

Book Review Discussion Questions



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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.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Of Mice and Men



This drama is written by John Steinbeck and published by Penguin Classics. *Of Mice and Men* is intended for adults, yet is often assigned to

high school students.

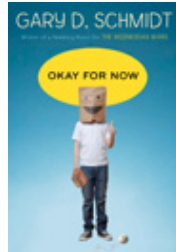
Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

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

1. Why did George stay with Lennie? Why did he rant about his life being better without Lennie? Do you think his life will be better without Lennie? What is something you thought you'd be better without but weren't?
2. Steinbeck's story illustrates how the weak are often preyed on by the strong. What are some examples of this throughout the story? Why do you think this happens? How does God want us to treat other people?
3. Why was Crooks forced to live apart from the other workers on the farm? In what areas of your world do prejudices still exist? What role do the media play in inciting racial division? What can you do about this in small ways in your life?
4. George and Lennie have survived for a long time on the strength of their dream to own a farm. What is one dream you have about your future? What steps can you

take to make that dream come true?

Okay for Now



This drama, humor book by Gary D. Schmidt is published by Clarion Books, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and is written for kids

ages 9 to 13.

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

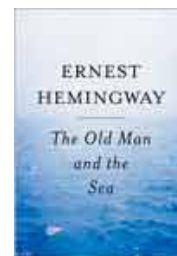
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. How does Doug's father treat the family? Based on the end of the story, do you think he will be a better husband and father in the future? How can you help and support someone who has a difficult or abusive home life? Why should you tell us if you think another child is being abused?
2. Why do the Audubon paintings become so important to Doug? How does sketching help him cope with his struggles? When have you had a talent or hobby that gave you a sense of purpose?
3. Which characters that initially seem like enemies become Doug's friends or allies (Christopher, Coach Reed, Mrs. Windermere, the principal)? How and why do these relationships change? How does Doug's

attitude and behavior impact these relationships? When have you had a rival who became a friend? What part did *you* play in improving the relationship?

4. Why do you think the author doesn't provide a clear, happy ending to this book? How does the ending leave you hoping for Doug and the people in his life? In what areas of your life are you "OK for now" but still hope for something better?
5. Name some of the adults who make a positive impact on Doug. What do they do to support and encourage him? When have you had a role model other than your parents who helped you discover positive things about yourself? How can you bring out the positive qualities in others?

The Old Man and the Sea



This adventure, drama book by Ernest Hemingway is published by Scribner Book Company, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Adult

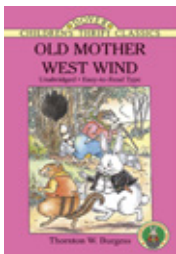
Publishing Group and is written for adults but is sometimes studied in high school classes.

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

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

1. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway praises determination. He suggests you're a hero not by escaping death or maintaining hope, but simply by persevering. In what ways do these ideas align with a Christian worldview? How do they differ from what the Bible teaches?
2. Santiago's pride causes him to pursue the big fish. Though he has to endure trials, he ultimately gains greater respect from the local fishermen because of his conquest. Does his pride lead to positive or negative ends? What does the Bible say about pride?
3. Why do you think Santiago loves and respects his opponent, the fish, so much?
4. In Hemingway's estimation, man achieves greatness by battling a worthy earthly opponent. Does this differ from what Christianity teaches? In what way?

Old Mother West Wind



This fairy tale, fantasy, allegory book by Thornton W. Burgess originally was published by Grosset & Dunlap in 1910; this edition was published by Dover

Children's Thrift Classics, an imprint of Dover Publishing, in 1995. *Old Mother West Wind* written for kids ages 9 to 13.

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

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

1. Why does Grandfather Frog say frogs no longer have tails? What do you think about his explanation? What lesson is Grandfather Frog trying to teach about vanity and pride? Do you agree or disagree with this lesson? Tell about a time in your life when you learned this same lesson.
2. What is Jimmy Skunk like? What punishment does he receive for his theft and dishonesty? How does Sammy Jay get caught for similar crimes? Have you ever acted like Jimmy or Sammy? Explain what you did. What were the consequences you received for acting in this way? How will you keep from acting like this in the future?
3. What are some of the tricks the animals play on each other? When is a practical joke funny? When might a practical joke be harmful or unkind to someone else? When have you played a practical joke or had one played on you? What happened?
4. What does Johnny Chuck find, which he thinks is the best thing in the world? Why can't the other animals find it? When have you had a hard time being content with what you already had?
5. What happens to Tommy Trout when he doesn't obey his mother? What other characters get in trouble for not obeying their mothers? When have you been punished for disobeying one of us, your parents? Why do we give you rules and boundaries?

Oliver Twist



This historical book by Charles Dickens was originally published by Richard Bentley in 1838 and written for adults, but today it's often found on high school reading lists

for 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. Zara memorizes the technical Oliver and the other orphans are routinely abused and betrayed by the people who are supposed to protect them. Have you ever felt hurt or betrayed by your loved ones or by the people who are taking care of you? What was the situation? How could it have been handled differently?
2. The boys at the workhouse are so desperate for food that they decide someone needs to ask for more. Has there ever been something that you needed but were afraid to ask for? If yes, what did you need, and why were you afraid?
3. Oliver gets depressed by his situation and wishes he were dead. Have you or anyone you know become so depressed by a situation that you saw no way out of it? What was the situation? Was it resolved, and if it was, how?
4. Noah constantly bullies Oliver until one day Oliver becomes angry and attacks him. Have you ever been bullied? What was the situation? How did you

- react to the bullying? How was it resolved?
- How is stealing depicted in this novel? What does the Bible say about stealing?
 - How does Fagin try to corrupt Oliver? Why do you think Oliver refuses to join the gang and give into a life of crime? How do you think you would deal with the temptation of regular food and easy money if you were in Oliver's situation?
 - Is the criminal world depicted in the novel better or worse than the workhouse? Why do you think it is better/worse?
 - How are people's attitudes toward the poor and orphans depicted in the novel? How are poor people and the homeless treated today?
 - The parish councils were in charge of the workhouses and baby farms. This means that the government used the dividing lines of the parishes, but these groups were run by the government. Sometimes clergy were on these committees, but the church was not over the workhouses and baby farms. If churches had been supervising the orphans, poor and sick, how should the church (the body of Christ) have treated them? How is this directive different from the ways the government-run councils and individuals treated Oliver?
 - How are marriage relationships portrayed in the novel? How are marriages based on economic advantage depicted differently from marriages based on love? Which marriage relationships are portrayed as good and which are bad? What do you think a good marriage relationship should be like?

- Fagin's character is identified by his race. Why do you think the author chose to identify him this way?

Om-kas-toe: Blackfeet Twin Captures an Elkdog



This historical book is published by Baker Book House, Grandview Publishing Company and is written for kids ages 8 to 12.

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

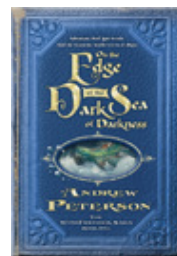
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

- How does Twin Sister catch the first elkdog? What might have happened if the twins had tried to capture it using force? In what situations have you found you can accomplish more by being gentle than by being forceful or aggressive?
- For what character trait does Old Man praise Tall Woman? How does her love save her children, and eventually, the whole tribe? How has the love of your parents, friends, relatives and God changed your life? What loving acts can you do that will impact others?
- How does Om react the first time he sees an elkdog? What was something that amazed you the first time you saw a horse? What are some of your favorite animals? Why might God have created so many diverse animals,

landscapes, weather patterns, seasons, etc.?

- What would you find most interesting about living as a Native American in the 1700s? In what ways do you prefer the life you have now?

On the Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness



This Christian fiction, fantasy, allegory is the first book in "The Wingfeather Saga" series by Andrew Peterson, published by WaterBrook Press,

a division of Random House Inc. It is written for kids ages 9 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:

- How does Janner feel about taking care of Leeli and Tink? What happens when Janner doesn't obey Nia and stay with his siblings? What are some of your responsibilities? Are there certain responsibilities that you resent? Why is it still important for you to fulfill them?
- What secret does Nia keep from the children? Why doesn't she tell them who they are? How does it make Janner feel knowing that Nia has a secret? Can you think of a time when you didn't understand my actions? How did you react? When might it be important for you to trust me in the moment and ask questions later?

3. How does Podo act toward Peet? Why doesn't he treat him fairly? When have you been angry with someone? How were you still able to treat the person with kindness? Why is it important to show grace and forgiveness to others, even when you don't feel like it?
4. What do the townspeople and the Igiby children initially think of Peet? How does the children's perspective of him change? Have you ever judged someone because he or she was different than you? How can we better show God's love to the people around us?
5. What do Tink and Janner do after Tink accidentally takes the map from the bookshop? What could have happened to them as a result? What should they have done instead? Have you ever made a mistake that you were scared or embarrassed to admit? What did you do? Why is it better to be honest?

On the Run



This Christian adventure book (with an element of science fiction) is the first in "The Elijah Project" series by Bill Myers (with James Riordan), published by Zonderkidz.

On the Run 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 other steps might Piper have taken rather than beating up the boy on the bus? Was deducting the boy's dental expenses from Piper's allowance an effective punishment? Why or why not? What would you do as Piper? As Piper's parents?
2. Cody's friend, Willard, recalls a time when two girls physically fought over Cody. What do you see wrong about obsessing over a person to that degree? Have you experienced feelings like Piper had for Cody (wobbly knees, dry mouth, trouble breathing)? What does the Bible say we should think about in Philippians 4:8? To whom do you think this Bible verse refers?
3. Why do you think the three bad guys continue to do what Shadow Man wants? Do you think they might ever change, or will they always be aligned with evil?
4. Why do you think Mom and Dad won't tell the kids the reason they move so often? How old do you think the kids should be before they know the truth?
5. In this story, the parents leave the house with only a note for the kids. How would you feel if you came home and I was gone?
6. Can you think of a way the kids might have escaped from the bad guys, besides stealing the RV? Are there times when it's ok to steal or do something that's illegal?
7. When Piper is searching for Elijah in the hospital, she begins to feel lost and very alone. Her parents had given her a Bible verse (Matthew 28:20) for just such times. When are some times you felt alone? What did you do to help yourself cope—pray,

focus on helping someone else, cry?

8. The second Bible verse that Mom and Dad sent the kids is Romans 8:28. Why do you think they choose that verse when they know that evil forces were after them? What good has come about during the kids' mishaps?
9. Mom and Dad told the kids not to try and find them, but Zach decides they should anyway, even though there may be a trap. How would you handle this? Does obedience matter, even during dangerous times? Look up Ephesians 6:1-3. What does it mean to obey your father and mother? How is honoring your parents different than obeying?
10. The evil that is personified by Shadow Man knows how to exploit a person's weaknesses. Since we all have weaknesses, what defense do we have against this? What does the apostle Paul tell us about the spiritual forces of evil and how we should protect ourselves (Ephesians 6:11-18)?

One



This contemporary book by Sarah Crossan is published by Greenwillow Books, an Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. *One* is written for kids

ages 16 and up.

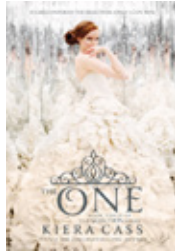
Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

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

1. Why doesn't Grace want to be amazing? Why does she want to be as boring as everyone else? Have you or someone you've known ever felt this way? What was the situation? How did it turn out?
2. Why does Grace feel she must be perfect to keep her father happy? Why does she think that her father's feelings are someone else's responsibility? Have you ever felt the need to keep someone else happy? What was the situation? Explain. Can one person be responsible for another person's happiness? Explain. Who may feel responsible to keep you happy? How can you release that person from this pressure?
3. When the twins overhear Jon saying that it is a waste because they are so beautiful, why do they get angry? Have you ever felt betrayed by a friend? How did this person disappoint you? What could you or they have done differently? How did you forgive this person?
4. How does Grace feel about Tippi's response when they discuss smoking? Why does Grace wish she could be more selfish? Are Grace's feelings justified? Explain. How does selfishness affect your relationships with others?
5. Why does Grace think hatred is better than sympathy? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
6. After the twins get sick, why are they suspicious of Caroline's friendship and her refusal to film them in the hospital? How do they misjudge her? Have your intentions ever been misjudged? What was the situation and what could you or others have done differently?

7. How does Grace handle her grief after Tippi's death? Who does the Bible say is our Comforter? Who can we always turn to with our pain, loss and disappointment?

The One



This romance, fantasy book is third in the "Selection" series by Kiera Cass is published by HarperTeen, a division of HarperCollins. *The One* 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. Freddy doesn't want to bring After the King tells America she is plain looking and not as desirable as the other girls who have gone further physically with the prince, what does America do? Have you ever felt pressured to be in a physical relationship? What was the situation? Is it still ongoing? What are the consequences of being in a physical relationship before marriage?
2. Is Celeste in love with Maxon? Then why does she want to win the Selection? Is fame or love more important to you? Explain. What does the Bible say about fame? About love?
3. What does Celeste admit to America? Why is she cruel and calculating to the other girls, trying to sabotage them so they would either leave or get thrown out of the Selection? Have you ever treated anyone poorly in

order to get something you wanted? Has anyone treated you like this? Explain. What could you or they have done differently?

4. How do the Elites become friends? Whom do you need to forgive or make peace with? What was the situation? How can we help you mend these broken relationships?
5. How does Maxon's father govern his son? Who is the only person that he feels can make the right decision? Does this help or hurt Maxon? Explain. Does this help or hurt his country? Explain. How do we parent you? What decisions do you feel free to make? How do we support your decisionmaking?
6. How does Kota threaten America? Who else is ready to betray Aspen? Why doesn't America tell Maxon about Aspen sooner? Because she doesn't, how does this break trust with him? Have you broken someone else's trust? What was the situation? How could it have been handled differently?
7. How does Maxon feel once he discovers America's flirtation with Aspen? What does he do? What forces him to take back his mean words? Tell about a time when you've said unkind things because you were angry. How have others been mean to you because they were angry? How have you learned to not be mean, even when you're angry?

One Came Home



This historical mystery written by Amy Timberlake is published by Knopf Books for Young Readers and Yearling, both divisions of Random

House Publishing. *One Came Home* is written for ages 10 and up.

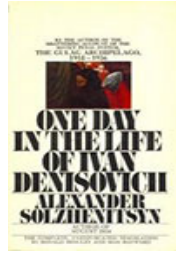
Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

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

1. How does Georgie telling Mr. Olmstead about Agatha's kiss affect the plot? What could she have done instead of talking to Mr. Olmstead? What would you have done?
2. Why do you think Agatha walks out into the swarm of birds and spins under her umbrella? What does this tell you about her personality? Would you have followed her out or stayed back on the porch with Georgie? What is an action that you've done recently that you feel best describes your personality?
3. Why might Georgie have felt compelled to make this journey? What might have changed inside of Georgie if Agatha had never written to tell them she was alive?
4. What does Georgie think happens to us when we die? What do you think happens? What does the Bible say about eternal life? What is an important choice for you to make about your eternal future?
5. Throughout the book, Georgie finds solace in shooting her rifle.

How does this change at the end of the book? What has changed her? Is this change a good or bad change? Explain.

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich



This historical fiction, drama by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is published by Greenhaven Press, an imprint of Thomson-Gale and is written for

adults but is sometimes studied by kids 16 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. For a large portion of the book, Shukhov performs good deeds only because he hopes for something in return. When does he finally perform a selfless act, and why?
2. What are some of the ways Shukhov finds value in his prison camp experience?
3. How does he attempt to maintain his human dignity?
4. What tasks or rituals are meaningful to him, and why do you think they help him remain positive?
5. Why is the camaraderie of the men within the gangs so important to their survival at the camp?
6. What are your impressions of life in a prison camp after reading this book? How do

you think people were strong enough to survive such horrible circumstances?

7. Alyoshka is an outspoken Christian, yet his gang mates seem to like and trust him rather than feel put off by him. What are some of his ministry "secrets"?
8. Are there any we can adopt today, in a society that is often hostile to Christians?

The One-Eyed Giant



This fantasy book by Mary Pope Osborne is the first book in the "Tales from the Odyssey" series and is published by

Hyperion Books for Children. *The One-Eyed Giant* is written for kids 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. What kind of relationship does Odysseus share with each member of his family? What spurs on Odysseus to reach home? How would you describe your relationship with each member in our family? In what ways do we motivate you to do things? In what ways might you motivate us to do things?
2. How does Polyphemus treat Odysseus and his men? How does King Aeolus treat them? What is the difference between the two? How do their actions hurt or help Odysseus and his

men? Why do you think hospitality was so important to the Greeks that they had a special god for it? What are ways that you can display hospitality?

3. How does Odysseus escape Polyphemus? What mistake does Odysseus make after his escape? What advice do his friends give him? What does Odysseus do instead of heeding their advice? Read Proverbs 16:18. If Odysseus had lived out this truth, how might his life had benefited? Tell about a time that you didn't heed someone's advice and should have. If you could live that moment over again, how would you have behaved differently?
4. When do Odysseus and others pray to their gods? How do the gods either answer or ignore their prayers? Read Jeremiah 29:12-13. What is the biggest difference between the Greek gods and our one, true God?
5. What does King Aeolus give Odysseus as a gift? How is this gift used poorly? Why do Odysseus' men open the bag holding the gift? What happens to them and their boat? When Odysseus returns to King Aeolus, what does he ask? How does King Aeolus respond? Read Amos 4:13. How does this verse display the might of God compared to that of Aeolus?
6. What are some of the disappointments that Odysseus faces? What is his attitude in the midst of hardship? What is a recent disappointment that you've had? How did you face the challenge that came from that disappointment? How does keeping your attention on the end goal help you overcome disappointment and hardship?

One False Note



This mystery book by Gordon Korman is the second in "The 39 Clues" series and is published by Scholastic, Inc. *One False Note* is written for kids

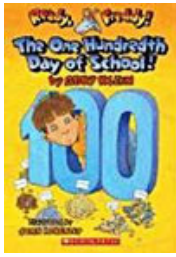
ages 9 to 12.

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 moral and ethical dilemmas do Dan and Amy face in their effort to stay ahead in the competition? Is it OK for them to steal clues from their competitors? Why or why not? What are some of the ways Dan and Amy cheat or lie to stay ahead? What do they lie about? How do they justify their actions to themselves? Is it OK for them to lie under these circumstances? Is it OK to lie under any circumstance? What does the Bible say about lying?
2. Why do Dan, Amy and Nellie have hateful feelings toward their competitors? How would you have felt about the other Cahills if you were Dan or Amy? How does the Bible tell us to treat our enemies? Could Dan and Amy "turn the other cheek" and still win the contest?
3. How does Amy feel about being a Cahill? Why does she say it made her feel like a part of history? Are any of your ancestors famous people, or did they show integrity amid crisis? Do you have to have famous ancestors or come from a rich or powerful family to do good things in the world? What kind of people does God use to do His work?
4. What have you learned about history or geography from this story? If you could visit one of the cities mentioned in this book, which would you choose? Why?
5. What do you learn about Mozart and his family from this book? Do books that mention historical figures always include real facts? How could you check to see if the author's information is true? What are some Mozart melodies you're familiar with?
6. How do adults in the story, such as Jonah's father, Irina and the Holt parents, treat Dan and Amy? What do they do or say to them? What kind of example do these parents set for their own children? What does their behavior teach their kids about how to treat others?
7. Is Nellie a good role model for Dan and Amy? What makes a good role model? In your day-to-day adventures, how are your parents your role models?
8. In the real world, could two kids and a young lady, such as Nellie, travel all over the world on their own? How would they pay for their adventures? How would they eat? What would they wear? What foreign languages would they need to know?

The One Hundredth Day of School!



This thirteenth school-life book in the “Ready, Freddy!” series by Abby Klein is published by The Blue Sky Press, an imprint of Scholastic, Inc.

The One Hundredth Day of School! is written for kids ages 4 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. Freddy doesn't want to bring just anything on the 100th day of school. Who does he want to please with what he brings? What is the difference between serving others and pleasing others?
2. Freddy's sister calls him a lot of names. How do you know that she really loves him?
3. Bully Max calls Freddy and Robbie stupid. Robbie thought Chloe was cuckoo and spoiled. How should children treat each other with their words? Have you ever called other kids mean names? Are these the words God would want you to use? What could you do differently?
4. How important is it to please your classmates?

One Memory of Flora Banks



This mystery, adventure, coming-of-age book by Emily Barr is published by Philomel Books, an imprint of Random House LLC. *The One Memory of Flora*

Banks is written for ages 14 to 18.

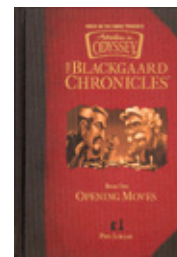
Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

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

1. How is Flora able to function so well when her parents leave, in spite of her memory loss? What is her secret to getting to the Arctic? When have you realized you can succeed at something big or daunting? What did you do to break the task into smaller steps? What motivated you to continue taking one step at a time?
2. Why do Flora's parents try to keep her medicated? What does this fear and guilt stem from? When have you made bad decisions out of guilt or fear? What helped you move in a better decision-making direction?
3. Why does Flora say she feels like she just exists, but she's not really alive? When have you felt like that? How does Flora demonstrate persistence and bravery in spite of those feelings? Have you ever felt empty inside? Explain the situation. What helps you find the strength to go on at times in your life when you feel empty?

4. How does Drake try to take advantage of Flora? Do you know anyone who was taken advantage of? What happened? In what way has someone taken advantage of you? How can you protect yourself from making the wrong decision in these kinds of situations? How can you help a loved one not become a victim to evil people?
5. How does Flora overcome the pain of Drake's betrayal (his saying they never kissed)? Why is it important to have friends in your life you can trust? What kind of friend is Paige? How has a friend let you down? How does Paige redeem herself? How has a friend redeemed himself or herself with you?

Opening Moves



This mystery, Christian fiction, book by Phil Lollar is the first in the “Blackgaard Chronicles” series and is published by Focus on the Family in association with Tyndale House Publishers Inc. *Opening Moves* is written for kids ages 10 and up.

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

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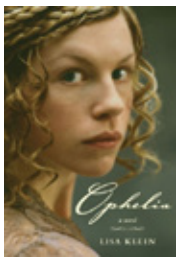
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Before coming to Odyssey, what kind of experiences did Connie have with people who called themselves “believers”? When have you known people who didn't seem to be living out what they claimed to believe? How can you be sure your actions and

words match what you say you believe about God?

2. In what ways does Whit use his life to help others? How can you allow God to use *you* to help others? What would you tell people who feel they don't have any useful gifts or talents?
3. Why does Connie grow frustrated with Whit and Eugene? How does Glossman make her feel even worse? When have you felt jealous or angry because you were left out of a secret?
4. What Bible story does Eugene and Connie's "Applesauce" situation remind you of? What are some of the similarities you see between this story and the Bible's account of Adam and Eve?
5. Why does Glossman continue to work for Blackgaard? What are some reasons people continue making bad choices or spending time with dangerous individuals, even though they know they shouldn't? When have you made a decision to do something wrong, even though you knew from the start it wouldn't please God? What happened in the end?

Ophelia



This historical, romance by Lisa Klein is published by Bloomsbury U.S.A. Children's Books. *Ophelia* is written for kids ages 14 to 19.

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 are women looked upon and treated in this book? What is expected of them? In what ways do Elnora's teachings about womanhood seem old-fashioned, and in what ways do they still apply today?
2. What compels Hamlet after his father's death? What happens to him as a result of his vengeful spirit? In what ways do others suffer because of his lust for revenge? What does the Bible say about revenge? What should you do when someone wrongs you?
3. What are your thoughts on Elnora's comment about a reputation being a fragile thing, easily lost and often never regained? When have you or someone you know done something that damaged your reputation or someone else's? How can you maintain a good reputation? If you make a mistake, how might you be able to restore your reputation?
4. What does Mother Ermentrude mean when she tells Ophelia that obeying God's will frees the soul to reach to heaven? When have you felt obedience to Him was confining? When have you found freedom in obeying God?

Origin



This science fiction, coming-of-age book by Jessica Khoury is the first in the "Corpus" series and is published by Razorbill, an imprint of the

Penguin Group. *Origin* is written for kids ages 13 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. How would the world be different if people were immortal? Do you agree with Kapukiri that no one should live forever? How would your behavior and worldview change if you knew that you could never die or be killed?
2. This book has an underlying theme of people sacrificing themselves to save others. What are some examples of this that take place in the book? How is sacrificing yourself to save another person different from killing an individual so that the whole group can benefit?
3. Why did Alex and Marian run away? Would you have fled if you learned that you were part of an experiment that involved murdering people, or would the promise of immortality be too tempting? Explain. Has someone ever asked you to do something wrong and said it was part of a plan to do something good? If so, describe what happened. If not, think about things that happened in history where people did this. Were they right or wrong?
4. Why does Aunt Harriet complete her Wickham test even though she believes it's a sin to shoot an innocent and beautiful animal? Would you have killed the horse if it meant you had the chance of saving a family member's life? What if your Wickham test, like Uncle Paolo's, involved killing another human being? Where would you draw the line?
5. What do Christians believe about human immortality? How is this different from the kind of immortal beings that the scientists are trying to create? How is it similar to the Aï'oan beliefs

about immortality? Is death always a bad thing?

6. What is the symbolism of the necklace that Eio gives Pia? Do you think that a person can ever belong to another person? Did you think Eio and Pia's relationship felt rushed or do you think that two people can genuinely learn to love each other in such a short period of time? Explain.

The Original Adventures of Hank the Cowdog



This humor story by John R. Erickson is the first in the “Hank the Cowdog” series published by Viking of the Penguin Group, part of Penguin

Putnam Books for Young Readers. (Illustrations are by Gerald L. Holmes.) *The Original Adventures of Hank the Cowdog* is written for kids ages 8 to 10.

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

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

1. How does Hank view himself? How would you describe Hank? In what ways does Hank have a distorted picture of himself? Why is it important not to think too highly of yourself?
2. What are some ways Hank gets himself into trouble? If you were Hank, what would you do differently to be a reliable Head of Ranch Security?

3. Why does Hank decide to become an outlaw? Why does he ultimately choose to return to the ranch? When you've been away from home, what do you miss most? What makes our home a special place for you?

Orphan Island



This fantasy adventure by Sigmund Brouwer is the first in the “Merlin's Immortals” series published by WaterBrook

Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc. *The Orphan King* 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 rules on the island? What happens when Jinny breaks them? What are some of our family's rules? What happens when you try to break them? What are some of God's rules? What happens when people try to break them? Why are these instructions important?
2. How is Jinny's decision to stay on the island a selfish choice? How is Jinny's decision to stay on the island a fearful choice? How does her decision impact the other kids? Why does it take her so long to see how her decisions are hurting her friends? When have you seen one person's self-focused behavior hurt many other people?

3. Why might the Elders start getting moody and restless when it is nearing their time to leave? In what ways have you watched this happen with older kids or felt it in yourself? What are some difficult things about moving from childhood to young adulthood?
4. How are eight kids able to survive alone on an island? What do you think would happen if a group of young children were really sent to an island to live? Why are the parents, adults and other authority figures in your life important and necessary, especially when you are young?
5. What kind of a teacher is Jinny to Ess and Loo? Why does she have a hard time teaching them to do things on their own? Why is it important for teachers, parents and even older siblings to help younger kids learn to be increasingly independent? What part does failure have in this process?

The Orphan King



This fantasy adventure by Sigmund Brouwer is the first in the “Merlin's Immortals” series published by WaterBrook

Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc. *The Orphan King* is written for kids ages 12 and up.

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

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

1. How do Thomas' interactions with women, such as Isabelle,

Katherine and the woman in the forest, cause him to keep or lose his focus? Why is modesty important? Why does William urge Thomas to keep his eyes to himself? What is one way the Bible offers for handling temptation?

2. What causes Thomas to doubt the existence or goodness of God? How do humans often make God look bad? What can you do to show God's goodness to others?
3. Thomas had many questions about spiritual things. Why couldn't he get them answered? Do you think he'll now get some of them answered? Explain. What questions do you have about God? How might you pursue the answers to those questions?

The Outcast



This fantasy book by Taran Matharu is published by Feiwel and Friends, a division of Macmillan and is written for kids 12 and up.

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

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

1. Why are Charles, Rook and Zacharias so unkind to Arcturus? How does Arcturus react to the bullying? Have you or anyone you know been bullied? What was the situation and is it still ongoing? Who would you feel comfortable and safe talking to if you were/are being bullied? Do you know you can talk to us?

2. Why does Ulfr dislike humans? Are his feelings justified? Why or why not? Have you or anyone you know been treated poorly because of their race or their appearance? What was the situation and is it still ongoing? How does the way we see each other differ from the way God sees us?
3. Why is Arcturus reluctant to travel to Raleighshire for a holiday with the other noble students? Why does he feel this way? Have you or anyone you know ever felt like you weren't good enough to hang out with a certain group? What was the situation and is it still ongoing? What could we have done to make you feel more comfortable with who you are?
4. Why does Crawley continue to help with the rebellion even though his father, General Barcroft, treats him poorly? Have you ever treated a friend or loved one poorly? Has anyone ever treated you this way? What was the situation? What could you or they have done differently?
5. How does King Alfric's opinion differ from Prince Harold's? Which of your views differ from the opinions of your friends or your close friends? Have those differences ever caused discord? What was the situation and how was it resolved? How should we treat each other, despite differences of opinions?
6. Why does King Alfric refuse to let Prince Harold rule, even after he said he would give up the throne? Has anyone ever made you a promise, and then broke it? Have you ever broken your word to someone else? What was the situation? What could you have done differently?

Outcasts United: The Story of a Refugee Soccer Team That Changed a Town



This biography, sports, inspirational book by Warren St. John is published by Delacorte Press, an imprint of Random House Children's Books,

a division of Random House Inc. and is written for kids 12 and older.

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

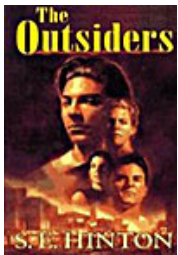
If your children have read this book, consider talking about the story using these discussion questions:

1. Why is it important to refugee mothers like Beatrice that their children remember their trials? What are some of the sacrifices Beatrice and other moms make to get their children to America and keep them safe? Why is it important to remember and respect what has happened in your past or your family's past?
2. Why does Luma demand so much of her players? How would you feel about being on a team she coached? When has a coach or teacher demanded a lot from you? What was the result of their efforts to push you?
3. What do the boys say when Luma asks them why people join gangs? What does she tell the boys about gang members who may try to convince them to do things for money or iPods? What ideas do the boys believe could be alternatives to gang membership? What

types of relationships or activities keep you from taking part in illegal or gang-related activity? How could you help someone who was getting into trouble by hanging around with immoral or law-breaking individuals?

4. In the epilogue, why does Tracy say that it's a bad idea to put Luma on a pedestal? What do she and Luma hope "normal" people will recognize about themselves from this story? What can you do to bring positive change to your community or your world?
5. In what ways does racism play a role in this story? Which characters suffer because of racial stereotyping? What preconceived notions do you hold about people from different countries or ethnic groups? How have you developed these ideas? In what ways can you demonstrate God's love for *all* people in your actions and speech?

The Outsiders



This teen-life book by S.E. Hinton is published by Viking Children's Books, an imprint of Penguin Group and is written for kids ages 12 to 18.

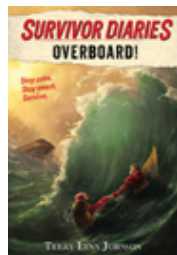
Search for a review of this book for parents at pluggedin.com/book-reviews.

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

1. Maya often lies to her mom and How does the violence and hatred in this book make you feel?

2. Why do you think these young people—greasers and socs—feel they need to fight?
3. How does Darry parent well? How does he parent not so well?
4. Despite all the violence in *The Outsiders*, Ponyboy clearly values human life—even the lives of his enemies. What are some of the ways you see this through his words and actions?
5. What does Johnny mean when he urges Ponyboy to stay gold?
6. How can you keep from becoming hateful and cynical in a world that doesn't always seem fair?
7. In what ways are Ponyboy's greaser friends good for him? In what ways do they bring him down? Do you think they would help him or hurt him as he tries to keep his priorities straight? How are your friends good for you? How do your friends bring you down?
8. Is Dally's death a suicide?
9. What does this tragedy teach Ponyboy and his brothers?

Overboard!



This adventure book is the first in the "Survivor Diaries" by Terry Lynn Johnson and is published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing

Company. *Overboard!* is written for kids ages 7 to 10.

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

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

1. What happens when Travis ignores his fears and climbs to the eagle's nest? How does he build a shelter when he'd never built one before? When have you felt scared or overwhelmed in a situation? What do you do to push through your fears? How does doing this help you accomplish what needs to be done?
2. What made Travis quit the gymnastics team? Why does he eventually rejoin the team? When have you had an experience that gave you the courage to try something difficult or new?
3. What are some survival tips you learned from this book?
4. How does Marina know so much about surviving a disaster? What are some life skills you've learned by watching us or other adults in your life?
5. Which part of Travis and Marina's adventure would have been scariest for you? How would you have handled their situation? What would you have done next if help hadn't come for a week?

Owl at Home



This beginning reader book is published by I Can Read Books, a trademark of HarperCollins Publishers. *Owl at Home* is written

for kids ages 5 to 9.

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 Owl let Winter blow into his house? What happens? When have you done something because you were trying to be nice, only to have it backfire?
 2. Why is Owl afraid of the two bumps in his bed? What are the bumps? When have you been afraid of something and then discovered it wasn't really scary at all?
 3. If you were making tear-water tea, what sad things would you think about?
 4. Why does Owl try to be upstairs and downstairs at the same time? When have you tried to do too many things at once because you were afraid of missing something? What happened?
 5. What would it be like to live alone, like Owl? What would you like about living alone? What would you dislike?
1. How did Ori feel about Sola initially? How did Sola's flattery change Ori? What did Ori discover about Sola's motives? Have you ever been blinded to the truth? What kept you from thinking things through clearly?
 2. What did you think when you read about the Numa? How is it like the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to His followers?
 3. Oriannon rushes boldly into the Owling camp in an attempt to save her friends. When Jesmet appears to Ori and the Owlings in the prison camp, what does he ask her to do? How difficult is it for her to wait? Do you have a hard time waiting on God? What is the difference between doing nothing and waiting on the Lord's timing?
 4. What do Ori and her friends do that go against their authorities? When is it OK to question or rebel against authority?

The Owling



This science fiction/fantasy book is the second in the “The Shadowside Trilogy” by Roger Elmer and is published by Zondervan. *The*

Owling is written for kids ages 13 and up.

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

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