

Auch, MJ. *One-Handed Catch*. Henry Holt and Company, 2006.

SUMMARY:

July 4, 1946, the first big celebration after the end of World War II and everyone is ready to really celebrate. Norm is called in to help out in the family's meat market by grinding some ground beef. July 4th is the day on which Norm Schmidt loses his hand.

Norm's dreams and talents don't change much after that; he just has to give them a bit more planning and a lot more practice. Like his doctor says as Norm leaves the hospital, "The ones who succeed don't give themselves the option of failing. And they keep trying until they figure it out."

Norm's talents for art, designing cars, and especially baseball really get a trial through the following year. Best friend and funny-guy Leon is always there for him, especially as the two of them make summer league baseball and sixth-grader Norm is called up to pitch against an all-eighth-grader team.

Loosely based on the author's husband's loss of his left hand as a child, this book is all about everything, sky's-the-limit everything that a determined person can accomplish.

QUESTIONS:

Why did Leon sneak into the hospital?

What were some of Norm's initial frustrations with ADL (Activities for Daily Living)?

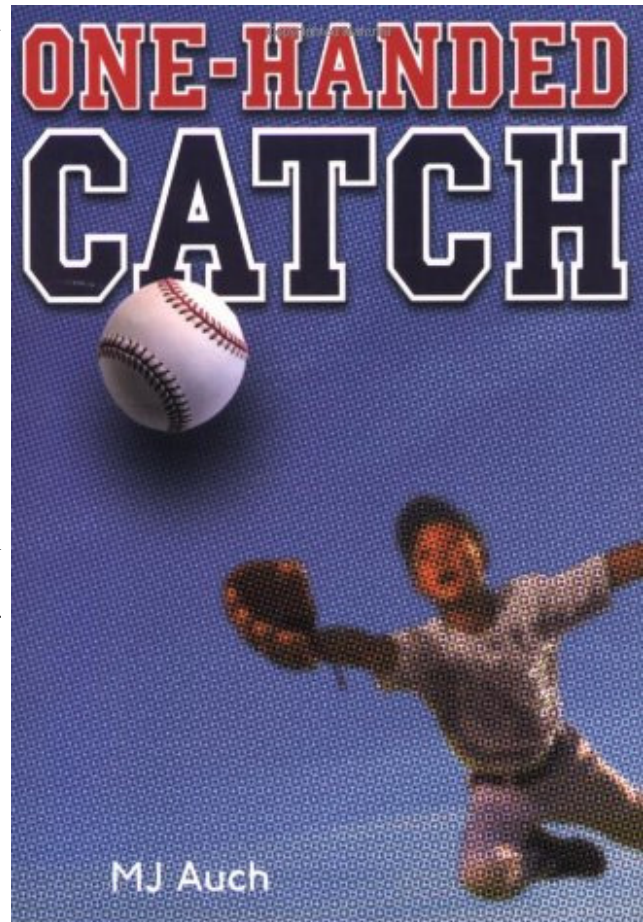
Why did Norm think that his real sister had been "kidnapped by gypsies?"

Why did Norm's father have a hard time talking with him?

Why did Norm's mother go talk to his teachers before school began?

What role does Norm's sense of humor play in his recovery?

Norm's father seemed to want Norm's life to be easier, his mother pushed him. Which parent do you think was right?



Broach, Elise. *Masterpiece*. Henry Holt and Company, 2008.

SUMMARY:

Marvin the beetle lives with his family in a New York City apartment. The apartment belongs to the Pompadays and when eleven year old James receives a pen and ink set for his birthday, the adventures begin. Marvin uses the set to create a miniature drawing and everyone believes that James is the creator. The Metropolitan Museum of Art takes notice and the plot then involves the miniature created by Marvin and a lost painting of Albrecht Dürer.

QUESTIONS:

Marvin takes a lot of risks in this book. What's his motivation for helping James?

James and Marvin become good friends even though they can't communicate. How would their relationship change if they could talk to each other?

Why does James take credit for Marvin's piece of art? How would story be different if James had told the truth? How does Marvin feel about James lie?

After James lies about being able to draw he's puts himself into a situation where people now expect him to draw another perfect piece. What do you think of his solution?

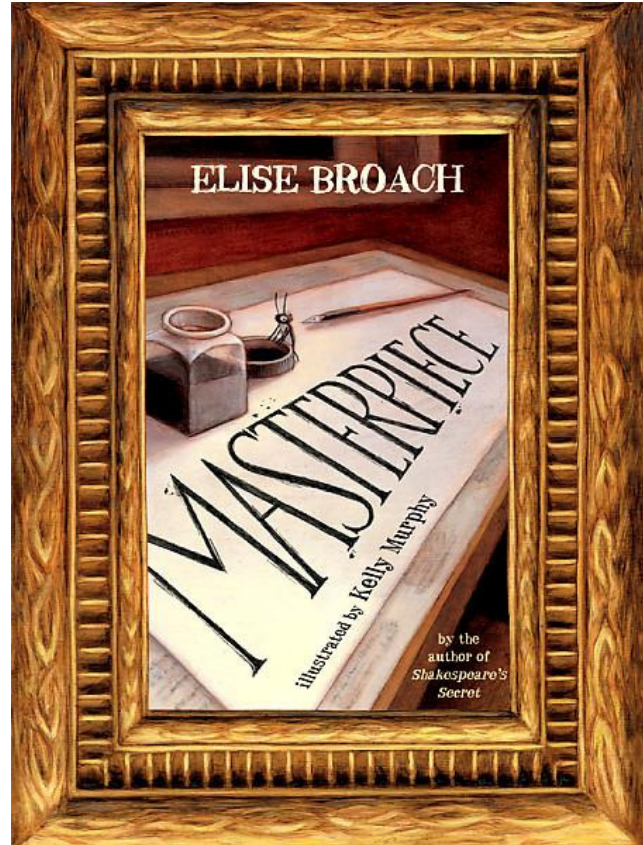
What could have done if Marvin hadn't of gone along with James plan?

Is James and Marvin's relationship equal? What does Marvin get from it?

Were you surprised when you discovered who the truth art thief was?

Is there such a thing as a perfect crime?

This book forces you to think about life from another perspective other than human. Since reading the book have you look at other creatures from the same viewpoint as you had before or have you wonder what they might be thinking?



Burg, Ann E. *All the Broken Pieces*. Scholastic, 2009.

SUMMARY:

Matt Pin is haunted by nightmares, horrifying dreams of his early years, memories of bombs and smoke; crippled, scarred people; and ever-present death. His mother is Vietnamese and his father an American soldier.

In 1975, ten-year-old Matt was airlifted out of Vietnam and adopted by an American family, one that showers him with love and understanding. Matt, though, is afraid the love is conditional, so he worries about being sent away.

A baseball coach, a piano teacher, a veterans group, and a teammate's hate that turns to acceptance, all help Matt understand his feelings and begin to come to terms with his two different lives.

QUESTIONS:

What would it feel like to lose a family, a country, a language?

How do Vietnam War veterans feel about the war?

How was the Vietnam War different from others wars in which the United States has participated?

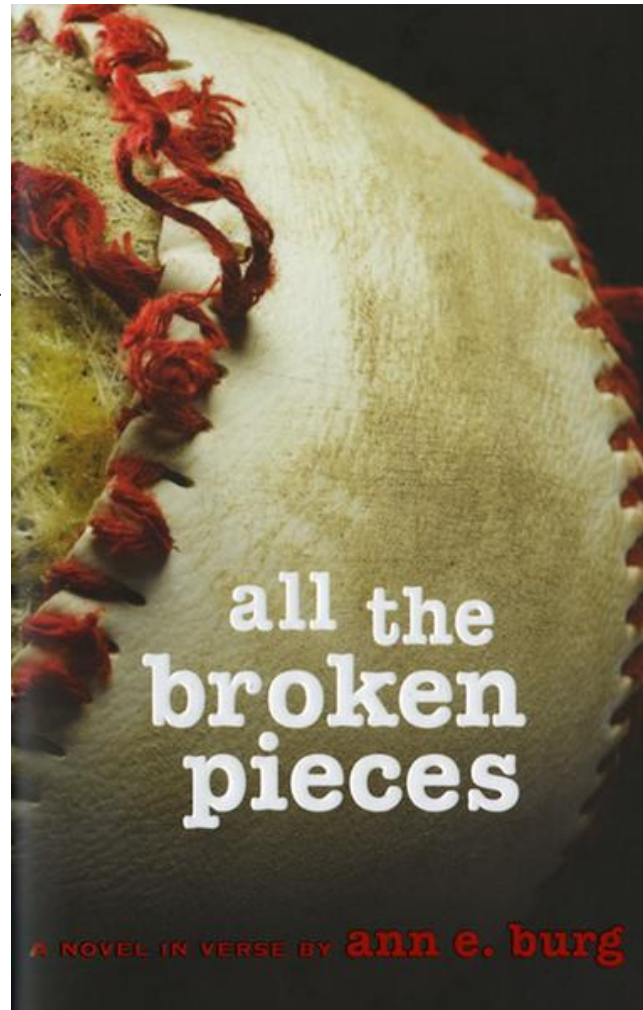
How can a child from a foreign country be made to feel welcome?

What can be done to help a student who is being bullied by classmates?

What could Matt mean by the following statements?

“My Vietnam is only a pocketful of broken pieces I carry inside me.” (p. 23)

“Sometimes the words people don’t say are as are powerful as the ones they do.” (p. 56)



**Carmichael, Clay. *Wild Things*.
Front Street, 2009**

SUMMARY:

Following the death of her mother, eleven-year-old Zoë goes to live with her uncle, Henry Royster, formerly a famous cardiac surgeon and now an acclaimed metal sculptor. Her cynicism and wariness make it difficult for her to trust him. However, these two, together with an assortment of eccentric characters including an old feral cat and a wild boy who lives in the woods form a lasting bond of love and respect far beyond Zoë's wildest dreams. The story is told through the eyes of Zoë, but the family history, critical to both plot and theme, comes through the chapters about the cat.

QUESTIONS:

What is learned from Henry and Zoë's initial shopping outing?

What do Henry and Zoë have in common?

What is irony? What is ironic about the town of Sugar Hill?

Who is Fred? What do he and Zoë discuss when they first meet?

Why doesn't Zoë trust that Uncle Henry won't ditch her?

How does Ms. Avery help Zoë adjust to being in school?

Why does Zoë name the cat *Mr. C'mere*?

Who is Harlan Jeffers, why does he visit on Thanksgiving, and how is he received?

How are Zoë and Wil similar and different?

What is the title of the sculpture that Henry gives to Zoë, and why is it so special?

How does Zoë know that Wil "knows he's one of us" at the end of the story?

Zoë keeps expressing that she is independent, but does she really believe this?

Who are the *Wild Things*? Is this a good title for the book? Why or why not?



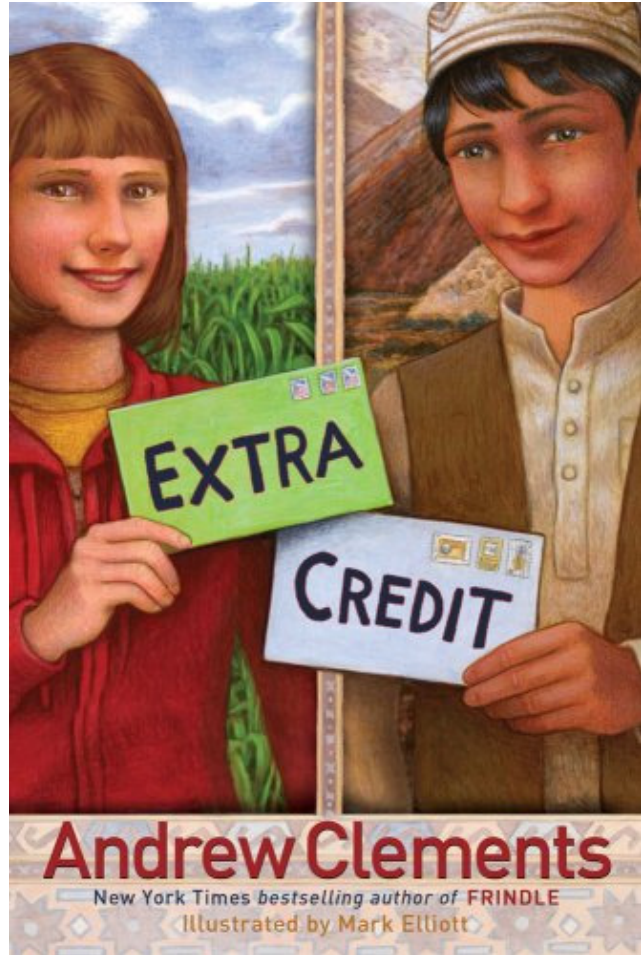
**Clements, Andrew. *Extra Credit*.
Atheneum, 2009.**

SUMMARY:

In February of her sixth-grade year, Abby learns that she is going to pay a dear price for her poor homework and test scores, ones that are low due to refusal to do the work, not inability. She is going to be held back! For a chance at being promoted, she is able to strike a three-part bargain with her teachers: one, doing all her homework in every class; two, earning eighty-five percent or better on all quizzes and tests in every subject; and three, doing an extra credit assignment.

This project includes writing and receiving at least four letters from a pen pal, doing a bulletin board, and presenting an oral report.

Through the bargain, Abby not only meets Sadeed Bayat and his sister Amirya, learning about them and life in Afghanistan, but she also discovers more about who she is and her abilities.



QUESTIONS:

Why does Sadeed's teacher think that writing a letter to America is an important job?

Why does Abby choose to write a pen pal in Afghanistan? If you were to write to a pen pal in a foreign country, what nation would you choose and why?

What is learned about life in Afghanistan from *Extra Credit*?

What do Abby and Sadeed lives have in common and how are they different?

How does prejudice play a role in the story?

How do Abby's and Sadeed's opinions of the pen pal project change through the story?

Cochrane, Mick. *The Girl Who Threw Butterflies*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.



SUMMARY:

Eighth-grader Molly Williams mourns the loss of her father, a man she loves so much and with whom she shared a common bond – the love of baseball. He was the one who spent hours with her in the backyard playing catch, and he was the one who taught her how to throw the knuckleball. When she decides to try out for baseball, instead of softball, and makes that team, she feels his presence in many ways and moves from feeling antagonism from her teammates to acceptance.

QUESTIONS:

How can one help a friend who is dealing with grief?

How could Molly's relationships with her mother and father be compared and why are they so different?

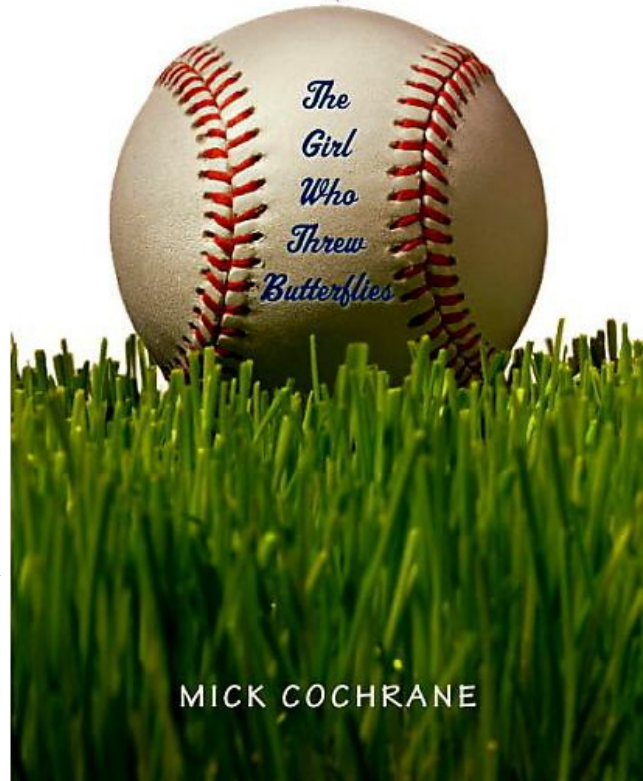
What does Molly consider evidence of her father's existence?

How can people who have very little in common, like Molly and her mother, reach out to each other and find a better relationship?

Do girls and boys approach sports differently in your school, and, if so, why?

Why are Molly's friendships with Celia and Lonnie so important?

How did Molly and her mother change after the death of Mr. Williams?



Cody, Matthew. *Powerless*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

SUMMARY:

Daniel Corrigan and his family have just moved to Noble's Green, Pennsylvania, to care for his ailing grandmother. Daniel dreads being the new kid at school, but is befriended by one of his neighbors, Mollie Lee, who's friends all accept Daniel. Daniel learns that this group of six friends each has a superpower. These kids look over and protect the people of Noble's Green, and are very proud of the town's reputation of being "The Safest Town on Earth." Daniel learns that when his superhero friends turn thirteen, their superpower disappears, and so does any memory of the power they once had. As each of the older superheroes' thirteenth birthday get closer, the kids discover that it's the Shroud, who threatens them, but Noble's Green is being threatened by the most powerful man in town. It is up to Daniel, the only person in the group without a superpower, to save the town and his friends.



QUESTIONS:

What is your definition of a hero?

What are the qualities that a hero might have?

Being the "new kid" in town, Daniel has to decide who to become friends with. What does Daniel mean when he thinks that "in order to be friends with a bully, you have to become one"?

Daniel makes use of his detective skills throughout the story. What skills should a detective have to be able to solve a crime?

Why is Daniel actually more powerful than his friends with superpowers? Or is he?

Kelly, Jacqueline. *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*. Henry Holt, 2009.

SUMMARY:

In 1899, eleven-year-old Calpurnia “Callie” Tate is dealing with many problems: the sweltering Texas heat; being the only girl in the middle of six brothers; the frightening rumor that the world will come to an end with the turn of the century; and her mother's insistence that she be brought up as a proper young lady, with cooking and sewing skills. Instead, she would rather be outside, studying insects, plant life, and animal tracks, and recording her observations of nature in a notebook. When her grandfather loans her a copy of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, it is the start of a close relationship with him, a man she never really knew before.

QUESTIONS:

What is a naturalist? Does Callie “become” one, or was she always one?

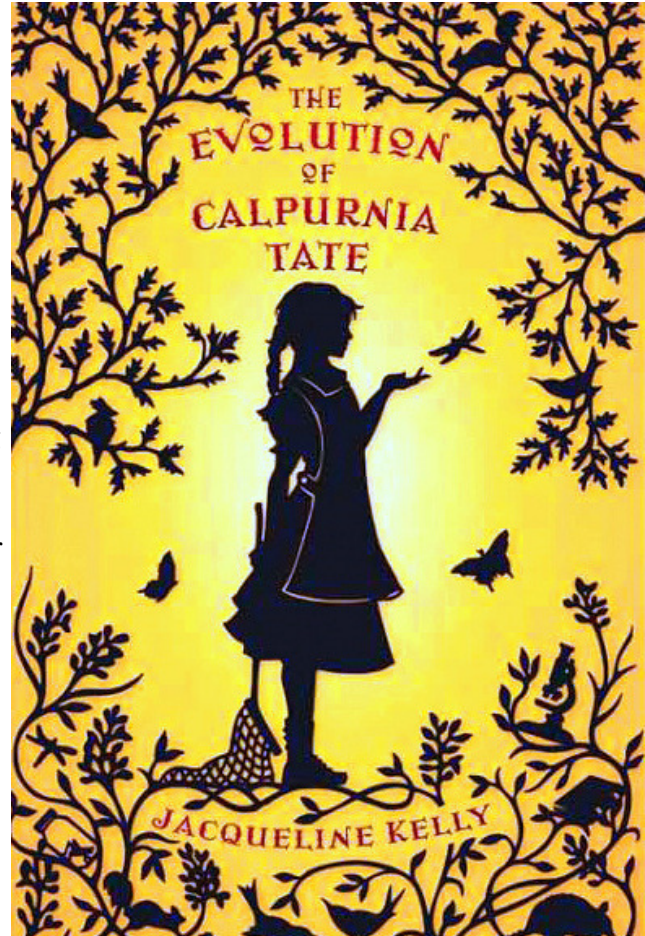
How does the relationship between Callie and Granddaddy change through the novel?

Describe Callie's relationships with her brothers and her mother.

What observations does Callie make about human behavior?

How would Charles Darwin feel about Callie and Granddaddy's work?

How does the title *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* reflect the story's characters, plot, and theme?



Lin, Grace. *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. Little, Brown, 2009.

SUMMARY:

Raised in poverty at the base of Fruitless Mountain, Minli is inspired by the tales her father tells to take off alone on a journey to seek the fortune-changing advice of the mythical Old Man of the Moon. Her journey brings danger, excitement, humor, and friendship in many different forms. Frequent fascinating tales based on Chinese folklore, both old and new, help to inspire Minli and move her story along to understanding that satisfaction comes from being grateful and rich in what one already has.

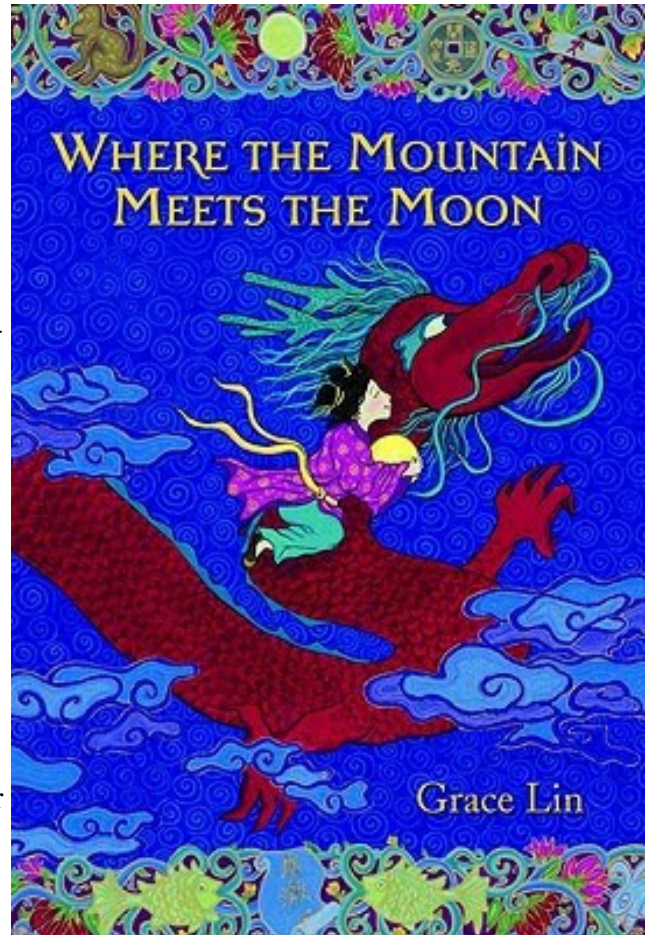
QUESTIONS:

Minli's name means "Quick Thinking". Does that seem to be an appropriate reflection of her character? What does your name mean? Do you feel it describes your personality well?

What are some tokens that are traditionally reputed to bring good luck? Do you think they may or may not? Do you have any of your own?

Grace Lin has said that swirls are a trademark element of her illustrations, and these can be seen prominently on this book. What do you think they add to the cover? Do you have any "trademarks" (favorite symbols or elements) that you include in things you write, draw, or decorate?

If you could only take one person and one item with you on a long journey, which would they be and why?



Magoon, Kekla. *The Rock and the River*. Aladdin, 2009.

SUMMARY:

In 1968, Sam Childs, a thirteen-year-old living in Chicago, finds himself caught between his pacifist civil rights father and his older brother Stick, who has joined the Black Panther Party.

As tensions grow both at home and in his community, Sam searches for his own identity and his place in the civil rights movement. He also must face the difficult decision of either obeying his father or following his brother. An author's note provides background for this novel.

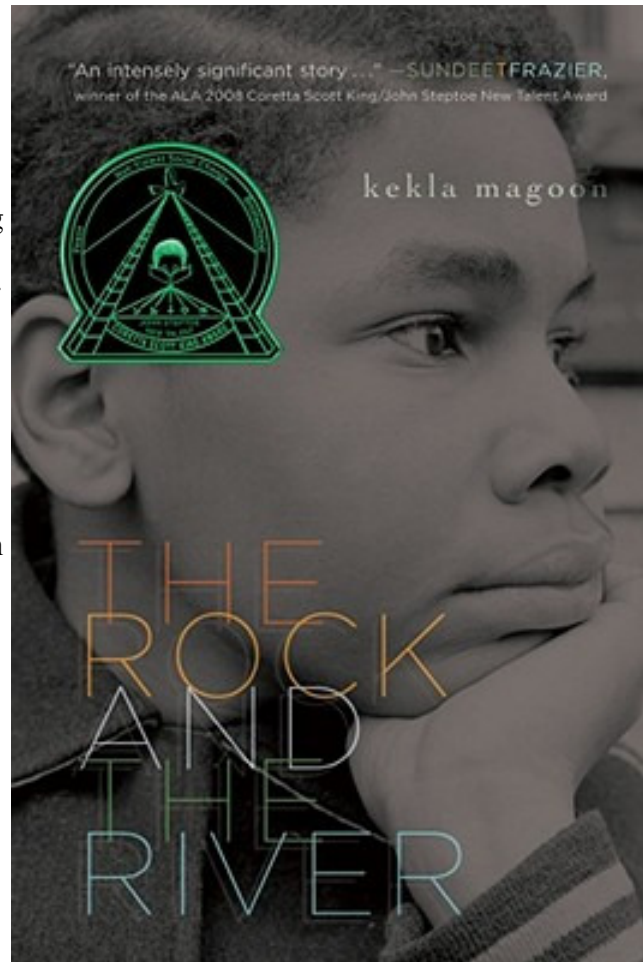
QUESTIONS:

How can the reader tell that Sam and Stick are close?

Does Sam respect his father? How does he show it?

Who or what do you feel strongly enough to defend? What would your defense be?

Is Stick a hero or a villain? Explain.



**Mass, Wendy. *Every Soul a Star*.
Little Brown, 2008.**

SUMMARY:

Ally, Bree, and Jack each give their own version of their meeting at Moon Shadow Campground, the one place in the United States where the upcoming Great Eclipse can be seen in totality. Twelve-year-old Ally has been home schooled while living at the isolated campground her parents built in anticipation of this monumental event. Thirteen-year-old Bree, a fashion queen with the looks and the goal of becoming a model, discovers she is moving to the same camp, far away from civilization and all she values. Fourteen-year-old Jack has never gotten anything quite right and recently failed science, so attending the eclipse is a means to avoid summer school. Each finds something quite different when they discover each other and witness a total eclipse.

QUESTIONS:

Ally, Bree, and Jack each have their own chapters throughout the book so readers discover each kid's perspective on the events taking place. Choose one character and describe the initial reaction to Moon Shadow Campground and how that opinion changes.

Did you feel differently towards Ally, Bree, or Jack as the story progresses?

Whom do you think will have a harder time adjusting to their new lifestyle: Bree far away from civilization, or Ally navigating the social landscape of school? How do they help each other?

Why does Jack wish he could stay at Moon Shadow Campground?

What is so special about a solar eclipse?

Even though Ryan's life seems perfect, he's athletic, smart, and good looking, what isn't so perfect in his life and how do his outward successes hide his difficulties?

Ally and Bree's siblings, Melanie and Kenny, seem to take everything in stride and seem fine with all the changes to come. Are they realistic?



O'Connor, Barbara. *Greetings from Nowhere*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.

SUMMARY:

The Sleepy Time Motel in Shawnee Gap, North Carolina has fallen on hard times and its widowed owner, Aggie, is ready to sell. Unexpectedly, people begin to arrive. Kirby and his mother stop because of car trouble, Loretta and her parents stopped on their way to tour the Smoky Mountains and Willow and her father, Mr. Dover arrived with the intention of purchasing the North Carolina property. Aggie misses Harold, Kirby needs to stay out of trouble, Loretta is looking for her mother and Willow and her father are lonely. All their lives are changed during their stay!

QUESTIONS:

Why do you think Willow's father is in such a hurry to move?

Why did Kirby and Willow have a hard time getting to know Loretta's family and Aggie?

What were the differences between Kirby's mother and Loretta's mother?

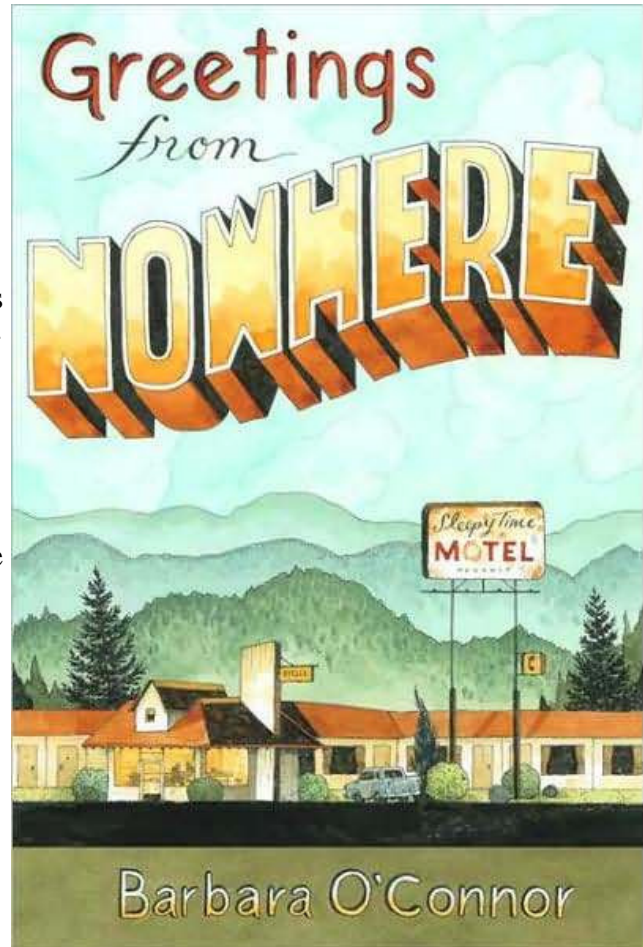
Why does Kirby take Loretta's pin? Why does he return it?

What is the significance of Loretta's charm bracelet?

How does Aggie use the garden to work out the things that bother her?

How are Kirby, Loretta and Willow different at the end of the book from the people they were at the beginning?

What difference did the residents of the motel make to Aggie?



Parry, Rosanne. *Heart of a Shepherd*. Random House, 2009.

SUMMARY:

A young Oregon boy comes of age on the family's sheep ranch when his father must leave for service in Iraq and his older brothers pick up their lives away from the ranch. It is up to Ignatius "Brother" Alderman and his grandparents to keep things going. He meets each challenge with depth and courage, the depth and courage he will need to face the biggest challenge of all.

QUESTIONS:

How can the relationship between Brother and his father be described?

What are some of the beliefs of the Quakers, also known as the Society of Friends?

On pg. 37, "He (Ernesto) leans over the rail and rests a broad, callused hand on my (Brother's) shoulder. 'Heart of a shepherd,' he says, like he's pronouncing a blessing." What does Ernesto mean?

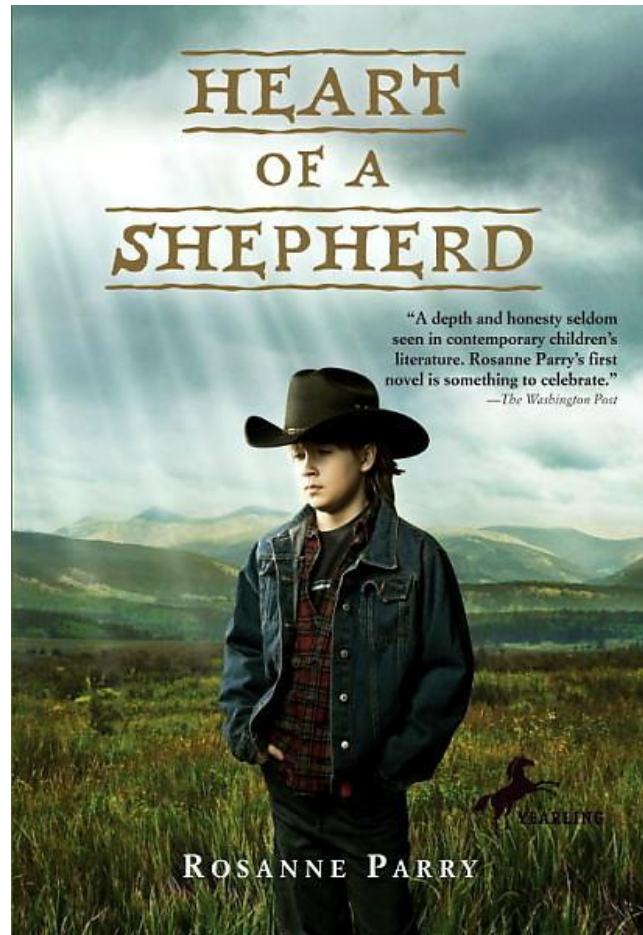
Why are dad's e-mails to Brother so businesslike?

Describe some of Father Ziegler's traits that make him an effective parish priest.

Why does Brother have mixed feelings about the return of the Ugartes?

"Don't confuse the right thing with the easy thing," Mrs. Ugarte tells Brother. (p. 117) Can you relate this statement to any other characters and situations you have read about?

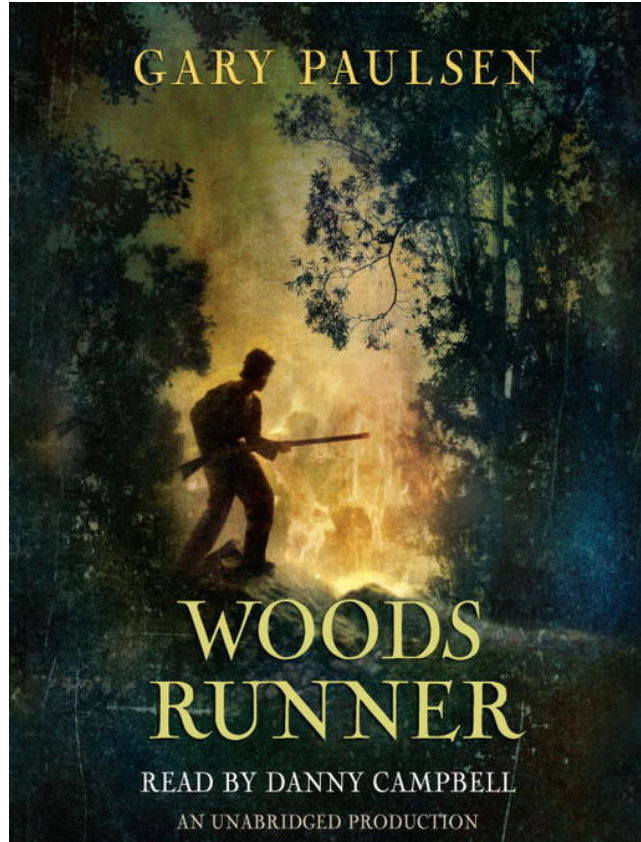
Brother refuses to leave his dead grandfather to go for help. Would you have made the same choice? Why or why not?



**Paulsen, Gary. *Woods Runner*.
Wendy Lamb Books, 2010.**

SUMMARY:

Living with his parents in western Pennsylvania, Samuel has learned how to survive in the forest, tracking and killing game, constructing shelters, and building fires. He knows everything a man should know to survive far away from the chaos of “civilization.” However, in 1776 when Samuel is thirteen, the Revolutionary War reaches his family and destroys their idyllic life. Samuel’s homestead is savagely attacked by British soldiers and Iroquois. His parents are taken prisoner, and Samuel must use his tracking skills to move silently through the forest, following them to New York and into the depths of a war more bloody and brutal than he could ever imagine. Each footstep brings Samuel closer to his parents; each day brings new encounters with both enemies and allies.



QUESTIONS:

How is living in the wilderness different from living in a town or village?

Why do Samuel’s parents build a life in the wilderness of western Pennsylvania?

Why does news travel so slowly in 1776? How does this affect families on the frontier?

Why do the British employ Iroquois and Hessian (German) soldiers to raid homesteads?

Name and describe the different types of conflict in *Woods Runner*.

How does the character of Samuel change and develop over the course of the story?

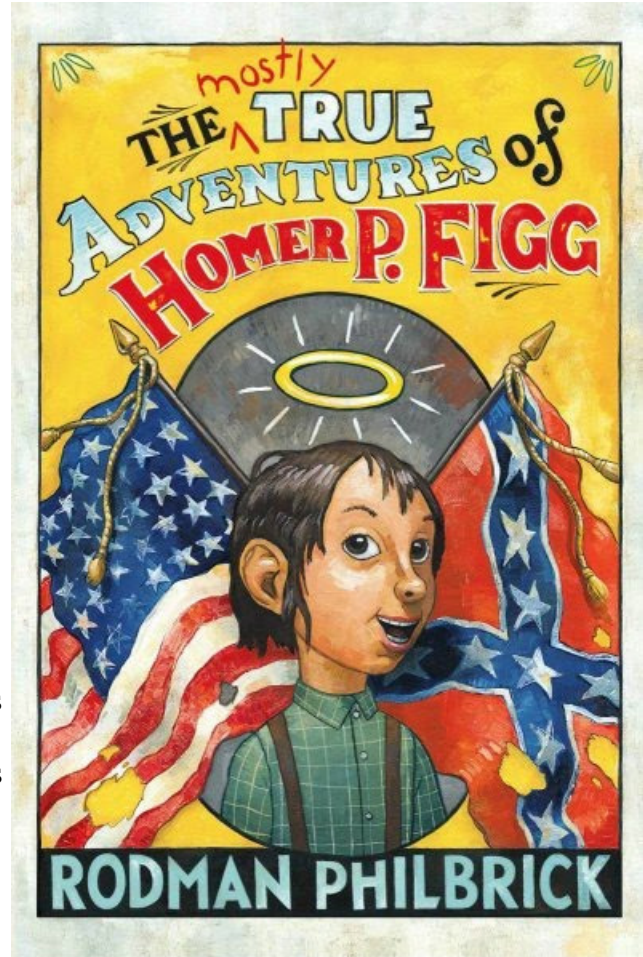
Why are Samuel’s parents taken prisoner, and how does Samuel find and free them?

What is a hero? Is Samuel one? Why?

Philbrick, Rodman. *The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg*. Blue Sky Press, 2009

SUMMARY:

After their parents died, seventeen-year-old Harold Figg and Homer, his twelve-year-old brother, went to live with their uncle Squint Leach in Pine Swamp, Maine. Squint hates them and treats them cruelly. Then, in 1863, after a rather nasty incident, Squint sells Harold into the Union army for \$300. As Harold is being led away, Homer is put into a root cellar from which he later escapes. Homer's mission is to save his brother before Harold is killed in the war. Thus starts a series of wild, dangerous, and sometimes hilarious adventures involving slaves and slave catchers, rides on a train and a steamboat, a stint as a carnival attraction, a ride in a hot air balloon, as well as witnessing the horrors of the Battle of Gettysburg before Homer saves his brother from being killed in the war.



QUESTIONS:

How are Homer and Harold similar and different?

What are some of the adventures that Homer experiences while trying to save Harold?

How is Homer betrayed throughout the novel?

How does Homer get involved with the Underground Railroad and Jebediah Brewster?

What does Mrs. Bean mean when she says, "Never thought a boy could be good and a liar, too.

But you are...You are."? (p. 77)

Why does Homer risk his life to save Harold?

Who are the best and the worst people that Homer meets?

How does media coverage of the Civil War differ from coverage of war today?

What does Homer mean by, "We're all of us haunted by yesterday, and we got no choice but to keep marching into our tomorrow."? (p. 217)

Prineas, Sarah. The Magic Thief.
HarperCollins, 2008.

SUMMARY:

Conn is a thief, pure and simple, a boy living by his wits in the streets of Twilight, his only intention to survive. But when he picks the pocket of the Wizard Nevery, he encounters more than change for dinner. The exiled Nevery is equally surprised that Conn even survives an encounter with his wizard stone: a “locus magicalicus.” Nevery has never taken on an apprentice, and Conn has no interest in becoming Nevery’s servant, but their shared goal of restoring the magic of Wellmet brings them together to save their city. Conn’s own intuitions, so opposed to traditional beliefs, provoke this boy who senses what must be done—but who will believe a thief? With the events focused on Conn’s experience interspersed with journal notes by Nevery, readers find themselves rooting for the magic while Conn seeks to find his own locus magicalicus and Nevery comes to trust a crook.



QUESTIONS:

Why does Conn refuse to become Nevery’s servant? What convinces Nevery to take him on as his first apprentice? What does Conn offer to teach Nevery in exchange?

How does Bennet feel about Conn? Can you guess what Conn has done to impress Bennet?

What do you learn about Conn’s relationship with Underlord Crowe? Given their family relationship, would you trust Conn if you were Nevery?

Why does Keeston help Nevery find Conn after Pettivox has him kidnapped? Can Keeston be trusted?

What function does the phlister serve? Is it necessary to cause Conn to speak the truth?

Neither Conn nor Nevery knows everything because they are limited to their own knowledge of events. Discuss the other characters and what their perspective might be. For example: Bennet; Pettivox; The Duchess; Brumbee; Keeston; Rowan or other students from the academics.

The Underlord’s minions become rats under the Embero spell, what animals might other characters become?

Scieszka, Jon. *Knucklehead: Tall Tales & Mostly True Stories about Growing*

Up Scieszka. Viking, 2008

SUMMARY:

In a series of autobiographical vignettes, Jon Scieszka hilariously tells about being the second of six brothers growing up together in Flint, Michigan. He shares wild youthful memories, whether it is playing games from baseball to war or breaking things from furniture to bones. Living with multiple brothers causes sharing (for example, clothes, chores, bedrooms, and Halloween costumes) and leading younger brothers, sometimes astray, and other times to activities like Cub Scouts and choir. School stories are included, and, through it all, Scieszka emphasizes his love of reading.

QUESTIONS:

The word “Knucklehead” started out as an insult. How did it change over the years?

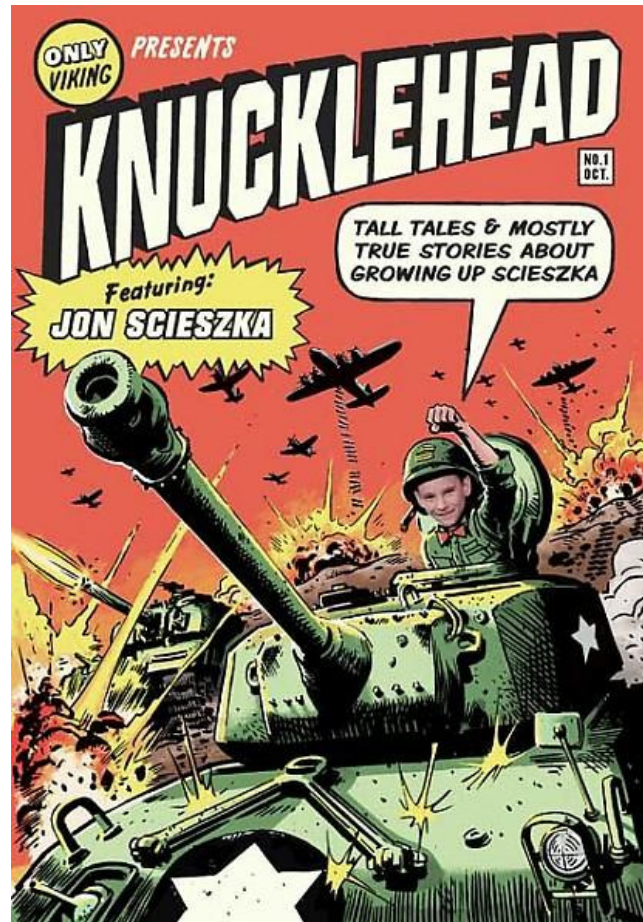
How were life and school different when Jon was growing up as compared to now?

How did the careers of their parents affect the boys?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of birth order?

Dick and Jane were in early readers when Scieszka was growing up. He found them strange – why?

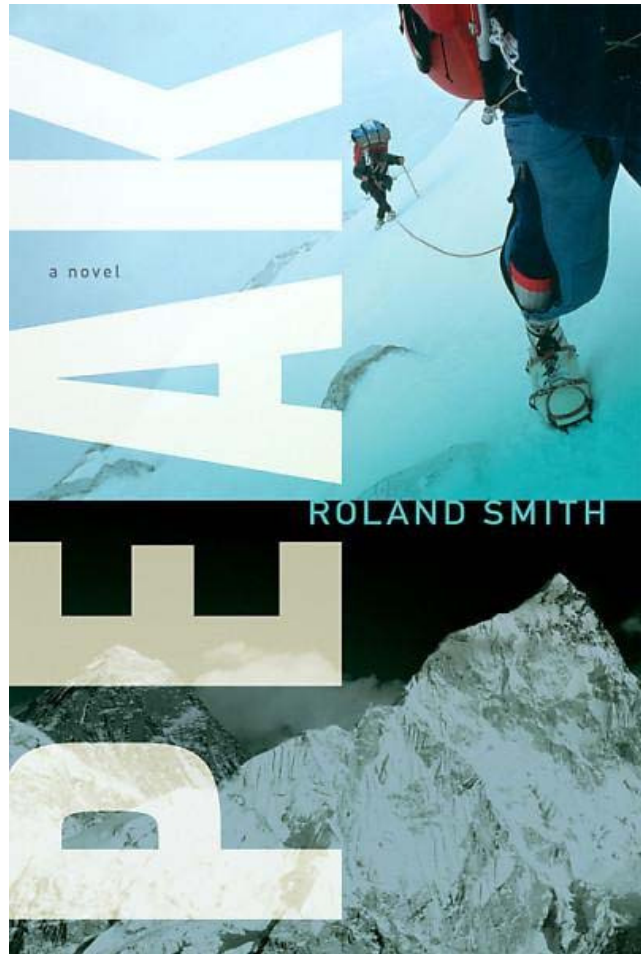
Knucklehead is, of course, written through Jon's eyes. How might any of his brothers or his parents describe these growing up years?



Smith, Roland. *Peak*. Harcourt, 2007.

SUMMARY:

The son of mountain climbing parents, fourteen-year-old Peak Marcello is arrested for scaling a skyscraper. He avoids juvenile detention when the father he has not seen or heard from in years takes him to Nepal, where he owns a mountain climbing expedition company. Once there, his father surprises him by telling him their destination is the summit of Mt. Everest, the highest mountain in the world. Peak is both thrilled and wary, as he discovers that his father is primarily motivated by the publicity his company will receive if Peak becomes the youngest person to summit Mt. Everest. Peak becomes even more concerned when he realizes that his father isn't going to climb with him, but instead sends him up an obscure path with a Sherpa guide and his Nepalese nephew. Peak must face many dangers as climbing up Mt. Everest is literally a life-or-death expedition.



QUESTIONS:

Why does Peak climb the Woolworth Building in New York City?

Why does the state of New York want to sentence Peak to juvenile detention?

How is Joshua Wood both selfish and caring?

Why does Peak want to summit Mt. Everest?

What do you think of the trash described on Mt. Everest?

Peak's mother tells him that he needs to be completely selfish in order to be successful on Mt. Everest. Why do you think she says this?

Peak believes that Sun-jo has a good reason to risk his life. Does Peak also have one?

How are Peak's sisters, the "two peas," important to this story?

Why do you think the author has Peak discuss his story in terms of writing a story?

How do you think the Greene Street School has influenced Peak?

Smith, Sherri L. *Flygirl*. Putnam, 2008.

SUMMARY:

Ida Mae Jones shared her father's dream of flying and her plan was to attend flight training school in Chicago. When World War II began, that plan changed and her dream was to enlist and serve in the Women's Airforce Service Patrol. At that time, African American Women were not admitted to that branch of the service and Ida Mae made the difficult and frightening choice to "pass" as a white woman. After going through the cadet training, Ida Mae enters the war effort with all its challenges and pain.

QUESTIONS:

What were the consequences of Ida Mae's decision to "pass."

During the time Ida Mae "passed," how do you think she felt about herself?

What did Grandy have to say about "passing?"

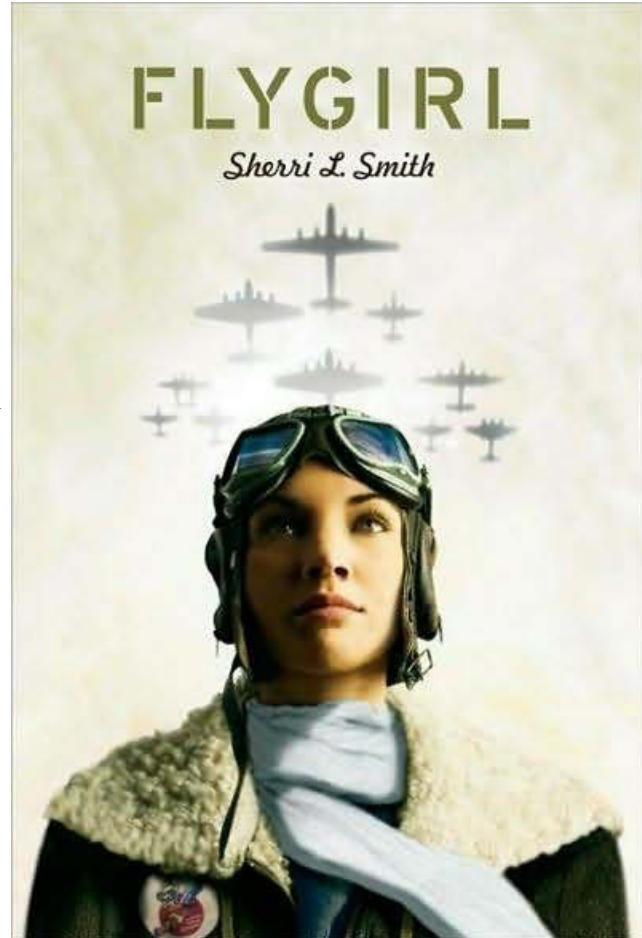
What were the high and low points of Ida Mae's experience in the WASPS?

What opinions did Ida Mae's mother have about Ida Mae and the WASPS?

Flying gave Ida Mae a sense of freedom. What gives you that same sense?

What do you think of the relationship between Jolene and Ida Mae? How is it different from the relationship Ida Mae had with Patsy and Lily?

What was going on when Ida Mae visited the hardware store to purchase an awl?



Westerfeld, Scott. *Leviathan*. Simon Pulse, 2009.

SUMMARY:

In pre-World War 1 Europe two very unlikely children meet. Prince Alek, whose parents have just been assassinated, and Deryn, a girl disguised as a boy so she could become an airman. Prince Alek is escaping in a machine called a Stormwalker. Deryn is working on a whale airship named Leviathan. When both vehicles crash near the same location, they must work together for their survival.

QUESTIONS:

Why didn't Alek believe that Count Volger was acting on his father's orders?

Why does Alek want to get away from the Darwinists?

Why does Alek call Deryn a "real soldier?"

What do you think is in the eggs that Dr. Barlow has on Leviathan?

Which group could identify with more, the Clankers or the Darwinists?

Which beast or invention did you find the most interesting?

Did the illustrations add anything to your reading experience? Could you have imagined this world without the images?

Who was your favorite character and why?

Would you like to live in this world? Why or why not?

Is it credible that Deryn is able to hide the fact that she is a girl?

Which character do you think is the bravest?

How does Alex's character change throughout the book?

What do you think will happen next in the story?

