

Literature Circle Questions

Use the questions and activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Journey to the River Sea* by Eva Ibbotson.

1. How does Maia react when she finds out she's moving to the Amazon? What does the book she finds in the library say about bringing one's "fear and prejudices" to the jungle?
2. What is Miss Minton's role as a "governess"? How did she get fired from her last job? What's in that heavy trunk of hers?
3. Discuss the difference between how Maia imagines the twins before her journey and how they turn out to be after she arrives. How was her perception of them both accurate and inaccurate?
4. Why do you think the Carters are afraid of the jungle? Compare the way the Carters react to the "life" of the Amazon with the way Maia does.
5. Why does Finn summon Maia to help him? How does he know that she's someone he can trust?
6. Describe what kind of place Westwood is. Why would someone raised in the jungle be so unwilling to go and live in "civilized society"?
7. Describe what kind of people the Carters are. Consider how they treat the Indians who work for them, as well as the way they treat Miss Minton. Consider also the real reasons they invite Maia to come live with them.
8. Compare the way the Carters interact with the Indians to how Maia does. How does Maia's friendship with the Indians help her later in the story? Why did some of the Indians put a curse on the Carters' house?
9. Explain what each person's role is in hiding Finn - Maia, Clovis, and later Miss Minton. Besides wanting to help Finn out, explain what each character has to gain from tricking the crows and allowing Beatrice and Gwendolyn to claim their cash reward.
10. Earlier in the book, Mrs. Minton says about the Carter's lifeless house: "People make their own worlds." What does she mean by that? How do Maia, Finn, Clovis and Miss Minton all "make their own worlds"?
11. The fire in the Carter's house is, of course, an accident, caused by spilled oil from the twins' lamp. However, discuss how Beatrice and Gwendolyn's greed and suspicion play a role in setting the stage for the fire. How do the twins' actions "indirectly" cause the fire?

12. Why do you think Miss Minton takes Maia with Finn and Professor Glastonberry to live with the Xanti? Do you think she was being reckless by taking Maia deep into the jungle to live with a strange tribe? Analyze Miss Minton's motives for doing such a thing.

13. Formulate another chapter in the lives of Beatrice and Gwendolyn, years later. Do you think that working as maids for Lady Parsons will teach them any important lessons about how to treat other people. What about Clovis - imagine what life is like at Westwood five years down the line.

14. Why does Miss Minton say "We are all going home" in the end? Do you think that means Mr. Murray has allowed her to have joint guardianship over Maia? If she doesn't mean that, what could she be trying to say?

Note: These literature circle questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge: 1-2; Comprehension: 3-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-12; Evaluation: 13-14.

Activities:

1. Imagine a different ending to Journey to the River Sea, in which Maia and Miss Minton remain in the jungle, living with Finn and the Xanti. Do you think they would live "happily ever after," or would they miss the comforts of home and want to return? What might they miss about the outside world?

2. List all the things you love about nature and imagine about how life would be different if, like the Carters, you rarely interacted with that world. What would you be missing out on? How does nature play a role in your daily activities - the sports you play, the out door games at recess, your hobbies?

3. Using the descriptions in the story, draw a map that includes the Carter's house, the city of Manaus, and the river between. Then, try to place all of Maia's favorite locations on the map, including her dance class, the museum, Finn's secluded home, even the docks where Clovis hides. You can place other locations on the map that appear in the story. Try to place each location an accurate distance from the others. If an inch on the map equals a mile in real distance, create a key that gives that information, so the map-reader will know exactly how far Maia had to travel.

Other Books by This Author:

The Great Ghost Rescue, 2003, Puffin.

Dial-A-Ghost, 2003, Puffin.

Island of the Ants, 2001, Puffin.

The Secret of Platform 13, 1999, Puffin.