Book Review
Discussion Questions

Provided by Focus on the Family magazine
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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.
Abandon

This paranormal fantasy book by Meg Cabot is the first in “The Abandon Trilogy” and is published by Point, a division of Scholastic, Inc. Abandon 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. What do you think happens when we die? What does the Bible tell us happens after we die?
2. When Pierce is in the Underworld, she sees two lines, and it is implied that the good people were in the short line and the bad people were in the long line. What do you think makes a person good? Does being good guarantee salvation? Who does the Bible say is good?
3. John gets angry in many situations and responds with violence. What could he have done differently? What other choices could he have made in the circumstances?
4. Pierce’s mother blames her father for Pierce’s accident and refuses to forgive him. Have you ever refused to forgive someone for something that person did to you? What could you have done differently? Has someone ever refused to forgive you? How did it make you feel? What does Jesus say about forgiveness?
5. Pierce and Hannah lose their friendship when they need each other the most. Have you ever argued with a friend and lost the relationship? What were the circumstances? Can the relationship be or was the relationship repaired?

Abarat

This fantasy novel is the first book in the “Abarat” series by Clive Barker and is published by HarperCollins Children’s Books, a division of HarperCollins. Abarat 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 kinds of problems does Candy have with her history teacher? Does she handle the situation wisely? How is her teacher unfair or unkind? How should those in authority behave?
2. What is censorship? How does Candy feel about book burnings? What books are not allowed in your school library? If you don’t feel a book is worthy of reading, what should you do about it? Who should have the power to censor books? Who shouldn’t have the power to censor books?
3. Who does Candy say she will not forgive? How does not forgiving her father hurt her? If she forgives her father, does it mean that she has to pretend that he is perfect? How can you forgive someone who continues to treat you poorly? If she forgives her father, does she have to continue to be abused?
4. Where does Candy go with Samuel Klepp? How does he help her? Where does Candy go with Wolfswinkel? How does he hurt her? How do you know when it’s OK to trust a stranger?
5. Lord Carrion’s grandmother stitched his lips together for a day when he spoke the word love in her presence. And he may have been abused in other ways. How does Carrion now treat others? Does someone who has been mistreated have to become a person who mistreats others? How can God help such a person? Who can find a way to use the evil done to someone for good?
6. What are John Mischief and his brothers? How is thievery presented in this book? Do thieves lead glamorous, exciting lives in the real world? When you look up to thieves, who do you forget to care about? How do the actions of thieves affect others?
7. How does Candy feel misunderstood by her parents? Do your friends’ parents understand them? What do you wish I understood about you?
8. What are some of Candy’s admirable qualities? How does she behave in the face of Shape’s onslaught? What does she
The age range reflects readability and not necessarily content appropriateness.

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recognize about Malingo, despite his ugly appearance? What do you like best about her? What are some of her flaws?

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

1. What makes Cust an easy target for Franklin Clarke’s scheme. How do you feel about Franklin taking advantage of a troubled ex-soldier? How can you help defend weak, sick or mentally challenged citizens in your community?

2. How does Crome feel about Poirot and why? When has someone criticized you because they didn’t agree with your thought processes or methods? What happened?

3. Why does Franklin Clarke want his brother dead? When have you seen a person’s greed cause him or her to act in horrible ways? When has greed turned you into a person you didn’t want to be?

4. How is Poirot able to discern motives and clues that others cannot? What special gift or ability do you have that many others do not? How can you use these skills to benefit your friends, family or community?

5. Why does Poirot make sure Franklin Clarke’s gun is empty when he accuses the man of the murders? When have you seen a guilty person escape punishment for his or her crimes or offenses? How did it make you feel? Why does God sometimes offer grace from punishment and other times require us to face consequences for our actions?

The A.B.C. Murders

This mystery, suspense book by Agatha Christie is published by G.P. Putnam’s Sons, a member of Penguin Group USA, HarperCollins Publishers. The edition reviewed was published in 2011. The A.B.C. Murders is written for ages 18 and up.

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

Abe Lincoln at Last!

This historical adventure book by Mary Pope Osborne is the 47th book in the "Magic Tree House" series, but is a part of the "Magic Tree House: A Merlin Mission" book that started with book no. 29. It is published by Random House Children’s Books, a division of Random House Inc. Abe Lincoln at Last! is written for kids ages 7 to 12 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 hope important? How did it help President Lincoln when Jack and Annie gave him a positive message about the future of the nation? What does the Bible say about hope?

2. In what were Jack and Annie told to put their trust when they didn’t understand their circumstances? In what or whom do you put your trust when life doesn’t make sense?

3. What interesting facts did you learn about Abraham Lincoln from this book? What else would you like to know about him?
Abe Lincoln's Hat
This easy-to-read biography by Martha Brenner, with illustrations by Donald Cook, is published by Random House Children's Books, a division of 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. Why do the people like Abraham Lincoln? Which of those qualities do you have?
2. What are some good things he does to help others? Who in your town or country needs assistance or justice? What can you do to help them?
3. Why does Abraham Lincoln keep his papers in his hat? How is his hat like a filing cabinet? How is it different? Where do you store important papers to keep from losing them?

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
This semi-autobiographical, coming-of-age book by Sherman Alexie is published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Hachette Book Group and is written for kids 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. What does Junior blame for the majority of problems and deaths on the rez (reservation)? Who in Junior's family was killed because of alcohol? How does Junior think he will die? Why does Junior choose to never take a drink?
2. Where did Junior's sister get her clothes? What did Junior think about shoplifting or stealing? Why do you agree or disagree with him?
3. Penelope is bulimic and justifies it, saying anorexics are always anorexic, but she is only bulimic when she throws up. What isn't logical about her argument?
4. Why was Mr. P so adamant about Junior leaving the reservation? What did he think Junior had that no one else on the rez did?
5. Why do you think non-Indians living nearby, and even teachers on the rez such as Mr. P, felt...
so much prejudice toward the Indians? Do you see prejudice around you in your school? Which groups of people get picked on, and which people do the bullying?

6. Why was Rowdy so opposed to Junior going to a new school? How have you reacted when you saw one of your friends succeeding at something you didn't think you could accomplish? What does jealousy ruin? Why do you think fighting was such a big part of the culture Junior grew up in?

7. Junior's life changed when someone encouraged him to hope. How can you be a person who helps bring hope to others?

### An Acquaintance With Darkness

This historical fiction book by Ann Rinaldi is published by Gulliver Books, an imprint of Harcourt. An Acquaintance With Darkness is written for kids ages 14 to 17.

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 do you see wrong about his reasoning about breaking rules?
2. What other rules does he break in this story?
3. Is it OK to break rules when it's convenient?
4. How do you determine right from wrong?
5. Have you ever been accused of doing something wrong when you were innocent? How did it make you feel? What actions did you take? Did you talk to anyone about it? How was it resolved?
6. Right and wrong seem difficult for Theo to determine at times. Why might he be confused?
7. Was Uncle Ike a trustworthy confidant?
8. What are some ways you keep yourself from feeling superior or better than those around you?
9. How do you determine right from wrong?
10. Why might he have felt that way?
11. Look up the definition of humility, then read Romans 12:3. What does Theo say or do that is condescending? How can you tell he thinks too highly of himself?
12. When you are able to read what Theo is thinking privately, does it affect how much you trust him?
13. What are some ways you keep yourself from feeling superior or better than those around you?

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an acceptable way for Uncle Valentine to continue his studies? What would you do if you were Emily and you found out that your uncle was a body-snatcher?

5. Why does Emily’s mom choose not to put Emily’s needs and her husband’s needs above her own? Can you think of a situation where you would have to set your own wants and dreams aside to put someone else first? Can you think of anyone in your life who routinely puts others first? Why does that person choose to do that?

Across Five Aprils

This historical fiction book by Irene Hunt is published by Berkley Jam, part of the Berkley Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. An Across Five Aprils is written for kids ages 11 to 17.

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 ironic when a man tells Jethro he’s lucky he’s just a boy without any worries during these times of war? In what ways does the war change Jethro, even though he never sees any fighting? When have “grown-up” problems had an impact on you or a young person you know?

2. Why does Bill choose to fight for the Confederacy, even though he hates slavery? When have you had to make a difficult decision, where you didn’t see clear right or wrong answers? What happened?

3. Which characters receive forgiveness and redemption in this story? Who forgives them? When have you forgiven someone who hurt you? How did it feel to forgive? When have you been forgiven of something you did, and how did that feel?

4. What does Ross Milton mean when he says the end of the war will not be a perfect pearl? When have you seen something bad come to an end, only to discover there are still many problems left behind?

5. Why do people in this story spend so much time discussing and reading about the various war generals? Why is Jethro so captivated by President Lincoln? Have you ever lost a hero, either because he died or because he disappointed you? What happened? Who is the only one who doesn’t change? How can you place more of your respect in God?

The Action Bible

This Bible storybook illustrated by Sergio Cariello is published by David C. Cook, and 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 was it like to see Bible stories come to life in words and scene-by-scene pictures? Do the characters look the way you imagined them when you heard these Bible stories in the past? Did you discover anything new about the Bible or biblical characters that you didn’t know before? Explain.

2. Is it accurate to compare heroes of the Bible to Spider-Man, Superman or other action heroes in today’s comic books? How are Bible heroes similar to comic book heroes? How are they different?

3. What qualities make someone a hero? Where does a true hero’s power come from? Could you be a hero? Explain your answer. Which character did you like the most, and why? Which character was the most frightening or evil? Which did you feel was most like you, and why?

4. Why did nations keep forgetting or disobeying God, even though He had shown them His power so often? What are some reasons people today have a hard time believing in or following God?
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won't go to heaven. What do you think about this? What do you think was the right thing for Huck to do? Was it more important to obey the laws of his day or help his friend?

6. People are always trying to civilize Huck. Do you think he lived in a civilized society? Explain your answer.

7. Huck and Jim believe in the power of charms, spells and luck. What are some beliefs people hold today that go against the idea that God alone is in control of the universe?

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

The Adventures of Pearley Monroe

This historical fiction, adventure book by Marci Seither is published by Sawmill Press. *The Adventures of Pearley Monroe* is written for kids ages 8 to 14.

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 Pearley think of Mr. Stone before he rescues Grant? What does he think of him afterward? Why does Pearley’s perception change? Have you ever wrongly judged someone based on rumor? Has anyone ever wrongly judged you? Explain. How are rumors harmful? What can you do in regards to gossiping, in line with what the Bible says?

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

This adventure book by Mark Twain is published by Sterling Publishing and is written for adults but is sometimes studied by 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. Huck and Tom can invent lies to manipulate situations. They tell them far more often than they tell the truth. What do you think about their lying? Is it ever justified? If so, when? What does the Bible say about lying?

2. Huck sometimes seems to be bothered by stealing, but other times, he justifies it. What do you think? Is stealing ever OK? In what situation(s)? What does the Bible say?

3. How did you feel when you read about slavery and people’s attitudes toward and treatment of blacks throughout our nation’s history? Do you think this sort of prejudice exists today? How did you feel about the frequent use of the word n----r in this book?

4. Slavery is a significant theme in this book — but it isn’t just in reference to the black slaves. Huck feels like a slave to his culture and laws, always trying to escape and gain freedom from his present situation. Whether the authority figures in his life at the time are negative or positive, he still runs from them to gain freedom. His inner dialogue also indicates that he feels enslaved by his conscience and by God. Parents can discuss the world’s view of God being a cruel taskmaster (and someone they may run from) vs. the Christian mind-set of Christ providing true freedom.

5. Huck frequently struggles over whether he should help Jim gain his freedom. He finally decides to help Jim, even if it means Huck

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2. Why does Pearley get angry with the miners after the explosion? Have you ever blamed others or has someone blamed you for a misfortune or an accident? Explain. What is Andrew’s advice to Pearley? What is the only thing able to keep bitterness from taking hold?

3. Why is Elizabeth Barnsworth rude to Chen? On what basis does she accuse him of stealing her jewelry? Why aren’t her assumptions fair? Is it fair to make assumptions about people based on the way they look? Explain. What assumptions have people made about you? What assumptions have you made about people you know? How were they proved wrong?

4. Why doesn’t Pearley want to take Cordelia berry picking? Afterward, why is he happy he went with her? Have you ever been reluctant to complete an assigned chore? If yes, what was the chore? Why are chores important in our family? What do you learn from doing your assigned chores?

5. Why does Pearley want to be just like his grandmother? Do you have a person in your life you look up to? Which of their traits do you admire? How can we help you develop those traits in your life?

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
This mystery, suspense, historical book by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was originally serialized in The Strand Magazine (between July 1891 and June 1892), then published in 1892 by George Newness. The reprint reviewed was by Dover Publications in 2009. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* is written for ages 18 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 Annie afraid of? What does Jack remind her about her courage? What are you afraid of? Why are you afraid of this thing? What can you do to overcome your fears? How can your reliance on God help you with your fears?

2. When Jack and Annie are lost in the rain forest, what does Jack want to do? What does Annie want to do? Does Annie do the right thing by following the monkey? Does Jack do the right thing by finding her? How should they have compromised? What kinds of disagreements do you have with your siblings or friends? When you are faced with a decision, how do you decide what is the right thing to do?

3. What kind of animals are piranhas, snakes, crocodiles and jaguars? How did this book give you a better understanding of these dangerous creatures?
The Age of Miracles
This coming-of-age, dystopian novel by Karen Thompson Walker is published by Random House. The Age of Miracles 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. Gossip seems to be a prominent factor at Julia’s middle school. What does the Bible say about gossip? Is your school similar to the one in this book? What should you do when someone starts gossiping to you?

2. How would you feel if you had been at the bus stop when the bully pulled up Julia’s shirt in front of everyone? What would you have done? If Julia had had good friends, how might they have helped her?

3. Seth asks Julia if she wished she could be a hero. What does being a hero mean? How would you answer Seth’s question?

4. Seth’s mom is dying from cancer. Why is he upset when Julia says she’s sorry to hear about his mom? Why does her statement feel inappropriate to Seth?

5. Losing Hanna as a best friend was painful for Julia. How have your friendships changed over the last year? Proverbs 12:26 says, “A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.” How can you be cautious in choosing friends?

6. Why was Gabby’s online relationship dangerous? Throughout the story, Julia is desperately lonely. When she talks about the kids in the library, she describes them as the lonely, the unloved, and the weird. Have you ever felt that way? Who are some people you know who care very much about you and what happens to you? How welcoming are you to new friendships? Do you know anyone who looks like they need a friend?

Al Capone Does My Shirts
This historical book by Gennifer Choldenko is published by G. P. Putnam’s Sons, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers 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. How should you treat people with disabilities? What should you do when your friends or peers ask you to join in activities you know are wrong?

Airhead
This teen chick-lit book, first in the "Airhead" series by Meg Cabot is published by Point, an imprint of Scholastic, Inc. and is written for kids ages 15 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 do you like about Em's life? What do you like about Nikki's life? How is Em changed once she finds herself in Nikki's body? Should people put down others for being different (e.g., cheerleaders, academics, models, game players, etc.)? How does Em learn this the hard way? How do her feminist ideas change? What are some of the ethical problems with whole body transplants, if such things were possible? Why does Em have to pretend to be Nikki? How is Em's new life as Nikki a lie?

The Alchemist
This mystical fable by Paulo Coelho is published by HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers and is written for 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 is a Personal Legend? What do you think of Melchizedek’s belief that your only obligation in life is to recognize your own destiny? How does this idea differ from Christ's teachings? According to the Bible, how does
God want His children to use their time on earth?

2. What does the author mean when he talks about the Soul of the World? Define the word pantheism. How does the author’s version of God, rooted in pantheism, differ from the God of the Bible? What benefits of God does the pantheist forfeit?

3. How does the universe reward Santiago for following his Personal Legend? What sort of treasures does God promise us here on earth when we follow His path for us? Where are we urged to store up our treasures, and why?

4. In what way will God show Santiago the right path, according to Melchizedek? What are some ways in which God guides and directs His people today? How can we determine whether the signs we perceive are coming from God?

5. Which aspects of this story align with your beliefs about God and Christianity? Which ideas do not align with biblical teachings? Why is it important to develop a solid understanding of what you believe about God? What are some potential dangers of adopting bits and pieces of various belief systems as your own?

The Alchemyst
This fantasy book by Michael Scott is the first book in "The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel" series and is published by Delacorte Press, an imprint of Random House Children’s Books, a division of Random House Inc. The Alchemyst is written for kids ages 12 to 15.

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 Josh and Sophie’s relationship to each other and to their parents. Would you like to live in their family? How is Josh’s father different from Nicholas Flamel? What benefits do the twins gain from their family’s unorthodox lifestyle? What things do they miss out on? What do you most like about our family?

2. Why does Josh feel so betrayed by Nicholas? Is it ever necessary to lie to someone to protect them? Do you believe Nicholas’ or Dee’s version of events? At the end of the story, Josh still feels conflicted. Whose side would you choose?

3. Why are many of the Elder Race worshiped as gods by humans? How are these “gods” and “goddesses” different from the God of the Bible? What was the difference between good and evil characters in the book? How is it the same or different from the way you would define good and evil?

4. Do you think the book’s version of history is plausible? How is it different from what you believe about the origins of humanity? What did you think about how the author uses science to explain magical powers? Do you think that science will advance to the point where things that seem magical today (like teleporting or time travel) will one day be possible?

5. How are Dee and Nicholas the same? How have their choices made them different? Think of some close friends. How have their choices made them the individuals they are today?

Alex and Eliza: A Love Story
This historical, romance book by Melissa de la Cruz is the first book in "Alex and Eliza" series and is published by G.P. Putnam’s Sons, an imprint of Penguin Random House, LLC. Alex and Eliza: A Love Story 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 are some ways women’s roles in wartime differ in our day from Eliza’s day? What are some ways Eliza and her aunt and sisters serve their country, even though they can’t fight? What might you do to show those who are in the military that you appreciate what they’re doing?

2. Why couldn’t people in Alex’s and Eliza’s time marry for love alone? Why was it so important that people married into families with well-known names or pedigrees? If this were still a rule today, with whom do you think we would have matched you?

3. What qualities do Alex and Eliza see in each other that cause...
them to fall in love? What characteris-tics in people do you find attractive?

4. Why does Eliza agree to marry Henry, even after his obscene behavior? When have you sacri-fi-ced your own happiness to rescue a family member or friend? What happened?

5. What does Alex think he must do to prove his worthiness to Eliza and her family? What are some ways people in our soci-ety today try to prove themselves worthy? Through whom are you worthy before God? What does a worthy life look like for a Christ follower?

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

This fantasy adven-ture novel by Lewis Carroll was written for 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. What didn’t make sense to Alice about the characters in this story? What did you find most nonsensical? What makes a char-acter or an action nonsensical? Do you ever see these nonsensi-cal elements in your world? What doesn’t make sense to you in your world?

2. What did boredom cause Alice to do? What has boredom caused you to do? When you feel like there’s nothing to do, how can you figure out what there is to do?

3. What did Alice’s entire adventure turn out to be? What is one of your dreams?

4. Why do you think the author called this place Wonderland? What would your “Wonderland” hold? What would be the most important rule in it?

All the Bright Places

This contemporary drama, romance book by Jennifer Niven is pub-lished by Ember, an imprint of Random House Children’s Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All the Bright Places 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. Finch asks Violet what it is like to have a best friend because he has never had one. What qualities do you look for in a best friend? How do you treat your friends? What things could you do to be a better friend?

2. Does being sorry waste time, as Finch thinks? How does he think everyone should live his or her life? Is it possible to live your life in a way so that you will never have to apologize? Explain.

3. How could Finch’s death have been prevented? Who are some of the people who might have been able to help him? What might they have done to inter-vene? Why does Violet feel responsible? If you discovered a friend was contemplating suicide, what steps could you take to help the person? Whom could you tell?

4. Why does Finch lie to Violet’s parents about his home life? What other things does Finch lie about? Why might he do this?

5. How can grief cause people to change how they normally act (consider Violet)? What does time do to help quell the pain of grief? Why should people hold on during a time of grief, even when they don’t feel like it? Should they allow their feelings to help them make life-and-death decisions? Explain.

6. What doesn’t Finch understand, which causes him to take his life? How important would medica-tion have been for him? How important is hope in one’s life? Why should one’s hope be placed in Jesus and not another person?

7. What does Finch believe about lying? Is a lie still a lie if you “feel” it’s the truth? How can feel-ings lead someone to do things he wouldn’t normally do? What makes the truth true? What part do feelings play in the truth? Why is it important for the truth to be a standard and not based on how people feel? What does the Bible say about God’s truth?
Allegiant
This futuristic thriller book by Veronica Roth is the third in the "Divergent" series published by Katherine Tegen Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Allegiant is written for kids ages 14 years 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 people to make bad choices? How are a person's genes and their choices different? Explain with examples.

2. What does Tris do for Caleb, despite his betrayal? Why does she continue to take care of him? When have you forgiven someone who hurt you? How hard was it? What was the outcome?

3. Why is Tobias upset when he learns his genes are "damaged"? What are some painful labels people have used for you or someone you know? Why do words have such a powerful impact on us? What does the Bible say about the way God views us, even though we are all "damaged"?

4. Describe the way Tobias deals with his grief after losing Tris. How might a Christian handle grief differently than a non-Christian? Explain.

Almost Home
This historical fiction book in the "Daughters of the Faith" series by Wendy Lawton is published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Hachette Book Group. Almost Home 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. Elder Brewster says he would meet the group of Pilgrims, who left from Holland, in England. Mary knows he did not board the ship when they stopped in England. She suspects that he is hiding. Why does Elder Brewster hide?

2. What is he willing to risk to gain the freedom to worship God? When Mary's father dies, Mary wonders if her family should not have traveled on the Mayflower. What does Mary's mother say to her? Can that advice be applied to your life, also?

3. Many people die, and the Pilgrims endure many hardships. What do the Pilgrims have to be grateful for? What are you grateful for?

Always and Forever, Lara Jean
This romance, contemporary book by Jenny Han is the third book in the “To All the Boys I've Loved Before” series published by BYFR, a division of Simon and Schuster. Always and Forever, Lara Jean is written for 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. What does Lara Jean think would have happened to the main characters in "Romeo and Juliet" if they had lived? Why does she think it was easier to maintain a lifelong love in historical times? Do you know any older couples who have been happily married for 30 or more years? What do you think is the key to keeping a relationship healthy over several decades?

2. Why does Lara Jean pretend to be asleep during the game of "Never Have I Ever" that students are playing on the bus? What question is she afraid she will be asked when the "Truth or Dare" game begins? Have you ever been in a situation where people were playing a game that made you uncomfortable? Did you play along despite feeling nervous, refuse to play, walk away from the situation or something else? Was that the right thing to do? Explain. How can you prepare yourself to handle social situations where people ask you inappropriate or overly personal questions?
questions? What methods can you use to determine when a game or conversation has gone too far?

3. How does Peter respond to his father's attempts to reconnect with him? Why does Lara Jean think Peter should give his father a second chance at being part of his life? How might a child feel when one parent is responsible for the divorce? What advice would you have given Peter?

4. Why does Lara Jean think sex shouldn't be taken for granted? What steps does she take to try to make sex a precious, special event? What are God's standards for sexual relationships?

5. What does Peter's mom talk to Lara Jean about in a private conversation? What does Peter's mom imply that Lara Jean should do? How might being emotionally and romantically involved with another person before college limit someone's ability to make big choices? In what other ways could such a relationship make a person feel braver, stronger or more able to face new challenges?

Always Starring Skinnybones

This humor book by Barbara Park is published by Yearling, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Always Starring Skinnybones 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 Alex's pride get him in trouble? Why does he try so hard to get people to notice him? What does the Bible say about people who are focused on themselves and their own desires? Why might God want us to think about the needs of others?

2. Why does Alex feel the need to tease and annoy others, such as Annabelle and Albert? Is Alex a bully? Explain your answer. If Alex came to you for advice, asking you how he could be a better friend, what would you say to him?

3. Why does the director call Alex a quiet hero? How does Alex feel about being a quiet hero after he's spent so much time trying to get people to notice what he's doing? Would you rather be a quiet hero or the kid who puts on a show for everyone? Explain your answer.

4. What is Alex's view of God? Does God exist to do favors for people? Explain your answer. How is your view of God different from Alex's? What kind of relationship does God want to have with you?

5. Why does Alex think no one deserves fame more than he does? What has he done to *deserve* fame? What does the Bible say you deserve in life for your behavior? What has God done to ensure you will get something much better than you deserve?

6. When does Alex feel his friends have disappointed him? How does he want Brian and his classmates to respond after seeing his commercial? When has a friend acted differently than you expected? How did the person's reaction make you feel?

Always Watching

This Christian suspense book is the first in "The Rayne Tour" series, by Brandilyn and Amberly Collins is published by Zondervan. Always Watching is written for teens ages 13 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. What is Shaley's life like as the daughter of a rock star? How isn't it as glamorous as it appears?

2. What does Shaley say she wants most from her mother? Where else does she look to find love? How does Carly explain God's love to her?

3. What kind of secrets does Rayne keep from her daughter? How do you think that makes Shaley feel? What secret has been kept from you? What secret have you kept from someone else?

4. How does Shaley react to losing three of her friends in 24 hours? What does she learn about the fragility of life? How does this realization change her? What does God's Word say about mortality? How can we be assured about where our spirits go when we die?

5. What lesson does Shaley learn about trusting others? How do you feel when you are betrayed?
Parents may want to revisit with their kids a Christian perspective of the fall of man (Genesis 3) and how, contrary to Pullman’s declarations, knowing and having fellowship with God is what makes people wiser (Job 28:28; Proverbs 1:7; 15:33; 1 Corinthians 1:17-31).

3. AUTHOR’S HONESTY

Pullman mentions names of people who are somewhat familiar to Christians, such as Calvin and Enoch, and then writes about them as if he were telling the truth. Parents may want to talk to their kids about whether Pullman is presenting the facts accurately and encourage them not to take biblical references (in this book or elsewhere) at face value.

4. HEAVEN

This book depicts heaven as a place where God has imprisoned souls. It is dismal, and the dead are listless, restless people hungry for life and tortured by menacing birds that remind them in their sleep about the bad things they did in life. How is heaven depicted in the Bible? What will be different there than in Pullman’s “heaven,” and why?

Amber Brown Is Feeling Blue

This family-life book in the “Amber Brown” series by Paula Danziger is published by G.P. Putnam’s Sons Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group. Amber Brown Is Feeling Blue is written for kids ages 8 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. Amber had a difficult decision to make. What are some ways you handle tough choices? To whom can you go for help or advice when you have a tough decision to make?

2. Children of divorced parents may also benefit from additional discussions concerning how they feel about divorce and their parents’ current relationship. Were you ever put in a situation where you had to choose between two parents? How did you feel and handle it?

The Amber Spyglass

This third science fiction/fantasy book in the "His Dark Materials" series by Philip Pullman is published by Yearling Books, an imprint of Random House Children’s Books. The Amber Spyglass 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. LYING

Lyra says lying, cheating and betraying came as naturally to her as breathing. Though she seems to recognize that those actions are wrong, she says doing those things actually made her feel virtuous because she only did them for Will. What do you think of that logic?

2. ATTAINING WISDOM

Dust is Pullman’s word for enlightenment. “Dust is a name for what happens when matter begins to understand itself,” one of Lord Asriel’s angels tells Will. “Matter loves matter. It seeks to know more about itself, and Dust is formed.”

How do you feel about Pullman’s assertions that we will gain wisdom and understanding by simply being open-minded and living for today?

Pullman’s theories suggest that people can be free only if they abandon the “myth” of God. He also says we shouldn’t mourn the loss of our innocence because it brings a “gain in self-knowledge.”

The Ambition

This legal thriller by Lee Strobel is published by Zondervan and written for 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. Why is Gina confused by the conflict her faith brings into her relationship with Garry?

2. Why do people often expect relationships with God to bring them instant earthly peace? What did Jesus say would happen when people followed Him? (Matthew 10:34-35)

3. What should Eric Snow choose—to be a politician or a pastor? Explain.

4. Why is Art so determined not to tell Tom's secret? Does he do the right thing in dealing with the police, or should he tell them what he knows? Explain your answer.

5. Have you, like Eric, ever felt yourself standing at a distance from God? What are some ways God drew Eric back to himself? What are ways He's drawn you or someone you know back to Him after a time of struggle?

6. Is Debra Wyatt a Christ follower? Explain your answer. If you could sit down with her and discuss faith, what would you say or ask her?

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

1. What is Amelia Bedelia supposed to do? What does she do? Why don't the Rodgers' instructions work correctly for Amelia Bedelia?

2. What are some reasons we may have trouble understanding other people, even when they speak the same language we do? What does Mrs. Rodgers do to help Amelia keep their misunderstandings from happening again?

3. Luke tries to learn the truth about Shadow children from his parents and from Jen. What propaganda do the government and other people, on both sides of this issue, create? What is the truth? How often do you consciously evaluate the truth of what you are told? What do you have available to help you evaluate what you hear? How do you use these things or people to make good decisions?

4. What are some things our society values that you suspect might not be fully true? If we ever had a dictatorship in our country, and they wanted to convince people to agree with those values, how might they do so? What would the propaganda say, and how might it be packaged to appeal to us?

5. Why doesn't God use propaganda to get people to come to Him? How does Satan use propaganda? What makes propaganda appealing?

6. Why don't some of the government officials follow the policies that they are being paid to enforce? What is the role of our conscience, even for those who make no claim to know the Lord? What might overwhelm someone's conscience, so he no longer listens to it? What role does Scripture play here? The Holy Spirit?

7. Jen believed that change in a dictatorial society would only come as a result of a direct protest. Did Jen's protest change her society? How did her time with Luke make a change? How is Jen's stepfather working toward change? How does Luke intend to change society? How do you want to

Among the Hidden

This coming-of-age, science fiction book by Margaret Peterson Haddix is the first in the "Shadow Children" series and is published by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, a division of Simon & Schuster Inc. Among the Hidden 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. Why does the government think the country needs a two-child-only policy? Why do others think the policy is unnecessary? Whom do you believe? Why?

2. How do parents hide their Shadow children? How is what they do similar or different from what Moses' mother did in the Bible book of Exodus? Why do parents risk their lives for their children?

Amelia Bedelia

This humorous children's book by Peggy Parish, illustrated by Fritz Siebel, is the first of the "Amelia Bedelia" stories published by Harper Trophy, a division of HarperCollins Publishers. Amelia Bedelia is written for kids ages 4 to 8.

Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.
change your society? What will you do to reach this end?

**Among the Impostors**

This dystopian novel by Margaret Peterson Haddix is the second book in the "Shadow Children" series and is published by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers and Aladdin Paperbacks, both divisions of Simon and Schuster Inc. *Among the Impostors* is written for kids ages 8 to 14.

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. Luke had to take on another identity for his own protection. How would you feel if you had to pretend to be someone else? What would you miss most about your old life? What would be exciting about getting to start over with a new identity?

2. Luke is naïve and has trouble telling if people are being truthful. Do you think you can tell if someone is lying? Read James 1:5. How might God have helped Luke with this, if he’d have asked?

3. The government said that people could only have two children. Why do you suppose some people disobeyed the law? Was it a fair law? If not, what would you have done to change it?

4. The students in the story call each other names — *exnay, fon-rol* and others. Do kids in your school call others rude names? Why do they do that? Have you ever been harassed like that? How did it make you feel? Did you tell someone? What did you do?

5. Luke and his friend Jen believed they could make a difference in the world. How can you make a difference in your home? Your school? Your community?

**The Amulet of Samarkand**

This contemporary fantasy by Jonathan Stroud is the first in the "Bartimaeus Trilogy" and is published by Disney-Hyperion. *The Amulet of Samarkand* is written for kids ages 10 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. Bartimaeus claims that Solomon used demons, presumably to give him power and wisdom. Read 2 Chronicles 1:7-13 and discuss how the Bible says Solomon received his wisdom.

2. Nathaniel is driven to summon Bartimaeus by his desire for revenge. What are other, more positive ways, Nathaniel could have channeled his anger?

3. Bartimaeus says that freedom is an illusion and that it comes at a high price. Do you agree with him? The Bible tells us the truth will set us free. Discuss what you think this means.

4. Although Underwood cautions that demons are wicked, how does having the story told in Bartimaeus’ point of view change the reader’s opinion? What does the Bible say about demons and magic *(Leviticus 20:27; 2 Kings 17:17)*?

5. Demons are seen as powerful beings that can be controlled through the use of incense and incantations. How did Jesus deal with demons?

**And Then There Were None**

This mystery, suspense/thriller, horror book by Agatha Christie is published by Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers (originally published in 1939 as *Ten Little [n-word]s* and later as *Ten Little Indians*. The version reviewed was published in 2011.) *And Then There Were None* is written for ages 18 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 invitees go to Soldier Island, even though they aren’t sure who invited them? When has your curiosity gotten you into trouble? What should you have done instead?

2. Luke is naïve and has trouble telling if people are being truthful. Do you think you can tell if someone is lying? Read James 1:5. How might God have helped Luke with this, if he’d have asked?

3. The government said that people could only have two children. Why do you suppose some people disobeyed the law? Was it a fair law? If not, what would you have done to change it?

4. The students in the story call each other names — *exnay, fon-rol* and others. Do kids in your school call others rude names? Why do they do that? Have you ever been harassed like that? How did it make you feel? Did you tell someone? What did you do?

5. Luke and his friend Jen believed they could make a difference in the world. How can you make a difference in your home? Your school? Your community?
find most morally reprehensible, and why? Which do you feel sorry for? Explain. Why does Justice Wargrave feel he has the right to do what he does? Is justice served by his actions? Why not?

3. What is Justice Wargrave’s reason for selecting the people that come to Soldier Island? Why does he confess what he’s done? When have you had a secret that was too great a burden to keep to yourself? What did you do?

4. What are some of the ways different guests demonstrate their fear and anxiety as more murders occur? When have you seen people turn on each other in stressful situations? What might allow you to feel peace in a stressful situation?

5. How do the guests respond to the accusations made by the recorded voice? What do their responses tell you about them? What should they have done? Why is asking for forgiveness important? Why is accepting the consequences of your actions important?

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

1. How did Andi’s pride keep her from good things?
2. Did her pride play a part in why she left her family’s ranch?
3. How was running away a good or poor choice? How did running away solve or not solve her problems?
4. Why should or shouldn’t Andi have stolen back her own horse?
5. How could she have handled the situation more appropriately?
6. In what ways did her disobedience cause more trouble?
7. How could the story have ended differently had Andi not been found by her family?
8. In what ways did you see God’s hand of protection on Andi during her time away from her home?

The Angel Experiment

This science-fiction adventure is the first book in the "Maximum Ride" series by James Patterson and is published by Little, Brown and Company, in conjunction with Time Warner Book Group. The Angel Experiment 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. If you were Max, would you trust The Voice? How do you determine who you can trust in your life?
2. Why are friendship, loyalty and a sense of family so important to the Flock? What would have happened if they had gone their separate ways after Jeb left? What do the kids feel is missing in their lives because they don’t have, or even know about, their parents?
3. What is a fatal flaw? What does Max say is her fatal flaw? What’s yours?
4. What does The Voice mean when it tells Max that knowledge is a terrible burden? Have you ever had information others didn’t that became a heavy weight on your shoulders? What did you do? How can knowing Jesus help release your burdens?
5. What are your impressions of Jeb and the scientists at The School? What value do they place on human life? Are there people in our society who treat other humans as disposable items? Explain your answer. Which humans does God value?
6. Why is Jeb’s betrayal so devastating to the kids in the Flock? Have you ever been betrayed by someone you loved and respected? What happened? How did you feel?
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Why does the author use a fable to make a political point instead of offering a historical discussion that includes names and factual situations? How was the fable more interesting or informative to you?

2. How do pigs use the language to subdue the other animals? As you examine the pigs’ language, can you see how words and different degrees of mistruth can influence others? Where do you see this same use of language in your world today?

3. Why does Anna stop spending time with her friend Countess Lydia in order to make friends with Princess Betsy Tverskaya? Does Betsy approve of Vronsky’s love for Anna? Although Anna never verbally encourages Vronsky’s love for her, do her actions send a different message when she attends society events?

4. What are some of the life lessons Anna learns as she travels with Swallow Man and Reb Hirsch? What does each man believe about the situation? Whose side would you have taken, and why? What does the Bible say about the value of human life?

5. Why do Anna, Swallow Man and Reb Hirsch keep walking, even though they have no destination? What would you have done in their place?

6. Why is Swallow Man afraid of names? What does he think will happen if someone finds out his name? Do you think you would feel different about yourself if you were forced to give your identity away and remain nameless, like Anna?

Anna Karenina

This historical drama by Leo Tolstoy, translated from Russian to English by Constance Garnett, is published by Modern Library, a division of Random House Inc., and written for kids ages 16 and up.

Random House Inc., and written for kids ages 16 and up.

Search for a review of this book for parents at PluggedIn.com/book-reviews.
functions where she may meet him? In your life, how might your actions send different messages than your words?

4. Why does Anna think that her husband’s willful self-deception is worse than her own adultery? Which is worse in your mind? Are both equally as wrong?

5. How do the men of St. Petersburg treat Vronsky after his affair with Anna? How do the women treat Anna? Why might this be? When does Anna begin to grow suspicious that Vronsky is not faithful to her? Are her fears accurate? How does Vronsky react to Anna’s anger and jealousy toward him? Have the two of them found the happiness they hoped for? Why might happiness be fleeting, even for those who get what they want?

6. How have your relationships with friends changed over time?

How does the Nazi prejudice against Jews show itself in the everyday lives of the people in Amsterdam? How does Anne feel when she hears reports of the treatment other Jews are enduring? What prejudices do you see in your country or in your school?

Anne of Avonlea

This second historical book in the "Anne of Green Gables" series by L.M. Montgomery is published by Sterling Publishing. Anne of Avonlea 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 did Anne Shirley do when she sold her neighbor’s cow by mistake? Was confessing and offering him her cow and the $20 she earned from the sale enough? How did Anne explain to Davy that dishonesty was wrong? When have you chosen to be honest about a mistake? When have you lied to cover up an action? What were the consequences of each? What does the Bible say about telling the truth? Anne struggles with how she should rule her classroom. The Bible states that God disciplines those he loves (Hebrews 12:6). What discipline do you think works best and why? When did Anne use this kind of discipline?
and when didn't she? Anne and Marilla work hard to understand Davy's actions and discipline him. Often they use the same punishment of sending him to bed without supper. How do their attempts to communicate with Davy help or hurt? What discipline has helped you become a better person?

What makes life at our home special for you? How do you and our family have a better life because we live together?

3. Who thinks Anne talks too much? Do you agree? How is your imagination similar to or different from Anne's? In what ways is her imagination beneficial? In what ways is it a drawback? How do you use your imagination? Is it beneficial to you? Explain.

4. Why might Anne feel so negative about her red hair? What is something uniquely different about you? Do you feel negative or positive about this attribute? Explain.

5. Which of Anne's adventures do you connect with the most? What makes you connect with it? If you and Anne lived in the same town, how might you have treated each other — friendly, coldly? What might your relationship with Anne have looked like?

6. Describe Anne and Diana's friendship. What helps their friendship stand the test of time? Think about a friend you have. How is it similar to Anne and Diana's friendship? How is it different? What has this book taught you about being a better friend?

7. How does Anne get into trouble for something she didn't mean to do? Have you ever done that? Explain how it felt and the lesson you learned.

Anne of Ingleside

This historical romance is the sixth book in the "Anne of Green Gables" series by L. M. Montgomery and is published by Starfire, an imprint of Random House Children's Books. Anne of Ingleside 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 are some of the lies told in this novel? How do people react to those lies? How do you react when you discover someone has lied to you? How was the truth discovered in this book? What helps you discern truth?

2. Why does Nan bargain with God? Why is bargaining with God not a good way to pray? What does Nan learn about bargaining with God? How should you pray?

3. What are some of Aunt Mary's critical ways? How can you be kind when someone is mean or critical?

4. Why is Anne concerned about her relationship with Gilbert? What does she do? What should she have done? How can you approach someone when you are concerned about a relationship?

5. How does Anne learn to be grateful for her life? What are you grateful for in your own life? How can you find something kind to say about other

Anne of Green Gables

This first adventure, coming-of-age, drama book in the "Anne of Green Gables" series by Lucy Maud Montgomery was originally published by L.C. Page & Co.; the book reviewed was published by the Sterling Publishing Company in 2004. Anne of Green Gables is written for kids ages 10 to 14.

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 Anne feel when she first comes to live with Matthew and Marilla? Describe how you would feel if you went to live with an unknown family in a place where you knew no one. What would you have done in a way that was similar to what Anne did? What would you have done differently from Anne?

2. What makes life at Green Gables special for Anne? What are Marilla's concerns about keeping Anne? What makes Matthew want to keep her? How do each of these characters have a better life because they live together?
The Apothecary’s Daughter

This historical romance book by Julie Klassen is written for ages 16 and up and is published by Bethany House Publishers. 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 satisfied is Lilly with her life at the opening of the story? If her mother had returned, would all of Lilly’s longings have disappeared? Is that what she thinks would happen? How satisfied are you with your life?

2. What does Lilly long for? Why does she feel unable to change her future? How does she feel trapped in her life? Do you ever feel trapped in your life? What do you long for? What can you do today to help you move toward that future?

3. What does Lilly do on Honeystreet Bridge? Do you have a special place where you can think about the past and the future, and talk to God?

4. How does Francis rely on Lilly? Is she helpful or hurtful initially? Is she helpful or hurtful to his long-term plans? What did it take for Francis to grow into his role as an apothecary?

5. What makes Lilly’s transition back into life at her father’s shop more difficult after a season in London? What place does disappointment have in one’s attitude? Tell about a time when you were disappointed. How did God help you during this low time?

6. Although Lilly is talented as an apothecary’s assistant, why is she unable to help others legally? Does Lilly decide to do what is right for her father’s patient or keep out of legal trouble? How does her decision to serve someone else hurt her father’s apothecary business? Have you ever had to choose to do what was right before God and serve someone, even though others looked down on you? How were your feelings similar to Lilly’s? What was the outcome of your actions?

7. Why is Lilly willing to marry any suitor that her aunt deems acceptable? What does Lilly learn about love before the end of the story? Does God have a plan for Lilly’s life? What is your criterion for the person you will marry?

Aquifer

This science fiction novel by Jonathan Friesen is published by Blink, a trademark of the Zondervan Corporation, and is written for kids ages 14 to 17 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 do the leaders in Luca’s world take away the people’s access to art, literature and emotion? What do they hope to accomplish? What would our people even if they have not acted kindly?
world be like today without beauty and emotion?

2. Why does Luca admit that he misses not knowing some of the truths about his world? When have you found ignorance to be easier to take than the truth in your own life?

3. Why is Luca intrigued by the Wishers? How does their behavior surprise him? How is it similar to a group of people you might know?

Are You There God?
It’s Me, Margaret.

This coming-of-age diary by Judy Blume is published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers, a division of Simon and Schuster, and 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 does Margaret believe what Nancy says about boys, growing up and getting a period? What does Margaret discover about Nancy's knowledge? How do Margaret's thoughts and actions change after this?

2. How do you talk to God? How is it different than talking to your friends? Do you ever try to make a deal with God? Do you ever get mad at God? How should you talk to God?

3. Do you know kids who go to Temple like Margaret's grandmother does? Why doesn't Margaret know her other grandparents? What is the difference between the Jewish faith and the Christian faith? What does Margaret think is the difference?

4. Why is being like everyone else important to Nancy and Margaret? Do you want to be like everyone else? How do you decide what is best for you?

Armageddon—
“Daniel X” Series

This science fiction, fantasy adventure book is the fifth book in the "Daniel X" series by James Patterson and Chris Grabenstein and is published by Little, Brown and Company, a division of Hachette Book Group. Armageddon is written for kids ages 10 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 are Abbadon's other names? How does Abbadon compare to Satan as explained in the Bible? How does Abbadon fool Daniel in the destruction of New York? What does he promise Daniel in order to get him to serve him? How has someone fooled you? Tell about a time when you didn't let yourself be fooled.

2. How does Daniel defeat Abbadon? Who defeated the real Satan? How did Jesus fight against Satan's temptations in the desert? How can you fight against Satan's temptations? What has helped you when you've been tempted to sin? What does not help you?

3. In what ways does this novel cast Daniel X in the role of a savior? Who does the Bible say the one, true Savior of the world is? How does Jesus have the power to save? How can you be saved and know that you can be with Jesus for all eternity?

4. Who warns Daniel about letting his negative emotions control him? What happens when Daniel ignores that advice, gives in to rage and tries to fight Abbadon? Describe a time when you allowed yourself to be controlled by anger. What was the situation? How can rage hurt you and the people around you? What helps you gain self-control and not sin in your anger? When you and I sin, what way out do we have as Christians that Daniel does not have?

5. Why does Daniel think that Dana decided to date Willy? Has a friend ever tried to make you jealous? Have you ever tried to make someone jealous? What was the situation? How could it have been handled differently?

6. At the end of the book, Daniel considers the anger inside himself. What does he think might happen if he fails to control his anger? If Daniel always lets his anger control him, how might that affect him? What negative aspect of your nature could become worse if you did nothing to combat it? How can you improve that part of yourself? How can God help you in this area?
Artemis Fowl

This fantasy adventure book is the first in the "Artemis Fowl" series by Eoin Colfer and is published by Talk Miramax Books, a division of Hyperion Books for Children. Artemis Fowl is written for kids ages 10 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 part do rules play in this story? What are some of the rules the humans and fairies live by? How do the rules prevent certain characters from achieving their goals? What are some things different characters do to get around the rules? Why do you have rules you're expected to follow, at home, at school and elsewhere? What are some of those rules? What purpose do they serve?

2. In what ways does Artemis act and seem like an adult? In what ways does he still behave like a child?

3. What is Artemis' goal in translating the fairy book? Is he just after gold? How do you feel about his desire to learn a new language so he can exploit a new group of people?

4. What are Artemis' initial impressions about fairies? How does that change in light of his interactions with Holly? Have you ever had negative first impressions about someone that changed after you got to know the person better? What happened?

5. How does Butler respond when Artemis tells him the Fowl mansion is about to be bio-bombed? Why doesn't he grill the boy about how he (Artemis) plans to handle the situation? How does Butler react when he realizes Artemis has drugged his drink? If you were Butler, would you have had enough faith in Artemis to simply say, "I trust you."? Is there anyone in your life you trust that completely? If so, what causes you to trust him or her?

6. What kind of man is Butler? Is he a good role model for Artemis? Explain your answer.

7. Why does Holly heal Artemis and Butler, her enemies? Why is she concerned for Juliet? How does she respond to the idea of lost lives, even if they're the lives of people she's battling? What does this tell you about her character?

8. Will Artemis always be evil? Which of his actions help you believe that he will or won't always be evil? Which of his thoughts or behaviors indicate he has a conscience, even if he doesn't want anyone to know it? When does he recognize that his own arrogance has compromised his mission?

9. What impressions do the fairies have of humans? (You can prompt your child by asking about pollution, lead-based paint, whales, etc.) What does Holly say that humans will have to answer for? What does Commander Root call people? What are some of the human behaviors they find particularly offensive? Why do they view humans as careless with the environment? Do you agree or disagree with their remarks? Explain why it is or isn't true that humans can't get along with others, or themselves. What things about humanity are good that Holly, Root and the other fairies don't consider?

Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident

This sci-fi/fantasy adventure book is second in the "Artemis Fowl" series by Eoin Colfer and is published by Disney Hyperion Books, an imprint of the Disney Book Group. Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident is written for kids ages 8 to 12 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 Artemis treat the school psychologist at the beginning of the book? Why can't Artemis think of anyone he respects enough to consider that person an equal? How do Artemis' responses and behaviors change as a result of his adventure? What causes him to develop respect for people such as Holly, Butler and his father? How does he treat the psychologist at the end of the book? Why is it important to treat people such as Holly, Butler and his father? How does he treat the psychologist at the end of the book? Why is it important to treat people, particularly parents, teachers and other adults in authority, with respect, even if you think you know more than them or don't agree with them?

2. What does loyalty mean? Which characters most exemplified...
loyalty? How did they act, or what did they do? Who in your life would you consider loyal? Why? To what or whom are you loyal?

3. Why does Butler think Artemis is the loneliest boy he’s ever seen? Is Artemis lonely? If so, why? Do you think his being a genius contributes to his loneliness? Why or why not? How could a person like Artemis overcome loneliness? Do you ever feel lonely or misunderstood? If so, what are some steps you can take to improve that situation? How could I help you?

4. How does Artemis feel about his father? How does he describe Artemis I, in his inner dialogue and when he’s talking to others? In what ways is Mr. Fowl a good role model? In what ways does he set a less than admirable example for his son? How does Artemis feel about his mother? In what ways is Mrs. Fowl a good role model? In what ways does she set a less than admirable example for her son? Why does Artemis say he is feeling more humane impulses since she regained her sanity?

5. How does Artemis initially feel about fairies? How does his opinion of them change, and why? Describe a time when you developed a certain impression about someone, only to find you were wrong after getting to know him/her better? Why is it important to get to know people before you make up your mind about them?

As Brave As You

This coming-of-age, contemporary, drama book is published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing Division. As Brave As You 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. Why do you think Grandpop doesn’t want people to know he is blind? What kind of things can he do for himself? Do you think you could do those things if you were blind? What would scare you the most about being blind? Do you know someone with a disability? If so, what kind of things can you do to help him or her?

2. What do Genie and Ernie miss about the city when they come to live with their grandparents? What do they come to like about the country? Think about a time when you spent time in a place away from your own home—camp or a relative’s house. What was the best thing about your experience? What did you like about going home?

3. Genie feels guilty about breaking Wood’s model and killing Granpop’s bird. Why does he try to hide his mistakes? How would you feel if you were in his place? What would you have done? Tell about a time when you had to apologize for breaking or losing something that belonged to someone else.

4. What are some of Genie’s fears? What does he do to help him control his fear? What frightens other characters in the book, including Grandpop, Ernie and Tess’ mom? How do they deal with their fears? What frightens you? What do you do to help yourself not be afraid?

Asking for Trouble

This contemporary Christian book is the first in the “London Confidential” series by Sandra Byrd and is published by Tyndale House Publishers. Asking for Trouble is written for kids ages 13 to 16.

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 Savvy having a difficult time making friends? Have you ever had difficulties finding other kids to hang out with? What did Savvy do right? What have you done right? What did Savvy do wrong? What have you done wrong? What are some things that you can do that will help you find friends?

2. Savvy chews gum even when she knows the classroom rule that she can’t. Why does she do it? What two things happen as a result of her disobedience? Is it OK for her to chew the gum until her teacher enters the room? Who might be watching her and her actions? How might her actions affect her witness to others? What is one area in your life
where people may be watching your actions?

3. At first, Savvy doesn't let her parents know that she only delivers school papers and that she ruined her mother's silk shirt. How much of the truth did Savvy tell her parents at first? Why did she end up telling them the whole truth? Tell about a time when you did something like this. How did it end up?

What do you wish you had done differently?

4. Savvy eventually tells Jack the truth about her inexperience as a school newspaper reporter. Did she still get what she wanted? When you do what is right, do you always get what you want? Even if you don't get what you want, why is it important to tell the truth?

5. Think about Savvy's columns. What did you like about them? What did you dislike about them? How would you have written them differently?

6. Where does Savvy want to sit in the cafeteria? What table is open to her at first? Why won't she sit there? What kinds of kids doesn't she want to hang around? Which kids at your school would you like to be friends with? Which kids at your school do you avoid?

7. Why does Savvy change the newspaper bag for her own bag? How important is physical appearance to Savvy? How important is yours to you?

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### The Assassination of Brangwain Spurge

This fantasy, thriller book by M.T. Anderson and Eugene Yelchin is published by Candlewick Press, a division of Penguin Random House. It 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 is Werfel's attitude toward Spurge before he arrives? What does he look forward to sharing with Spurge? How does he prepare his home for his guest? When have you experienced hospitality? What did the other person (or people) do to make you feel comfortable? How did you feel when someone went out of her way to make sure you received the proper care? How can you anticipate the needs of guests or travelers to help them feel more at home?

2. How do Spurge's and Werfel's viewpoints on goblins' shedding skins differ? How does Spurge react when Werfel tries to explain the beauty and significance of the skins? Have you ever lived in another country or had a friend from another culture? What foods, manners and gestures did you find unusual? What might someone from another culture find unusual about your daily life and habits? How can you work to understand the things that people from other cultures find valuable?

3. How do the elves' and goblins' accounts of their longstanding war differ? What does Werfel think the elf king did to the goblins? How does Spurge regard the king's historical attacks on the goblins? What are some things your country has done well? What are some things your country has done poorly? What can you do to help your country do well during your lifetime?

4. What was Spurge's childhood nickname? How did being called by that name make him feel? What does Werfel say to encourage Spurge? Were you ever called a bad word or ugly nickname? How did you respond? How did those words make you feel? How did you get past their meanness?

5. Why is Werfel surprised to see the photo transmissions Spurge sent while he was in goblin land? What about the photos is inaccurate? How do your perceptions about a situation change how you see reality? Are there times in your life where a bad mood or disappointed hopes made a situation seem worse than it was? Why is it important to correct your misperceptions about others? If there is a person or group of people that you dislike or feel uncomfortable around, how can you try to change your perception of them in order to treat them more fairly?

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### Asterix in Corsica

This graphic novel is the 20th volume in the "Asterix" comic book series by Rene Goscinny and is published by Orion. *Asterix*
in Corsica 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 was your impression of the Romans after reading this book?
2. Do you think the feud between Boneywasawarriorwayayix and Olabellamargaritix is really over?
3. How did Asterix get his power? Was it honorable? Will he be able to keep it?

Atlantia

This science fiction, fantasy book is first in the "Atlantia" series by Ally Condie and is published by Speak, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC. Atlantia was 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. Why does Maire tell Rio she must trust in her power if she wants to succeed on the surface? What do you think about the religion of the Atlantians, the way the characters trust in gods, sirens and Ministers? In what power do you put your trust, and why?
2. Why does Rio say she feels like she's spent her whole life hiding? What part of herself must she hide? When have you felt like you had to hide a part of yourself to be accepted or loved?
3. Why is it so important to Rio that the sirens don't use their powers of persuasion over the people Above? When have you seen manipulation take place in our culture, by advertisers, politicians, etc.? When have you felt manipulated by someone? What did you do?
4. What does Rio mean when she says looking out for the greater good doesn't come naturally to her? In what ways do you make decisions based on what is best for everyone, not just yourself? What are some areas in which you know you need to be less selfish and more concerned with the needs and wants of your friends, family or community?
5. In what ways are Rio's mother and Nevio very different kinds of leaders? What qualities make a good leader? How can you develop these attributes in yourself?

Attack at the Arena

This historical, adventure, Christian fiction is the second book in the "The Imagination Station" series by Marianne Hering and Paul McCusker and is published by A Focus on the Family book in association with Tyndale House Publishers Inc. Attack at the Arena is written for kids ages 7 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 does Telemachus keep Patrick from trying to rescue Beth? What would have happened if Patrick hadn't listened? Why is wisdom an important characteristic to have? Can you think of a time in your life when you acted with or without wisdom? Which outcome did you like better?
2. Why is Telemachus not upset when Aldric steals the chalice? Would you be upset if someone took something valuable that belonged to you? What might help you in that situation to change your attitude to one of generosity?
3. Is Honorius a good leader? Why or why not? What would have made him a better leader? Are there any leaders in your life that you admire? What do you like about him or her? How can you become more like this leader?
4. How does Aldric help Patrick in the arena? How might trying to protect Patrick have made it harder for him to defend himself? Can you think of a time that you put someone else's needs above your own? If not, how can you start taking better care of those around you?
5. What allows Telemachus to speak boldly to the crowd? Why isn't he afraid of dying? When was a time you faced a scary situation? If you were able to be brave, what gave you the courage to act in this way?
August 1914

This historical fiction is the first book in the "Red Wheel" series by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and is published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., a division of Macmillan. August 1914 was written for adults but this book is studied in high schools.

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. Comment on Varsonofiev’s quote: “Intolerance is the first sign of an inadequate education. An ill-educated person behaves with arrogant impatience, whereas truly profound education breeds humility.”

2. Sanya struggles with how to react to the war and tries to determine his part in it. How was his decision right? How was it wrong?

3. Some critics say Samsonov is a Christ figure, especially in his death. In what ways do you see Christian imagery? What part does his suicide play in this scenario? Do you agree with critics?

4. Solzhenitsyn’s view on war was that whether we like that it happens or not, we should support our nation. Do you agree? Explain your answer.

5. Do you agree with Solzhenitsyn’s idea that “revolution” was too drastic and that social progress needed to happen gradually? Do any events in the history of your nation support your opinion?

What experiences or studies have led you to this conclusion?


7. How are educated people (the “intelligencia”) portrayed in this novel? Is it a fair portrayal or a poor one?

8. Do you believe there is a connection between godliness and patriotism? Explain.

The Awakening

This science fiction book by Michael Carroll is the first book in the "Quantum Prophecy" series and is published by Puffin Books, a division of Penguin Young Readers Group. The Awakening is written for ages 9 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. Façade betrayed an entire family for a chance to save the world. What was right about his motivation? What was wrong about his actions? Does the end result make the bad things you do to get there OK? What does the Bible say about this?

2. What kind of relationship does Colin have with his parents? Who has the final say in Colin’s family? When a decision has to be made, who has the final say in our family?