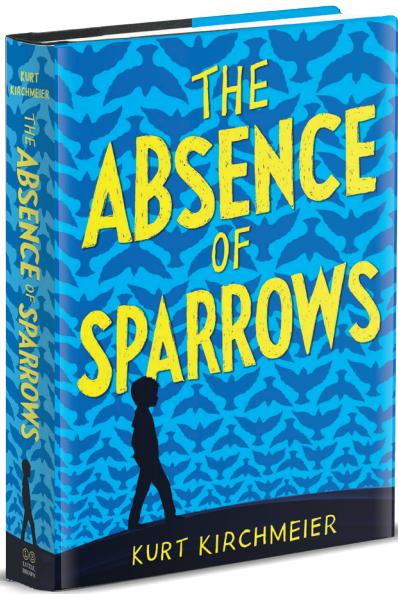


THE ABSENCE OF SPARROWS

KURT KIRCHMEIER



Book Club Guide

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. Throughout the book Ben describes the ways in which different species of birds have adapted over time to better survive. What are some other examples you can think of where animals have evolved to fit their surroundings? How does the town of Griever's Mill adapt to the new reality of the glass plague?
2. How does each member of the Cameron family cope with Ben's dad's classification? How do you think you would handle such an event?
3. Ben describes being a little brother as being like "a satellite instead of a planet in your own right" (p. 160). How does Ben and Pete's relationship change over the course of the book? If you have siblings, how does your relationship with them compare to Ben and Pete's?
4. Ben laments that he and Pete "should have been gluing together model airplanes or doing cannonballs at the pool" instead of dealing with the glass plague (p. 247). In what ways does Ben take on more adult characteristics? What parts of childhood does he manage to hold on to?
5. Ben and Pete encounter the Messam brothers, Lester and Lars, several times. What initially makes the Messam brothers so intimidating to Ben? By the end of the book, how and why has Ben's perception of the brothers changed?
6. Who or what do you think the voice on the radio represents? Why is Pete so compelled by the voice?
7. Ben's mom struggles with anxiety. How does the rest of the family help Ben's mom deal with her anxiety? What do you think anxiety feels like based on Ben's mom's behavior?
8. The Cameron family approach their faith in different ways. What role does faith play in each of their lives? How does their faith impact their reactions to the glass plague?
9. How does the glass plague compare to real world natural disasters such as hurricanes or blizzards? How do the people of Griever's Mill prepare for future classifications?
10. Ben remarks that, "Nobody talked about the shattering.... Life simply went on" (p. 371). Do you think the shattering worked? What theories do you have for what happened to the people who turned to glass? How do the images of sparrows and crows in the book relate to the glass plague?

