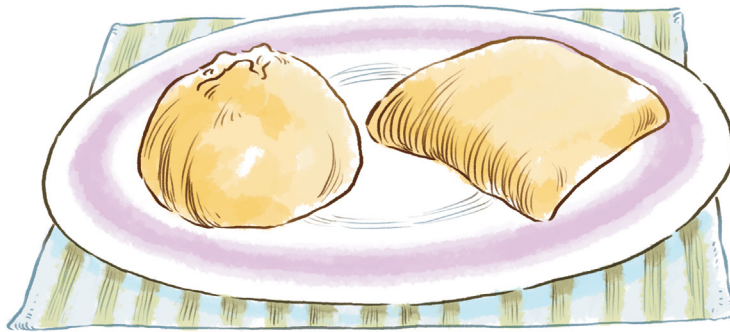


A Classroom Guide to

*The*  
**KNISH WAR  
ON  
RIVINGTON  
STREET**



By Joanne Oppenheim

Guide prepared by the author

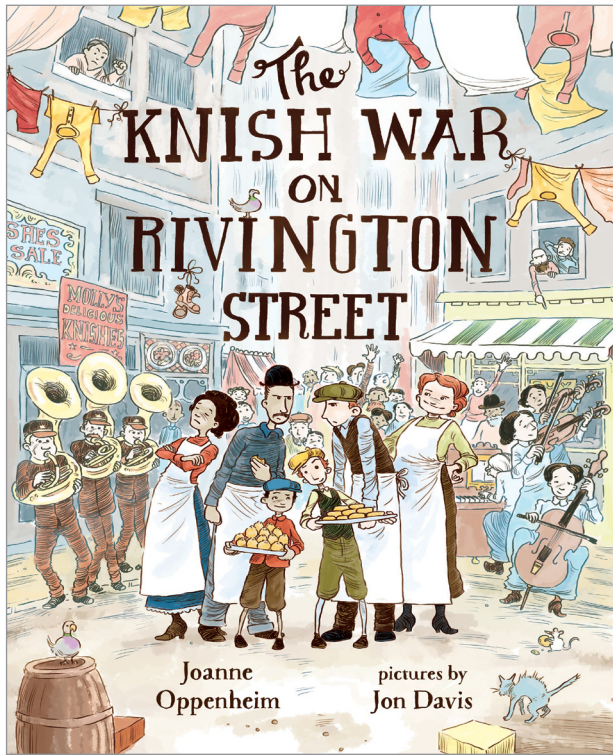
Ages 4–8 // Grades P–3

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# About *The Knish War on Rivington Street*



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Benny's family owns a knishery and sells delicious round dumplings. Then the Tisch family opens a store across the street—selling square knishes for a penny less—and Benny's papa worries. So, what does he do? He lowers his prices, but then Mr. Tisch does too. As each knishery tries to outdo the other, Benny helps his papa realize there's room on Rivington Street for more than one knishery.



## About Joanne Oppenheim

Joanne Oppenheim is a former early childhood teacher and author of more than fifty books for and about children. She is cofounder of [www.toyportfolio.com](http://www.toyportfolio.com), a review of children's products. Find her online on Facebook and Twitter and at [www.joanneoppenheim.com](http://www.joanneoppenheim.com), where you can contact her about arranging a visit to your classroom or library.

## About Jon Davis

Jon Davis has illustrated more than fifty books for publishers around the globe. His favorite illustrations include pirates, old elephants, witches in bloomers, bears on bikes, ugly cats, or sweet kids. Jon is currently based in the United Kingdom. Visit him online at [www.jonsmind.com](http://www.jonsmind.com).

# Using *The Knish War on Rivington Street* in Your Classroom

The “war” between Benny and Solly’s families offers a useful way to talk with your students about competition. It’s also a way to talk about and perhaps taste food specialties from different countries. For art and creative writing, focus on how businesses advertised long ago, before there were TVs or computers. It’s an opportunity for students to try their hands at marketing an edible product they will create. Cooking and polling preferences lend themselves to hands-on math experiences with measuring and simple counting. Most importantly, *The Knish War on Rivington Street* will also give you a way to help students discover that there can be more than one good way to make a quality product.

## Classroom Activities

### Before Reading

Ask your students if they know of any ways that people compete. What does it mean to compete? If you are on a sports team? What about quiz shows on TV? Or when playing a game, such as checkers?

Competition is about trying to be the winner or the best. That’s what this book is about, only in this case, the competition in twentieth-century America was about a type of food that was new in America, a popular food called knishes. They were well known to immigrants: people who had come from Europe to America. A knish was a pastry. Have any of you had a knish?

A knish can be filled with potatoes or cheese or kasha. Potato knishes were the

most popular. They were not expensive and they could be eaten without a fork or knife, so people could take them along to eat while they were at work.

Let’s find out why there would be a war over knishes.

### After Reading Cook Knishes

Talk about why Benny and Solly’s families were fighting. Why should it make a difference if the knishes were baked or fried? Can they think of any food they like one way better than the other? How do they like potatoes? Make a list of their favorite potato dishes: baked, fried, mashed, chips. There are many ways to enjoy the same basic potato. That’s true of knishes too.

Find out which type of knish your students prefer. Use the recipes for baked and fried knishes in the back of the book to prepare knish at home or with students. If cooking is not an option, you can do the same activities listed below with another food item, such as square and round crackers.

After cooking and eating, begin by talking about how Benny and Solly's families got people to come into their knisherries with advertising. The signs in the windows and the sandwich boards the boys wore are two examples. Talk about how things are advertised today on TV, on buses, in magazines, and online. But Benny and Solly didn't have computers. How did they tell people about their products?

## Language

Have the children talk about why they liked/disliked a particular kind of knish. What are some words to describe what they liked and didn't like?

## Creative Writing and Art

Ask the children to imagine they wanted to sell their kind of knishes. Divide the students into two groups. Have those who made the dough for the fried knishes work together and the ones who made the baked knishes work together. Have them create signs, rhymes, or sing jingles to advertise their knishes. Remind them of how Benny and Solly's families used price, music, coupons, and prize dishes to win customers.

Give students art materials to create posters and time to come up with their ads and share them with the class. Put their signs on display.

## Math

Have students vote on which type of knish they liked best. Make a graph of their votes. You may want to cut out circles and squares so students can put up their choice on the graph.

Is there a favorite from the vote? Was it close? Did one group win? As the teacher, you can play the part of the mayor and decide. Make a show of tasting both kinds of knish and talk about what you like about each.

## Final Discussion

Did anyone really win *The Knish War on Rivington Street*? Take time to discuss this and have the students express their views. Encourage students to recall how the dispute ended in the book. Sum it up with the big idea that everyone won after the mayor helped them understand that there can be more than one good thing: not just one best kind. Besides, we don't all like the same things. So, having choices is a win for everyone. Talk about how we can like the same foods cooked in different ways, just like we can have more than one friend at a time and like them both even if they are very different from each other. With many things, there isn't a one and only best but room for lots of different choices.