

THE HOUSE THAT WHISPERS

LIN THOMPSON BOOK CLUB GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Eleven-year-old Simon and his siblings, Talia and Rose, are staying the week at Nanaleen's century-old house. This time, though, everything's different. It's fall, Mom and Dad are staying behind, and Nanaleen keeps forgetting things. And these aren't the only things getting under Simon's skin: He's the only one who knows that his name is Simon. To make matters worse, Simon keeps hearing a scratching in the walls and seeing shadows in the corners. He can't shake the feeling that something is deeply wrong...and he's determined to get to the bottom of it. Will Simon's search for ghosts turn up more secrets than he ever expected?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After explaining how he chose his name, Simon hypothesizes, "Maybe a name can be something you want to be" (p. 3). Why are names so important? How can they reflect and change us?
2. Throughout the story Simon describes feelings of belonging as warm and light, whereas fear and anxiety are cold. Why do you think that is? What things make you feel warm or cold?
3. When describing his Nanaleen's chores, Simon points out that, "Unless you ask for something different, you'll get dropped into... whatever gender everybody assumes you are" (p. 35). Have you ever experienced this? How could we avoid placing people in that situation?
4. Do you believe in ghosts, either real or imagined? How do they show up in your life?
5. Simon plays Tetris to help relieve anxiety and sees a lot of parallels between the game and his life. Do you have any games, books, shows, or movies that help you understand yourself or the world around you?
6. There are two presences that Simon senses in Nanaleen's house. One presence he comes to associate with his great-aunt Brie. Who or what do you think the other presence is?
7. What role do photos and videos play in the book? In what ways do they reveal truth and in what ways do they hide it?
8. Simon realizes that he, his mom, and many other people in his life have an old, wrong version of themselves recorded somewhere (p. 175). Is there an old, wrong version of you out there? How did you find a new, more correct version of you?
9. How does the relationship between Simon and his sisters change over the course of the book? What remains the same?
10. Near the beginning of the book, Simon explains, "Sometimes I have to start out believing something is imaginary until I'm finally ready to understand that it's real" (p. 30). What does he mean by this statement? What role does imagination play in Simon's coming out process? Why do you think the book ends without Simon coming out to his parents?

