

REMARKABLES

MARGARET PETERSON HADDIX
DISCUSSION GUIDE



BOOKTALK

Lonely after moving to a new town, Marin wanders into the woods behind her house and sees a remarkable sight: teenagers who appear and disappear as she watches them. The older girls and boys radiate happiness and friendship, and she'd love to know them. The moment she approaches, however, they disappear. Only Charley, her unhappy neighbor, also sees the group he's dubbed the Remarkables. Could the Remarkables exist in the past, when Charley's father made a haunting, fatal mistake? Can Marin and Charley travel through time to prevent that tragedy from ever occurring? Marin's life turns out to be full of surprises—about her past and her future—in this intriguing mystery.



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What is Marin like when the book opens? What is she worried about? What are some of the good things in her life? Discuss what she learns in the course of the book. Talk about the conversation in which Ashlyn points out some of Marin's strengths, saying "You can be by yourself, no problem." (p. 170) How is the ability to be by herself useful?
2. Describe Marin's parents and how they interact with her. What are some difficulties that her parents are dealing with? How does the trip Marin takes with her father to the funeral change things for her? Why does her father tell Marin about his depression during college?
3. Talk about Owen and his role in the family. How do his parents feel about him? How do his needs disrupt the household? Talk about how Marin interacts with him and what he adds to her life.
4. Although Marin faces some problems, she realizes that Charley has even more. What problems does he have? What are some of the good things in his life? Why does he struggle with feeling he isn't normal? What helps him to change?
5. Describe the friendship between Marin and Ashlyn before Kenner came along. Explain why Ashlyn treated Marin unkindly. Talk about how Marin expressed her anger the night of the sleepover, and whether you think she was justified in what she said.
6. How does the author create curiosity about what happened back in Illinois with Marin and her friends? Point to some of the hints in the text that suggest something bad had happened with Marin and her friends. Before learning what happened the night of the sleepover, what did you think had gone on with Marin, Ashlyn, and Kenner?
7. What does Marin's father tell her about Kenner that changes Marin's point of view? Why hadn't he told her sooner? Do you agree with Marin's father that he and her mother should have noticed Marin was having problems with Kenner? Why didn't they notice?
8. In addition to creating curiosity about the past, the author creates suspense about the future. Find some specific examples of cliff-hangers and other ways the narrative makes the reader eager to find out what will happen next. When you read about Marin's first few encounters with the Remarkables, what did you think was going on?
9. For a while, Marin and Charley hope to go into the past and change what happened with the smoke alarm, which would then change the future. Why do they want to do this? What do they hope would change? If they had been able to change what happened 20 years earlier, what might have been different in their present time? What would be some dangers of time travel if it were possible?

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

10. Marin, Charley, Ashlyn, and Priya all have worries about starting middle school. What are they worried about? How does seeing the future help Marin and Charley feel better about middle school? Analyze the Epilogue and predict what it foreshadows about their future.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

DEAR OWEN. By the end of the novel, Marin has learned a lot about friendship and come up with some ways to approach middle school. Have students each write a letter from Marin to Owen that gives him advice for when he enters middle school. Some of the advice should tie in to what she learned in the story. Students can also add some of their own wisdom about school and friendships.

YOUR CRYSTAL BALL. Although Marin and Charley weren't sure they were seeing the future, the graduation party they witnessed gave them confidence and comfort. Invite students to consider what they would like their life to be when they graduate from high school. Each student should write a detailed essay, to be shared only with the teacher, about what kind of person they hope to be, what kind of friends they hope to have, and other important aspects of their future life.

SAFETY FIRST. *Remarkables* highlights the importance of safety devices like smoke alarms in everyday life. As a class, make a list of safety measures that are familiar to your students such as seat belts, child car seats, air bags, bike helmets, devices for childproofing a home, and so on. Have pairs of students do research on one of the safety measures, its history, and its effectiveness. They should prepare a multimedia presentation to share with the class.

THE REMARKABLES AS SUPERHEROES. Marin, Charley, and even Marin's father refer to superheroes in the story. Hold a class discussion on the qualities of a superhero. Then invite students in teams of five to imagine a group of five teenage superheroes, with each student creating one of the superheroes. The student should design a poster to hang in the classroom that conveys the superhero's appearance, unique power or powers, origin story, and more. The group should be prepared to explain why their five superheroes work well together.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MARGARET PETERSON HADDIX grew up on a farm in Ohio. As an adult, Haddix worked as a newspaper reporter and copy editor in Indiana before her first book, *Running Out of Time*, was published. She has since written more than forty books for kids and teens, including the Greystone Secrets series, the Shadow Children series, the Missing series, and lots of standalones. Her books have been honored with numerous state reader's choice awards and the International Reading Association's Children's Book Award, and they've been translated into more than twenty languages. Haddix and her husband, Doug, now live in Columbus, Ohio. You can learn more about her at www.haddixbooks.com.