

LAUREL-LEAF

readers guide bind-up



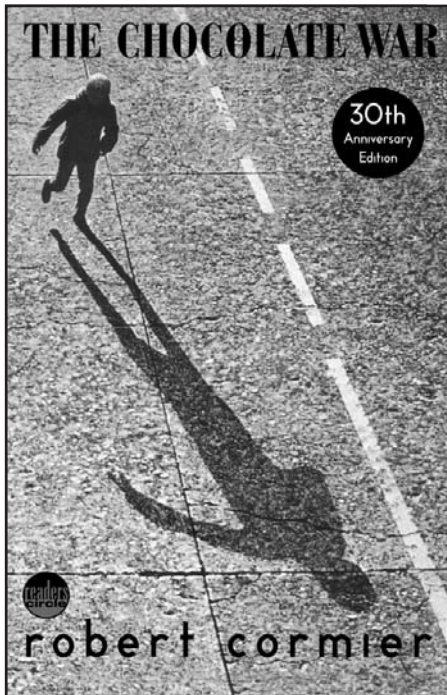
DISCUSS THEM ALL!

A Day No Pigs Would Die • The Black Pearl • The Cay
Children of the River • The Chocolate War • Eyes of the Emperor
Farewell to Manzanar • Gathering Blue • The Giver
Island of the Blue Dolphins • Johnny Tremain • Messenger
Milkweed • Shabanu • Soldier's Heart • Under the Blood-Red Sun
Where the Red Fern Grows • Whirligig
The Witch of Blackbird Pond



www.randomhouse.com/teachers

The Chocolate War



ROBERT CORMIER

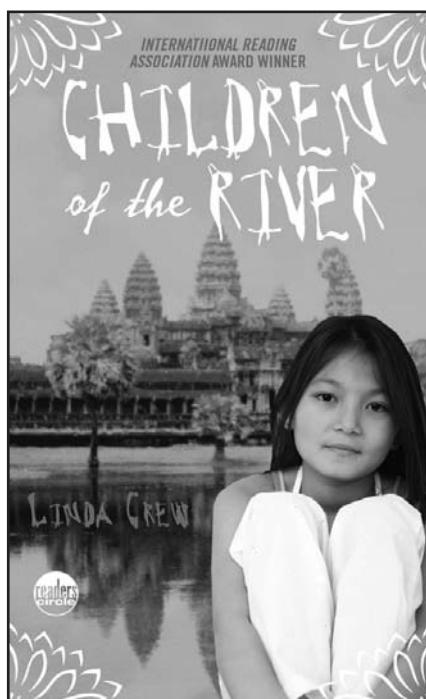
An ALA/YALSA Best Books for Young Adults
 A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year
 A *Kirkus Reviews* Best Children's Book
 A *New York Times* Outstanding Book of the Year

ABOUT THE BOOK

Cormier's chilling look at the insidious world of gang intimidation and the abuse of power in a boys' boarding school is no less relevant today than it was upon publication in 1974.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Jerry places a poster in his locker that says, "Do I Dare Disturb the Universe?" At first, he doesn't understand the meaning of the poster; he just likes it. At what point in the novel does Jerry begin to get the meaning of the poster? How does Jerry become a martyr by disturbing his universe?
- How is misinformation about the chocolate sale used to maintain peer pressure? Discuss how this tactic affects Goober, who quit selling the chocolates after 27 boxes.
- Compare and contrast the peer pressure at Trinity with peer pressure in your own school. Brother Leon actually promotes peer pressure at Trinity. Discuss ways a school administrator should deal with peer pressure. What should students do if they feel they are the victims of extreme peer pressure?
- Archie Costello, one of the leaders of the Vigils, doesn't believe in violence. How does this make him different from the typical school bully? Which character in the novel best fits the typical school bully profile? Discuss the difference between physical and psychological bullying. Which is more damaging?
- Why is Jerry Renault an easy target for bullies like the Vigils and Brother Leon? Why doesn't Archie give "assignments" to most athletes?
- Archie Costello is a legend at Trinity High School because he is the "Assigner" for the Vigils. How does this position give him power over the entire student body? How does Archie use manipulation to gain power? How is his power recognized and used by Brother Leon?
- How does the opening scene on the football field foreshadow Jerry's courage?
- *The Chocolate War* is one of the most censored books in America. It is under perpetual attack because of Cormier's "negative portrayal of human nature," and because the ending appears hopeless. Discuss the objections to the book, and think about how Cormier "disturbed the universe" by writing the novel. Why do people fear a realistic portrayal of life? What is the relationship between looking at the "good and evils" of life and "disturbing the universe"?



LINDA CREW

An IRA Children's Book Award for Older Readers

A Texas Lonestar Reading List Book

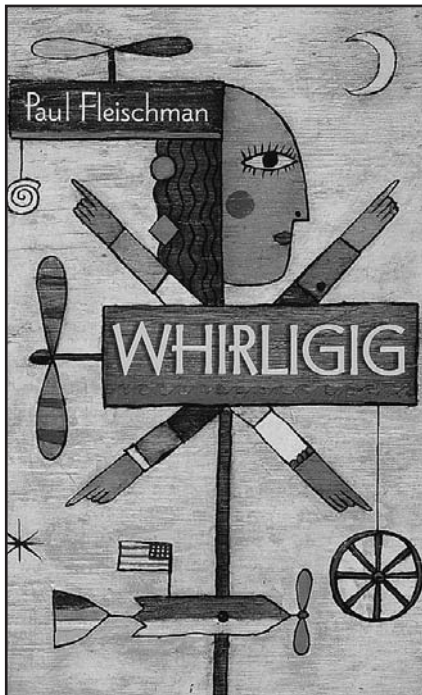
A Washington Evergreen Young Adult Book Award Winner

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sundara fled Cambodia with her aunt's family to escape the Khmer Rouge army when she was 13, leaving behind her parents, her brother and sister, and the boy she had loved since she was a child. Now, four years later, she struggles to fit in at her Oregon high school and to be "a good Cambodian girl" at home. She wonders if her hopes for happiness and a new life in America are disloyal to her past and her people.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Why is it so important for Sundara to maintain her traditions? What are some of the differences between Sundara and the American kids she goes to school with? Do you think Sundara's family is wrong to expect her to maintain the appearance of a "good" Khmer girl even though they now live among people with different customs?
- Think about the title of the book, *Children of the River*. What are the different meanings the title has? In the book, Sundara says it's strange that Americans use the metaphor of a road to explain life. In Cambodia, they say life is like a river. Which do you think is a better metaphor for life, a road or a river? Or something else entirely?
- Do you think Sundara has any real hope of returning to Cambodia one day? What are some turning points in the book that make it seem more or less likely that Sundara will ever return? Are there any moments that make it seem like she's becoming more American?
- *Children of the River* takes place in 1979. What are some events in today's world that remind you of the political situation in Cambodia nearly 30 years ago?
- What do you think happens to Sundara and Jonathan when they grow up? The author, Linda Crew, says readers always ask her if Sundara and Jonathan get married, and whether Sundara ever finds her parents. What do you imagine the answers to these questions are?
- One of the central conflicts in the book is between Sundara and her aunt Soka. Do you think Soka's treatment of Sundara is harsh? Can you understand why she wants Sundara to stay away from Jonathan, and why Sundara feels such strong guilt toward Soka?
- Sundara is lucky to have escaped Cambodia, and her family can only do so much to help those people left behind. Jonathan criticizes his parents for not taking action to help the Cambodians, and finally his father decides to spend a few months working as a doctor in a refugee camp. What kind of responsibility do we have to help others who are less fortunate?
- The Cambodian belief in the importance of one's "spirit" plays a part throughout the book. What is your understanding of this belief in the spirit?



PAUL FLEISCHMAN

★ “The brilliant Fleischman has written a beautifully layered, marvelously constructed novel that spins circles in marvelous directions.”

—*School Library Journal*, Starred

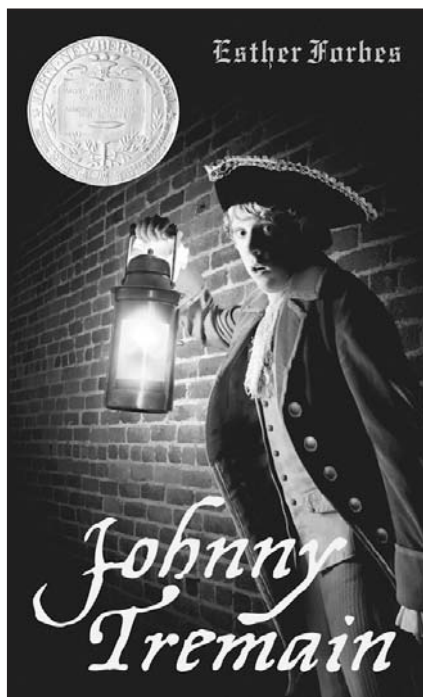
ABOUT THE BOOK

Because of a drunk-driving accident, 16-year-old Brent Bishop causes the death of a teenaged girl and is sent on a journey of repentance that changes his life.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Because Mr. Bishop has moved his family around the country, Brent has been the new kid at school many times and is always in search of ways to be a part of the group. Discuss how Brent’s need to belong is a common need expressed by most teenagers. How do you know that Brent is concerned with social status? What are the things that Brent does to try to impress his peers? Have the class talk about how Brent’s humiliation at Chaz’s party could have been avoided.
- The judge sentences Brent to probation in place of the detention center. Although most teenaged criminals would welcome probation, Brent wants to be punished. Discuss why Brent needs a punishment. What is Brent’s reaction when he meets Lea’s mother? Why does he say that he wishes his parents weren’t around when he sees Mrs. Zamora? Ask students to discuss how Brent deals with his guilt as he makes his journey around the United States.
- Lea’s mother doesn’t believe in retribution. Why might retribution be considered the easy way out? Brent’s parents are horrified when Mrs. Zamora requests that Brent travel around the country making whirligigs. Discuss why Brent is so willing to accept the assignment. At what point on his journey does Brent begin to forgive himself? Discuss what Mrs. Zamora and Brent may say to one another when he returns with the photographs of the whirligigs. Discuss whether Mrs. Zamora knew that she would be helping Brent by sending him on this journey.
- Ask students to discuss the relationship between self-discovery and coming-of-age. How does Lea help Brent to come of age? After the car crash, Brent feels that “he was lodged in his own chrysalis but had no idea what he was turning into.” (p. 43) Discuss what Brent discovers about himself.
- Ask students to explain the metaphor, “His life was a house that had burned to the ground.” (p. 17) Then have students locate and explain other metaphors in the novel. What is the central metaphor of the book?
- Engage the class in a discussion about the structure of the novel. Why does the author alternate chapter settings in Maine, Florida, California, and Washington?

Johnny Tremain



ESTHER FORBES

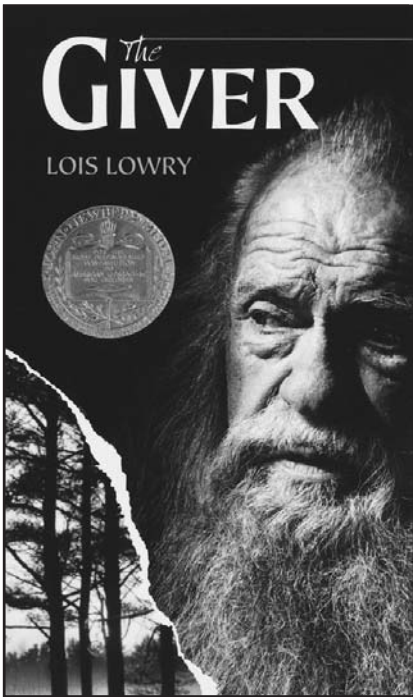
A Newbery Medal Winner

ABOUT THE BOOK

Johnny Tremain, a young apprentice silversmith, is caught up in the danger and excitement of 1775 Boston, just before the Revolutionary War. But even more gripping than living through the drama of Revolutionary Boston is the important discovery Johnny makes in his own life.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Johnny Tremain is orphaned and at 14 becomes an apprentice under Ephraim Lapham, an acclaimed silversmith in Colonial Boston. What are the rules of apprenticeship? At what point does Mr. Lapham realize that Johnny is his most gifted apprentice? Discuss Mr. Lapham's plans for Johnny's future. How does Johnny's future change once he is no longer "any good" to Mr. Lapham? Explain why Mr. Lapham is a bad role model for Johnny.
- How does Johnny react to the authority that is granted him by Mr. Lapham? Discuss how this affects his relationship with the other less-talented apprentices. How does Mr. Lapham attempt to deal with Johnny's arrogance? Explain why some of the political giants in Boston might view Johnny's rash behavior as a virtue. How is it almost his demise?
- Johnny's mother harbors a family secret that she reveals to Johnny just before she dies. Discuss why she decides to tell Johnny that he is related to Jonathan Lyte, a wealthy Boston merchant. Why does his mother warn him to stay clear of Lyte? Discuss why Johnny tells Cilla this family secret. Why does Johnny decide to ignore his dead mother's warning and approach Mr. Lyte? How are Johnny's personal traits similar to those of Mr. Lyte? Johnny has a silver cup engraved with the Lyte coat of arms that his mother gave him. Mr. Lyte steals the cup from Johnny. Why does Johnny refuse the cup when he has a chance to take it back? Discuss the symbolism of this scene.
- Discuss Johnny's transformation from an indifferent political bystander to a passionate Whig. How does this journey change his life? Who is responsible for Johnny's journey? At what point does Johnny take his final giant step toward manhood? What does he learn about pride along the way?
- Some critics believe that the most important element in historical fiction is setting. What does the reader learn about Colonial Boston, and the events that led to the American Revolution from reading *Johnny Tremain*? It is clear that the novel is about Johnny's coming-of-age. How is it also the coming-of-age story of a nation?



LOIS LOWRY

A Newbery Medal Winner

An ALA/ALSC Notable Children's Book

An ALA/YALSA Best Book for Young Adults

ABOUT THE BOOKS

The protagonists in these companion novels deal with fear, power, and secrets, but somehow they gain the courage to defy the evils of their controlling world. Lowry makes a provocative statement about community and freedom.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

THE GIVER

- Each family has two parents, a son, and a daughter. The relationships are not biological, but are developed through observation and a careful handling of personality. In our own society, the makeup of family is under discussion. How are families defined? Are families the unchanging foundations of a society, or are they continually open for new definitions, and why?
- *The Giver* pictures a community in which every person and his or her experience is precisely the same. The climate is controlled, and competition has been eliminated in favor of a community in which everyone works only for the common good. What advantages might sameness yield for contemporary communities? In what ways do our differences make us distinctly human? Is the loss of diversity worthwhile, and why?

GATHERING BLUE

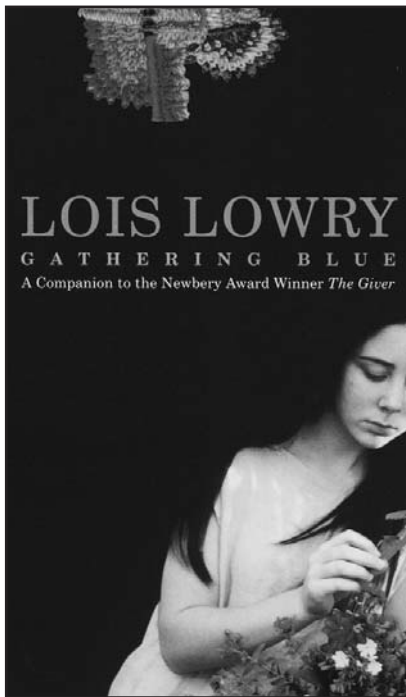
- Discuss with students how Kira deals with her fears. How do her fears change throughout the novel? Discuss how Kira changes from a fearful young girl to a self-assured young woman and how Kira and Thomas help Jo deal with her fears. Discuss why the women of the village are fearful of

Vandara. How does Vandara display the qualities of a bully? Talk about the best way to deal with bullies.

- Discuss how Katrina shows courage when she stands up to the people of the community and demands that her handicapped daughter's life be spared. Katrina told Kira, "Take pride in your pain. . . . You are stronger than those who have none." (p. 22) How is strength related to courage? Discuss how physical pain contributes to Kira's courage. Matty suffers from a different type of pain. Describe his life in the Fen. Discuss the many different ways he shows courage.

MESSENGER

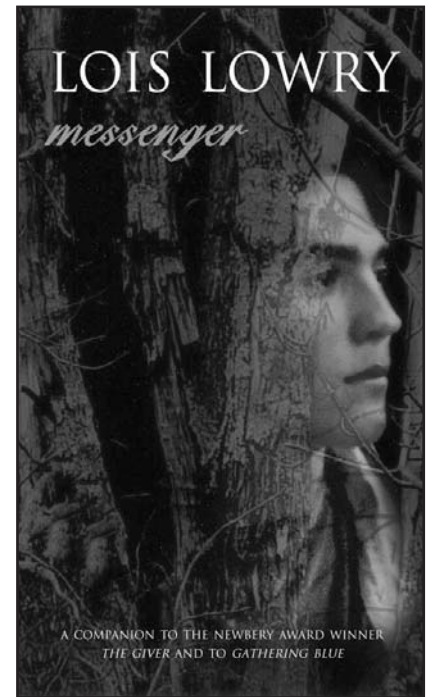
- Many of the people from Village came from communities that were built around secrets. Why does Leader believe that secrets cause sadness? How does he promote an open society? Discuss the relationship between secrets and ignorance. How is Matty bothered by the fact that he has a secret? Why is it important that he keep his secret?
- Have students discuss the meaning of power. What is the power in Matty's gift? How is Matty troubled by his power? Why does Leader warn Matty to be careful how he uses his



An IRA Young Adults' Choice

★ “A completely enchanting, haunting story about the dark corruption of power and good people using their gifts as weapons against it.”

—Kirkus Reviews, Starred



gift? Describe the Blind Man's power. How does his power and wisdom guide Matty? What does Seer mean when he says, “Our gifts are our weaponry?” (p. 155)

EXPLORING THE NOVELS TOGETHER

- Have students describe how the communities in *The Giver* and *Gathering Blue* are similar. What are their primary differences? Discuss why Jonas, the Blind Man, and Matty feel forced to leave their communities. Village in *Messenger* was created out of selflessness. Contrast *selflessness* and *selfishness*. How are the efforts to close the border a selfish act? Discuss the potential dangers to the community.
- Jonas understands fear in *The Giver* and, in *Messenger*, establishes Village as a place where others can come to escape their fears. Explain the fear that Leader is feeling when the citizens of Village vote to close the borders. In *Messenger*, Matty learns that Forest is a “tangled knot of fears and deceptions and dark struggles of power.” (p. 168) Ask student how might Forest be symbolic of the communities in *The Giver* and *Gathering Blue*?
- Debate whether the people in *The Giver* and *Gathering Blue* understand the meaning of hope. How do Jonas, Matty, and the Blind Man represent hope in *Messenger*? At what point are these three characters almost stripped of hope?
- Jonas in *The Giver* and Matty in *Gathering Blue* live in communities that thrive on control and “sameness.” What gives Jonas and Matty the courage to leave their communities? Debate with students whether the courage of the “new people” in *Messenger* is driven by hope or fear.
- Jonas wasn't allowed feelings in *The Giver*. Now as Leader of Village, he encourages people to express their feelings. Describe his feelings for Matty. How does Seer get inside the feelings of Leader? Have students compare Matty's feelings for Jean in *Messenger* to his feelings for Kira in *Gathering Blue*. Contrast Leader's feelings as he looks over Village in *Messenger* to his feelings when he left his community in *The Giver*.
- Ask students to define *family* from the point of view of the following characters: Jonas in *The Giver*; Kira, Matty, and Thomas in *Gathering Blue*; Matty, Jean, and Seer in *Messenger*. How might Matty describe his newly acquired family in *Messenger* to Kira?

Farewell to Manzanar



JEANNE WAKATSUKI HOUSTON & JAMES D. HOUSTON

"An extraordinary episode in American history . . . a beautiful and very personal book."—*School Library Journal*

ABOUT THE BOOK

The true story of one spirited Japanese American family's attempt to survive the indignities of forced detention . . . and of a native-born American child who discovers what it is like to grow up behind barbed wire in the United States.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Discuss what it would be like to grow up without any children of your own race; then discuss what it would be like to grow up among only children of your own race. In the book, how did Jeanne feel in each situation?
- On page 47, Jeanne writes, "It helps me understand how Papa's life could end at a place like Manzanar. He didn't die there, but things finished for him there, whereas for me it was like a birthplace. The camp was where our life lines intersected." What began for Jeanne at Manzanar? How did this help or hurt her understanding of her father's experience there?
- Chapter six, "Whatever He Did Had Flourish," discusses Papa's family history. What do you think was more difficult for him to come to terms with: his family's original descent from the samurai class, or his imprisonment at Manzanar? Why?
- In December 1942 (Chapter 11, "Yes Yes No No"), the administration of the Manzanar camp gave each family a Christmas tree as an apology for the difficulties that had led to the riot earlier that month. Why do you think the camp authorities chose a Christmas tree? What would this donation have meant to you?
- On page 86, in remembering questions 27 and 28 of the loyalty oath, Jeanne writes, "From the beginning Papa knew his own answer would be YES YES. He agreed with Woody on this much, even though it meant swearing allegiance to the government that had sent him to Fort Lincoln and denying his connections with the one country in the world where he might still have the rights of a citizen." How do you think a Japanese American's answers to the questions would have been influenced by Japanese culture and its concepts of loyalty and honor?
- Discuss the ambivalence Jeanne and her family felt about the camp's closing and their return to regular society. Did Jeanne's perception of this time differ from her parents'? If so, how?
- Discuss how fear and wartime panic can influence people and governments to forget common sense and democratic traditions. Besides the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, has this happened at other points in history? Do you think it could happen today?

The Black Pearl



SCOTT O'DELL

A Newbery Honor Book

An Arkansas Charlie May Simon Children's Book Award Winner

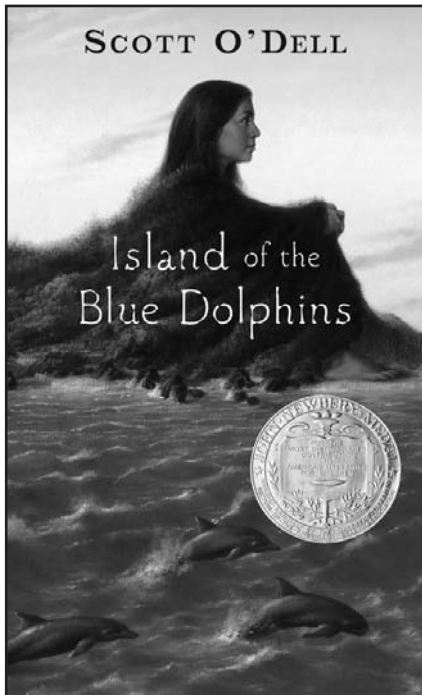
ABOUT THE BOOK

Ramón has just found a pearl in an oyster he's brought up from an underwater cave where the Manta Diablo, the monster devilfish, lurks. But neither Ramon nor his father can foresee the trouble a pearl can bring.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Describe the Manta Diablo. What is the role of this “evil” creature in the lives of the people of La Paz? How are the children taught to fear this creature? Discuss the connection between the legend of the Manta Diablo and the religious beliefs of the people of La Paz. Ramón doesn't believe the stories of the Manta Diablo until he encounters the creature at the end of the novel. What do you think Ramón's mother will say to him when he tells her of his dangerous encounter with the evil creature?
- When Ramón turns 16 his father, Blas Salazar, makes him a partner in the family pearl business. Why is Ramón conflicted about this partnership? His father does something to make Ramón feel like a boy and not a partner. At what point in the novel does Blas Salazar begin to treat his son as a business partner?
- Why does Gaspar Ruiz direct his stories of danger to Ramón? Explain why Ramón's father, who realizes that Gaspar is dangerous and a troublemaker, tells Ramón to let Gaspar talk. How does this advice become difficult for Ramón? Contrast Gaspar Ruiz and the Manta Diablo. What is symbolic about the collision of the two evil beings at the end of the novel?
- Discuss the business relationship between Soto Luzon and Ramón's father. How does Ramón use this relationship to achieve his desire to dive for pearls? Why is Soto Luzon reluctant to teach Ramón to dive? Discuss the superstitious beliefs of Soto Luzon. Why is the cave ominous to him? Explain why Luzon fears the black pearl.
- Describe the commotion that the Pearl of the Universe causes in the town of La Paz. Why does Ramón's father give the pearl to the Madonna? Father Gallardo leads a celebration of the pearl. Why does he call the pearl a miracle? Discuss why Mr. Salazar takes the Madonna to the sea to bless his fleet. What is Soto Luzon's reaction to such celebration?
- After Ramón finds the pearl, Soto Luzon tells him, “You are still a boy and there is much that you still do not know.” (p. 60) Trace Ramón's journey to manhood. What is the role of the black pearl in this journey?

Island of the Blue Dolphins



SCOTT O'DELL

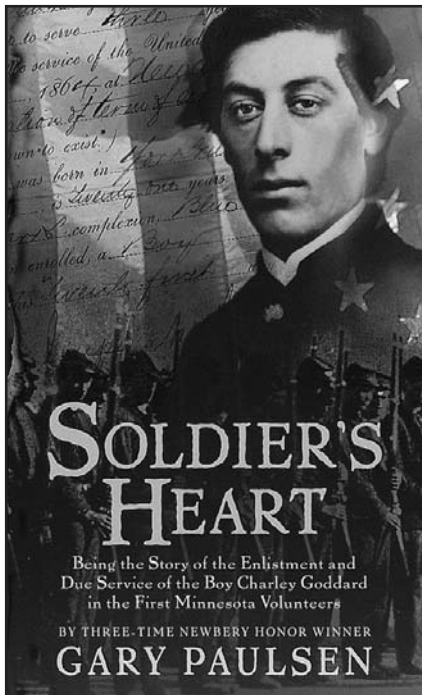
- A Newbery Medal Winner
- A Hawaii Nene Award Winner
- A Kansas William Allen White Award Winner
- A Virginia Young Readers Program Award Winner

ABOUT THE BOOK

In the Pacific, there is an island that looks like a big fish sunning itself in the sea. Around it blue dolphins swim, otters play, and sea birds abound. Karana is the Indian girl who lived alone for years on the Island of the Blue Dolphins. Hers is not only an unusual adventure of survival, but also a tale of natural beauty and personal discovery.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- *Island of the Blue Dolphins* is a classic survival story. How does Karana use her resources to help her survive? Is there ever a point when she thinks she will not survive? Ask students to locate a magazine article that chronicles a modern-day survival story. Then, have them compare and contrast the contemporary survival story with Karana's story.
- There are times when Karana is extremely lonely. How do the dogs she trains provide the companionship she needs? Ask students to brainstorm ways to overcome loneliness. How are animals sometimes used in our contemporary society to fulfill a void in a person's life? For example, pets in nursing homes, orphanages, and as companions to handicapped people.
- Ask the class to prepare a ceremony that recognizes Karana for her courage. The students may wish to wear authentic dress and serve food that closely resembles what the people at the mission might have served.
- Karana loves her younger brother Ramo so deeply that she risks her life for him by jumping overboard into the turbulent sea. Shortly after the ship leaves, Ramo is killed by the wild dogs. Karana, however, never regrets leaving the ship in order to stay with him. What does this say about Karana's character and her relationship with her brother?
- How is Karana different from the others at the mission? Why don't the others at the mission seem to connect with Karana. Father Vicente isn't at the mission; he is in Mexico. How would he handle the people if he were present? Ask students to write a letter that Father Vicente might write to convince the other padres and Indians to be more tolerant of Karana's differences. What does Karana's situation teach us about dealing with people from other cultures?
- *Island of the Blue Dolphins* is written in first person narrative. Why do you think the author chose to write the story this way? Do you think you would have known and cared about Karana the same way if the book were written from in a different style. In *Zia*, the sequel, readers are not privy to Karana's thoughts. After students have read the sequel, ask them if they think *Zia* is accurate in her account of her aunt's feelings and behavior?



GARY PAULSEN

An ALA/YALSA Best Book for Young Adults

An ALA/YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers

An IRA Teachers' Choice

A Virginia Library Association Jefferson Cup Award Winner

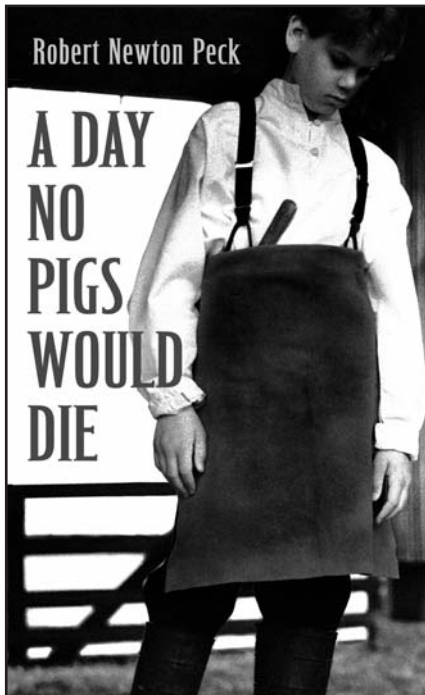
ABOUT THE BOOK

The gripping, heart-wrenching story of war as seen through the eyes of Charley Goddard, a 16-year-old who enlisted in the First Minnesota Volunteers in June 1861 and fought in almost every major battle in the Civil War.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- How does Charley's lack of experience contribute to his desire to go to war? At what point in the story does he lose his innocence? Do you think he would have enlisted if he had known what war was like? Later he feels old in comparison to the new recruit Nelson. Why is Charley unable to teach Nelson what he knows?
- There are several places in the story where Charley wants to leave. Is it bravery that makes him continue to face battle, or something else? Find passages to support your answer.
- Charley thinks "when a man went down he was alone, even if he was your brother." Why does Charley choose not to have friends on the battlefield?
- Charley tells us that "four men died of dysentery and disease for every man that died of battle wounds." Research the symptoms and causes of typhus and dysentery. How are they spread? What conditions in a Civil War army camp led to these and other diseases? The trenches of World War I? Particular illnesses in the Vietnam War?
- Use reference books at the library to research Charley's kindly general, George McClellan. Read the history of the battles of Bull Run and Gettysburg and compare with Charley's account.
- Create a graph with three bars comparing the number of Union soldiers and the number of Confederates killed in battle in the Civil War, and also the number who died of disease. What percentage of the general population at the time do these numbers represent? Leave room on your chart for adding more statistics later.
- Paulsen makes Charley's fear vivid to us by describing it in terms of his bodily sensations. Think of a time when you were very afraid and write a paragraph about how it felt.
- In the last chapter, Charley has returned to Winona after the war, but he is living alone in a shack by the river. Why do you suppose this is? What happens or is about to happen in the end? What clues does Paulsen give us?
- What is the symbolism when Charley says he "felt his own age . . . not in years . . . but in meadows." What do "meadows" stand for? What two things does the Confederate revolver in the last chapter symbolize?

A Day No Pigs Would Die



ROBERT NEWTON PECK

An ALA/YALSA Best Book for Young Adults
 A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year
 A Colorado Children's Book Award Winner
 A Library of Congress Children's Book of the Year

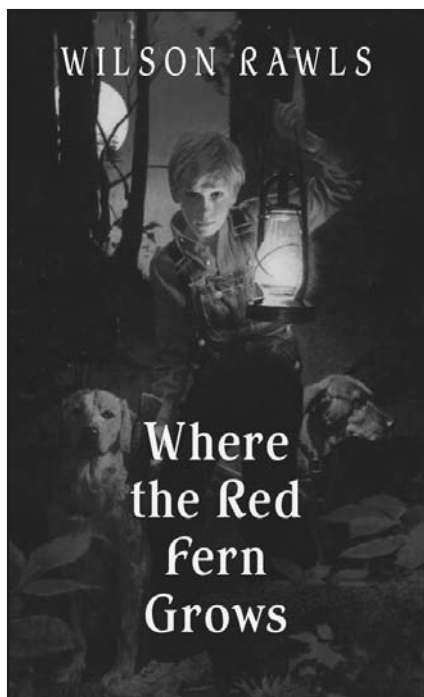
ABOUT THE BOOK

In this classic autobiographical novel set in the 1920s in rural Vermont, 12-year-old Robert Peck comes of age when his father dies and leaves him to manage the farm.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Describe Robert's relationship with his family. How is Haven Peck a role model to Robert? Discuss why Robert kisses his father's bloody hand after he slaughters Pinky. According to Shaker tradition, Robert becomes the head of the family when his father dies. Explain how Robert's mom and Aunt Carrie begin treating him as the head of the household immediately following Haven's death. How does Robert prove that he is ready to take on the role?
- Define friendship from Robert's point of view. How is Pinky Robert's best friend? At what point does Robert realize that Mr. Tanner is his friend? Why is Robert surprised when so many people show up for his father's funeral? Describe Haven Peck's kindness to others. How does the way he lived his life reflect the Shaker belief: "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself"?
- Discuss how Robert feels isolated from his peers and community. How does he deal with such isolation? In many ways, Robert has no childhood. Debate whether this contributes to his feelings of isolation. Discuss scenes in the novel when Robert expresses his desire to be like the other kids. How does going to the Rutland Fair with Mr. Tanner broaden Robert's life? At what moment does he fully accept being an outsider?
- Trace Robert's journey to manhood from the beginning of the novel to the end. How does he prove his manhood? Though Edward Thatcher is a minor character in the novel, he plays a large role in defining Robert's character. Compare Robert's coming-of-age to that of boys in his school like Edward Thatcher. Which of the boys can expect the longest journey?
- What is Haven Peck's attitude toward death? Debate whether he knew that he was about to die. How does he prepare Robert for his death? After the funeral, Robert returns to his father's grave before going to bed. What is the significance of this scene? How is the entire novel a celebration of life and death?
- Discuss how the Shakers view other religions. Mr. Tanner and Aunt Matty are Baptists. How does Robert's view of the Baptists change by the end of the novel? When Haven Peck dies, Robert's hopes of continuing his education die. Discuss how Robert accepts his fate.

Where the Red Fern Grows



WILSON RAWLS

A Massachusetts Children's Book Award Winner

A New Hampshire Great Stone Face Award Winner

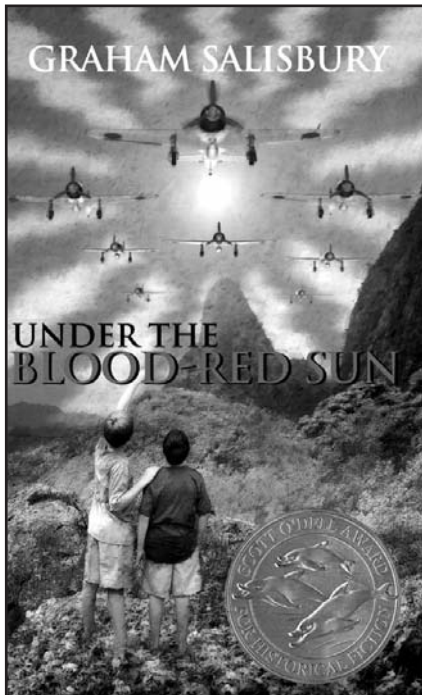
A North Dakota Flicker Tale Children's Book Award Winner

ABOUT THE BOOK

Billy, Old Dan, and Little Ann—a boy and his two dogs. A loving threesome, they ranged the dark hills and river bottoms of Cherokee country. Old Dan had the brawn, Little Ann had the brains—and Billy had the will to train them to be the finest hunting team in the valley. Glory and victory were coming to them, but sadness waited too.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Billy Coleman's grandfather says that determination and willpower are good for a man to have. More than anything, Billy wants two hound dogs to train for hunting. How does Billy go about realizing his dream? What does Billy's determination to achieve his goal say about his character? At what point in the novel would it have been easier to give up?
- Describe the Coleman family. How is Billy's relationship with his father different from his relationship with his mother? What is Billy's relationship with his three sisters? How does being the only son shape Billy's role in the Coleman family? Discuss how Billy's family helps him realize his dream.
- What values do Mr. and Mrs. Coleman teach their children? Debate whether the Coleman family values might be influenced by the Depression era. How do these values sometimes cause conflict within Billy? Discuss how these values contribute to his journey to manhood?
- Billy has a special relationship with his grandfather. Cite evidence from the novel that indicates that Billy's grandfather understands him in ways that his father doesn't. Why might it be easier to be a grandfather than a father? How does Billy's grandfather help him achieve his ultimate goal?
- Billy suffers many triumphs and disappointments in the novel. What are his greatest triumphs? How does he learn to deal with his disappointments? What does conquering his disappointments say about his character? How does this help his father gain respect for him?
- Compare and contrast the temperaments of Old Dan and Little Ann. How do their differences make them good companions? At what point does Billy gain a true understanding of his dogs? How does recognizing his dogs' differences make Billy a good master? Discuss how Billy earns the trust of his dogs. What do Old Dan and Little Ann teach Billy about courage, determination, and love?
- Discuss the symbolism of the red fern. How does the red fern help Billy deal with the death of his dogs? Draw a connection between the legend of the red fern and the religious beliefs and values of the Coleman family.



GRAHAM SALISBURY

A Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction Winner
 An ALA/YALSA Best Book for Young Adults
 A California Young Reader Medal Winner
 A Hawaii Nene Award Winner

ABOUT THE BOOKS

Under the Blood-Red Sun and *Eyes of the Emperor* are companion books that illustrate the impact of cultural prejudice during a time of intense fear—the invasion of Pearl Harbor. Both novels expose the lives of Japanese American families struggling to define an American identity for themselves, while also preserving their Japanese roots and traditions.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

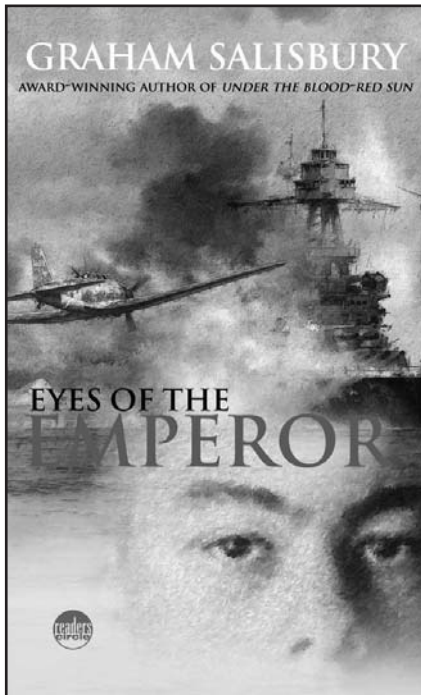
UNDER THE BLOOD-RED SUN

- Tomi's family owns a katana—or samurai sword—that symbolizes honor. It has been in the family for over 300 years. Many families have items that have belonged to them for generations (e.g., a Bible, pictures, letters, antique furniture, quilt, jewelry, toys, etc). Have students ask their parents or grandparents to share with them their family's most cherished item, and find out the story behind the item to share with the class.
- The Nakaji family must take many precautions to protect themselves, like observing blackout rules and hanging blankets over the windows at night in case of an air raid. Ask students other ways they might prepare for a raid in order to protect themselves and their homes.
- What do Tomi and his friends have in common? How are they different? Ask each student to think about a special friend, and then take a sheet of paper and create two columns. In one column, list how they are similar to their friend. In the other column, list their differences. After this exercise is completed, have students write a one-page paper about the qualities that bind their friendship.

- Tomi is asked by his grandfather to save the family and the katana. (p. 222) What makes Tomi finally understand the meaning of the sword? Do you think his grandfather would have felt that Tomi was worthy of the sword? How does the katana give Tom the strength he needs to stand up to bully Keet Wilson?

EYES OF THE EMPEROR

- Eddy and Cobra capture a Japanese soldier off the coast of Hawaii. The Japanese soldier, Sakamaki, asks to be killed because he is deeply ashamed of his capture. (p. 111) Sakamaki lived by the bushido custom of ancient warriors who understood the shame of surrender and capture. (p. 113) Ask students to research the Japanese traditions of bushido and kamikaze. How did the values of these Japanese customs and traditions come into play during World War II?
- Eddy expresses gratitude over having friends like Cobra and Slim as his comrade on Cat Island. Ask students to consider the meaning of friendship—both in the book and in real life—and write a haiku about it. (This Japanese poem has three lines. The first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, and the third line has five



An ALA/ALSC Notable Children's Book

An ALA/YALSA Best Book for Young Adults

A *Kirkus Reviews* Best Children's Book

A New York Public Library Best Book for the Teen Age

syllables). The teacher should model writing a haiku for the class before having students write one of their own.

- Eddy has to survive a hideous experiment on Cat Island. He narrates that he is worried for his own safety and feels like nobody is looking out for him. Ask your students to help Eddy by preparing a survival pack for him. Have students work in groups to write a survival guide for the soldiers on Cat Island. Challenge students to assemble a survival kit for Eddy that contain everything he might need to face the physical and emotional challenges of his military mission.
- In a daring water rescue, Slim risks his life to save James from the rocky sea during a daunting storm. Eddy describes it as “the bravest thing I’d seen in the army so far.” (p. 207) Have students analyze this scene in the book. What motivated Slim? How is he courageous? Discuss how courageous acts don’t always have to be visible. Ask students to define courage in their own words and write a paragraph about the most courageous thing they have ever done or witnessed. As an extension activity, encourage students to

find articles and pictures of teenagers who have displayed courage and post them in the classroom.

EXPLORING THE NOVELS TOGETHER

- Analyze the battle scenes in both novels when Pearl Harbor is attacked. How does author Graham Salisbury construct the two scenes in similar or different ways? How does Salisbury’s description of the attack reflect, or differ from, historical accounts?
- How is cultural prejudice inflicted on characters in both novels? Ask students to brainstorm examples of cultural discrimination from both books. What gives both sets of characters the strength to deal with acts of prejudice? What motivates the American characters who discriminate against the Japanese Americans? How are the acts of racism in the novels similar to prejudice experienced by minority groups in America today?

The Witch of Blackbird Pond



ELIZABETH GEORGE SPEARE

A Newbery Medal Book

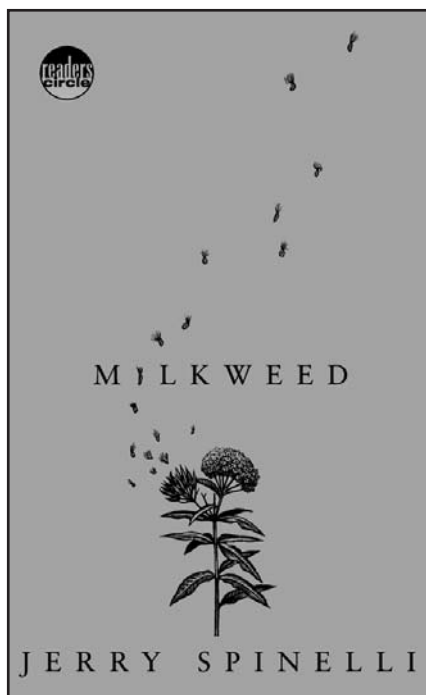
An ALA/ALSC Notable Children's Book

ABOUT THE BOOK

Kit Tyler must leave behind shimmering Caribbean islands to join the stern Puritan community of her relatives. She soon feels caged, until she meets the old woman known as the Witch of Blackbird Pond. But when their friendship is discovered, Kit herself is accused of witchcraft!

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Kit learns that people fear or dislike her because she is different. They distrust Hannah Tupper for the same reason. How is Hannah different from her neighbors? How is Kit different? How does being different contribute to Kit and Hannah's friendship? Ask students to consider how prejudices are formed. Have them write in their journals about a time when they have judged someone or been judged based on physical appearance.
- Kit enjoyed an easygoing and warm relationship with her grandfather when he was alive. They were openly affectionate with one another. Kit is startled to discover that her aunt and uncle have different ideas about relationships and communication. Have students compare and contrast Kit's relationship with her grandfather to that with her new family.
- Kit doesn't tell her aunt and uncle that she is visiting Hannah Tupper's house. She knows that they will forbid her to go. Yet Kit also knows that Hannah depends upon her for her well-being. Ask students to discuss whether it is ever right to be dishonest with one's family. How else could Kit have handled this situation so that she could be more truthful and still fulfill her commitment to Hannah Tupper?
- Mercy is left handicapped after a childhood illness. Have students locate references to Mercy's handicap in the novel. How does Mercy deal with her physical limitations? How do others treat her? Describe what Mercy's life would be like if she were living today.
- While Kit finds the treatment of children bewildering in Connecticut, she is surprised that colonists are appalled by her view on slavery. This use of irony is not an isolated example. Later in the novel, Kit refers to Hannah Tupper's home as a sanctuary, though others in her community label Tupper as evil. Speare uses paradox and irony to underscore the themes of the story. Locate other instances of these literary devices in the novel.



JERRY SPINELLI

An ALA/YALSA Best Book for Young Adults

An IRA Young Adult Choice

A NCSS-CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People

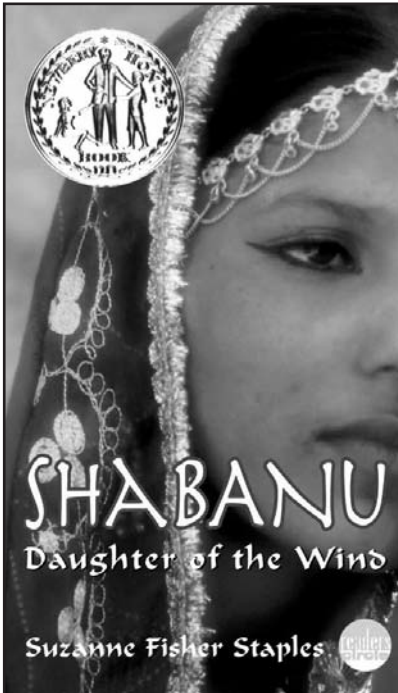
A Texas TAYSHAS High School Reading List Title

ABOUT THE BOOK

Young Misha Pilsudski lives on the streets of Warsaw, Poland, and struggles with his identity. When he enters the Jewish ghetto and sees firsthand the evil acts of Hitler's Nazi soldiers, he realizes it's safest of all to be nobody.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Uri advises Misha and the other homeless boys that an important survival skill is to remain invisible. How does Misha have a difficult time remaining invisible? What other survival skills do the boys employ? What does Misha teach the Milgroms about survival? What is the greatest threat to the survival of the Jews in the ghetto?
- Discuss what Misha Pilsudski means when he says, "Thanks to Uri, in a cellar beneath a barbershop somewhere in Warsaw, Poland, in autumn of the year 1939, I was born, you might say." (p. 31) How does the made-up story of his life become so important to him? How does Misha's identity change throughout the novel? What gives him a true identity at the end? Discuss Uncle Shepsel's efforts to give up his identity as a Jew. How is this related to survival?
- Uri is described as "fearless on the streets." (p. 80) What does Uri teach Misha about fear? Janina has led a privileged life and doesn't deal with fear until her family is moved to the ghetto. Discuss how Misha helps her cope with her new life. How does fear eventually kill Mrs. Milgrom? At what point in the novel does Misha display the most fear? How does he deal with it?
- Ask students to discuss how Misha's relationship with the Milgrom family changes throughout the novel. At what point does Mr. Milgrom invite him to become a part of the family? Why are Uncle Shepsel and Mrs. Milgrom so reluctant to accept Misha as family? Discuss how Misha's desire for family comes full circle by the end of the novel.
- Brainstorm the qualities of true friendship. Discuss the friendship that develops between Misha and Janina. Why is Misha such a good friend to the orphans? Why does Dr. Korczak, the head of the orphanage, call Misha a "foolish good-hearted boy"? (p. 65)
- When Misha comes to the United States, he shares his memories of his life in Poland on the street corner. He says that "running" is his first memory. (p. 1) What might he say is his last memory? Misha won't share Janina with his family, but he pays tribute to her memory by naming his granddaughter for her. Discuss why he wants to keep that memory to himself. Discuss the symbolism of the milkweed. How does planting milkweed at the end of his yard preserve his memories of Poland?



SUZANNE FISHER STAPLES

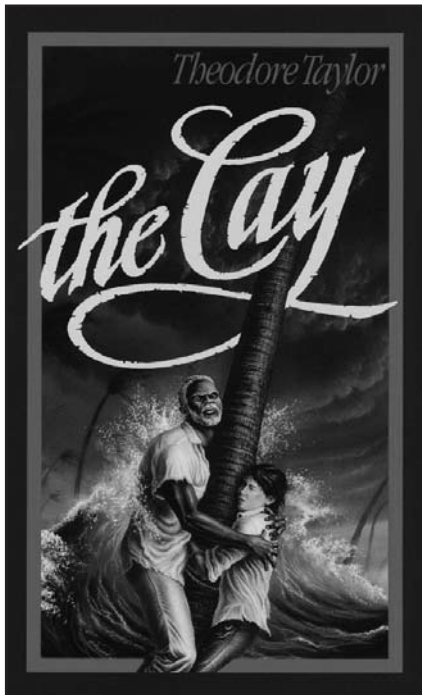
A Newbery Honor Book
 An ALA/YALSA Best Book for Young Adults
 A *Horn Book* Fanfare
 A *New York Times* Notable Book

ABOUT THE BOOK

Life is both sweet and cruel to strong-willed young Shabanu, whose home is the windswept Cholistan Desert of Pakistan. The second daughter in a family with no sons, she's been allowed freedoms forbidden to most Muslim girls. But when a tragic encounter with a wealthy and powerful landowner ruins the marriage plans of her older sister, Shabanu is called upon to sacrifice everything she's dreamed of.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- How is the life of Shabanu's family affected because the family has no male children? How is their financial well-being affected? Explain how having no brothers has shaped Shabanu. Do you believe that having a son is a high priority for a family in your culture?
- When Shabanu begins to realize that Guluband might be sold, Dadi says, "What Allah wills cannot be changed." (p. 49) How does Shabanu feel when it really happens? Why does she reject her impulse to take the animal and run away? (p. 56) Later, Shabanu has intellectually accepted her father's decision, but emotionally it is a different story. (p. 63) Explain why she feels she has lost her joy, her freedom, and her identity. How do you interpret her statement that the experience has taught her "both the strength of my will and its limits"? (p. 85) How does this foreshadow later events?
- Shabanu is the name of a princess. Considering our Shabanu's character and station in life, what is appropriate and inappropriate about her name? At the bazaar in Rahimyar Khan, do you think it is her name or her nature that causes the shopkeeper to give Shabanu the valuable gifts? (pp. 70–74) Defend your answer with examples from the story. The shopkeeper's kindness touches Shabanu's heart. Explain how her gratitude may be more important than the items themselves.
- A dilemma is any situation requiring a choice between equal—often equally unpleasant—alternatives. Explain Shabanu's dilemma when she and Phulan meet Nazir Mohammad and his hunters. Shabanu's choosing to save her sister from rape leads to the story's climax. On p. 154, why is Shabanu angry at her sister? "She was asking for it" is still used as a defense by rapists. Does Shabanu's anger show an antifeminist response or is she, too, a victim, but a victim of her culture?
- What is Sharma meant to represent in the story? Is she wise or simply a rebel? Shabanu faces her future armed only with Sharma's advice: "Keep your innermost beauty locked in your heart." (p. 217) What does this mean? Do you think it will protect Shabanu?



BY THEODORE TAYLOR

A Jane Addams Honor Book
 A California Young Reader Medal Winner
 A Kansas William Allen White Award Winner

ABOUT THE BOOK

When a freighter to the United States is torpedoed during World War II, an 11-year-old boy is blinded and stranded with an elderly black man who teaches him survival skills.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- The skills necessary for Phillip and Timothy to survive on the raft are very different from the skills they need on the cay. How does Timothy instinctively know what they must do? Discuss why Timothy feels so strongly about teaching Phillip survival skills once they are on the cay. At what point does Phillip feel that he has graduated from Timothy's survival course? How will Phillip's experiences on the cay and his relationship with Timothy help him survive in life?
- Discuss the many fearful scenes in the novel. At the beginning, Phillip's mother tries to protect him from fear, while his father tries to help him face it. Discuss how his mother's protective nature actually creates more fear in him. How does Timothy help Phillip deal with this emotion? Does Timothy have his own fears? How does Phillip's fear sometimes turn to loneliness?
- Phillip says, "At one point my fear turned to anger." (p. 46) Discuss the relationship between fear and anger. Why is Phillip angry with his mother? Phillip pushes Timothy to a fit of anger, and Timothy strikes him. Phillip says, "Something happened to me that day on the cay. I'm not quite sure what it was even now, but I had begun to change." (p. 72) Discuss what causes Phillip's outburst of anger. What do you think happened to Phillip that day?
- Ask students to define *courage*. Debate whether courage can be taught, or whether it is something innate. How does it take courage for Phillip to accept his blindness and learn to contribute to his own survival on the island?
- Ask students to identify direct quotes from the novel that indicate that Phillip is prejudiced. Explain what Timothy means when he says to Phillip, "[Your mother] started dis terrible wahr, eh, young bahss?" (p. 38) How are prejudices learned? Discuss how Timothy deals with Phillip's racial remarks.
- Ask students to describe Phillip's friendship with Henrik van Boven. How are their lives different? Explain what Phillip means at the end of the novel when he says, "I saw Henrik van Boven occasionally, but it wasn't the same as when we'd played the Dutch or the British. He seemed very young." (p. 136) Discuss Phillip's relationship with Timothy. At what point in the novel does Phillip begin to accept Timothy's friendship?



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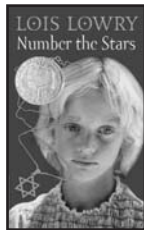
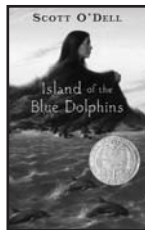
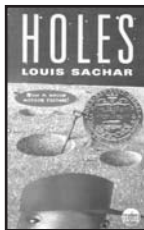
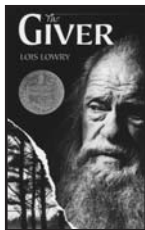


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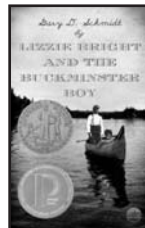
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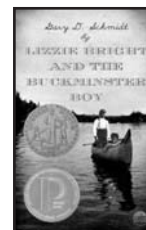
NEWBERY HONOR BOOKS



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Discussion questions on pages 2, 4–5, 9–15, 17, and 19 prepared by Pat Scales, children's literature consultant; pages 6–7 prepared by Pat Scales and Gary D. Schmidt, professor of English at Calvin College and children's book author; page 16 prepared by Teri Lesesne, professor of children's and young adult literature at Sam Houston State University; page 18 prepared by Willett Stanek, Ph.D., educational consultant.