



Baby Donk

Family Conversation Guide

Seven Little Donks and the Secret Map
by Matt Clement

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Ages 3–8

Big idea: Friendship

Home & classroom

Hello, grown-ups!

This little guide helps you talk with your child about *Seven Little Donks and the Secret Map* and the big idea at its heart: **friendship**. There are no right or wrong answers. The best conversations start with a question and a little patience.

How to use it

- **Read the book first, just for fun.** Enjoy the rhymes, the sounds and the pictures.
- **Pick two or three questions**, not all of them. Little ones may only want one!
- **Pause and wonder together** with the “during reading” prompts on a second read.
- **Try an activity** this week to keep the story going.
- Every part works at a kitchen table, in a classroom or at the library.

About the book

In a den in Drearyland, just past Stinknose Bend, lives a pack of little Donks who are the very best of friends. One cold and rainy, dreary day, Billy Belly finds an old map to a place where Donks live in the sun, with meadows green and water pure. Queen Michelle puts on her tiny seeing lens and reads its riddles, and the pack sets off together.

The road is long: a hidden pass, walls of ice, an ancient clock, a deep creek, a dark and narrow path, and a stair that climbs up and up. Each Donk helps in their own way. Together they find out that paradise is any place with grass and sun when it's shared with friends who are true.

Meet the pack

**Burro Blue****Billy Belly****Little Noey****Clumsy Cloppy****Harry Hairry****Queen Michelle**

Tip: the book has a surprise or two. We've kept them out of this page, so it's safe to read before the story.



Before you read

1. Look at the cover. What do you think the Donks are looking for?
2. What is a map for? Have you ever followed one?
3. What do you think makes a good friend?
4. If you could go anywhere with your friends, where would you go?

Read-aloud tips

- Read a little slower than feels natural and let the rhymes land.
- Go big on the BRAAAAY, the BOOM and the WHOOSH.
- Count the Donks with your child as you go.
- Pause at the dark path and ask, “What happens next?”

While you read: pause and wonder

Use these on a second read, when your child knows the story a little.



The den and the map

Billy “HAD to share his find.” Why do you think he ran back to the pack instead of keeping the map? Can you read the map’s riddles together and guess what “walls of glass” might be?



The clover rock

The rocks were small, and “their disappointment grew.” Then Cloppy tripped! Has a mistake or a tumble ever turned out lucky for you?



Walls of glass

Harry was looking at the brambles in his mane, and that’s how he spotted the clock. What were the “walls of glass” really?



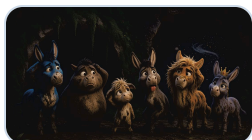
The power kick

Burro Blue “measured up his kick” before he kicked. Why is it smart to stop and think before using your strength? Now make the thunderous BOOM together!



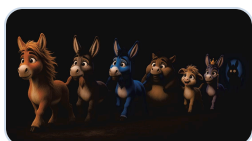
Noey flies

Little Noey always wished he had wings. How do you think he felt swinging across the creek? What would you love to try one day?



Left or right?

Which path would you pick, and why? Then a WHOOSH fills the gloom. Can you make the sound of the wind?



The dark path

The Donks held their tails “like elephants” in the dark. How does holding on to a friend help when you feel scared? Something small and shadowy is coming. Who or what could it be?



After you read

These questions talk about the whole story, including its surprise. Save them for after the last page.

FEELINGS

Friendship

1. How did the story make you feel? Which part was your favorite?
2. How did you feel on the dark path, before the shadow said, "Oh, don't be scared"?
3. Dusty Doo wiped back a tear in the meadow. Why do you think he cried?

FEELINGS

Courage

1. Which part of the trip needed the most courage?
2. Noey launched into the sky. Blue blasted through the ice. When have you been brave?
3. Is it easier to be brave alone or with friends? Why?

CONNECTION

Teamwork

1. Every Donk helped in a different way. Can you name how? (Billy found the map, Michelle read it, Cloppy's tumbles found the clover rock and the hidden stair, Harry spotted the clock, Blue kicked open the ice, Noey crossed first, and Dusty knew where the WHOOSH came from.)
2. Which Donk are you most like? Why?
3. How do you help your family or class?

CHOICES

Sticking together

1. Dusty had tried each trail alone. Why could the pack find the way together?
2. Michelle said, "No Donk should be alone." What would you do if you met someone new who looked a little scary?
3. Who could you invite to join in this week?

The big idea

"For paradise, the six now knew, / and Dusty knew it too, / is any place with grass and sun / when shared with friends who're true." What do you think that means? What makes a place feel like home to you?



Seven Donks, seven virtues

Book 1 is all about **friendship**. Each Donk is also growing a virtue of their own, and each one will get a book of their own. Here's a peek at what each Donk is learning, with a question to talk about.



Queen Michelle

Generosity

She opens the pack to someone new: "No Donk should be alone." **How can you make room for someone this week?**



Clumsy Cloppy

Diligence

He trips on many things, but he always gets up and keeps going. **What is something you kept working at until it was done?**



Harry Hairy

Humility

His mane fills with brambles, and he still stays merry and leads the way. **Can you laugh when things get messy?**



Little Noey

Perseverance

He wishes he had wings, and at the creek he finally flies. **What do you dream of doing? What is one small step toward it?**



Billy Belly

Sharing

He finds the map and runs straight home to share it. **What is something you love to share?**



Burro Blue

Patience

Before his big kick, he backs up and measures it first. **What helps you calm down before you act?**



Dusty Doo

Gratitude

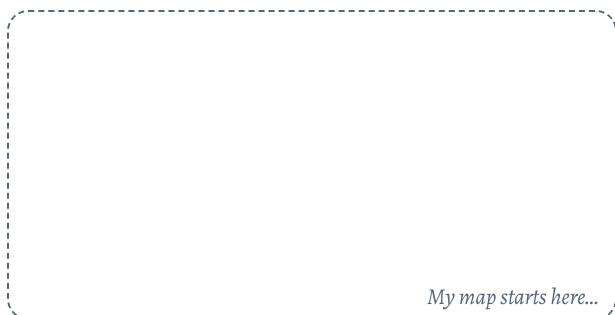
In the meadow he says, "We made it home," wiping back a tear. **What are three things you are thankful for today?**



Things to do together

1 Draw your own map

Draw a map to a treasure in your home or classroom. Add a clover rock, a secret path or a clock, and write a rhyming clue like the Donks' map. Then trade maps and go hunting!

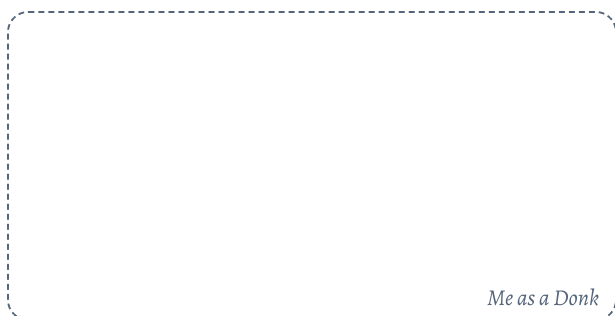


2 Find the 13 hidden treasures

Thirteen treasures are tucked into the pictures. Use the Second Map at the back of the book, or print the free treasure checklist at BabyDonk.com. Talk about it: 13 is called unlucky, but the Donks think it's the luckiest number. Should we judge anything (or anyone) by its reputation?

3 Which Donk are you?

Read about the seven Donks on page 5 of this guide. Which one is most like you? Draw yourself as a Donk, with your own name, your own "thing" and your own virtue.



4 Room for one more

This week, invite someone new to join in: a game at recess, a seat at lunch, a call to a relative. At dinner, share who you invited and how it felt. Then draw a Donk for each new friend and add it to your own pack picture.



Keep the adventure going at BabyDonk.com

Meet the Donks, print the Second Map and the treasure checklist, and see what's next for the pack. Real Donks need friends too: meet some of our favorite donkey rescues at BabyDonk.com/rescues. **We're proud supporters of donkey rescues.**