The Story

Arlo thinks his mother is crazy for taking a job in a small town, far away from his old home and his good friends. And to make matters worse, the students at his new school are crazy—hockey crazy. Arlo has never laced up a pair of skates in his life, and he's not about to start. To avoid making a complete fool of himself in front of his classmates, Arlo joins a group of misfits called the Dumpster Dudes, who set him a series of wild initiation tests that unleash mayhem on the school. Broken windows in the classrooms, angry ants in the hallways, bicycles in the library and monsters in the air ducts—can East Bend Elementary survive Arlo? And will Arlo survive East Bend?

Study Guide

Before Reading the Novel

•In *Klutzhood*, Arlo moves to a new town in the middle of the school year. He faces many challenges in adjusting to his new home and, in particular, his new school. Find out if anyone in the class has had a similar experience. Discuss the challenges faced in moving to a new school in the middle of the year. Generate a list of ways students can help a new student adjust to their new school and home.

•Klutzhood is an invented word. Brainstorm some possible definitions of the term's meaning.

•In *Klutzhood*, Arlo's new school is ice hockey crazy. They have an outdoor rink behind the school and spend every spare minute playing shinny hockey. Arlo has never been on ice skates in his life, and he's terrified of making a fool of himself. Discuss similar experiences students may have had facing something that terrified them, making them afraid to try. Was it jumping off the high diving board, playing at a piano recital, or something else they were terrified to try?

Questions and Activities While Reading the Novel

Each section includes some literal questions, inferential questions, as well as other suggested activities in various curriculum areas.

Chapters 1-3

•Why are Arlo and his mother moving to East Bend?
•How was Cedric different from the other students in Arlo's new class?
•What did most of the kids in the school do at recess?
•Arlo had a very bad start to the first day at his new school. Of all the bad things that happened to him, which do you think was the worst? Give reasons for your answer.
•One of Arlo's mottos is, "If at first you don't succeed, get more ridiculous." What does he mean by this?
•What reasons did Arlo have for thinking East Bend was a weird place?
•What could Arlo have done to make his first day at East Bend Elementary a

better experience for himself?
•First impressions are supposed to be very important. Imagine you are a member of Arlo's new class. Describe your first impression of him.
•Arlo is a master of outrageous excuses. He makes up excuses for not playing hockey, sitting on the Dumpster lid after the recess bell, and being late for class. What is the best excuse you have ever made? Describe the problem you faced and the excuse you made up. Did your excuse work?
•How would the story be different if Arlo had been a star hockey player back in Victoria?
•Draw a picture of what you think is inside the Dumpster.
•"I hadn't had so much fun since the time I locked myself out of the house in my underwear." That's how Arlo starts the story. Think back so some of your worst experiences, or just make something up and create your own version of the sentence: *I hadn't had so much fun since . . .*

Chapters 4-6

•What strange event occurred during Arlo's first school assembly?
•How does one become a lifetime member of the Dumpster Dudes?
•Arlo was too busy thinking about the Dumpster Dudes to pay attention to what he was doing in class. What three embarrassing things did Arlo do?
•What lucky break did Arlo get at the school assembly?
•Why would X, Rocko and Pinball choose to hold their meetings in the Dumpster?
•Cedric said, "Rather than criticize, we should empathize!" What does he mean by this?
•Arlo learns about the mysterious character X from Rocko and Pinball. Why do you think he's only known as X?
•If you were X, what test would you give Arlo to become a Dumpster Dude?
•Arlo refused to try ice skating. If you were a classmate of his, what would you do to persuade Arlo to try skating? Perform a role play in which one person pretends to be Arlo while the other is a classmate persuading Arlo to try skating.
•Design a logo for an East Bend School hockey jersey.

Chapters 7-9

•What was Arlo's first test to become a Dumpster Dude?
•What excuse did Arlo make to leave the classroom at 1:15?
•What are Pinball and Rocko's real names?
•Arlo thought there was a "conspiracy" to get him out on the ice to play hockey. What is a conspiracy, and why does he think this?
•How did Pinball and Rocko "take care" of the school custodian, Mr. Ludlow?

•Why did Arlo pretend to be a monster living in the ceiling?
•If you were Arlo and faced with the choice of the Dumpster Dudes' first test or playing ice hockey for the first time, which would you choose? Give three reasons why.
•Imagine that Mr. Ludlow suddenly showed up and caught Arlo climbing into the air duct. Make up an original excuse Arlo could use to explain what he's doing.
•Arlo crossed the school through the air ducts, landing not in the storage room, but in the principal's office. Do you think he passed the test to become a Dumpster Dude? Give your reasons why or why not?
•Reread the chapter describing Arlo's trip through the air duct system of East Bend School. Based upon the information provided, draw a map like the one X would have given to Arlo.

Chapters 10-12

•What excuse did Arlo give Mrs. Armstrong for being away from class for so long?
•What did Mr. Crow and Mr. Ludlow dump into the Dumpster?
•Describe Arlo's second test to become a Dumpster Dude.
•After Arlo landed in the principal's office, how did Mr. Ludlow accidentally help Arlo avoid getting into trouble?
•Why did X think Arlo had failed his first Dumpster Dude test?
•In what way was the second test given to Arlo by X more dangerous than the first?
•In Chapter 10, the kids were talking after school about what had happened that afternoon. Their description of the events wasn't exactly accurate. Exaggerated stories are sometimes called tall tales. Make up your own tall tale describing what happened that afternoon at East Bend School.
•If you were X, think of a different challenge you would give Arlo as a second test.
•In Chapter 12, when Arlo asks about X, Pinball says, "There are some things even we don't know about X." Why do you think X remains such a mysterious character?
•Some novels have titles for each chapter. *Klutzhood* doesn't. Carefully consider the last three chapters and come up with a title for each. Make sure the title is an attention grabber, yet represents what actually happened in each chapter.
•Rocko and Pinball did all of X's dirty work. Why do you think Rocko and Pinball followed X's orders even though he didn't treat them very well?

Chapters 13-15

•How could Arlo tell that his mother was angry with him?
•Why was Arlo so worried about bumping into other kids in the crowded coatroom?
•Describe how Arlo scored his very first goal.
•Cedric said, "Friendship is indeed a difficult relationship to achieve, especially if it is forced, hurried and artificially induced." What exactly does Cedric mean?
•How can you tell that Mrs. Armstrong was running out of patience with Arlo?
•What did Arlo suddenly remember at the end of Chapter 15?
•Was X justified in failing Arlo on his second test? Give reasons to support your opinion.
•At the end of Chapter 14, Arlo was really stuck. Help him out by coming up with a great excuse he could use to get himself out of this jam.
•Even though Arlo had a great deal of trouble playing hockey, he still enjoyed himself. What made his experience so enjoyable?
•What would have happened if Mrs. Armstrong had let Arlo go to the washroom with his coat full of eggs?

Chapter 16 & Epilogue

•Why did Arlo save the Dumpster Dudes?
•What topic did Pinball, Rocko, X and Arlo choose for their science fair project?
•Why did they choose that particular topic for their science fair project?
•Arlo started to feel like East Bend was his new home. What does it take to make any place feel like home?
•Draw a Venn Diagram comparing any of the following pairs of characters: Rocko and Pinball, Cassie and Arlo, Cedric and Arlo, Cassie and X.
•Bubba's Drive-in in East Bend has a unique menu, featuring Bubba's Blubber Burger. Write up a menu for some of the other strange dishes Bubba might serve. Give them unique names and describe their unusual ingredients.
•Rocko, Pinball and X all go by nicknames. Based on what you know about them, make up appropriate nicknames for the following characters: Arlo, Cassie, Chuck and Elsa.
•Imagine that Arlo's mother had found a new job back in Victoria at the end of the school year. How do you think Arlo would react?

After Reading the Novel

•Choose one scene from the book, and create your own comic strip or graphic novel version.
•Sometimes a reader might have their own questions about the characters and events in a novel that never get answered. These questions often start with, "I wonder . . ." Think of some unanswered questions you still have about Arlo, the

kids at East Bend School, and the events in the novel. Share your questions and discuss possible resolutions.

•Pictures of Arlo, Pinball and Rocko are found on the front and back covers of the book. How do you visualize the other characters in the novel? Draw pictures of other characters such as Mr. Butterworth, Mrs. Armstrong, Cedric, Cassie, Chuck, and Elsa as you imagine them.

•Describe what was for you the most memorable part of the story. Why does it stand out in your mind?

•Through his experiences in the story, how do you think Arlo has changed? What did he learn?

Klutzhood Study Guide