Tip:
Lowji convinces the exhausted Landlady Crisp to get a cat because a cat will keep mice out of the apartment house, to get goats because goats will eat the grass that needs mowing, and to get a dog because a dog will keep burglars away. How did this happen—since Landlady Crisp was very opposed to pets? Lowji made connections between pets and helping get work done from his experiences in Bombay.

Talk with your child about other animals that can help us rather than create more work for us. Ask your child.

• “If you had been Landlady Crisp, do you think you would have been convinced by Lowji’s arguments for getting animals to help her? What other reasons might she have wanted animals?”

Skill:
When you ask your child to analyze a character’s motivations and actions, you are helping your child see connections between feelings and behavior. For example, you might point out that the landlady was lonely since the death of her husband. This back and forth conversation about Lowji’s arguments and Landlady Crisp’s motivations is what researchers call “serve and return.” Like a game of ball, one of you says or does something (serves) and the other responds (returns). The importance of these everyday interactions to brain building is a key finding from child development research.

Tip:
Even though Lowji has learned English in his Bombay school, he makes new connections to slang expressions as he discovers America, such as “lemony fresh” for smelling clean, “on the house” for not costing anything, and “on the fritz” for being broken. These expressions may or may not be familiar to your child. Ask your child:

• “What are some other slang expressions we use that someone coming to America might not understand?”

• “What else does Lowji learn that is different? For example, the school schedule is different, as is shopping (no stalls, no one is haggling over prices at All-Mart)?”
You will notice that these tips promote two child development principles: 
Serve and Return and Executive Function skills. 

Serve and Return, like a game of ball, involves a back and forth conversation between you and your child where you listen, then build on and extend what your child says or does to promote learning. 

Executive Function skills are skills you use to manage your attention, your feelings, your thoughts and your behavior to reach your goals. They include being able to pay attention, remember information, think flexibly and exercise self control. 

Find more about Families and Work Institute’s Mind in the Making at www.mindinthemaking.org.