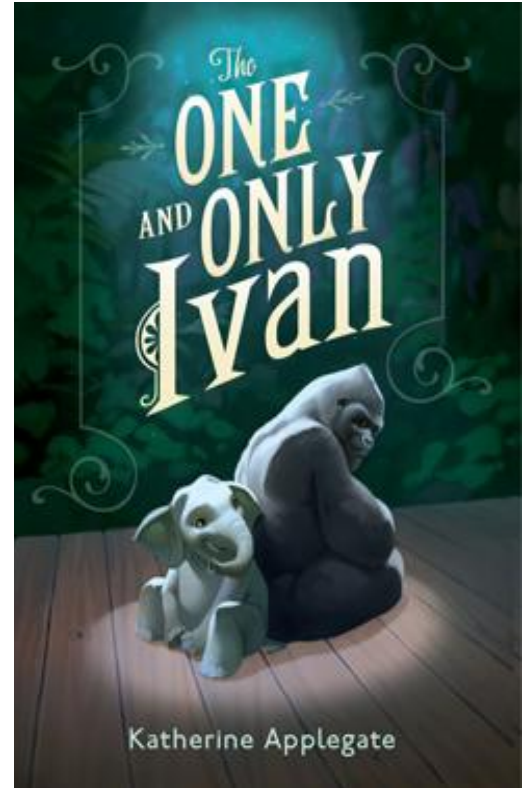


***The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate
(Harper, 2012)***

Ivan is a gentle gorilla who lives chained to a cage at a circus-themed mall. He rarely misses the jungle, but when a baby elephant arrives, Ivan decides he must find her a better life. 2013 Newbery Winner

Discussion Questions

1. Ivan knows what the poster on the highway says because Mack once told him: “Come to the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade, Home of the One and Only Ivan, Mighty Silverback.” How does the poster portray Ivan and why does he think it is not accurate?
2. When Ivan is taken away from his gorilla family and put in a dark cramped crate with his sister – he survives, but his sister Tag dies. Why does Ivan survive? P. 129 Why does Ivan call his doll “Not-Tag?”
3. When Ivan is bought by Mack, he is kept at Mack’s home. What kind of a pet does Ivan make?
4. The book explores the concept of good and bad humans. Ruby tells a story about the good humans who rescued her from the water hole. Are there other good humans in the book? What bad humans have Ruby and Ivan encountered? Is Mack a good or bad person? What other humans are helpful?
5. Why does Bob love to sleep on Ivan’s stomach?
6. When Mack tries to get little Ruby to perform in the ring she at first refuses and lashes out at him with her trunk. Then she stops fighting him - why did Ruby become so compliant?
7. Ivan has lived in captivity so long that he ponders – “what am I? Am I a gorilla or am I a human?” Do you think Ivan is more gorilla or more human? Ivan speaks in gorilla images – he describes a woman’s hair as like...”the color of a rotten branch teeming with luscious ants.”
8. Why does Ivan call his cage his “domain?” On p.165 why does he decide to call it a cage.



9. P. 173 – Ivan is thinking about Stella saying: “Humans can surprise you sometimes.” How did this give Ivan the idea to save Ruby?

10. On p. 166 Ivan tells Ruby that zoos are where “humans make amends.” Does Ivan think zoos are a good thing or a bad thing? Ivan sees the inside of a zoo at one point and comments, “It’s not a perfect place . . . A perfect place would not need walls. But it’s the place I need.” When Ivan is brought to the zoo, he calls it his habitat where the wall is endless, high and wide and carefully built to keep us in and other out. This is, after all, still a cage.” How do you think Ivan feels about his new home?

11. Did you consider the ending a happy one?

Caroline Ward,
The Ferguson Library