

Reading Discussion Questions

The World Beyond the Stairs: Mary's Journey

Student Worksheet

1. In the story, the main character, Mary, feels inner turmoil or guilt about working full-time and being away from her kids. Name a time when you felt conflicted about something.
2. The book introduces a world called Divinity. How would you feel if you suddenly found yourself in a different or foreign place you had never been before: Would you feel like Mary? Would you feel differently? Would you welcome the experience? Would you think it was merely a dream? Would you immediately accept it as reality?
3. There is a unique relationship between the four sisters Mary meets in Divinity. Do you agree with the age hierarchy structure established in Divinity? Do you think it's fair that the oldest sibling in a family is able to tell their younger sibling or siblings what to do? Would you be able to follow those rules if you were not the oldest sibling in the household? Why or why not?
4. In the book, the characters in Divinity share a mental bond with one another. Would you like it if others could hear your thoughts? Would you like being able to hear the thoughts of others? Why or why not?
5. If you could suddenly hear the thoughts of an insect or animal, which living creature's thoughts would you want to hear the most? Why?
6. In the story, the four sisters Mary meets decide to go along with Mary on her journey to the Northern Lands even though they could be imprisoned or killed. Why do you think the characters decide to risk their own lives for someone they just met? Would you make the same choice? Why or why not?
7. Can you think of any examples in your life where you have had to make a difficult decision like the four sisters in Divinity? What did you do? Would you make the same choice if you could do it all over again?

8. In the book, Mary learns that the god-like being known as Hazaar has transferred his divine power and abilities to his adopted son, Milo. Yet, the four sisters Mary meets in Divinity still believe Hazaar watches over them and protects them. Do you believe Hazaar really gave up all of power to his son? Why or why not?
9. In the world of Divinity, Mary learns about a law that limits the number of children a family can have. Do you think this is a fair law? Give examples of what effects not limiting the size of families could have on a small community.
10. There are major differences between the two groups of people in Divinity known as the Hazaarii and the Liberators. What are some of them? What are the similarities between these two groups? Based on what you know about each, which group do you feel you belong to? Why?
11. The character Lizaa believes all Liberators in Divinity are bad. Do you feel the same way? Why or why not?
12. Mary has conflicted thoughts about allowing the four sisters to go with her on her journey to the Northern Lands. If you were Mary, what would you do? Why?