

Research & Essay Prompts

1. Environmental awareness is one of the themes of this story. Write down 4–5 things we can do to protect the environment.

2. Muthu doesn't trust adults because they were cruel to him. Have you read other books about children like Muthu who are enslaved and forced to work? How can we ensure that children's rights are respected and protected? What do you think every child needs to have?

About the Author



Padma Venkatraman was born in Chennai, India and became an American Citizen after exploring rainforests and coral reefs, leading research cruises as a chief scientist of oceanographic vessels, and living in 5 countries. Her previous novels, *A Time To Dance*, *Island's End*, and *Climbing the Stairs* were released

to twelve starred reviews and have won numerous awards and honors such as the South Asia Book Award, Julia Ward Howe Award, Paterson Prize, ALA Notable, NYPL Best Book, *Kirkus* BBYA, *Booklist* Editor's Choice, etc.

Visit her at WWW.PADMAVENKATRAMAN.COM
and follow her on twitter [@PADMATV](https://twitter.com/PADMATV)

PRAISE FOR THE BRIDGE HOME

A 2019 Global Read Aloud selection

A 2019–2020

Project LIT Book Club selection

★ “A blisteringly beautiful book.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “An unforgettable tale of families lost, found, and moving ahead without leaving those they love behind.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “An absorbing novel of love, loss, and resilience.”

—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “Exquisitely narrated.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “A story that must be shared.”

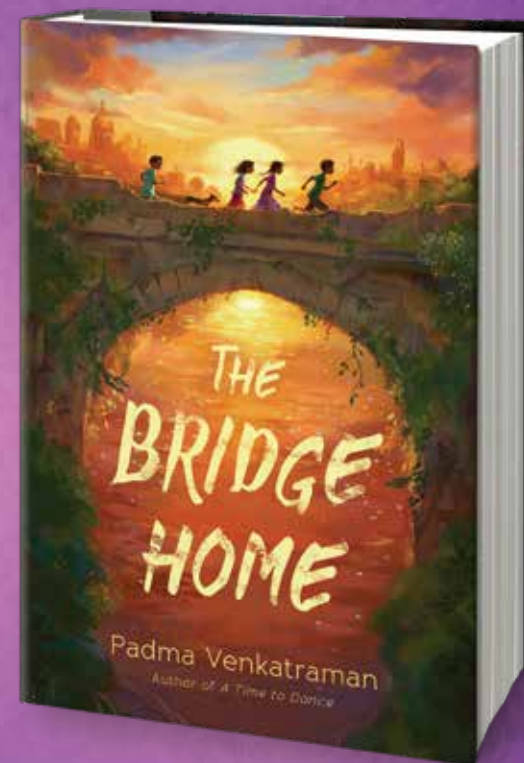
—*School Library Connection*, starred review

PENGUINCLASSROOM.COM

f PENGUINCLASSROOM **@** PENGUINCLASS

@ PENGUINCLASSROOM

A Discussion Guide To



About the Book

Four determined homeless children make a life for themselves in Padma Venkatraman's stirring middle-grade debut.

Life is harsh in Chennai's teeming streets, so when runaway sisters Viji and Rukku arrive, their prospects look grim. Very quickly, eleven-year-old Viji discovers how vulnerable they are in this uncaring, dangerous world. Fortunately, the girls find shelter—and friendship—on an abandoned bridge. With two homeless boys, Muthu and Arul, they form a family of sorts. And while making a living scavenging the city's trash heaps is the pits, the kids find plenty to laugh about and take pride in, too. After all, they are now the bosses of themselves and no longer dependent on untrustworthy adults. But when illness strikes, Viji must decide whether to risk seeking help from strangers or to keep holding on to their fragile, hard-fought freedom.



Discussion Questions

1. Many of the events in *The Bridge Home* are told in flashback and Viji tells the story in direct address (by using the second-person point of view). Why do you think the author chose to write the story this way?

2. Viji and Rukku's parents are isolated from their own families. What is the reason for this? And how does not being connected to aunts, uncles, cousins, and other extended family affect the two sisters?

3. Viji knows that some aspects of her life will be so much harder if she runs away with Rukku, but she proceeds with her decision anyway. Why?

4. How do Viji and Rukku come to view the deserted bridge as their new home? How does this place offer more peace than their life with Amma and Appa? How is the bridge a more difficult place to live?

5. After a long, hard day of struggling to find work, Viji says, "We were in plain sight. But we were invisible." What does she mean by these words?

6. There is a moment where Viji savors an orange, slowly peeling it and breathing in its sweet scent, hoping to make it last. Why is this a key part of the book?

7. Why does Viji share fairy tales with Rukku? How do Viji's stories change after meeting Arul and Muthu?

8. Arul's religious faith is important to him and he frequently shares his beliefs with the other children. How do the other children feel about religion?

9. In what ways do Arul, Viji, Rukku, and Muthu act like the children they are? In what ways are they forced to grow up?

Discussion Questions (CONTINUED)

10. When Muthu says, "Our palace is a home, inside my head... And those men can't wreck it ever," what does he mean?

11. When Celina Aunty says she can provide shelter and education to the children, why are the boys distrustful of her offer?

12. Just before the Diwali festival, a girl assumes Viji and Rukku are beggars and offers them cookies. How does the girl's charity make Viji feel?

Personal Response

1. What are 3–5 things you can do to help children and families in your community who are experiencing homelessness and hunger?

2. Viji wants to become a teacher and despite her struggles, she finds a way to pursue her dream. What are some ways you can make your dreams come true?

3. Even though they are not related by blood, Viji and Rukku consider Arul and Muthu to be family. Do you feel the same way about anyone in your life? Why?

4. How do Viji's parents break her trust? Have you experienced something similar in your life? How did you work through that issue?

5. Viji is overprotective of Rukku out of fear that people will mistreat her sister because she has a disability. But in what ways does she hold Rukku back?