

Reading Group Guide

Free Time

1. Have you ever experienced a time when your world got turned upside down, or severely interrupted, because of someone playing too strictly with the rulebook? What was your reaction to it, or how was it resolved? Do you agree that Tommen should have been removed as manager, or should he have been allowed to stay? Do you believe his reaction was appropriate? Do you believe the twins' offer was reasonable? Should they have been more harsh or more lenient?
2. Do you believe Mr. Wilson should have been more forthcoming about the position he was hiring for? Do you believe he was being truly deceitful, or merely error by omission? Would you have taken the position if you understood what it was going to be like beforehand?
3. What do you make of the Hands' decision to ban the Akari? The Akarin decision to close their doors? What would prompt such moves? Are they understandable? Do you agree with them? How would you resolve the situation? Who do you believe is behind the decisions?
4. What does Micaiah do with the declaration of war against humanity by the Borelians? What does Saul think? What do you think? How does someone handle such a war in the midst of other wars, all the while considering that Earth is blissfully ignorant of the whole thing? What do you make of Kayla's encounter with Tomos?
5. Why is Wolf Cabin called the prison cabin? Is it appropriate? What are the psychological ramifications for the kids who are placed there, and is it helpful or hurtful? Given the story of how it came to be called the prison cabin, as well as other anecdotes, should it exist at all, or should the boys simply be barred from attending camp?
6. Why do you think Saul keeps returning to the camp, when all evidence suggests that he hates it? Do you believe he is a good mentor for the boys, or is he too harsh? Could the prison cabin be more of a reference to him, rather than the boys?
7. How does Tommen react to being on his own without his dad or the twins? Does he display more or less maturity? How does he keep hold of his paranoia about Rifun, and is it effective? How does he take charge of himself?
8. How would you react if someone handed you a book about your life, including intimate details no one could possibly know? How does Tommen react? Do you think it could be a prank? What would you do if you were able to track down this so-called author of your book? What if it wasn't a prank, but it was all real?
9. How do Saul's cultural upbringing and religious beliefs shape his attitude and general conduct? What does the incident with the wolf, including his interaction with Tommen, Mr. Wilson, and the Game Warden, say about him? Consider the significance of the story he told around the campfire. Do you agree with Mr. Wilson's decision to fire Saul, or how would you have resolved the situation?

10. Do you believe the camp made the right decision in continuing on as normal after the vandalism, including the decision to switch the routine for the second camp? Do you think they should have told the younger kids the truth, or stuck to the bear story? Do you believe it would have been different for the older kids?
11. What do you make of the second meeting of the Akarin? Do you believe things are getting better and being resolved, or spiraling out of control? What do you make of Saul's demonstration?
12. Do you believe that Rifun killed Saul, or ordered the hit? Why or why not? Do you believe the kids should have been told the truth, and if so, how bluntly? Do you believe the camp should have gone on as normal, or cut off completely?
13. What do you make of Micaiah's plans? Is he crossing wires, trying to mix Time and Akari? Should he even be concerned with such things? Is there a balance that can be struck? Is there a time when it is acceptable to break the rules? What happens when rules are contradictory or ineffective?
14. Name a time when someone kept promising to do something but never did it. When did you start to get frustrated with that person? When did you consider giving up on that thing being done? When did you ask someone else to do it? When did you end up doing it yourself? What were the results?
15. Why do you think Rifun showed up to the fire? Do you think it was a good idea to show Tommen the more advanced things, or do you think it was a ruse? Do you think he planned on Tommen doing something dumb?
16. What is Walter's mental state when he learns that trouble has found his kid again? Does he handle it reasonably well? Could he have handled it better?