

Book Review Discussion Questions



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Book reviews cover the content, themes and worldviews of fiction books, not their literary merit, and equip parents to decide whether a book is appropriate for their children. A book's inclusion does not constitute an endorsement by Focus on the Family. You can request a review of a title you can't find at reviewrequests@family.org.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Babylonne



This historical adventure book by Catherine Jinks is published by Candlewick Press and is written for kids ages 12 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What has Aunt Navarre taught Babylonne about the world? Does Babylonne believe there's any good in the world? What does she think about herself? How do her thoughts change after she meets Isidore? What does he think about the world, and what does he tell her?
2. What do Babylonne and Isidore do to keep Babylonne safe? Is it ever OK to lie? What does the Bible say about lying?
3. Why does Babylonne feel the need to dress like a boy? Why and how is Isidore different than the other men she knows?
4. What does Babylonne initially believe is required to get close to God? What does she learn from listening to Isidore's theological discussion with Gui, the prefect? What does she believe will happen to her if she dies?
5. Why does Babylonne scoff at the woman who is worshipping with amulets and relics? Is it wrong to worship that way? Why or why not? What does Isidore tell Babylonne to keep her from

judging this woman's worship methods? Do you know anyone who worships in a different way than you do? How can you tell if another way of worshipping is actually wrong or just different from yours?

6. How do most of the men and a few of the women in this book treat the opposite sex? How do they choose their words? Is it OK to make lewd and sexual comments? What does the Bible say about the kind of thoughts we should dwell on? What about the kind of talk that should come out of our mouths?
7. What fairytale does Babylonne make up in her head about herself? How does it change as the story goes on? What does she ultimately decide she wants out of life?
8. How do Isidore's behavior and personality win Babylonne over, despite her long-time hatred of Roman priests? What were some characteristics of Isidore that inspire Babylonne to be a better person? Which of these characteristics could you adopt to demonstrate Christ to others?
9. What would you think of Babylonne if you had met her at the beginning of the story? Did she seem like a nice person? Would you have wanted to be her friend? Why or why not? How would you have reacted to her hostility and vulgarity? What does Babylonne believe to be true about her parents? What does she learn later on? How do you think you'd feel if you never knew your parents?

Back to School



This Amish-life book is the second in the "Rachel Yoder" series by Wanda E. Brunstetter and is published by Barbour Publishing. *Back*

to School is written for kids ages 7 to 10.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What does Orlie do to Rachel from the first day of school forward? How does Rachel eventually retaliate? What could Rachel have done instead?
2. What does Rachel give Orlie as a peace offering? How does Orlie respond? How do his actions make Rachel feel?
3. How does Rachel feel when she finds out that she and Orlie will be Mary and Joseph in the Christmas play? What does Rachel do during the play? How does Orlie help her? How do his actions help them become friends?
4. How does teasing hurt and/or help others? Does anyone tease you? How does it make you feel? How do you respond?

Backstage Pass



This first friendship book in the “Chosen Girls” series by Cheryl Crouch is published by Zonderkidz. *Backstage Pass* is written for kids

ages 9 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Why was it so difficult for Mello to play the drums in front of other people?
2. How would her brother have felt if he could have seen her on the video?
3. Have you ever felt jealous because one of your close friends became a good friend of someone else? What did you do?
4. What are some good things about having a couple of close friends rather than just one best friend?
5. Do you know anyone like Makayla, who enjoys making others feel bad? Why do you think some people act that way? Why would anyone choose to be a “follower” of someone who is so cruel to others?
6. Chosen Girls made better music and built stronger friendships when they started praying together. Do you have any friends you could pray with? Or can you think of some things you’d like to pray about on your own (or with me)?

The Bad Beginning



This adventure, or what some refer to as a dark comedy, is the first book in “A Series of Unfortunate Events” by Lemony Snicket and is published by

HarperEntertainment, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. *The Bad Beginning* is written for kids ages 10 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. As one of the Baudelaire kids, would you have relied on any of the adults in the story? Why or why not? Why is it important to have trustworthy adults in your life? Which grown-ups in your world could you talk to if you had a problem?
2. Why do you think the children’s friends had stopped writing or visiting the kids after their parents’ deaths? Have you ever had a friend who lost a loved one or was going through a tough time? How hard was it to find the right thing to say to him or her? What are some things you can do to help struggling friends, instead of avoiding them?
3. Why did Klaus think he could solve any problem if he read enough books? How did Klaus’ and Violet’s love of reading and knowledge help them in this book? Are the solutions to all of life’s problems found in books? Explain your answer. Who is the ultimate source of answers when you are struggling?

4. Why did Violet feel responsible for Klaus and Sunny? Do you ever feel like it is your job to look after your siblings? Why or why not?
5. Why did Count Olaf do such evil things to the Baudelaire kids? What did he want more than anything else? Have you ever known anyone who let greed rule his or her life? What was the person like? What dangers do we face when we put all of our energy into getting money or other material items?

Bad Idea: a novel with coyotes



This contemporary book is the first in the “Bad Ideas” series by Todd and Jedd Hafer and is published by NavPress. *Bad Idea: a novel with coyotes* is written

for teens.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Griff has a lot of problems. What do you think would have happened if Griff had communicated some of his issues to his dad? Do you think his dad would have understood if, for example, Griff told him how much he was bothered by the way Rhonda talked and dressed?
2. Counselors often say that sarcasm is a sign of anger. Do you think this is true in Griff’s case? Cite some instances from the story where this might be true.

- When life seems hopeless to you, what are some healthy ways to cope? What are some things that feel beyond your control? How do you react to these negative events? How do they affect your life?
- In the face of overwhelming problems, what are some choices Griff could have made that would have diminished the effect of his problems? How mature is Griff? Is Griff mature enough to make better choices? Give an example.
- How is Amanda different than Griff? Do you admire Amanda for her strength or does she act self-righteous? What would you do in her place?

The Basilisk's Lair



This fantasy book is the second in the “Nathaniel Fludd, Beastologist” series by R.L. LaFevers and is published by Houghton Mifflin

Books for Children, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. *The Basilisk's Lair* is written for kids ages 7 to 11 years.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

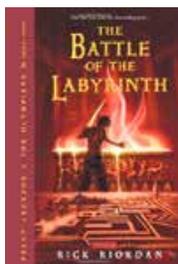
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

- Why does Aunt Phil make Nate join her in various stages of their basilisk hunt when he would rather wait outside or go home? What does she want to teach him? What is something you have learned through experience

instead of just hearing about it? Will Nate learn more from his experiences or from hearing Aunt Phil talk about hers?

- What are some characteristics of Aunt Phil that make her a good adventurer and beastologist? What kind of a guardian is Aunt Phil?
- Is Nate a good beastologist? How does he grow from the beginning to the end of the story? Where does he still have room for improvement?

The Battle of the Labyrinth



This fantasy adventure is the fourth book in the “Percy Jackson and the Olympians” series by Rick Riordan and is published by Hyperion Books

for Children, an imprint of the Disney Book Group. *The Battle of the Labyrinth* is written for kids ages 10 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

- What does Dionysus mean when he tells Percy that sometimes a kind act can be as powerful as a sword? Give an example of a generous action that could wield great power.
- What does Annabeth mean when she says children of Athena should be wise, not just clever? What's the difference between

cleverness and wisdom? What does God call His children to be?

- What is significant about Percy's interaction with his father, Poseidon? What do his father's words of affirmation mean to him? What is unique and special about the relationship between a child and his or her father? What role does your father play in your life?
- Which characters hold grudges and seek revenge? Why are these behaviors harmful and dangerous? What can happen to you and others when you fail to forgive? What does the Bible say about forgiveness?

The Battle for Skandia



This fantasy adventure is the fourth book in the “Ranger's Apprentice” series by John Flanagan and is published by Puffin Books, a division of

Penguin Young Readers Group. *The Battle for Skandia* is written for kids ages 9 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

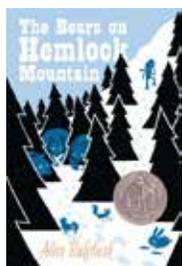
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

- Describe the relationship between the countries of Araluen and Skandia. How does this relationship affect the interactions between Halt and Erak? Why are they able to overcome their differences? Talk about a time when you had to work with someone with whom you do not get along.

What helped the situation? What didn't help?

2. How do good relationships among people help them succeed in the battle against the Temujai? What relationships would you like to improve? How can a good relationship with Jesus help you in your relationships with others?
3. What vow does Ragnak make to the Vallas? What reaction does he expect from his gods if he breaks the vow? What would God's reaction be if you failed at something and sinned? Read 1 John 1:9 and discuss.
4. How are the Temujais' and the Skandians' fighting styles different? Do you tend to strategize like the Temujai or rush into things like the Skandians? Which approach do you think is more successful and why? How can prayer fit into a successful strategy?

The Bears on Hemlock Mountain



This slice-of-life story by Alice Dalgliesh is published by Charles Scribner's Sons Books for Young Readers, part of the Macmillan Publishing

Company and is written for kids ages 6 to 9 years.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. How does Jonathan feel when Ma asks him to go over Hemlock

Mountain? When have you been afraid and had to face one of your fears head on? What happened?

2. How does Jonathan end up on the mountain after dark? How might he have avoided being there in the dark and running into bears? What kinds of things distract you when you are supposed to be doing something your parents asked?
3. How does Uncle James set a good example for Jonathan about the way to treat animals? When have you set a good example for a younger child? Why is it important to do that

Beastly



Beastly is a contemporary fairytale written by Alex Flinn and published by Harper Teen, a division of Harper Collins Publishers. The book is written for ages 14 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What type of characteristics do the media promote as important? What characteristics does God look at?
2. Compare how Linda views school and how the privileged kids view it. Why is a good education so important to Linda?
3. Discuss 1 Timothy 6:10 "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." How do the characters demonstrate this?

4. How does Kyle pick friends in the beginning of the book? How do Will and Magda show him what true friendship is? What characteristics are important to you when choosing a friend or considering a relationship with someone?

Beautiful Creatures



This teen fantasy book by Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl is the first in the "Caster Chronicles" series and is published by Little, Brown, and

Company, a division of the Hachette Book Group. *Beautiful Creatures* is written for kids ages 12 years and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

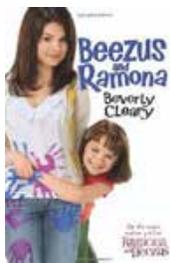
1. Why do the citizens of Gatlin refer to the Civil War as either The War Between the States or The War of Northern Aggression? Why do the Wates call it the Civil War? How does this difference affect the Wate family and the other people in Gatlin? Why do the citizens of Gatlin place such importance on events like Civil War reenactments? What historical events still affect your town or your family? Why might that be?
2. Why does Ethan say that seeing Lena makes him think of how much he is like all the other kids at school? In what ways does Ethan try to distinguish himself from his peers? Why is Ethan distressed to find that he fits in with the other kids in Gatlin

more than he stands out from them? Why does Lena's Uncle Macon disapprove of her choice to interact with the townspeople of Gatlin? What was one time that we did not approve of your friends? How did that make you feel? How did you respond to our views?

3. Why does Ethan say he does not want to be stuck in his hometown, as his father is? Why does Mr. Wate stay in his study all day long? In what ways does Amma stand in as the parent in Ethan's life? How does Mr. Wate explain his own behavior when Ethan discovers that he has lied about writing his next novel? Do you suspect that someone around you is still grieving or is depressed? How do you respond to this? How does Ethan respond?
4. Why do Amma and Macon Ravenwood think it is dangerous for Ethan and Lena to be together? Why does Macon avoid telling Lena that Sarafine is her mother? Would Lena have been better able to protect herself if she had known the truth, or was she better off not knowing that her mother is evil?
5. Why does Ridley resent Lena? What was Ridley and Lena's relationship before Ridley was Claimed? Does Ridley still retain any of her affection for Lena? Why does Ridley arrange for the Gatlin students to throw a birthday party for Lena? Why does Ridley choose to spare Mitchell Wate's life when Link asks her to stop influencing him? Does Ridley still have the ability to choose between right and wrong?
6. Light and Dark Casters have no choice about whether they will become good or evil. What does God's word say about human free will? Do you have a choice to do

right or wrong, or is the choice already made for you?

Beezus and Ramona



This humorous book is not in a series but is the first in a collection of eight books with Ramona Quimby as the main character. Written by Beverly Cleary, the "RamonaAndHenryHuggins" Ramona Collection is published by HarperTrophy, which is an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. *Beezus and Ramona* is written for kids ages 8 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What does Ramona say when the librarian asks about the kind of work Ramona's father does? Why does the librarian laugh at Ramona's answer? What do you tell people when they about your father's job?
2. How does Ramona sign her name? Why does she write it on the pages of a library book? Do you remember learning to write your name? Was it easy or hard to do? Where could you write your name? Where couldn't you write your name?
3. What makes Fridays special for Beezus and Ramona? What is your favorite day of the week? Why?
4. Why do people say that Ramona has an imagination "a mile long"? Is it possible to measure

imagination? Can a person have "too much imagination," as Mr. Quimby says that Ramona does? How much imagination do you have? How do you use it?

5. What makes Ramona's mother start counting to 10? How does Ramona act when her mother is counting? How does your mother respond when you don't do what you're told to do?
6. Why doesn't Ramona's mother punish her for taking a bite out of the apples in the basement? How does Ramona feel when no one punishes her for being naughty? Was this a fair way to treat Ramona? Why or why not?
7. What gives Ramona the idea of putting her doll in the oven? Have you ever done something just for fun and had it turn out badly? How did you feel afterward?
8. Why does Beezus say that she sometimes doesn't love her sister? Do you sometimes feel this way about those in your family? Do you think they sometimes feel this way about you?

Being Nikki



This teen chick-lit book is the second in the "Airhead" series by Meg Cabot and is published by Point, a division of Scholastic, Inc. *Being Nikki* is written for kids ages 12 and older.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What causes or beliefs were important to Em before her accident? How would you react if, like her, you were forced to act against many of your values and beliefs in order to keep your family safe?
2. What kind of person was Em before she took over Nikki's body? In what ways, both positive and negative, has she changed since becoming a supermodel?
3. What if you suddenly had an opportunity to be a celebrity? What would you want to do? Who would you want to meet? Why did Em seem so unhappy with her new life that she actually thought of suicide to get out of her predicament? If you were in Em's place, how would you try to escape the constraints of her circumstances?
4. Why does Em have some doubts when Christopher professes his feelings for her? How much of a part does physical attractiveness play when you fall for someone? Could you like (or have you liked) someone who wasn't overly beautiful? Why or why not? Do you think physically attractive people have an easier time in life than those who aren't? Explain your answer.
5. What impact does Em's new life have on her younger sister, Frida? How does Frida behave around Em's celebrity friends? What kind of negative consequences could come from Frida (and even 17-year-old Em) being surrounded by alcohol, immorality and frivolous attitudes about money and fame? How might your behavior and choices

influence younger siblings, relatives or friends?

6. Which characters commit crimes? What do they do? Do all of the illegal acts seem equally wrong, or are some (such as Christopher's quest to destroy Stark) portrayed as justifiable? What does the Bible say about how people should respond to the laws of the land?
7. How does Em feel about posing in bikinis and lingerie? Why does she feel OK about dressing seductively to get Christopher's attention? Why are dressing and behaving modestly important? How can you be attractive and modest at the same time?
8. Why, in this book and in the media, do fame and alcohol use so often go together? How did you feel about all of the drinking and partying that took place? What does the Bible say about these issues? What are some of the potential consequences of these behaviors?

The Believer



This Christian historical romance book is by Ann H. Gabhart and is published by Revell, a division of the Baker Publishing Group. *The Believer* is not

age-level ranked. It has been marketed for adults and young adults.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What does Elizabeth pray for after her father dies? How is a seed packet the answer to her prayers? Describe a time when you needed God's direction and asked for it. How did God answer your prayers?
2. What is Ethan's fear about his biological father? Is this a logical concern? Why or why not? What Scriptures would you use to help him understand that he is a new creature in Christ?
3. What do the Shakers do to keep separate from the world? What do they do to be in the world but not a part of it? How do their actions line up with what the Bible says? How do they not line up with what the Bible says?
4. How does Elizabeth's family view Hannah's free spirit? How does the Shaker community view it? How can two views about the same person be so different? How do you think God views Hannah?
5. Why does Elizabeth leave the Shaker community? How does she hope her actions will protect Ethan? What would you have done if you were in her place?
6. Why does Ethan leave the Shakers? After he saves Elizabeth from Colton Linely, why does he feel stuck? What makes his decision so difficult? How does your training as a child affect what you do as an adult? Do you think Ethan made the right choice? Why or why not?

Below the Surface



This Christian mystery/crime novel by Tim Shoemaker is the third in the Code of Silence trilogy and is published by Zonderkidz, a division of

Zondervan. *Below the Surface* is written for kids ages 8 to 13.

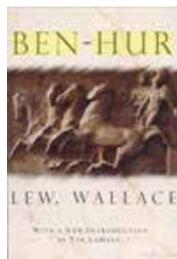
Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Why has Cooper developed a fear of swimming underwater where it's dark? Who tries to help Cooper overcome his fear? When does Cooper decide to stop burying his fear and face it? What does Cooper focus on when he and Lunk swim under the boat to get the camera? What fear would you like to face? How can we help you do that?
2. Near the end of the book, Hiro has a sense of fear about going out in the storm to meet Cooper, but she ignores it. What happens to her as a result? How can fear protect you and be a warning about danger? When has a sense of fear kept you from danger?
3. What did Hiro's father do for a living before he died? How is Hiro like her father? How many 14- or 15-year-old kids actually put themselves in the kind of danger that Hiro and her friends do and solve crimes? Why don't the teens seek more help from their parents? When have you or someone you know been in a dangerous situation?

4. Why does Hiro leave the condo alone at 10:30 p.m. to meet Cooper? Why isn't that wise? Why might Hiro's mother have a curfew for her daughter? Why is it especially unsafe for her to be out alone at night? What is your curfew? How might your curfew be there to protect you?
5. At the fair, why doesn't Hiro want to go on any rides? Why does she eventually give in? What are some things you or someone you know have been pressured to do? What are some healthy ways to react in that type of situation?
6. Why doesn't Lunk feel as if he fits in with his new friends? Do you know of anyone in an abusive situation? Why is it important to share that type of information with safe adults? Whom do you know who might feel left out like Lunk did? How could you make a difference in that person's life?

Ben-Hur



This historical adventure book by Lew Wallace is published by Signet Books and is written for adults but is sometimes studied by high school classes.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

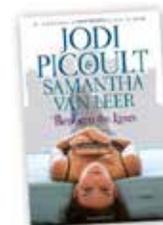
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. A key theme in this story is revenge. Initially, Ben-Hur is driven by his desire to avenge his sister's and mother's "deaths." What changes Ben-Hur's

perspective on vengeance? What does the Bible say about revenge?

2. What turns the friendly relationship between Ben-Hur and Messala into a bitter rivalry? Have you ever struggled with a friend because one (or both) of you developed a new belief system? How did you handle this?
3. What did Ben-Hur believe about Christ and His purpose? What event makes him believe otherwise?
4. Why doesn't Amrah, a former servant of the Hur family, tell Ben-Hur when she discovers that his mother and sister are alive? What makes her change her mind?
5. What happens to Messala in the end?
6. What makes Arrius interested in Ben-Hur?
7. What lessons can we learn from the way Ben-Hur acted, even as a prisoner?
8. How is life in the Grove of Daphne like life in America? Do you see any behaviors or ways of thinking that seem similar?
9. What do you think of Wallace's account of the Crucifixion? How is this account different to or the same as the way you have heard it before?

Between the Lines



This teen romance by Jodi Picoult and her teen daughter, Samantha van Leer, is published by Simon Pulse/Emily Bestler Books/Atria, divisions of Simon &

Schuster Inc., and is written for kids ages 12 and older.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What attracts Delilah and Oliver to each other? What do they have in common? Oliver and Edgar are identical. Why isn't Delilah attracted to him?
2. How does Delilah's obsession with her book and Oliver impact her relationship with Jules? With her mom? Was her mother justified in worrying about her daughter?
3. How would you describe Jessamyn and Edgar's relationship? How could it have been improved? How would you describe our relationship? How could it be improved?

Beyond the Deepwoods



This first fantasy book in the "The Edge Chronicles" by Paul Stewart and David Almond is published by Random House Children's Books.

Beyond the Deepwoods is written for kids ages 9 to 11.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. When is it good to "stray from the path" as Twig did?
2. When is it better to follow the known path?
3. Adopted children could find Spelda's behavior (in sending Twig away) disconcerting. Parents may wish to address the fact that adoption is a permanent decision.
3. How do all of the deception and lying in the contest begin to take a toll on Dan and Amy? What makes them recognize that they are becoming like the other Cahills? How do they turn things around? What are some ways you can you recognize when your behavior is leading you down a dangerous path? How can you make positive changes to get back on track?

Beyond the Grave



This mystery adventure book by Jude Watson is the fourth book in "The 39 Clues" series and is published by Scholastic, Inc. *Beyond the Grave*

is written for kids ages 9 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Have you ever had a physical problem, like Dan does with his asthma? Did it bother you or keep you from doing all the things you wanted to do? What did you do about it? Or have you known someone who had a physical struggle that slowed him or her down? How can you be sensitive and kind to a person like this?
2. Why does it bother Dan so much that his sister likes to follow rules? Why do we have rules, such as those given to us by God and our parents? How do they help us? Is it possible to be too focused on rules? Explain your answer.
4. Why does Amy begin to distrust Grace and her motives? What helps her to realize that Grace has always been on her side? Which characters turn out to be trustworthy and which don't? How would you feel if someone told you (as Grace's lawyer warned Dan and Amy) never to trust anyone. In whom or what in your life can you safely put your trust?
5. Why are Dan's and Amy's memories of their grandmother so important? What kept Amy from retaining some of the special memories Dan has of Grace? Have you ever found yourself so concerned about silly things that you missed the beauty of an ordinary day with friends or family? How can you be more aware of, and more thankful for, each day?
6. What kind of a role model is Grace? Was she a good grandmother when she was alive? Should she, as Alistair suggests, have protected Dan and Amy more from the Cahills and the search for the clues? Was it wise for her to encourage young children to embark on such a dangerous hunt, on which they've had to lie, steal and cheat to succeed?
7. How does Amy feel when she realizes that the Cahills were behind dangerous inventions like chemical warfare and the

atomic bomb? Why does she feel so terrible? How does Bae Oh respond to Amy's feelings? Do you think evil can be embedded into a person's DNA? Is a person responsible for what his or her ancestors have done? What are some of the good choices your ancestors made, and how can you learn from them? What are some poor choices, and how can you learn from those?

8. What emotions does Irina struggle with in this book? What causes her to ponder death and rebirth? What choices has she made that led her to what she considers small, dark places? Can Irina change? Will she? Have you or someone you know found yourself in a bad place in life that you don't feel you can get out of? Where can you go for help?
9. What does Amy do when she and Dan are trapped and she doesn't feel brave? Can acting brave make you feel braver? Have you ever tried it? If so, explain what happened.
10. What did you learn about Egyptian history, customs and beliefs from this story? What have you learned about Egypt from the Bible? How do the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians differ from your beliefs about death and the afterlife?

Beyond the Reflection's Edge



This first Christian fantasy book in the "Echoes from the Edge" series by Bryan Davis is published by Zonderkidz. *Beyond the Reflection's Edge* is

written for kids 14 to 18.

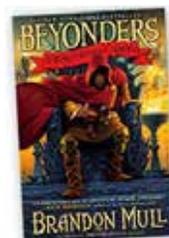
Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Nathan's father says courage doesn't mean not being afraid, but it means not letting fear keep you from doing what you have to do. How have you had to overcome fear to accomplish something?
2. Kelly does a lot of lying in her efforts to keep herself and Nathan out of trouble. How necessary are her lies? How does Nathan react to her lies? Is lying ever a godly option?
3. Kelly had a hard time hearing the words "I love you." What do you think kept her from accepting love? How difficult would it be to accept God's love if you feared love?
4. Nathan believes that by showing Kelly love, he can help her discover God's love. When do our demonstrations of love bring others closer to God? When does our love for someone who isn't a Christian pull us further from God? How is this complicated in a boy/girl relationship?

5. In light of Kelly's past, her parents' indiscretion and Nathan's efforts to be pure in heart, parents could also discuss the issues of sexual purity and love vs. lust.

Beyonders: A World Without Heroes



This fantasy book by Brandon Mull is the first in the "Beyonders" trilogy and is published by Aladdin, a division of Simon & Schuster. *Beyonders: A*

World Without Heroes is written for kids ages 8 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

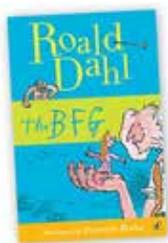
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. How does Jason perform while pitching in baseball practices? Why does he lose his nerve when he has to pitch in official games? Does the pressure to perform well ever make you nervous? What do you think could help you at those times?
2. Why do the Giddy Nine want to go over the waterfall? Why are spectators hesitant to stop the raft? Why does the leader of the rescue squad tell Jason that he can only rescue the Giddy Nine if they specifically request to be rescued? What would you do if you someone you wanted to save didn't want to be saved?
3. How do "the Word" that is supposed to render Maldor powerless and the Word of God compare to each other? Which one has more power? How has

the Word of God been powerful in your life?

4. Why does Galloran say that sacrificing for the greater good makes a person a hero, rather than physical strength or magical abilities? Does Jason think he has the qualities of a hero? Why does Jason tell Ferrin that he decided to stay in Lyrian and fight against Maldor instead of merely trying to find his own way home? What is your definition of a hero? What do you think God's definition of a hero would be? How could you be a hero?
5. Why do so many of Maldor's enemies give up their quest to defeat him? In what ways can the Eternal Feast seem like sin, which distracts people from their goal of following God's commands? Why is Maldor so intent on making his enemies into his allies, and getting them to work for his cause when they once opposed him? What has distracted or tempted you from reaching a goal or doing what God wants you to do? What could you do to avoid those distractions and temptations?

The BFG



This humorous fantasy tale by Roald Dahl is published by Puffin Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group and is written for kids ages 7 to 11.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Why are the other giants so mean to the BFG? What do they do and say to him? When have you been pushed around or called names by a bully? What should you do if a bully is mistreating you?
2. According to the BFG, what horrible thing do humans do to one another that other creatures — even giants — don't? Who do the giants kill? Why is it important to protect children from the giants?
3. What does Sophie expect the BFG to do with her when he first takes her from the orphanage? What does he do instead? Why does he choose to live differently from the other giants? If you are a Christian, how do you choose to live differently from some of the other kids you know? When has it been hard for you to be like Jesus instead of like other people?
4. Why do Sophie and the BFG need the Queen of England's help? How has an adult helped you with a problem? What kinds of problems are too big for children to solve on their own? How might an adult help children who are facing those problems?

The Big Bike Mystery



This Christian mystery is the second book in "The New Sugar Creek Gang" series by Pauline Hutchens Wilson and Sandy Dengler and is published

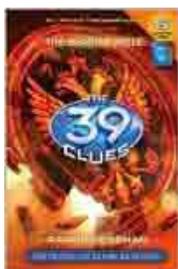
by Moody Publishers. *The Big Bike Mystery* is written for kids ages 8 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What happened to Bits' computer, and what did she tell Les? Why did she lie? How did she react when Les confronted her with the truth? Have you ever lied to get your way? What did you learn from the experience? Why doesn't God want you to lie to get your way?
2. How did Bits feel after Les caught her lying? Why wasn't she remorseful? How does rebellion cause people to behave? Describe a time when you tricked someone. How did you feel afterward? What does the Bible say about repentance? How is saying you are sorry for doing something the same as or different than feeling sorrow over doing it?
3. What did the Sugar Creek Gang want to buy? What did they do to purchase the bikes? How have you worked for something you wanted? How did you reach or give up on your goal? Was it worth it?
4. What did Les and his friends discover about what they saw in an ad? Have you seen ads that were not true? How can you guard against believing everything you see in ads or on TV?
5. How did little things play a big part in the church fire? How do little things play a part in your life? What are some little things to God?

The Black Circle



This mystery adventure book by Patrick Carman is the fifth book in “The 39 Clues” series and is published by Scholastic, Inc. *The Black Circle* is

written for kids ages 9 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What did you learn about Russia from this story? What did you learn about Rasputin and the Russian royal family? What do you know about Russian history? Which site or historical person in this book would you most like to learn more about?
2. How does Dan react when the kids receive a gold credit card? How does Amy respond? Why does she later find it easier to use the card? What would you buy if someone gave you a credit card with all the money you wanted? How can credit cards be dangerous? What is materialism, and what kind of problems can it cause? What does the Bible say about money?
3. What kind of father is Eisenhower Holt? Why is he so concerned about Hamilton working with Dan and Amy? What was Eisenhower’s father like? How do you think a person’s relationship with his parents can impact the kind of parent he becomes? Why is Irina so cold-hearted? Why is it sometimes easier to understand people’s

motives when you know something about their past?

4. Why does Nataliya risk so much to help Dan and Amy, even to the point of betraying her own Lucian branch? What impresses her about the kids? Why is it important to be able to work with others and not try to accomplish everything on your own?
5. When Nataliya offers to give Dan and Amy information about their parents and how they died, why don’t they accept her offer immediately? What are they afraid of? How do they feel as they make this decision? If you were them, what would you have chosen? What kinds of things might you be better off not knowing? Who can help you when the realities of life seem frightening or overwhelming?
6. How do you think all of the clues Dan and Amy have found will ultimately fit together? Are they being given a formula for something? What might it be? What will life look like for the winners of the 39 clues contest?

The Black Paw



This animal adventure novel by Heather Vogel Frederick is the first in the “Spy Mice” series and is published by Simon & Schuster Books for Young

Readers, an imprint of the Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing Division. *The Black Paw* is written for kids ages 8 to 11 years.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Why is Glory embarrassed that she is part house mouse? Why is Oz embarrassed by his name? What does Julius tell them both? When have you felt embarrassed about your heritage, family, income level or some other trait that makes you different from others? What does the Bible say about our true identity?
2. What have Oz’s past school experiences been like? How does he feel about himself at the beginning of the book? Who and/or what helps Oz change his opinion of himself throughout the story?

Black, White, Other



This coming-of-age drama by Joan Steinau Lester is published by Zondervan and is written for kids ages 13 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

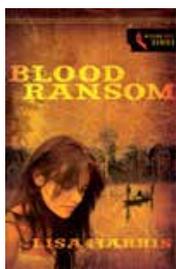
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Nina feels that God spoke to her through Sarah’s story. What are some ways that God speaks to you?
2. Why does Nina feel the need to run away? If you were Nina, would you have run away? If not, what would you have done instead?
3. Nina sees one of her “friends” steal something from a store. What would you have done in

Nina's place after she is falsely accused of stealing the item her friend stole?

4. Nina feels torn between being "black" and "white." Why does she feel the need to choose between the two? Have you ever felt torn between two groups? How did you feel?
5. Nina was surprised when her father began to express a negative attitude toward white people. Unknowingly, how does he insult her by saying these things? How do his words make her struggle to find herself more difficult?

Blood Ransom



This Christian romance and adventure book is the first in the "Mission Hope" series by Lisa Harris and is published by Zondervan. *Blood*

Ransom is written for readers ages 18 and older.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. When you think of someone being a missionary, what do you envision? How does this novel confirm or deny your idea?
2. What do you know about human trafficking? How is it a problem in the world today? What have others done about this problem? What can you do about it?
3. What does Natalie know might happen if she tries to bring the photos of the ghost soldiers to

the right people? Why does she do it anyway when she knows her life will be put in danger? Does she do the right thing? What would you have done in her place? Who or what enables her to have the courage to do what she does?

4. Natalie, Chad and Joseph each see the Lord answer their prayers. For whom does that make the biggest difference? Why?
5. If you could be a missionary either in a war-torn country like Dhambizao or a "safe" country like Canada, which would be your first choice? Why?
6. Although Dhambizao is a fictitious place, there are countries that are similar to it. Can you name some? You may never be called to be a missionary to any of these countries, so what can you do to make a difference to the people of such countries now?

The Body of Christopher Creed



This coming of age book by Carol Plum-Ucci is published by Harcourt Children's Books, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and written for kids

ages 13 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Torey is disturbed that his friends' responses to Christopher's

disappearance are so callous. When your friends say thoughtless things or make inappropriate jokes, how do you feel? What do you say to them?

2. Torey thinks that Bo is mature because he defends Ali and makes lunches for his siblings. What are signs of maturity?
3. Torey's mother says the people of Steepleton destroyed Bob Haines by blaming him for his son's disappearance because it was easier than admitting they were partly at fault. Which of your actions or words have hurt others? How can you make things right?
4. When Isabella leaves a message that she would be at the mall with her mother, Torey assumes that she leads a sheltered life, much like Christopher. When he meets Isabella, he realizes that her situation is different and says, "It's amazing how things can be so different from how they sound." How might others misunderstand you or your actions? How have you misunderstood the actions or relationships of others?

The Book of Names: A Novel



This fantasy book is first in the "Legends of Karac Tor" series by D. Barkley Briggs and is published by NavPress, a division of The Navigators. *The*

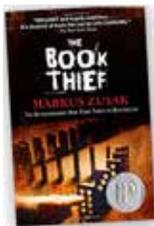
Book of Names: A Novel is written for kids ages 13 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Why don't Hadyn and Ewan want to share their discovery of the stone arch? How do they ask their dad for help in deciphering the ancient words written on the stone opening to the portal without telling him the whole truth? How would the outcome of the story have been different if they had told their father about their findings right away? What kinds of things do you keep from your parents [us]? How might something have been different if you had told your parents [us]??
2. How do you know that Hadyn and Ewan are still grieving over the death of their mother? How does Hadyn's sorrow play into Nemesia's plans to make him one of the Nameless? What roles do Ewan and the importance of family play in saving Hadyn from Nemesia's grasp? How important is your family to you?
3. How do you know that Archibald wants to do what is best for the people of Karac Tor? What or who distracts him? How are the sly words of his adviser, Jonas, hurtful to Archibald? What are Jonas' motivations for keeping Archibald from taking action against the evil in the realm? What strategy does Jonas use to do this? Why are his actions particularly effective on Archibald?
4. Why does Hadyn declare that he and his brothers will fight for Karac Tor? What have Hadyn and Ewan learned during their time there? From what you've read about the four brothers, why might they have been chosen as champions for Aion?

The Book Thief



This historical novel by Markus Zusak is published by Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, a division of Random House Publishing. It is written for ages 12

and up.

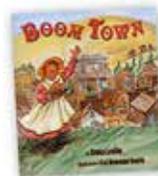
Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. There is an old saying, "Actions speak louder than words." How do Rosa's actions say what her words do not? How does Hans use his words and actions? Do you let your words or actions speak for you? Explain.
2. Death can't understand how human beings can be so beautiful and yet so ugly. What did Death see as beautiful? What did he see as ugly? Read Romans 7:21-25. What does the apostle Paul say on the subject?
3. Hans, Liesel and Max struggle with feelings of guilt. How does guilt affect Hans? Liesel? Max? What does it motivate each of them to do? Have you ever suffered a guilty conscience? What does God want us to do with our guilt? (See Philippians 3:13-14 and 1 Timothy 1:12-17.)
4. Hans is called a coward for not belonging to the Nazi party and defending Germany. Was Hans a coward? What actions prove him otherwise? What are some ways that you may be called on to be brave in our society?

5. Liesel comes to realize that words are a powerful tool that can be used for good or evil. How are words used for good in this book? How are they used for evil? Think about our society. How do you think the media use words to sway people to certain opinions? Do you think words still have as much impact today?

Boom Town



This beginning reader by Sonia Levitin, with illustrations by Cat Bowman Smith, is published by Orchard Books and is written for kids ages 5 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Why does Amanda grow bored? How does she overcome her boredom? What are some creative things you can do when you're bored?
2. If you moved into a small town as Amanda did, what kind of business would you want to open, or what kind of products would you like to make? Why might people buy these products from you?
3. How does Amanda's father try to earn money? Why does he decide to work as a baker rather than continuing to mine for gold? How might his decision help his family?

The Borrowers



This fantasy book by Mary Norton is the first in the “Borrowers” series and is published by Harcourt Children’s Books, an imprint of Harcourt, Inc. *The*

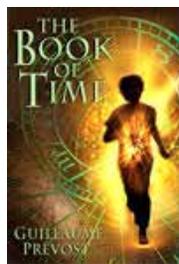
Borrowers is written for kids ages 8 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. How do the Borrowers define the difference between stealing and borrowing? How do they defend borrowing from humans? Why won’t they “borrow” things that might be missed later? Explain.
2. How does Mrs. Driver show her Borrower tendency with some of her mistress’s things? Where should the line be drawn for her? Why?
3. Why do Pod and Homily keep so many gates up through the corridors of their house? What is good about the gates? What might be bad about them? When does too much freedom become dangerous? When might too many limits become dangerous as well? How would you define what makes for wise limits?
4. What does Arrietty learn from the Boy? Why might the idea that the world doesn’t revolve around either Arrietty or the Boy surprise both children? When did you understand that the world doesn’t revolve around you?
5. How does greed play a role in this story? When do things get out of hand? What might greed look like in your life? How could that greed hurt you? Why does God want us to be content with what we have?
6. Why does Mrs. Driver react like she does? Why doesn’t she believe the Boy? Why is she so determined to catch the Clocks? Tell about a time when you reacted like Mrs. Driver and your reaction was wrong.

The Book of Time



This time-travel mystery, the first book translated from the French “The Book of Time” trilogy by Guillaume Prévost, is published by Arthur A. Levine

Books, an imprint of Scholastic, Inc. *The Book of Time* is written for kids ages 9 to 13.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What modern invention does Sam compare to the time machine? How is the Internet like a time machine? In what ways does it teach you about the past? In what ways does it fail to give you an accurate picture of history?
2. What interesting things about history did you learn by reading this book? When reading a story like this, how can you find out whether the historical information included is factual or the author’s imagination?
3. What lies does Sam tell to his grandparents, his aunt and her boyfriend? What lies does he tell to the people in other times? How could he have done what he needed to do without lying? What would you have done in those situations? At one point, Sam says he’s so used to lying that he’s figured out how to tell stories vague enough to earn him sympathy without getting him in trouble. What’s wrong with doing that? Why does he take pride in being a good liar? What does the Bible say about lying? Should you take pride in being a good liar?
4. How does Sam escape the bully, Monk, from his judo class? If he hadn’t been able to see slightly into the future to anticipate Monk’s moves, what would have happened in the judo competition? Does Sam really win the match? Since you don’t have Sam’s special abilities, what would you say or do to handle a bully like Monk?
5. Of Sam’s relationships, which are loving, positive and respectful? Which are not? What happens because of the disrespectful relationships? How does God want you to treat your family members and others in your life? How will you treat people who do not like or respect you? How will you treat those you do not like or respect?
6. If you could go back in time, which era or city would you choose, and why? Which historical character would you most like to meet, and why?
7. In which situations is Sam brave? In which is he fearful? Would you consider him a hero? Why or why not? What is a hero? Are there any other characters who are heroic in the story? Who

are the villains, and what makes them so?

The Boxcar Children



This mystery book is the first in “The Boxcar Children” series by Gertrude Chandler Warner and is published by Albert Whitman & Company. *The*

Boxcar Children is written for kids ages 8 to 10.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What are Henry, Jessie, Violet and Benny running away from? Where do they end up? What have you run away from that was actually good for you? How did you find out that it was good for you?
2. What are some ways that Henry and Jessie made do with what they had? What are some ways that you have learned to be content with what you have?
3. How do the children’s attitude make a difference in their adventure? What would have happened if they had grumbled and complained the whole time? If they had bad attitudes, how much would the children have loved the boxcar they were in?
4. What makes Henry work so hard and well for Dr. Moore and Mrs. Moore? What does his hard work bring him? Tell about a time when you were a good worker.

What was the result of your hard work?

5. What are some of the dangers that the children face? How do they make it through the dangers? Why do they agree to live with their grandfather instead of remaining on their own in the boxcar? How might their life with their grandfather be similar to your life? How was their life in the boxcar different from your life?

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas



This historical fiction book by John Boyne is published by David Fickling Books, a division of Random House Children’s Books, and is written for readers ages 12

and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Shmuel never fully explains what life is like on his side of the fence to Bruno. Why do you think he is so silent about the horrors of the camp? What would you talk about if you were in his place?
2. While Shmuel is very hungry and has black eyes, Bruno is complaining about the living conditions at his house because it didn’t have enough bedrooms and didn’t have a basement. Why might Bruno not understand Shmuel’s world? Why might Shmuel better understand Bruno’s world? Think about

your friends. Who might not understand your world? Explain. Who might you not understand because of his/her world?

3. What is wrong about Shmuel and others being in Out-With? If you saw something like that happening today, what would you do? How do you think God would want you to respond?
4. Who figures out what happened to Bruno? How might this have helped change the way he felt about the prisoners at Out-With? How did this story make you feel? Explain a little of the helplessness that you may have felt. How might those in the prison have felt a large dose of the same helplessness?

The Boy Who Dared: A Novel Based on the True Story of a Hitler Youth



This historical fiction book by Susan Campbell Bartoletti is published by Scholastic Press, Inc. and is written for kids ages 9 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

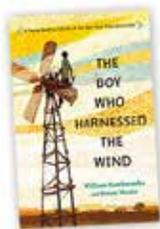
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. After Hitler was sworn in as chancellor of the Reich, he began to malign the Jews as enemies of Germany, and Helmuth witnesses the subsequent persecution of many of his Jewish acquaintances.

Do you think it was right for Helmuth to stand up for the Jews?

2. What do you think of Helmuth's belief that the Jews are God's chosen people, and that people should be able to worship God however they want?
3. When Helmuth chooses to continue reading the banned Karl May western novels, he and his brother, Gerhard, engage in a lengthy discussion about their beliefs and whether God's laws are higher than man's. How would you respond to Helmuth's question about whether there is ever a reason for breaking the law?
4. Would you agree with Gerhard's claim that "if you choose to break the law to help someone else or keep someone from harm, then it's justified"? Why or why not?
5. Helmuth disobeys the law when he obtains and listens to a non-sanctioned radio. As a result of the British broadcasts he heard, he becomes convinced that it is necessary to write and distribute leaflets to inform German citizens of their government's atrocities. How would you classify Helmuth's actions?
6. What would you do if you were faced with a similar situation?

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind



This biographical memoir by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer is published as a young readers edition by Dial Books for Young Readers,

a division of the Penguin Group and is written for kids ages 10 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Describe how William and his family feel when they have almost no food. How do they keep their minds from dwelling on their hunger pains? Describe a time when you were very hungry. How did it affect your ability to concentrate? Your energy? How might what Williams' family did, ignoring their hunger pains, help you?
2. Which part of William's story do you find most inspiring? Tell about a time when you repurposed an item in a creative way, similar to what William did.
3. Read Philippians 4:8-9: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me — practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." How does William's mother

demonstrate this during the famine? How well does this work? (Consider how other families act and how this family acts.)

4. Read the first part of Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." Can having a positive attitude change how you cope with difficult situations? How can you practice this?
5. How is your mind renewed? How might a renewed mind transform you? What are some ways you can stay focused on the hope found in Jesus Christ, and not on the injustices of this world?
6. What goals and dreams do you have? What gifts or talents has the Lord given you?

The Bravest Dog Ever: The True Story of Balto



This historical adventure story by Natalie Standiford is published by Random House Children's Books, a division of Random House Inc., and is written

for kids ages 5 to 8.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. How many drivers of dogsled teams volunteer to help? Why might they have volunteered? How would you respond if asked to volunteer for a mission like this? Explain.

2. Why is it so important for Gunnar and Balto to arrive in Nome quickly? Think about how long the journey was supposed to take and how long it actually takes. Do other dogsled teams feel the pressure to go quickly? How can you tell from the story?
3. What are some ways Gunnar has to help and guide Balto? What are some ways Balto helps the whole team survive?
4. What is needed to make a good dogsled team? When have you been part of a team and had to work with others in order to succeed? How did you contribute to the effort? How did others help? Why is it sometimes better to work as a team than to do something on your own?

- is the unknown worth the risk of exploring?
2. Why is it challenging for the Cullens and wolves to become allies? How do they overcome their differences to work together? Do you have “enemies” in your life? How do you overcome your opposing views? How does the Bible say we should treat our enemies?
 3. How do the Cullens differ from other vampire families? What are their values and beliefs? Why do they work so hard to live them out? Do you ever find it difficult to stand by values that may be different from those of your friends? Why is it important for your behavior to match up with your beliefs?

3. Many times we compare our lives with others without knowing all the facts. What is the danger in this? Do you compare your life with others? What is it you wish you could change? If someone looked at your life, what would they see? What wouldn't they see?
4. Tom tries to confront Nick about his abuse of Caitlyn. Did he do enough to stop it? What else could Tom have done? What would you do if you saw a friend doing something to hurt another person? What might prevent you from getting involved in the situation?

Breaking Dawn



This fantasy/romance book is fourth in the “Twilight” series by Stephenie Meyer and is published by Little, a division of the Hachette Book

Group. *Breaking Dawn* is written for kids ages 12 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Why do the Volturi insist that only what is known is safe, while the unknown is a possible vulnerability? What are they afraid will happen if they allow something unknown to exist? When is the unknown dangerous? When

Breathing Underwater



This contemporary novel written by Alex Flinn is published by Harper Collins Publishers and is written for kids ages 14 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. How does the phrase “breathing underwater” describe Nick’s emotional state? Have you ever felt that way? Why? Did anything help you feel better?
2. Why did Nick keep his father’s abuse a secret? What might have happened if he’d told his friend Tom? What if he’d told a teacher? How might that have affected his relationship with Caitlyn?

Bridge to Terabithia



This coming-of-age story by Katherine Paterson is published by HarperCollins. It’s written for ages 10 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

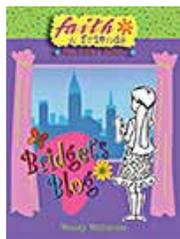
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Why is it important for Jess to be the quickest runner at his school? Why is he unsatisfied with simply being one of several good runners? What is the difference between trying your best and becoming obsessed with being the best? How does Jess hope his life will improve if he becomes a great fifth-grade runner? What are some of your goals and dreams?
2. How does Jess interact with his four sisters? How does Jess describe his 4-year-old sister, Joyce Ann? May Belle adores

her big brother. How does Jess treat May Belle? How could the Aarons children treat each other with more respect? How do your siblings treat you? How do you treat them?

3. How does Jess feel about his music teacher, Miss Edmunds? What does she say to Jess to encourage his artistic dreams? Why do the other teachers dislike Miss Edmunds? In what ways does Jess think that he and Miss Edmunds are alike? Which of your teachers are you most like?
4. What does Leslie do to make Jess dislike her at first? Why does Jess change his mind about being friends with Leslie when they are in music class together? How does sharing the secret of Terabithia improve Jess and Leslie's friendship? What special activities do you share with your friends?
5. How does Jess hear about Leslie's death? Does he feel there is anything he could have done to prevent her accident? How do Jess' parents react to their son's loss? Have you known anyone who has died? What was most difficult for you to accept? What helped you get through the grieving process? What would you tell Jess, if you could?

Bridget's Blog



ages 8 to 12.

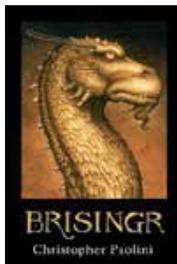
This second family life book in the "Faith and Friends" series by Wendy Withrow is published by Mission City Press. *Bridget's Blog* is written for kids

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Bridget's mother says that her aunt's personal sacrifice and generosity are a reflection of her inward beauty. What was the sacrifice?
2. How does that show inward beauty?
3. Bridget blogs about her challenges. How was cutting her hair a challenge for Bridget?
4. What helps her make the decision to do it?
5. What verse or tip would you make as a comment on Bridget's blog?
6. What is a challenge that you have to face?

Brisinger



This fantasy adventure is the third book in "The Inheritance Cycle" by Christopher Paolini and is published by Knopf Books for Young Readers, a division

of Random House Books. *Brisinger* is written for kids ages 8 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

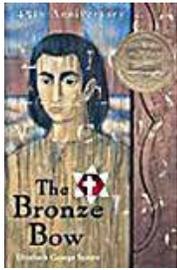
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. The worshipers of Helgrind mutilate themselves to please their god. Why is Eragon disgusted by

their self-destruction? What does God's Word (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) say about how you should treat your body?

2. Does Murtagh serve Galbatorix willingly? What can Murtagh do to free himself from serving the king? Does Eragon believe Murtagh will change? Do you agree with Eragon? Explain.
3. Eragon wants to kill Sloan. How do Eragon's intentions change when he finds Sloan imprisoned in Helgrind? What are Eragon's reasons for sparing Sloan? Why does Eragon allow Roran and Katrina to believe Sloan has died? How does Eragon get rid of Sloan without killing him? How do Queen Islanzadi and Arya think Eragon should have handled the problem? Tell about a problem that you fixed even though others did not agree with how you did it. Did you do the right thing?
4. How does Roran feel about the men he has killed? What is the difference between Eragon's feelings and Roran's reaction to killing? How does Arya decide whether it is necessary to kill a person? Which of these three has the healthiest reaction to death? Explain.
5. Why does Nasuada ask Eragon to avoid removing the curse he placed on Elva? Is Elva harmed by the curse? How do his efforts make up for the harm he has caused Elva? Have you ever tried to help someone that you once hurt? Explain.

The Bronze Bow



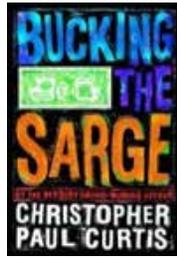
This Christian book by Elizabeth George Speare is published by Houghton Mifflin Books and is written for kids ages 8 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. While working for Rosh, what does Daniel feel justified in doing? Is lying and stealing are ever justifiable? Why or why not?
2. Toward the end of the story, Daniel debates whether he can repay Leah's love with vengeance, since he feels that is all he has to offer. Is revenge ever a good idea? If so, when? What does the Bible say about it?
3. What did Daniel's hatred do to him? What can hate do to us? Can you think of a time when you've seen someone's hatred overrule him or her? What happened?
4. When Simon, Daniel and others choose to believe in Jesus, they have to choose without knowing what lies ahead for them. How can you put your trust in someone or something that doesn't offer immediate answers?
5. When Daniel wonders why Jesus isn't healing everyone, what was Simon's suggestion? Do you think Simon was correct?
6. Who may not want to be healed of their pain, sorrow or addictions today? Explain your answer.

Bucking the Sarge



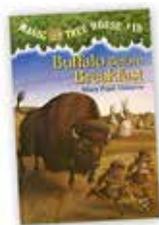
This coming-of-age book by Christopher Paul Curtis is published by Random House Children's Books and is written for kids ages 12 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. How do you feel about Luther's decision to take revenge on Sarge—a woman who has hurt a lot of people?
2. What does the Bible say about revenge?
3. What are some ways we can reach out to the poor and elderly, the kind of people Sarge despises?
4. How does Sarge's business ethic demonstrate the principle about money in 1 Timothy 6:10?
5. Parents could also initiate discussions on ethics, premarital sex, pornography and masturbation.

Buffalo Before Breakfast



This fantasy adventure novel by Mary Pope Osborne is the 18th in the "Magic Tree House" series and is published by Random House and is written for kids ages

5 to 8.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What is Jack afraid of in the story? What reasons does Jack have to be afraid of a horse? When can it be a wise thing to be afraid of something? How can you know if something is safe or not?
2. Who saves Black Hawk? When is it good to be brave like Jack? When have you been brave? When would you like to be brave? When do you think God wants people to be brave?
3. What happens when Annie runs into the stampeding buffalo? How large is a buffalo? In real life, what would probably happen if a little girl did this? What would you do if you saw large wild animals?
4. What do the Lakota believe about spirits in animals, trees and wind? Some people worship trees and animals and ask them for help, but the Bible tells us to ask God for what we need. What is a need that you can ask God about today?
5. How do the Lakota use the buffalo that they hunt? What kind of animals do people use today? Talk about what you ate or wore today. Which food or fabric came from animals? Why do you think God put people in charge of animals?

The Bungalow Mystery



This mystery book by Carolyn Keene is the third in the “Nancy Drew Mystery Stories” series, the 1988 edition, and is published by Grosset and

Dunlap Inc., a member of The Putnam & Grosset Group. *The Bungalow Mystery* is written for kids ages 8 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

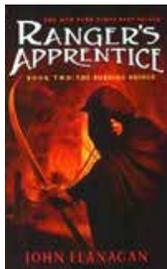
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. During the storm, Nancy and Helen are in an emergency situation. Later, all three girls use the bungalow to recover from being cold, wet and hungry. Was it OK for the girls to enter the bungalow and use the supplies? How did they try to contact the owners? What did others tell them about the emergency use of the bungalow? Do you agree with what they said? Would you be OK with others using your home or food in the case of an emergency?
2. When Nancy and Helen get back to the hotel, Nancy tells the manager about the boat sinking. What would you have said to the manager? When you have something difficult to tell someone, what helps you do this? If you're going to get into trouble for your actions, should you even tell? Explain.
3. Cathy and Jim go with their parents to check on Jacob when Marian calls and is worried about him — even though they had

already been at the house a couple of times. Describe a time when you helped a neighbor, a friend or a stranger in need. How did you find the courage or time to do that? How did the person you helped react? What was the outcome? What are some ways we can be good neighbors to those on our block, down the street and in our communities?

4. Nancy and Helen try to reassure Laura when she is upset. What are some ways you have encouraged friends when they are struggling? How have your friends encouraged you? At one point Nancy and her father talk about whether to tell police about Laura's situations and concerns. What would you have done in this situation?

The Burning Bridge



This fantasy adventure is the second book in the “Ranger's Apprentice” series by John Flanagan and is published by Puffin Books, a division of

Penguin Young Readers Group. *The Burning Bridge* is written for kids ages 10 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What kind of relationships did Will and Horace have with their mentors? Why are these ties particularly important in light of the boys' pasts?
2. Why did Halt and Gilan feel it was important for Will to get back to work after his terrifying

confrontation with Wargals? What does Gilan tell Will about self-doubt? How can it become self-fulfilling? In what areas of life do you feel fear or self-doubt? How can you use these circumstances to make you stronger rather than bring you down?

3. How did Will and Horace get caught unprepared by the thieves in Celtica? What was their critical mistake? How does this situation mirror the behavior of the kingdom as a whole? Why have the citizens grown complacent? Can you identify any areas in your life where you might be caught unprepared if you let your guard down? What steps can you take to avoid this? How can you remain alert and focused?
4. Why didn't Halt or the King stop Morgarath from fighting Horace? What is chivalry, and why did these men uphold its codes so fiercely? What sort of “rules” exists in modern wars or conflicts?

By the Light of the Silvery Moon



This Christian historical fiction book by Tricia Goyer is published by Barbour Publishing Inc., and written for ages 17 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What is the significance of wealth and social standing in this story? Which characters use their

talents, resources and influence wisely? What are the results of their decisions? Which characters don't use their money wisely? What are the consequences of their actions? In the end, how does money or status help the passengers on the Titanic? In what ways do wealth and social prestige impact your world, school or town today?

2. If you were Damien, how would you have responded to the reappearance of your brother? What surprised you about Damien's character? What does the author say was Damien's true inheritance?
3. What might have happened if Amelia or C.J. had forced themselves or their faith on Quentin? How did they approach him instead? Why is it important to approach people with acceptance rather than an agenda? How can you kindly and effectively approach someone who is lost with the message of Christ's love and forgiveness?