

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

Vacation Under the Volcano



This fantasy adventure book by Mary Pope Osborne is the 13th book in the “Magic Tree House” series and is published by Random House.

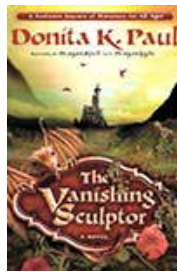
This book is written for kids ages 5 to 8.

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 type of religious building do Jack and Annie see in Pompeii? Who do the people worship in this temple? How do the people worship their god? How are Christians supposed to treat false gods, goddesses and idols?
2. What is a soothsayer? How does the soothsayer know Pompeii will be destroyed? The Bible commands us not to seek out soothsayers or try to tell the future (Leviticus 19:26,31). If you have questions, whom should you ask? Where should you look for your answers?
3. On what do the ancient Romans write their stories? Where do Jack and Annie find the library? How do the children get the scroll from the library? What would you have done in their place?
4. When the volcano erupts, how do Jack and Annie protect themselves from the falling pumice stones? What happens when they reach the stream? How do they ask for help? Who saves them? How realistic is this? Would something like this happen in the real world?
2. Tipper is passionate. Wizard Fenworth calls her excitable. When is having passion for something a good thing? When is it a bad thing? What is an example of Tipper’s passion being good? What is an example of Tipper’s passion being inappropriate?
3. What are some of Tipper’s hasty judgments regarding some of the adults? Is her information correct? Did her father abandon her and her mother? How does she misjudge Fenworth? Who is someone you have misjudged? What made you readjust your opinion of that person?
4. Have you ever been on a quest? What is something you are doing now that could be considered a quest? What kind of plans did you make when you started your quest? Who is going with you? What obstacles have you encountered? Fenworth says a talent or gift may come to the surface on a quest. Do you think that is true? Why or why not? Have you experienced hidden talents coming out in you on your quest?
5. Prince Surrus is Prince Jayrus’ mentor. Beccaroon is Tipper’s guardian and mentor. What are mentors? What do they do? What qualities do you think you should look for in a mentor? Who are some adults in your world that might be good mentors for you?
6. Why are Fenworth and Librettowit so surprised with Verrin’s artistry? What part does Wulder play in the creation of beauty? How is that similar to

The Vanishing Sculptor



This fantasy, adventure book by Donita K. Paul is published by Waterbrook Press, a division of Random House, Inc. 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 does Tipper deceive Bealomondore, a young artist who wants to meet her father? Realizing she has done wrong, what does she do to make things right? Tell about one time that you deceived or tried to trick someone. How did you make things right? What was Bealomondore’s response? Was his distrust of Tipper and her companions reasonable? How do you regain a person’s trust once you have lost it?
2. Tipper is passionate. Wizard Fenworth calls her excitable. When is having passion for something a good thing? When is it a bad thing? What is an example of Tipper’s passion being good? What is an example of Tipper’s passion being inappropriate?
3. What are some of Tipper’s hasty judgments regarding some of the adults? Is her information correct? Did her father abandon her and her mother? How does she misjudge Fenworth? Who is someone you have misjudged? What made you readjust your opinion of that person?
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5. Prince Surrus is Prince Jayrus’ mentor. Beccaroon is Tipper’s guardian and mentor. What are mentors? What do they do? What qualities do you think you should look for in a mentor? Who are some adults in your world that might be good mentors for you?
6. Why are Fenworth and Librettowit so surprised with Verrin’s artistry? What part does Wulder play in the creation of beauty? How is that similar to

the talents and gifts that God gives us? Why do you think God gives talent to people who do not know or acknowledge Him?

7. Beccaroon is concerned whenever it looks as if Tipper and Jayrus might be spending time together alone. Is Beccaroon overreacting? Why or why not? How can teens who are romantically interested in each other build a relationship without putting themselves in risky situations?
8. The people of Chiril speak of a power, Boscamon, that is the overall designer of life and will ultimately reward good and punish evil. However, Boscamon is mysterious to them and basically unknowable. Fenworth and Librettowit see their arrival in Chiril as an opportunity to help people know Wulder and see that he reveals himself through his love for them and wants fellowship with his creation. How is the description of Wulder similar to the description of our God?

Vespers Rising



This mystery adventure book by Rick Riordan, Peter Lerangis, Gordon Korman and Jude Watson is the 11th in “The 39 Clues” series and is published

by Scholastic Inc. *Vespers Rising* is written for kids age 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. Gideon Cahill and Damien Vesper start out as friends, but the desire for power turns them into archenemies. Tell about a friend who changed. Did you like your friend better after he or she started acting differently? How did these changes affect your relationship?
2. Olivia raises Madeleine to bring the family together through the power of forgiveness. Why is forgiveness the only way to bring the family together? What makes forgiveness so powerful?
3. What do Dan and Amy find boring about normal life? What do they miss the most? What would you miss if this happened to you?

Vienna Prelude



This historical suspense book is the first in the “[HYPERLINK](http://www.thrivingfamily.com/Family/Media/book-reviews/z/z.aspx) “<http://www.thrivingfamily.com/Family/Media/book-reviews/z/z.aspx>”

the “Zion Covenant” Zion Covenant” series by Bodie Thoene and is published by Tyndale House Publishers. *Vienna Prelude* is written for people who are 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. Who have you heard twisting the truth to use to his or her advantage? What arguments do people use to make choices that hurt other people or go against the Ten Commandments? In this story, why is it or isn't it okay for

adults to use deceit to save children? Why is it or isn't it wrong for Elisa to marry Murphy to get an American passport? Why is it or isn't it a good decision for Admiral Canaris, Theo's old friend, to pretend to follow Hitler to help thwart plans from the inside?

2. What causes Elisa to realize that she loves Murphy and not Thomas? How does a person's actions show love more than his or her words? Why do Murphy and Elisa have trouble revealing their true feelings for one another?
3. How does the indifference of people and countries fuel Hitler's evil plans? How are you indifferent or complacent about evil around you? In what way does your world seem upside down where evil is called good and good labeled evil? Have you ever felt like Elisa when she prayed for God about the evil around her? What did Elisa question? Does God allow evil to take place? Why would he do that? Have you ever, like Theo, called out to God for guidance? If so, what happened?
4. How did Theo become a shining light for God? How were his worldly hopes holding him back?
5. What did Marta believe regarding God and his children? Why can we always turn to Him for comfort even in our hardest times?
6. If you had to flee your home, what few items would you take?

The Viper's Nest



This mystery adventure book by Peter Lerangis is the seventh book in “The 39 Clues” series and is published by Scholastic Inc. This book 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. Does Nellie win back the trust of the children? Do you think she is trustworthy? Explain.
2. How does Irina becoming a good person affect Amy? Does this make her question other individuals in their adventures? Can a bad person become a good person? What does the Bible say about this? Explain.
3. When you first met Professor Bardsley, did you think he was working for or against the children? How did he play an important role in helping the children? How might we see him again?
4. What did you learn about the Zulu people? What is scary about their methods of war?
5. How much did you know about slavery and apartheid before reading this book? What did you learn about Nelson Mandela and his part in bringing freedom to South Africa?

A Voice in the Wind



This first historical fiction book in the “Mark of the Lion” series by Francine Rivers is published by Tyndale House Publishers. *A Voice in the Wind* 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.

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

1. While Hadassah’s faith remains strong throughout the novel, she is often afraid to openly share her faith for fear of persecution. The apostle John encourages Hadassah to continue trusting God for the strength to carry out His good purpose. How do you feel trapped by fear when sharing your faith?
2. How have you hesitated to tell others about Christ because you were afraid of what they would think or do?
3. How could you apply John’s advice to Hadassah in your life?
4. The theme of service runs throughout the novel. Marcus serves Rome; Julia serves her passions; Decimus serves his business; and Phoebe serves Roman gods. Hadassah, however, serves the one true God, and her life is marked by far more peace and joy than the other members of the Valerian family. How does Hadassah demonstrate her total devotion and service to God?

5. In what ways do the other characters prove that serving anything or anyone other than God leaves people empty and broken? Whom do you serve?

The Voice on the Radio



This mystery coming-of-age novel by Caroline B. Cooney is the third in the “Janie” series published by Ember, an imprint of Random House Children’s Books.

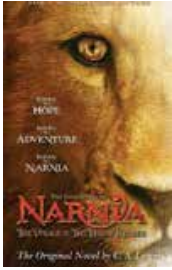
The Voice on the Radio is written for kids ages 12 years and up.

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. What kind of a person is Reeve? What drives him to betray Janie on his radio show? What mistakes have you made that stemmed from a desire to gain popularity or the acceptance of others?
2. What does Janie’s mom say are Janie’s options concerning Reeve? What does Janie decide to do? What choice would you have made? How can you forgive someone who has wounded you without allowing him to continue hurting you?

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader



This fantasy adventure is the fifth book in “The Chronicles of Narnia” series by C.S. Lewis, although it was originally published as the third

book in the series. HarperCollins Children’s Books, a division of HarperCollins is the publisher. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* 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 does Edmund react to his cousin Eustace? How does Lucy react to Eustace? (Lucy gives him cordial to heal his seasickness and offers him some of her water rations, but Edmund insults him and avoids him.) How should you treat someone who annoys you? What does God’s Word say about loving your neighbor?
2. Lucy finds a spell that will make her more beautiful than her sister, Susan. Why does Lucy want to say the spell? Why does she feel she shouldn’t? How does the Holy Spirit help you tell right from wrong? What does the Bible say about jealousy?
3. What lesson does Eustace learn while he is a dragon? How does he better relate to his cousins after the experience? How has God used a bad experience to help you become a better person? If you’ve read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, compare

the characters of Eustace and Edmund, how they had both been unkind boys. How did Aslan help each of them?

4. What does Reepicheep value? (honor and courage) When does his bravery help his friends? When is it harmful?
5. Why does Lucy call out to Aslan when the Dawn Treader is surrounded by darkness? Who can you pray to when you are afraid and feel like you’re surrounded by darkness?