EplusL Edu | Every big idea begins from one word.

Parent Reading Discussion Guide

Middle School Edition · Growing Thinkers · Ages 11–13

28 books · 2 conversation questions per book

How to Use This Guide

If a book conversation usually ends with "Was it good?" — this guide is for you. We've prepared two questions per book that any parent can ask naturally, whether or not you've read the book yourself.

Before you start:

- Don't look for a "right" answer. These questions open doors — they're not tests.
- If your child's answer surprises you, ask "What makes you think that?" before responding.
- Share your own thoughts and experiences too. It makes the conversation richer.
- You don't have to wait until the book is finished. A mid-book question can make the next chapter more exciting.
- You don't need to use both questions at once. Drop one naturally whenever the moment feels right.

Growing Thinkers · Ages 11–13

This is the age of friendship, identity, family, and first big challenges. Help your child step into the emotions of the characters on the page.

1. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe — *C.S. Lewis*

Q1 When the Pevensie children first step through the wardrobe, which was stronger — their fear or their curiosity?

Q2 Why did Edmund betray his siblings? Can someone make a terrible choice and still become a good person again?

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2. The Hobbit — *J.R.R. Tolkien*

Q1 Bilbo leaves the comfort of home for a dangerous adventure. If you had to choose between safety and a new experience, what would you pick?

Q2 What changed most about Bilbo by the end of his journey?

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3. A Wrinkle in Time — *Madeleine L'Engle*

Q1 Meg's stubbornness and anger — qualities she sees as flaws — become her greatest strengths. Is there a so-called flaw of yours that could be a superpower?

Q2 What do you think "IT" represents? Does anything in our world feel similar to you?

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4. The Outsiders — *S.E. Hinton*

Q1 Ponyboy lives in a world divided between Greasers and Socs. Do you see similar divisions at your school or in your life?

Q2 Why does the poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" carry so much weight in this book?

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5. Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry — *Mildred D. Taylor*

Q1 What do you imagine Cassie felt the first time she experienced racial discrimination?

Q2 Why does the Logan family fight so hard to keep their land? Is there something in your life you'd fight to protect?

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6. Number the Stars — *Lois Lowry*

Q1 Annemarie finds courage even while terrified. What risks do you think you could take for a friend?

Q2 Why do small acts of bravery from ordinary people matter so much during a crisis?

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7. The Phantom Tollbooth — *Norton Juster*

Q1 Milo is bored by everything at first but transformed by his journey. What bores you right now, and what might change that?

Q2 Why do the Kingdom of Words and the Kingdom of Numbers need each other?

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8. Anne of Green Gables — *L.M. Montgomery*

Q1 Anne uses her imagination to survive hard times. Have you ever used your imagination to get through a difficult moment?

Q2 How do Matthew and Marilla change because of Anne?

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9. Island of the Blue Dolphins — *Scott O'Dell*

Q1 Karana has to figure out survival entirely on her own. What do you think she learned that she never could have learned in a classroom?

Q2 What kept Karana going when she felt afraid and alone?

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10. My Antonia — *Willa Cather*

Q1 Jim and Antonia's friendship lasts across decades. What do you think makes a friendship last that long?

Q2 What would it feel like to be an immigrant family trying to build a life in a completely unfamiliar place?

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11. Ghost — *Jason Reynolds*

Q1 Ghost uses running to manage his anger. How do you handle difficult emotions?

Q2 How does Ghost's past shape his choices in the present?

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12. The House on Mango Street — *Sandra Cisneros*

Q1 Esperanza starts out ashamed of where she lives, but her feelings shift. How do you feel about the place you call home?

Q2 What do you think Esperanza means when she says she will come back "for the ones who cannot out"?

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13. Esperanza Rising — *Pam Muñoz Ryan*

Q1 Esperanza goes from a wealthy life to poverty almost overnight. What do you think the hardest change was for her?

Q2 What can we learn from seeing families and communities take care of each other during hard times?

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14. Hatchet — *Gary Paulsen*

Q1 Brian has to survive alone in the wilderness and teaches himself everything. What would you worry about most in that situation?

Q2 Where do you see Brian growing the most as a person through each crisis he faces?

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15. Refugee — *Alan Gratz*

Q1 Three characters from different eras flee their homes for similar reasons. What does it actually mean to be a refugee?

Q2 The three stories eventually connect. What feeling did that give you?

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16. The Watsons Go to Birmingham — *Christopher Paul Curtis*

Q1 The book shifts from funny to heartbreaking without warning. Why does that contrast make the serious events hit even harder?

Q2 How does Kenny change after what happens in Birmingham?

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17. Walk Two Moons — *Sharon Creech*

Q1 Salamanca slowly uncovers the truth about her mother during a road trip. Why can facing the truth feel so hard?

Q2 "Don't judge a man until you've walked two moons in his moccasins." What does that mean to you?

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18. Tuck Everlasting — *Natalie Babbitt*

Q1 Winnie has to choose between living forever and growing old naturally. Which would you choose, and why?

Q2 Is living forever really a gift? What might be lost?

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19. The Witch of Blackbird Pond — *Elizabeth George Speare*

Q1 Kit is mistrusted in her new community simply for being different. Why do people fear what's unfamiliar?

Q2 What makes a friendship real, according to this book?

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20. Hidden Figures (Young Readers Edition) — *Margot Lee Shetterly*

Q1 The three mathematicians proved themselves in a world that doubted them at every turn. What gave them the strength to keep going?

Q2 What do you think is the most effective way to push back against prejudice?

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21. The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind (Young Readers Ed.) — *William Kamkwamba & Bryan Mealer*

Q1 William taught himself from library books after dropping out of school and built a windmill. Have you ever experienced the joy of figuring something out entirely on your own?

Q2 What can we learn from William's determination to help his family and his village?

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22. Fish in a Tree — *Lynda Mullaly Hunt*

Q1 Ally hides her reading struggles because she's ashamed. Why is it important to be honest about the things that are hard for us?

Q2 What does a great teacher do differently that makes a real difference?

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23. American Born Chinese — *Gene Luen Yang*

Q1 This book weaves three stories into one. Have you ever struggled with questions about your own identity?

Q2 Why is it so hard to choose between being your true self and being who others expect you to be?

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24. The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate — *Jacqueline Kelly*

Q1 Calpurnia challenges the idea that science isn't for girls. When someone tells you a certain thing isn't "for you," how do you respond?

Q2 How does her relationship with her grandfather change Calpurnia?

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25. Purple Hibiscus — *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*

Q1 Kambili's family looks perfect from the outside but is filled with fear within. What happens when someone's outward image doesn't match their reality?

Q2 What does the "free laughter" Kambili finds at her cousins' house mean to her — and to you?

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26. Wonder — *R.J. Palacio*

Q1 Auggie faces prejudice because of how he looks. Have you ever judged someone by appearance — or been judged that way yourself?

Q2 The book's message is "choose kind." What does that look like in your everyday life?

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27. Bridge to Terabithia — *Katherine Paterson*

Q1 Jess and Leslie build an imaginary kingdom together. What power does imagination give their friendship?

Q2 How does Jess find a way to move through grief after an unexpected loss?

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28. The Wild Robot — *Peter Brown*

Q1 Roz the robot is dropped into a wild island and has to learn everything from scratch. If you were placed in a completely unfamiliar world, what would you want to learn first?

Q2 What does family mean to Roz by the end of the story?

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