

THE LIE THAT BINDS

Group Study Guide

THE LIE THAT BINDS - Group Discussion

Summary:

One summer seven-year-old Joshua Tanner decided it was no fun to spend every afternoon watching Oprah with his grandma. For just once he wanted to go into the woods behind his apartment complex and swim in the ponds with the “big boys.” But Joshua soon discovered that swimming in the pond is not the only thing that the boys were up to that afternoon. Joshua’s discovery at the pond sends him on a wild ride where he goes from changing his identity to being hypnotized by a local doctor. Meanwhile, the teenagers, whom Joshua had followed to the pond, had a few problems of their own to work out. Jay, the red-haired, freckle-faced paranoid schizophrenic, veiled his problems behind a panic attack that left him hospitalized and speechless. Ron, the ex-gang banger from “up north” wanted to solve his problems through violence. Allen, the infamous convenience store robber, simply followed the lead of whatever the rest of the motley crew told him. And Terrence, the ring leader, attempted to keep the group together, while dealing with his drunken foster father. In their attempt to cover their crime, the boys weave a web that entangles them so deeply until the truth is their only way out. Similarly, Joshua too soon discovers that the truth is his only option from “the lie that binds.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is the book called The Lie That Binds?
2. What was the first lie told in the story?
3. What lie was told before the story opened that set the entire plot for the story?
4. What is the irony on page 3 about Joshua wanting to remember every detail of his first trip to the pond?
5. The word **fugue** is defined as a disturbed state of mind where a person experiences a disruption in memory and intentionally takes on a new identity in order to escape a traumatic experience. This new identity is normally associated with comfort. What character experienced a fugue and when? Explain.
6. Compare and contrast Joshua’s real mother with Marsha Hopkins.
7. All four of the teenage boys lived at a certain level of poverty, how did each boy’s family fall into this socio-economic group?
8. Larry Cassin obviously worked hard to provide well for his daughter Sandy, yet someone meeting Sandy at the Rosewood housing project might ask the question, “What’s a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?” What could be some likely answers?
9. Marsha Hopkins appeared to be a reasonably intelligent woman, why would she do something so reasonably unintelligent as running away with a child that she knew belonged to someone else?
10. In reference to statements made at the bottom of page 5 and the top of page 6, what is significant about Marsha wanting to take Joshua to Disney World?
11. Other than the fact that children love Disney World, for what other reason was Joshua anxious to go there?
12. Find a statement on page 101 that restates the title The Lie That Binds.

13. Why did Terrence feel guilty about the backpack full of money?
14. Compare and contrast the first paragraph on page 138 with the scene where Terrence is arrested on page 143.

THE LIE THAT BINDS - Suggested Class Activities

1. **Character Profile Posters -**

Separate students into groups. Assign each group a different character from the story. Have each group write a profile on the character. The profile should consist of the character's name, age (or approximate age), physical description, personality, family demographics, role in the story, what they like or dislike about the character, and a short description of what they think this character would be like one year after the timeframe of the story. The students may also draw a sketch how they picture the character physically.

2. **Magazine Feature Story -**

Have the students imagine they are writers for a major magazine, and they have been given the assignment to do a feature article on crime in small towns. Have them choose one or more characters from the story to interview for their articles. The article should read and look like a regular magazine article. Again, sketches may be used, or the students may wish to use real pictures of their own to include in their stories.

3. **Extra! Extra! Read All About It! -**

This activity is similar to the magazine feature story, but in this activity the students are working for their local newspaper instead of a major magazine. The students are reporters for their local newspapers. Give them the choice between the two topics: "Joshua Tanner - Hometown Hero" or "Terrence McGee - Villain or Victim?"

4. **Write An Epilogue**

Many readers have stated that The Lie That Binds should have sequel. They want to know how the characters' lives turn out after the story, but the author has left it up to the readers to use their imaginations. Give your students the opportunity to write an epilogue of what they think life will be like for the characters after the conclusion of the story.

AR Questions:

1. What stood in the way of Joshua's being able to go to the pond?
 - A. The pond was a long walk from his home.
 - B. The older boys said he was too little, and his grandmother said it was too dangerous.
 - C. There were bears in the woods.
 - D. The pond was a catfish pond, and there was no swimming allowed.
2. Why does Jay get taken to the hospital?
 - A. He is in shock from being in the heat too long.
 - B. He was been bitten by a water moccasin while swimming in the pond.
 - C. He is in shock from what he has done in the woods, and the other boys pretend he has been bitten by a snake.
 - D. He caught a stomach virus while he was in the pond.
3. Why did Terrence feel as if he owed his foster father Jesse?
 - A. Jesse had loaned him a lot of money.
 - B. Jesse was the only person who would take him in after his parents abandoned him.
 - C. Jesse kept reminding him of how pathetic it was that his parents had left him.
 - D. Jesse needed someone to help him stop drinking.
4. How did Terrence, Ron, and Allen plan to cover their crime?
 - A. They planned to bury the bodies.
 - B. They planned to help look for Joshua then act shocked when his body was discovered.
 - C. They planned to put all the blame on Allen.
 - D. They planned to write a suicide note for Sandy Cassin and say she killed Joshua also.
5. Why did Marsha believe that Joshua was a godsend?
 - A. Joshua looked identical to her nephew who lived in Memphis.
 - B. She was not able to have children of her own.
 - C. She and Joshua both loved dogs.
 - D. Joe would make a perfect father for Joshua.

6. According to Joshua, how did he end up stranded on the highway?
 - A. His parents forgot him at the gas station.
 - B. He was running away from home.
 - C. He was on a camping trip and wandered away from camp.
 - D. His father beat him and left him stranded.
7. Why did Joshua live with his grandmother, Sadie Belle, rather than his own mother?
 - A. Sadie Belle had a bigger house than Joshua's mother.
 - B. Joshua's mother was on military duty in Iraq.
 - C. Joshua's mother left him when he was just a baby.
 - D. Joshua loved Mississippi more than any other place in the world.
8. Where had Joshua always wanted to travel?
 - A. Six Flags in Atlanta
 - B. Six Flags in Saint Louis
 - C. Six Flags in New Orleans
 - D. Six Flags in Chicago
9. When Joe told the police about Joshua, who did he say Joshua was initially?
 - A. Joe's nephew from Miami
 - B. Marsha's nephew from Miami
 - C. Joe's nephew from Memphis
 - D. Marsha's nephew from Memphis
10. What caused a fight between Terrence and Jesse?
 - A. Jesse accused Terrence of stealing his money.
 - B. Terrence accused Jesse of stealing his money.
 - C. Jesse ransacked Terrence's closet while looking for money.
 - D. Terrence ransacked Jesse's closet while looking for money.

11. When did Joshua begin to have doubts about Marsha?
 - A. Joshua began to doubt when Marsha stole a car.
 - B. Joshua began to doubt when Marsha changed her mind about Disney World.
 - C. Joshua began to doubt when Marsha wouldn't buy him a Mountain Dew.
 - D. Joshua began to doubt when Marsha stole money from a cash register.
12. Why was Joshua anxious to go to Disney World?
 - A. Joshua thought he would find his mother there since she lived in Florida.
 - B. Joshua wanted to get away because he thought he had killed Sandy Cassin.
 - C. Joshua wanted to get as far away from Joe as possible.
 - D. Going to Disney World is every child's dream.
13. How did Marsha find out that Joshua had lied to her about how he ended up on the highway?
 - A. She saw the information on a news brief while at a gas station.
 - B. Joshua finally told her the truth after she changed her mind about Disney World.
 - C. Joe called her on her cell phone and told her.
 - D. She heard about it on the radio.
14. Why did Terrence feel guilty about the backpack full of money?
 - A. He knew that he should have shared it with Jesse.
 - B. It was money that people should have used for their families rather than drugs.
 - C. He had planned to run away and keep it all for himself.
 - D. He had threatened the others into allowing him to keep it.
15. Why does Terrence smile when he is arrested?
 - A. He knows that his nightmare of lying is finally over.
 - B. He is glad that Ron and Allen were caught too.
 - C. He is planning his revenge on Joshua.
 - D. He is thinking of a way to keep the backpack full of money.