

# 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](mailto:reviewrequests@family.org).

# DISCUSSION TOPICS

## Jane Eyre



This gothic romance by Charlotte Brontë was originally published by Service & Paton, although many other houses since have published

it. *Jane Eyre* is written for adults but is often found on many high school reading lists.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. What argument does Mr. Rochester make for taking another wife? Do you agree with him? Under what circumstances, if any, could a marriage be considered invalid?
2. How do Mr. Rochester's character and his relationship with God change? How could God use a challenging circumstance in your life to help you grow closer to Him?
3. If Jane had lived with Mr. Rochester before Bertha's death, would they have been happy together? Have you ever done something you knew was wrong because you thought it would make you happy? Did it meet your expectations?
4. Do you know any people like Mr. Brocklehurst? What is missing in Mr. Brocklehurst's version of Christianity? How do you

feel when people who claim to be Christians don't behave in Christ-like ways? Do you think there is any hypocrisy in your own life? Do you have different standards of behavior for others than for yourself?

5. Why won't St. John marry Rosamund Oliver? Do you know anyone who has sacrificed his or her own desires to follow Christ completely? Is Jane wrong to want to stay in England and enjoy her family instead of traveling to the mission field? How is the life Jane chooses different from the one St. John imagines for her?
6. As a child, Jane feels bitter about the way the Reeds treat her. How does she act toward them when she visits Gateshead as an adult? What, or who, affected this change in her thoughts and attitudes toward them? Have you ever forgiven someone who has wronged you? How did it feel? What happens if you choose not to forgive?

## Janie Face to Face



This mystery coming-of-age novel by Caroline B. Cooney is the fifth in the "Janie" series and is published by Delacorte Press, an imprint of Random House

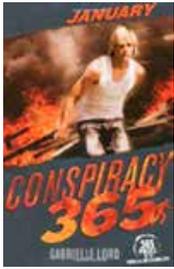
Publishers. *Janie Face to Face* is written for kids ages 12 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. Why did the Johnsons believe that Janie was their granddaughter? How do circumstances play a part in what they assumed? Tell about an assumption you made that was wrong. How did circumstances play a part in what you assumed?
2. Why is Janie able to forgive the Johnsons? How do our own failings help us accept the faults of others? Why might Jesus ask us to forgive others? How might Janie's life have been worse if she hadn't been able to forgive others? How does she come to peace with her life by the end of the story?
3. How did Janie's kidnapping impact many people, including her? Can a bad thing only affect one person? Think about something selfish you have done. How might your selfishness have affected others?

## January: Conspiracy 365



This psychological thriller is the first book in the “Conspiracy 365” series by Gabrielle Craig Lord. Published in Australia, the series is distrib-

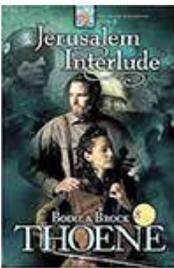
uted in the U.S. by Usborne Books and Kane Miller, a division of EDC Publishing. *January: Conspiracy 365* is written for kids ages 9 and older.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. How is Rafe’s behavior deceitful? What does Cal lie about? Is his lying necessary for his survival? Explain your answer. Why does Mum trust Rafe better than her own son? What does the Bible say about lying?
2. What are your theories about The Ormond Singularity? What message might the angel picture represent?
3. If you were in Cal’s place, where would you go for help and advice?

## Jerusalem Interlude



This fourth historical book in the “Zion Covenant” series by Bodie and Brock Thoene is published by Tyndale House Publishers and is written for adults

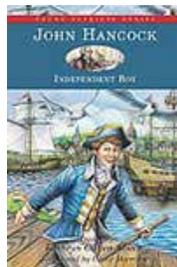
but is sometimes studied by kids ages 16 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. Theo travels to Germany knowing he might be killed. How does he have the courage to face danger?
2. Leah’s temporary loss of hearing and miscarriage occur when Muslims set off a bomb. How does she cope with tragedy resulting from terrorist acts? What kinds of tragedy have happened to you? How did you react?
3. Eli’s lust and love for Victoria get in the way of his studies to be a rabbi. How does he avoid or yield to temptation? How have you avoided or given into temptations?
4. A young Jewish boy in France trusts someone who turns out to be evil, and the boy becomes a pawn for Hitler’s cause. What made him trust this person?
5. How do you decide if someone is trustworthy?

## John Hancock, Independent Boy



ages 9 to 12.

This biographical book in the “Young Patriots” series by Kathryn Clevon Sisson is published by Patria Press, Inc. *John Hancock, Independent Boy* is written for kids

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. How do you think you would have responded to the country’s political turmoil if you lived in John Hancock’s time?
2. Would you have been brave enough to sign the Declaration of Independence, knowing the British might kill you?
3. Do you think the founders of our nation had a strong faith in God? How might their faith have impacted their victory over the British? (Parents may want to provide further information about the Christian beliefs of early U.S. leaders.)
4. Is there anything that seems unjust to you?
5. What could you do to bring about change, as John Hancock did?

## The Journey



This fantasy book is the second in the “Guardians of Ga’hoole” series by Kathryn Lasky and is published by Scholastic, Inc. *The Journey* is written for kids

ages 8 to 10.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. How do the members of Soren's band care for each other? How has Jesus told us to care for each other? How are these ways of caring similar?
2. What did Soren do that showed compassion for Primrose? What are some ways that you show compassion and care for others who are weaker than you?
3. How does Otulissa speak and act? Are some people and families better than others from birth? Do some people deserve better things than others because of who their families are? Are there people who shouldn't get good things or be treated well because of who their families are?
4. What went wrong in Soren's family? Do you care for your siblings as much as Soren cares for his little sister? What did Soren's brother do to him? What advice do you think Jesus would give you if you were in Soren's situation?
5. What words would you use to describe Twilight? What does he do well? What does he do poorly? When is pride a good quality? When is pride a bad quality? What does the Bible say about pride?
6. What do the owls do every day at the Mirror Lakes? What is foremost in their minds? How does this kind of selfish thinking hurt or help them and their mission? How does Mrs. P get them to leave?

## Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story



This social issues book about apartheid by Beverley Naidoo is published by J.B. Lippincott and written for kids ages 8 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. Some people say that the faults What causes Naledi to want to walk to Johannesburg? How important is her mission? What doesn't she know about the trip to Johannesburg? What is something you have done to help someone in your family?
2. Does Naledi start the trip as a child or a young lady? Explain. Does she end the trip as a child or young lady? Explain. How does Naledi's trip to Johannesburg change her? What is something you have done that has helped you mature?
3. What are the schoolchildren of Soweto demanding? Are their demands reasonable? What happened to some of the schoolchildren who wanted a better education? How are the policemen's responses unreasonable? How do the police make the children want to stop what they are doing? How do the police make the children want to fight harder? (Consider Grace's brother.)
4. Would you have marched with the schoolchildren of Soweto? How hard is it to fight

for equality when the laws are against you?

5. What was life like for those who were servants in South Africa during the end of the last century? (Have children consider Mma's life and her thoughts about it.)

## Journey to the Volcano Palace



This fantasy novel by Tony Abbott is the second in the "The Secrets of Droon" series and is published by Scholastic Inc. *Journey to the Volcano Palace* is

written for ages 8 to 10.

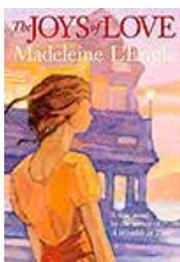
Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. Galen has told the children to keep Droon a secret in their world, including their parents. Should children keep secrets from their parents? Should children trust adults who ask them to do this? What might happen if they told their parents?
2. Eric and his friends have strange dreams about Droon before they return, all foretelling something that will happen there. Have you ever had a weird dream? What was it? God has used dreams as signs. Read the story of Joseph and Pharaoh in Genesis 41:15-32.
3. Appearances can be deceiving in Droon. Neal thinks the king of the Lumpies is a pillow. Lord Sparr is actually a hideous

monster. How do people judge others by their outward appearance? Why should you be careful not to judge someone by his appearance? Who can you trust to help you discern if someone is good or bad?

## The Joys of Love



This coming-of-age book by Madeleine L'Engle is published by Farrar, Straus, Giroux and is written for kids 12 and up. This title also was made into an

audio book.

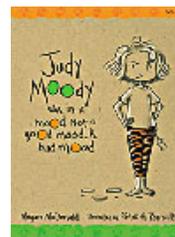
Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. What is true Christian duty? How would you evaluate it? In what ways did Elizabeth's aunt truly do what she was supposed to do as a Christian? In what ways did she not do what she was supposed to do as a Christian?
2. Elizabeth sees no problem with young men being in the bedroom she shares with another woman. They sit on the beds and talk or practice their skits and treat the room like a living room. Do you think it's OK for them to behave in this way? Why or why not? Elizabeth says going to Kurt's room is different from boys coming into her room to hang out. How is it different? What guidelines would you recommend for girls and guys when it comes to being in one another's rooms?

3. Elizabeth comes out of the bathroom in her robe after a shower and Ben is waiting in the hall. He follows her to her empty room and then leaves so she can get dressed. How is this behavior appropriate or inappropriate?
4. Elizabeth has an idea that love can conquer all; and she believes that Kurt loves her even though he pays attention to other women. How important are a person's words? How important are a person's actions? What should you do when a person's words and actions do not align?
5. How do Elizabeth's emotions allow her to see what she wants to see in Kurt? Describe a time when you let your emotions decide what you did. What can you do to keep your emotions from ruling your actions when it comes to romantic feelings?
6. What does Kurt think about morals? Are morals outdated? What does Elizabeth decide about Kurt's idea that things that would be considered wrong elsewhere or at other times are OK at the theatre?
7. How does Elizabeth decide whether something is right or wrong? Can something be wrong even if it doesn't hurt another person? How do you decide what is right and wrong? If something is right, is it always right? If something is wrong, is it always wrong? What does the Bible say about the concepts of right and wrong? (Help teens see that anything that takes them out of relationship with God is wrong, such as the inappropriate behaviors mentioned in the Ten Commandments, and anything that causes them to know God better is right.)
8. What does Kurt say is wrong because it hurts Elizabeth's aunt? How does Elizabeth rationalize that her being in the theatre is OK, even though it violates her rule for choosing what is right and what is wrong? Does Elizabeth's rule work? What is the only true measure for what is right and what is wrong? Why is the Bible the standard?
9. What does Kurt think about women falling in love with married men? What does Elizabeth think about the same thing? What do you think about it? How did Elizabeth react to Kurt's opinion? How should she have reacted?
10. Ben wants to know if Elizabeth did anything wrong when she was alone with Kurt. Ben says that what she did or didn't do doesn't matter to him. Remember, this is a novel. How would a real man (or woman) who is in love with someone act or think about the same situation?
11. Ben plans to wait at least six months to court Elizabeth and then marry her. Why do you think he is waiting six months? How will this time help Elizabeth get over Kurt? Do you think Ben's plan will work?

## Judy Moody



This first humor book in the "Judy Moody" series by Megan McDonald is published by Candlewick Press, an imprint of Walker Books.

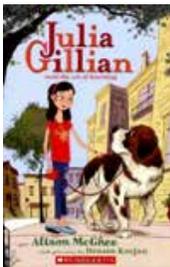
*Judy Moody* is written for kids ages 6 to 9.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. Judy lies a few times, once to Frank telling him he has the wrong number when he calls and once to her parents about when Frank's party starts. Do you think little lies are OK? What does the Bible say about lying?
2. Judy isn't nice to Frank at first, but she starts to like him after she gets to know him. Have you ever disliked someone and then, after taking the time to learn more about the person, realized he or she was OK? Give an example. (Judy isn't always kind to her little brother; she makes him do things for her, scares him and smashes his moon rock.)
3. For older siblings: How does your little brother/sister annoy you? What do you do when you're annoyed? How could you be nicer to him/her?
4. For younger siblings: Do you ever feel as though your big brother/sister isn't nice to you? What might help improve that problem?
5. For all: How does God want you to treat your brothers and sisters?
6. When Judy can't heal her doll, she bandages her. When her collage is ruined, she turns the juice stain into the state of Virginia. Even her brother finds ways to turn problems around: When Judy crushes his moon rock, he sells bags of moon dust. What are some difficult problems you face? What puts you in a bad mood? Can you think of any ways to turn those situations into positives, like Judy and Stink did?

## Julia Gillian (and the Art of Knowing)



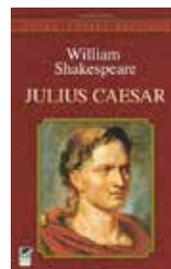
This realistic book by Alison McGhee is published by Scholastic Press and written for kids ages 9 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. Why does Julia lie to the little girl who is afraid to go to kindergarten? Are there times when it's OK to not tell the truth, and if so, why?
2. Why do you think Julia likes wearing masks? When you're worried or scared of something, what comforts you or helps you to feel brave?
3. How does the green-covered book end? How does Julia feel about the ending?
4. How do Julia's parents react when she intentionally disobeys one of their rules in order to get their attention? What could she have done instead of being disobedient?
5. What are you afraid of? Who can you talk to about your fears?

## Julius Caesar



This tragedy by William Shakespeare was published in the First Folio of 1623. Since then many different publishing houses have published it. It was

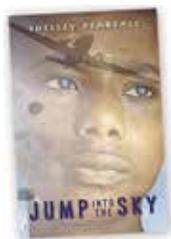
written for adults but is often read in high school classrooms.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. Why does Brutus think he needs to get rid of Caesar? How do others convince him, and how does he convince himself, that Caesar must not be allowed to lead Rome? Have you ever convinced yourself, or let others convince you, to do something you knew was wrong? What happened?
2. Why might the Roman citizens be so easily swayed by the flowery speeches of their leaders? What are some examples of dishonesty or misleading language we encounter in our world today? How can you avoid believing rhetoric and being manipulated?
3. What kind of person is Cassius? Whom do you know who likes to stir up trouble and drag others down with him?
4. Why do you think so many characters commit suicide? Why do some seem to believe it is an honorable act? What does the Bible say about suicide and the value of every human life?

## Jump into the Sky



This historical fiction novel by Shelley Pearsall is published by Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of

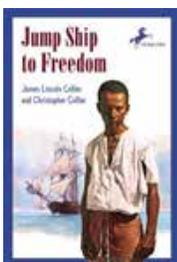
Random House Inc., and is written for kids ages 9 to 12.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. What does MawMaw Sands mean when she talks about sweetness and pain being woven together in life? In what situations have you seen both pain and sweetness?
2. Why does Levi's father give up selling encyclopedias? What answer is he seeking that he can't find in a book? How do you explain why there is death or war or people being cruel to each other?
3. How is the South different from Chicago for Levi? How would you feel and respond if you were treated the way he is treated by someone of another race?

## Jump Ship to Freedom



This historical fiction book by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier is from the "Arabus Family Saga" and is published by Bantam Doubleday

Dell Books for Young Readers, a

division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group. *Jump Ship to Freedom* is written for kids ages 10 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. Who in the book kept his word? What happened because of it? What does it mean to keep your word? What helps you honor what you have said to others? What does the Bible say about this? (Proverbs 12:22, Matthew 5:37, Ephesians 4:25)
2. How does Daniel feel differently about himself after he meets others who treat him with kindness? Name someone who has treated you kindly. How does being treated kindly change the way you feel about that person? About others?
3. Why did Daniel's actions require bravery? Could you have done what he did? How would you feel if you were the only person in your school that believed what you were doing was right? Why might you want to be brave even if you thought no one would help you?
4. Describe Daniel and Birdsey's friendship. Would Birdsey have helped Daniel escape? Explain your answer.
5. Why was Birdsey treated well? Why was Daniel treated poorly? Was it fair that Birdsey was treated better because he was the captain's nephew? Who in your family has treated you with favoritism? When have you felt that you were treated unfairly? How have you treated others differently because they were your

favorite or not? Why should or shouldn't you do this? (Luke 6:33)

## The Jungle Book



This book of fables by Rudyard Kipling was originally published by Macmillan Publishers in 1894 and is written for kids ages 12 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. What do Father and Mother Wolf do that saves Mowgli's life? Why are the other wolves required to protect Mowgli, too? What are you protected from? Who protects you?
2. Why does Baloo speak up for Mowgli? What does Bagheera have to do to have the right to speak up for Mowgli? What does their speaking up mean to Mowgli? Who are people in your world who need the protection of someone speaking up for them? How might you speak up for them?
3. Why does Mowgli feel betrayed by the Free People? Who is wise enough to see that Mowgli will need to defend himself soon? What does Bagheera ask Mowgli to do? How does he defend himself? Who is wise in your world, someone you might go to for advice? How might you have to defend yourself someday?

4. Why don't the Jungle People give the Bandar-log any attention? What does the Bandar-log throw at the Jungle People to get their attention? What are some of the things that the Bandar-log do to get a reputation for being foolish? What do you think people say about you? What should you do to keep a good name?
5. What are some of the things that Mowgli has to relearn when he goes to live in a man village? What keeps him motivated to learn new words, habits and customs? What are the most challenging things you have to learn? What motivates you to learn these things?
6. What does Kotick want to know? Why won't he just accept the complacent attitude of the others seals about the deaths of many bachelors? What does he do with his life to better the world? What is something in your world that you question? Who should you ask about it? What will keep you from getting complacent on this topic? What will you do, not just say, to make the world a better place?
7. Why does Kala Nag place Little Toomai on his neck when he leaves? What does Little Toomai have to do to witness elephant's dancing? What is something in your world that you were fortunate to be a part of, through little or no work on your part? How does this event make you grateful?
8. Why does the narrator laugh when a camel destroys his military tent? What can you do to find humor in bad situations? How might his keeping a good attitude have helped him overhear the animals talking? What might keeping a good attitude help you do?

## Junie B. Jones and the Stupid Smelly Bus



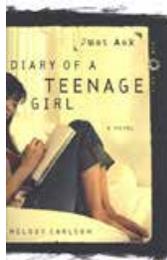
Bus is written for kids ages 6 to 8.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. Junie decides immediately that she hates one classmate and could beat up another. What happens when you make judgments about people before getting to know them?
2. When Junie roams the school, she plays with school supplies and equipment. Why is it important not to touch things that don't belong to you?
3. If you were Junie, what would you have said to help me (your mom/dad) understand why you didn't like riding the bus?

## Just Ask



14 to 18.

This first drama book in the "Diary of a Teenage Girl: Kim" series by Melody Carlson is published by Multnomah Kidz. *Just Ask* is written for kids ages

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

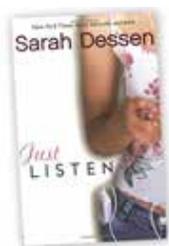
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. What did you think about the way Kim and her friends handled the couple that got drunk before the dance? What would you have done?
2. What do you think of Natalie's concern about Kim dating a non-Christian? Is she right? Could there be problems? If so, what?
3. Did you think the advice Kim gave as "Jamie" was good? Would you have answered anything differently?
4. What did you think about the way Kim's Christian friends behaved around her before she was a Christian? Did they push her too much with their conversations about prayer and faith, or were their conversations balanced? Do you find it hard to discuss Christ with your friends without turning them off?
5. When Kim lies to Natalie about her involvement with "Just Ask Jamie," she tells God she's sorry. Is it OK for her to be dishonest in order to keep her identity secret?
6. What about Kim playing poker with her friends? Is it harmless fun (she does donate the money to charity), or can this behavior lead to a gambling addiction?
7. How did you feel about Kim's dad's "blackmailing" her, pretending to keep secrets from her mom, and then actually telling her mother behind Kim's back?
8. What did you think when you read Kim's feelings about being

adopted? Did it give you any insight about the struggles adopted kids may feel? How can you be sensitive to the unique emotions of adopted kids?

9. Kim plays poker with her friends. Is this OK for her to do? On what do you base your opinion?

## Just Listen



This coming-of-age book by Sarah Dessen is published by Speak, a division of Penguin Group Inc., and is written for kids ages 12 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at [pluggedin.com/book-reviews](http://pluggedin.com/book-reviews).

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

1. How do the relationships among the three Greene sisters change over time? How have your relationships with siblings or friends changed as you've grown?
2. How does Annabel feel when all of the girls at school refuse to talk to her? How do you and your friends feel when you're in a situation where people ignore you?
3. Why did Annabel abandon her childhood best friend, Clarke, to become best friends with Sophie? Does Annabel think she made a wise choice when she traded one friend for the other? How have the friends you've chosen affected your life?
4. Are there any warning signs that Sophie and Annabel's friendship is not healthy? When Will

assaulted Annabel, why did Annabel not explain the situation to Sophie? What things can't you discuss with your friends? Why?

5. How do the different members of the Greene family react to Whitney's eating disorder? Do you think that Kirsten is interfering in Whitney's business when she tells their parents about Whitney's eating disorder? How do you know when to get help for a sibling or friend and when to respect their privacy?
6. How do Owen's anger management strategies change the way he speaks to other people? Why does Owen break his own rules and punch Will the night before Will's trial? What are some of the best methods you know for appropriately dealing with frustration or anger?