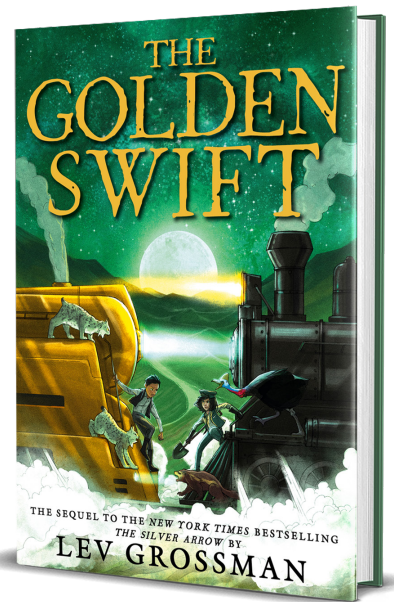


# THE GOLDEN SWIFT BOOK CLUB GUIDE

## ABOUT THE BOOK

A lot has changed for Kate in a year. She and Tom are now full-fledged conductors of the steam-powered, animal-saving Great Secret Intercontinental Railway. Life is good! Or good-ish, anyway. Her uncle Herbert has gone missing, and the worsening climate means that there are more and more animals that need help all the time. Out of desperation, Kate breaks the rules and takes the Silver Arrow out on an unsanctioned mission. But she quickly discovers she's not the only one on the Great Secret Intercontinental Railway. There's a mysterious train called the Golden Swift out there too, with an agenda of its own. Is it an ally? A rival? An enemy? A bit of all three?

These questions will turn Kate's world upside down, take her from the Scottish Highlands to the Australian outback to the bottom of the Bering Sea, and lead her straight on a collision course with the mysterious masters of the Great Secret Intercontinental Railway itself. Because when you're a human being fighting to save nature, are you the hero or are you the villain? There are no simple answers.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the beginning of the book, Kate feels torn between her everyday life and her adventures on the Silver Arrow. Why does she feel this way? Have you ever felt torn between two interests?
2. How have Kate and Tom changed since their first trip on the Great Secret Intercontinental Railway? Do you feel like you've changed over time? How?
3. Jag introduces the concept of rewilding to Kate, and they attempt to reintroduce species back to places where they used to live, to vastly different results. Do you think rewilding is a good idea? Why or why not?
4. Do you think kids and adults think about the world differently? Why?
5. Kate describes watching other kids bully Jag and not knowing what she should do. What do you think she could have done? How can you be a friend to someone who is being bullied?
6. The conductors visit many different environments on their magical journeys. Which one was your favorite? Why?
7. The Board of Directors notes that "the longest-lived mammals on land are human beings" (p. 220). Why do you think longer-lived creatures might have a different view of the world? Why is learning history important?
8. Kate learns that bees communicate through smell. What other ways do animals communicate? In what different ways do people communicate?
9. Do you think humans do more to hurt or help the environment? Why? How can we do more to help?
10. Jag reminds Kate of the Grace Hopper quote: "The most dangerous sentence in the English language is 'We've always done it this way'" (p. 262). What do you think this quote means? How can you apply it to your own life?

