

How to Eat Fried Worms

Recommended for Grades 2-4

Book Summary: How to Eat Fried Worms

When Billy is dared to eat fifteen worms in fifteen days by his friend Alan, he isn't sure he should do it. But the promise of fifty dollars is too much to resist. Billy wants the money so he can buy a minibike. He starts eating worms and it looks like winning the bet will actually be pretty easy. However, his friend Alan has some tricks up his sleeve, and soon winning the bet doesn't look easy at all. Will Billy be able to do it?

[SPOILER] Billy does win the bet and eats all fifteen worms. He buys the minibike with the money. His friend Alan gets into trouble for betting that much money. Billy has discovered that he actually likes the taste of worms and continues to eat them even after the bet is finished.

Author Biography: Thomas Rockwell

Thomas Rockwell was born on March 13, 1933. His family moved from New York to rural Vermont when he was five years old. His father, Norman Rockwell, was a famed artist. His mother was an unpublished writer. His older brother became an artist, and his younger brother became a sculptor. Thomas majored in literature at Bard College and worked for a gardening magazine in New York before moving to Poughkeepsie, New York to help his father write his autobiography.

Thomas published his first children's book, *Rackety-Bang and Other Verses*, in 1969. It received such poor reviews that his publisher declined to publish his next book of verse. Rockwell then switched to writing novels. He is most famous for the book "How To Eat Fried Worms," which was published in 1973. This book won the Mark Twain Award, the Sequoyah Award, and several other prestigious awards. Over the years, Rockwell has taught, sold second-hand books, worked for War on Poverty, and tried sporadically and half-heartedly to write for television and advertising to support his passion.

Discussion Questions: How to Eat Fried Worms

1. Would you ever eat a worm? Why or why not?
2. How is eating a worm different from eating other animals like chicken or fish?
3. Many cultures eat insects as parts of their diets. Are there certain things people are not meant to eat (such as worms) or does it just depend on what you grow up eating?
4. Is it fair for Billy's friends to do things to make eating the worms more difficult? What about when they start lying to him about the effects of eating worms? At what point do their tricks cross the line, if ever?
5. After his friends tell him eating worms can make you really sick, Billy's stomach starts to hurt. Can thinking something make you sick in real life? Or did eating the worms with all the ketchup and mustard really upset his stomach?
6. After getting caught having glued two worms together, Joe says, "It doesn't make any *difference!* It didn't *work!* You didn't *fall for it!* If you'd eaten the whole thing and *then* found out it was two worms glued together, *then* you could have claimed to win because Alan was cheating." (p. 66) Does this make sense to you? Is it only cheating if you get caught?
7. If you had made a bet to eat worms, would your parents help you cook them? Why or why not? What do you think your parent's reaction would be?
8. Do you think Billy and the other boys will remain friends after all the fighting and name calling? Would you remain friends with someone who had lied and cheated?
9. After the bet is over, Billy continues to eat worms. Do you think he is just showing off to his friends or does he really like them? Is it possible to get hooked on worms?

