

THE
**MAZE
RUNNER**
TRILOGY
READERS GUIDE



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ABOUT THE BOOKS

At the beginning of *The Maze Runner*, Thomas arrives in a place called the Glade, run by teenage boys, with no memory of their former lives. He becomes one of a special group mapping the Maze that surrounds the Glade. When Teresa, the only girl, arrives soon after Thomas, everything begins to change. After a harrowing escape from the Maze, the Gladers learn that their trial is not over.

In *The Scorch Trials*, Thomas and his friends discover that there are two groups being tested by the organization known as WICKED. Separated from Teresa, they are forced into a harsh, hot environment as they learn more about the disease known as the Flare. In a desert city, they come face to face with Cranks, people in varying stages of madness caused by the Flare.

The Death Cure begins as survivors of the trials are told their memories will be restored. Thomas and his friends refuse the treatment and escape from the compound with the help of two insiders. Discovering a resistance movement to WICKED, they plan to join. The trilogy comes to a stunning climax as Thomas and his friends grapple with concerns about the greater good of society and the future of the human race.

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PB: 978-0-385-73795-1
HC: 978-0-385-73794-4
GLB: 978-0-385-90702-6
EL: 978-0-375-89377-3
CD: 978-0-307-58288-1



PB: 978-0-385-73876-7
HC: 978-0-385-73875-0
GLB: 978-0-385-90745-3
EL: 978-0-375-89611-8
CD: 978-0-307-70659-1



HC: 978-0-385-73877-4
GLB: 978-0-385-90746-0
EL: 978-0-375-89612-5
CD: 978-0-307-70663-8

All: Grades 7 up



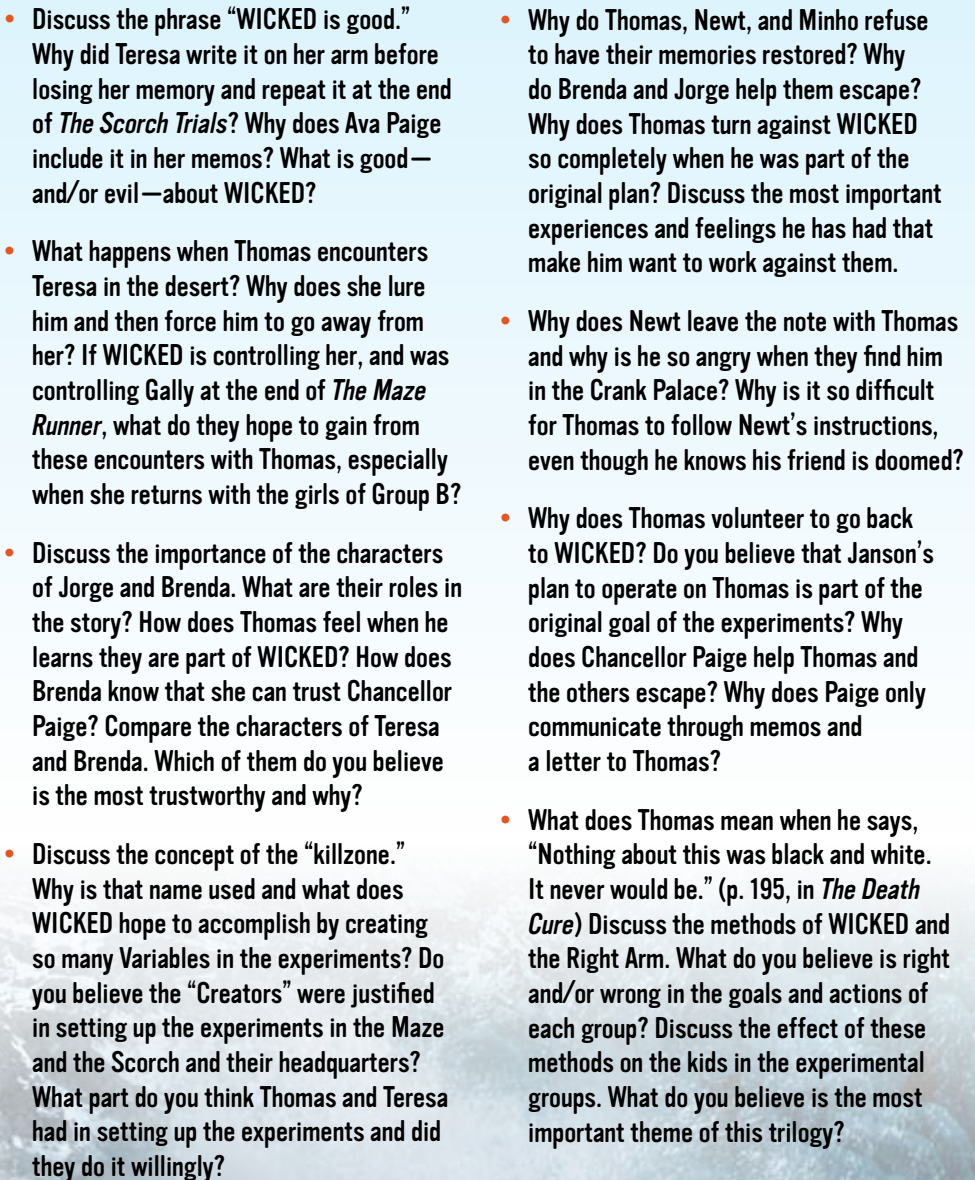
QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Discuss the unique language developed by the inhabitants of the Glade. How does it help them to cope with their environment? What does it tell you about the characters and their connection to each other? How do the Gladers keep order in their community?

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

The *Maze Runner* trilogy takes place in a futuristic world, one that is struggling for survival and using desperate means to find a cure for a disease that is destroying its people. This kind of desperation has occurred at various times throughout the history of the world. Research some of the plagues and diseases that have caused panic in populations throughout history—the Black Plague, smallpox, yellow fever, AIDS—and discover how these illnesses affected the social life of the times in which they occurred. Two excellent books to consult for this research are James Cross Giblin’s *When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS* and Jim Murphy’s *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793*. How does James Dashner’s imaginative world in the *Maze Runner* trilogy reflect these historical events?

- How does Thomas keep from going crazy when he arrives in the Glade? Why does he feel he has been there before? What happens to those who go through the “changing” and how does it affect Thomas? Why does Thomas force himself to go through the changing?
- What is the importance of Chuck and his relationship to Thomas? How do Thomas’s feelings about Chuck change? What effect does Chuck’s death at the end of the first book have on Thomas? Would it have been a different story if Chuck had lived?
- What part does Teresa play in the story? What effect does her arrival in *The Maze Runner* have on the others in the Glade? Describe her connection to Thomas as it unfolds throughout the first book. Would the boys have been able to discover the secret of the Maze without her? Does her character change in the last two books?
- Compare the characters of Alby, Newt, and Minho and their reactions to various situations in the story. What are the differences in their personalities that contribute to the way each of them faces difficult decisions. What are the experiences each has had that influence their actions? Discuss the role of Aris and how his character figures in the plot of *The Scorch Trials*.

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- Discuss the phrase “WICKED is good.” Why did Teresa write it on her arm before losing her memory and repeat it at the end of *The Scorch Trials*? Why does Ava Paige include it in her memos? What is good—and/or evil—about WICKED?
 - What happens when Thomas encounters Teresa in the desert? Why does she lure him and then force him to go away from her? If WICKED is controlling her, and was controlling Gally at the end of *The Maze Runner*, what do they hope to gain from these encounters with Thomas, especially when she returns with the girls of Group B?
 - Discuss the importance of the characters of Jorge and Brenda. What are their roles in the story? How does Thomas feel when he learns they are part of WICKED? How does Brenda know that she can trust Chancellor Paige? Compare the characters of Teresa and Brenda. Which of them do you believe is the most trustworthy and why?
 - Discuss the concept of the “killzone.” Why is that name used and what does WICKED hope to accomplish by creating so many Variables in the experiments? Do you believe the “Creators” were justified in setting up the experiments in the Maze and the Scorch and their headquarters? What part do you think Thomas and Teresa had in setting up the experiments and did they do it willingly?
 - Why do Thomas, Newt, and Minho refuse to have their memories restored? Why do Brenda and Jorge help them escape? Why does Thomas turn against WICKED so completely when he was part of the original plan? Discuss the most important experiences and feelings he has had that make him want to work against them.
 - Why does Newt leave the note with Thomas and why is he so angry when they find him in the Crank Palace? Why is it so difficult for Thomas to follow Newt’s instructions, even though he knows his friend is doomed?
 - Why does Thomas volunteer to go back to WICKED? Do you believe that Janson’s plan to operate on Thomas is part of the original goal of the experiments? Why does Chancellor Paige help Thomas and the others escape? Why does Paige only communicate through memos and a letter to Thomas?
 - What does Thomas mean when he says, “Nothing about this was black and white. It never would be.” (p. 195, in *The Death Cure*) Discuss the methods of WICKED and the Right Arm. What do you believe is right and/or wrong in the goals and actions of each group? Discuss the effect of these methods on the kids in the experimental groups. What do you believe is the most important theme of this trilogy?

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

The Maze Runner trilogy is part of a growing body of literature in recent years that has been called “postapocalyptic” or “dystopian.” Discuss the meaning of these terms and compare the Maze Runner trilogy to similar novels you may have read—the Books of Ember series by Jeanne DuPrau or the Hunger Games series by Suzanne Collins, for example. Why do you think there are so many books in this genre being written today?

Compare the Maze Runner trilogy to earlier classic works of this type: George Orwell’s *1984*, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*,

Nevil Shute’s *On the Beach*, and Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*. What world events may have prompted the authors of those earlier books to write about a post-apocalyptic world? Compare those events to recent events in our own times.

Many of these books have been adapted into movies. If the Maze Runner series were to be made into a film, which actors would you cast to play the different characters? Describe the setting of the Glade, the Maze, the Scorch, and the city of Denver as they might appear in a film version.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Dashner was born and raised in Georgia but now lives and writes in the Rocky Mountains. He is also the author of the 13th Reality series.



PRAISE FOR *THE MAZE RUNNER*

“Dashner knows how to spin a tale and make the unbelievable realistic. Hard to put down, this is clearly just a first installment, and it will leave readers dying to find out what comes next.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

A *New York Times* Bestseller

An ALA-YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults

An ALA-YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers

A Kentucky Bluegrass Award Winner

A Texas Lone Star Reading List Selection

A *Kirkus Reviews* Best Young Adult Book

PRAISE FOR *THE SCORCH TRIALS*

“Intriguing and surprising, this is a solid sequel that keeps both Thomas and readers wondering what is really going on.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

A *New York Times* Bestseller



View the book trailers
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JamesDashner.com

Prepared by Connie Rockman, Youth Literature Consultant, Adjunct Professor of Children's and Young Adult Literature,
and Editor of the H. W. Wilson Junior Book of Authors and Illustrators series.

Random House Children's Books • School and Library Marketing • 1745 Broadway • New York, NY 10019 • BN1124 • 08/11