

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *MILES MORALES*

1. Miles has shared his secret of being Spider-Man with both his father, Jeff, and his best friend, Ganke. He hasn't told his mother, however. Why would that be important?
2. Miles has a strong sense of his neighborhood and its community. He travels to Brooklyn to go to school, which has a very different kind of community. Miles struggles to find his place in both. Have you ever felt pulled by two (or more) differing communities? How did you reconcile it?
3. Ganke regularly tries to get Miles to use his super powers to make some extra money (performing on the subway, hustling the basketball players). Why do you think Miles is so reluctant to do it? If you had super abilities, how would you use them? Why?
4. Miles's parents are concerned about his behavior at school, especially since he seems to be getting into trouble steadily there. While it's clear that they don't want to see him repeat his uncle's (and father's) history, is it fair to judge Miles for his family's past? Have you ever had to overcome a prejudice based on your family's history? How did you handle it?
5. Miles knows the truth about how his uncle died, yet he hasn't told his father.

Miles knows the truth about how his uncle died, yet he hasn't told his father, because Miles doesn't want to upset or alienate him. So Miles is forced to carry the guilt of his uncle's death. Do you think that's the right choice? Why or why not?
6. When Miles and his dad go to visit his cousin Austin in jail, they discover why Miles's uncle Aaron kept breaking the law and how it led to him being in jail. Do the circumstances change your opinion of Aaron? Do they affect your opinion of Austin? Why or why not?
7. The themes of family and inheritance run through this book, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. Assuming we're all shaped by the family and community we grow up in, do you think it's possible to avoid repeating the mistakes of the older generation? How has this affected your own life?
8. The Warden and his minions, the Chamberlains, have targeted people, including Miles and his family, to prevent them from succeeding in life. The implication is that it's been happening for over one hundred years. Do you think that actually happens in our country? How has institutionalized racism/sexism/privilege affected our world today? How can it be stopped?

**9.** When Miles is accused of stealing from the school store, he can't tell the truth about what happened without revealing he's Spider-Man. While the dean agrees not to suspend him, he does lose his work/study job and his room-and-board voucher. Is this decision by the dean fair? Do you think it would have been the same if Miles were white or from a wealthy family? Why or why not?

**10.** In the novel, Mr. Chamberlain says: "So many slaves were comfortable with being enslaved. Happy even." The current United States secretary of housing and urban development, Ben Carson, recently referred to African slaves as immigrants to America in a speech to his department. Are these two things similar? How are they different?

**11.** What do you think of Alicia's form of protest in Mr. Chamberlain's class? What would make you do something similar?

**12.** Have you ever seen an authority figure single out an individual and consistently persecute them the way Mr. Chamberlain does Miles? Have you ever experienced it yourself? What happened and how was it resolved?

**13.** Miles's father advises him to "spill the salsa" in regards to his feelings about Alicia. What do you think of his advice?

**14.** Mr. Chamberlain points out that the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution says: "Neither slavery

nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within these United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." He then goes on to say that the South rose up again with a new form of slavery—prison. According to a 2014 report from the US Department of Justice, there were just over 1.5 million people incarcerated in state and federal prisons in the US. Of those, only 505,600 were white (men and women). Given those numbers, and the inequities within our culture, do you think Chamberlain's conclusion is true or false?

**15.** If the same story were told without the fantastical elements (no Spider-Man, no Warden with supernatural powers), how true to life would you find it?

