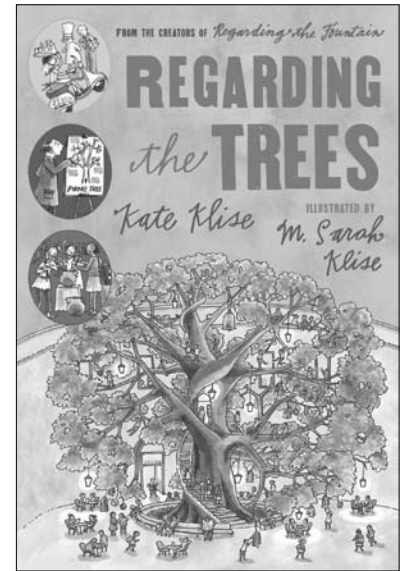
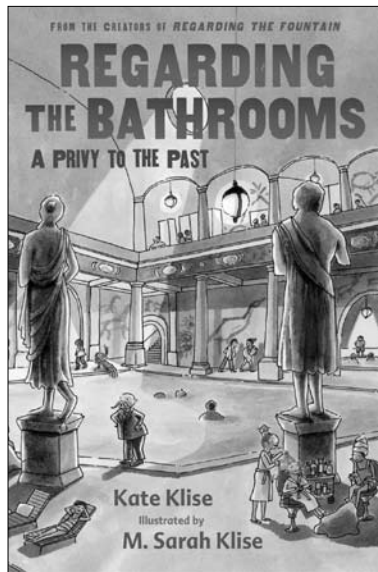


***“A clever, unconventional reading experience.”***  
—School Library Journal

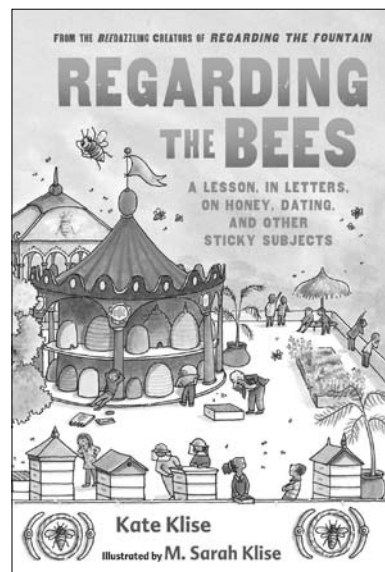
# REGARDING THE... SERIES DISCUSSION GUIDE



***“Filled with humor and whimsical characters . . . Witty wordplay abounds.”***—Booklist



***“[A] clever, funny romp. A must for fans of the series.”***  
—School Library Journal



***“The Klises ultimately dish out just desserts all round, along with sweet dollops of bee lore and life coaching.”***  
—Kirkus Reviews

## ABOUT THE SERIES

Set at Geyer Creek Middle School, the action of this acclaimed five-book series is told in letters, newspaper articles, and occasionally BEAN-mails. Sisters Kate and Sarah Klise have created a hilarious, touching, and thoroughly original series regarding fountains, sinks, trees, bathrooms, and bees.

## BEFORE READING

- Ask your class what structural changes it would like to see at its school. For example, would the students like a new gym or an outdoor cafeteria or more water fountains? Make a list of these suggested changes.
- As a class, compile a list of all the modes of communication the students have used in the past year. (Make sure electronic modes such as text messages and e-mails are included.) How many of these modes of communication were written? What are some modes of communication that are rarely used anymore? (Examples may include smoke signals and telegrams.)
- Define what an idiom is. Phrases such as “a fork in the road” and “raining cats and dogs” do not actually refer to silverware in the street and animals falling from the sky. Have students write down idioms that are used in the books of the *Regarding the . . .* series. Some idioms may be familiar to them, and some may need further thought and analysis to reveal the meaning.

## ACTIVITIES WHILE READING BOOKS IN THE SERIES

- Read and discuss the Klises’ disclaimer at the bottom of the copyright page of each book. Are the disclaimers funny? Why?
- Most of the students and adults portrayed in these books use personalized stationery for their correspondence to one another. Instruct each student to design his or her own personalized stationery. The design should express each student’s personality or interests and include illustrations in addition to text.
- Many of the character names in the series involve wordplay. Some examples are Sharla Tan (charlatan), Polly Nader (pollinator), Senator Sue Ergass (sewer gas), and Liz Ard (lizard). As the students read the books in this series, keep a class list of the names that are a play on words; also include the “translation.”

# ACTIVITIES FOR REGARDING THE SINK

## LANGUAGE

Have each student look at the graphic labeled “Special Report: Pork and Beans” (p. 112). Instruct the students to follow the arrows in the chart and translate this flowchart into cause-and-effect sentences.

## MATH

- There are six “Wall Street Wrap-ups” in this book. Have the students check the math of each chart. Are the percentages in the “Change” columns correct?
- Have each student choose one of the stocks listed in a “Wall Street Wrap-up” and then create a line graph showing the changes in that stock from the beginning of the book to the end. How do the changes correspond to newspaper articles or events in the story?

## SOCIAL STUDIES

- On page 42 there is a recipe for U.S. Senate Bean Soup. As a class, find out if this soup is still served in the U.S. Senate dining room, and how this recipe became a Senate tradition. Then have a class discussion about other traditional recipes and meals.
- A motto is a short expression that reflects the character or guiding principle of a person, government, company, group of people, or country. Lead a class discussion about mottoes and list the motto of the United States, your home state, and your school. Then gather ideas for a class motto. Have the students vote to choose the motto that best fits the class, then make a large banner expressing the motto to hang in your classroom.

## GEOGRAPHY

As a class look at the flight map from Geyser Creek to Sinkiang, China (pp. 92–93). Why didn't the pilot just head due west, straight to her destination?

## WRITING

Pair students and then have each student follow the mayor's “Official Proclamation” (p. 120) to write a nice letter to his or her partner using personalized stationery.

## ART

Divide students into small groups and instruct each group to look at the various ads from the *Geyser Creek Gazette*. Challenge each group to invent a new product or business and then write and illustrate an ad for it. Ads should be created in the same style as those in the *Gazette*, with a tongue-in-cheek (that's an idiom!) tone and generous humor.

# ACTIVITIES FOR REGARDING THE TREES

## LANGUAGE

- The Italian lessons throughout this book get longer and more complicated. As a class, try saying some of the phrases. If there are foreign-language speakers in your class, have them teach some of the same basic words and phrases. Are any of the words similar in spelling and sound in different languages? Are some of the foreign words similar to English words?
- Minnie O.'s slogan, "Ax not! It's what you can do for your country . . ." (p. 60) is a parody of a passage from President John F. Kennedy's inauguration speech. Locate an audio version of this speech for your class and play it aloud, or provide a transcript. How are Minnie O.'s words different from President Kennedy's? Is the meaning the same?
- Homonyms are used frequently in this book and others in the series. For example, the word *graft* is used in this book (pp. 19, 68–70), but it is not used the same way each time. Have each student keep a list of homonyms and how the usage of each varies as they read. Encourage the students to use context clues to determine which definition of the word is appropriate for each situation in the story.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

- Assign each student the task of mapping and illustrating his or her family tree, or the family tree of friends, as Minnie O. does (pp. 140–41).
- The Geyer Creek sixth graders learn that the flowering dogwood is the state tree of Missouri (p. 22). Every state has a designated tree, flower, bird, and other highlighted plants, animals, and natural resources. As a class, conduct research to identify your home state's official tree, flower, bird, or other specified symbols. Discuss why these symbols were chosen to represent your state.

## SCIENCE

- As a class, explore the school grounds. Observe the trees and plants growing around the school. Make a map of the grounds and mark each tree's location. Collect a leaf from each tree to use to identify the tree when you return to the classroom. Make sure to note on the map which tree each leaf came from so the tree can be labeled on the map.
- As a class, choose one tree on the school grounds to observe for a season. During that season, write down in a class science log all changes the tree undergoes, such as leaf color, bird or insect activity, limb loss, and seasonal changes.

# ACTIVITIES FOR REGARDING THE BATHROOMS

## LANGUAGE

Instruct the students as they read to keep a list of the Latin words or phrases used in this book, as well as their English translations. What other Latin words or phrases have students heard or read in their daily lives?

## SOCIAL STUDIES

- Install an idea box like Shelly's (p. 29) so students can make suggestions for improving your classroom or your school. Discuss the suggestions as a class. Are all the ideas realistic? Why or why not? How could some of the suggestions be implemented? As a class, vote on one realistic idea to tackle.
- Invite a peace officer from your county or town to visit your school or class. Ask the officer to tell your students about a typical day of work, favorite and least favorite duties, and his or her opinion of how peace officers are portrayed in movies or on TV. Encourage a question-and-answer opportunity so students can ask questions about law enforcement.
- Paleoindians (p.74) were prehistoric Americans. Using the facts in the book to start, as a class research the Paleoindians. Investigate how they arrived in North America, what they used as tools and weapons, what kind of food they ate, and imagine what their environment looked like. If possible, visit a natural history museum to see artifacts made by Paleoindians or other similar people.

## SCIENCE

Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is unique to every person (identical twins being the exception!), and like a fingerprint, it can be analyzed to determine a person's identity. Lily and Paddy conducted a DNA analysis and received the results almost instantly (p. 96). Assign students to find out how long it actually takes to get the results after conducting a DNA analysis. Also ask the students to find out what jobs use DNA analysis. If the students want to see their own DNA, have them gently swab inside a cheek and smear the swab on a microscope slide. Using high magnification, the students should be able to see their cheek cells; the dark matter in the middle of the cell nucleus is DNA. Have each student draw the field of view and label the cell parts.

## GEOGRAPHY

Divide the class into small groups of four or five students. Assign each group to research and create a poster presentation about an ancient civilization from some part of the world. Have each group present its project to the class. Despite their different homes, did the civilizations have anything in common? Detail shared attributes in a list. How did each group survive in its part of the world?

## **WRITING**

- Assign each student the task of writing a newspaper story using the advice of Annette Trap (p. 17). Instruct the students to write about a recent event that took place at their home, their school, or in their hometown. Then, as a class, choose a name for a class newspaper and lay out a design for the newspaper including the masthead, news stories, and ad space. Fill in the layout with the stories written by the students.
- Stress is a theme in this book. Students as well as adult characters suffer from stress. Have each student write about a time when he or she felt stressed and then detail what he or she did to alleviate it. What are some common causes of stress?

## **ART**

Instruct the class to look closely at the pictures of the graffiti Gil sends to Florence (pp. 89–90). What does this graffiti look like? Create a class mural, in the style of cave paintings and drawings, depicting animals, people, and places in the students' modern lives.

# ACTIVITIES FOR REGARDING THE BEES

## LANGUAGE

- *Homophones* are words that are spelled differently and have different definitions but are pronounced the same, for example, their, they're and there; bee and be; and to, too, and two. Have each student make a list of homophones that appear in the book. Then have each student use the homophones correctly in a sentence. How are homophones different from homonyms?
- From your school library, check out some books about American Sign Language. As a class, or in small groups, have the students attempt to learn the ASL alphabet and other basic words, such as *hello*, *thank you*, and *please*.

Organize a spelling bee with another class. Have each class select a team name.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

- There is a real movement throughout the United States and elsewhere called Random Acts of Kindness ([www.actsofkindness.org](http://www.actsofkindness.org)). As a class, list a random act of kindness that will affect another class, cafeteria workers, the principal, or a school bus driver.
- Throughout the book, Florence keeps adding ideas to the BEE Prepared list. Do the students think her advice is good? Would the class add or delete any idea?

## GEOGRAPHY

- On a world map, pinpoint the location of Malaysia. Ask the students what is unique about the geography and shape of this country.
- Give each student a political map of the world. Instruct the students to use the map to label and draw Florence Waters's trip, which begins and ends in Missouri.

## SCIENCE

- Polly Nader is stung by a bee and has an anaphylactic reaction to the sting (pp. 100–102). Instruct the class to research anaphylactic shock. What other substances besides bee venom can cause this reaction? How is anaphylactic shock treated? Do any students have bee allergies or other allergies?
- Define the word *apiary* for the class. Have the students research bees and their hives. How do bees communicate? How do they find flowers? How do bees collect pollen? How is pollen turned into honey? What are the roles of the queen and drone bees? If there is an apiary in your community, plan a class trip to see the bees and the bee farmer in action.

## **WRITING**

Mr. N.'s students decide to use their HIVE prize money to build an apiary and to have school dances (p. 18). For a creative writing assignment, ask the students to write about what they would like to do if the school won a million dollars. Remind the students that the money is for the *school*, not for any individual.

## **MUSIC**

Even though none of the characters are based on real people, one character does have the same name as a real person—B.B. King. Play a sample of B.B. King's music for the class. How is the music different from what the students typically listen to? Are there any similarities between King's music and today's pop music?



## AFTER READING THE SERIES

- Have you ever read an epistolary novel (*epistle* means “letter”) before? How would the stories be different if they were written as straight narratives? Which form do you find more interesting?
- Refer back to the list, made before reading, of the structural changes the class would like to see made at the school. Compare the suggested changes to the changes that were made to Geysers Creek Middle School throughout the series. Are there any other changes the students would like to add to their list?
- Florence Waters’s face is never pictured or described in any of the books in the series. Have each student draw a portrait of Florence.
- Tell each student to write four short letters between any two characters from these books. The letters should describe, explain, and comment on some new, imaginary event at Geysers Creek Middle School. Possible ideas include a new cafeteria lunch menu item, a new art teacher, an upcoming school play or musical event, or a science fair.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate Klise is the author of many successful (and hilarious) middle grade novels, including *Regarding the Fountain*, an IRA-CBC Young Adults’ Choice, as well as *Trial by Journal* and *Letters from Camp*, all illustrated by her sister Sarah. She has also written several picture books illustrated by her sister, including *Imagine Harry* and *Why Do You Cry?: Not a Sob Story*. In addition, Kate is a correspondent for *People* magazine and an occasional sink designer. She lives in Norwood, Missouri.

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

M. Sarah Klise is the illustrator of five successful (and hilarious) *Regarding the . . .* novels as well as *Letters from Camp* and *Trial by Journal*, all written by her sister Kate. Sarah has also illustrated several picture books written by her sister. In addition, Sarah is an art teacher and an occasional fountain designer. She lives in Berkeley, California.

For more information about Kate and M. Sarah Klise, their books, activities, and scheduled appearances, visit their website at [www.kateandsarahklise.com](http://www.kateandsarahklise.com).

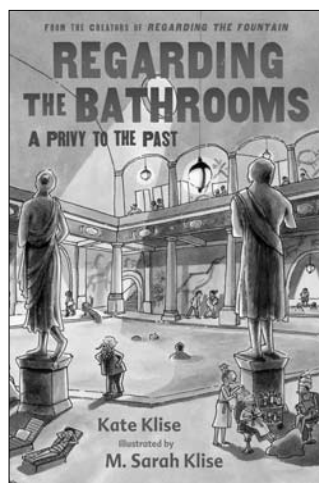
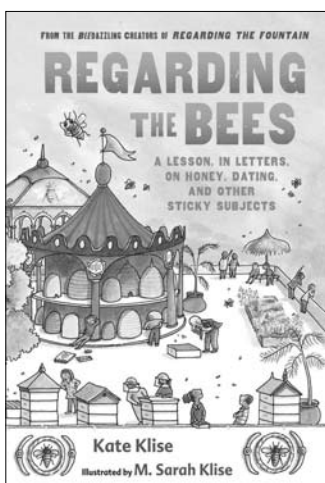
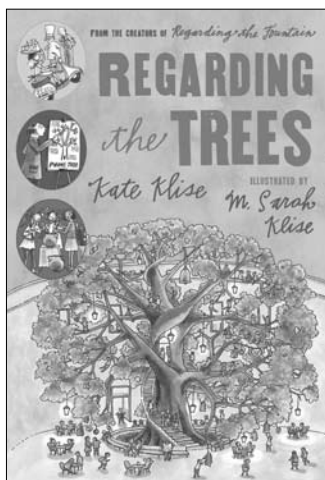
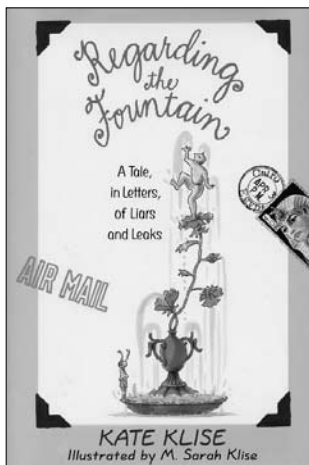
The activities in this guide were written by Mary Lou Meerson, an educational consultant who lives in San Diego, California.

# READ THE ENTIRE SERIES!

All books written by Kate Klise and illustrated by M. Sarah Klise

All books published by Harcourt Children's Books unless noted

All books ages 8 to 12



## REGARDING THE FOUNTAIN

**A Tale, in Letters, of Liars and Leaks**

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