines provided.

1. The first thing Alan and Joe tried was to create doubt and suspicion in Billy’s mind by pretending that their parents feared worms were harmful to your health.

2. They tried to gross Billy out with a giant worm that was actually two worms glued together wrapped in cornmeal.

3. They told Billy’s mother about the bet.

4. They filled Billy with snacks and soda at Shea Stadium to make him drowsy so he would sleep past the deadline.

5. Alan created a fake worm out of beans and planned to tell Billy after the day was over and too late to eat a real worm.

6. They presented a phony letter from the family doctor warning against eating worms.

7. The final desperate attempt was when they locked Billy up in the shed.

Bonus: How much of this was fair and how much of this was cheating? Mark each attempt as fair or unfair and explain why.