

DISCUSSION GUIDE

BONEBAG

Written by E.M. Elliott and David Elliott

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Grades: 5 and up

Ages: 10 and up



ABOUT THE BOOK

In this riveting middle-grade fantasy, *New York Times* bestselling author David Elliott and E.M. Elliott tell the story of a forest-dwelling boy forced to confront the mysteries of his life.

Trapped in a dark forest with his cold-hearted parents, Bonebag leads a cruel and isolated existence. However, he feels deep in his bones that things weren't always this way: he has known happiness before. Why does it feel like it was in a past life?

When Bonebag discovers a locket that burns him to the touch, and a ghostly girl beckons him into the deep woods, he must grapple with the riddle of where he came from and how he came to be. Only then can he begin to rewrite his fate.

This powerful middle-grade fantasy will take readers on a quest that tackles the mystery of belonging with high-octane twists and turns along the way.

PRAISE FOR *BONEBAG*

★ “David Elliott and his son E. M. Elliott combine their talents to tell a dark, immersive tale that never loses its sense of hope. Friendship and family emerge as themes as plot threads come together in surprising ways, but the visceral descriptions, entertaining pickpocket parlance, and original folklore are what make the story unforgettable.”—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “Genuinely scary, deliciously dark, and full of unexpected turns, this work about standing up for what you know is right, even when the stakes couldn't be higher, impresses and delights with its rich worldbuilding and invigoratingly inventive language... Darkly thrilling; will keep readers turning pages until every riddle has been solved.”—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

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“Compelling...”—*School Library Journal*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Throughout the book, Bonebag refers to five different characters he has read about in *The Tatters*: Marmee, Davie Balfour, Alice, Lucy, and Christopher Robin. In which real-world books do these characters appear. How many have you read? If you were stranded on a desert island and could only have one book with you, what would it be. Why?
2. In Chapter 8, Bonebag thinks that “. . .needing is not the same as wanting.” What is the difference between needing and wanting? Make a list of everything you need. Then make a list of everything you want. Which is more important? Is there anything that appears on both lists?
3. Madalena tells Bonebag that “to feel what others feel is a powerful gift.” What does she mean by this? Do you agree? Later Bonebag says that this gift is also a burden. What does he mean by this? Do you agree?
4. Bonebag and Toby are very different from each other; yet their friendship is very strong. What is it that draws them to each other? Have you ever had a friend who is very different from you? If so, how? Why do you think you are friends? What qualities do you look for in a friend?
5. Toby idolizes Cyrus only to be disappointed when he discovers who Cyrus really is. Talk about a time when someone has disappointed you. Did you forgive that person? Then talk about a time when you have disappointed someone else. Did they forgive you?
6. The idea of home is a constant theme in the book. What does home mean to you? Is it the same for everybody?
7. At The Glowers, Bonebag and Toby pass by many stalls selling all kinds of things: animal bones, birds, masks. Imagine that you are a vendor at The Glowers, what would you sell? What kind of mask would you wear? Why?
8. On the Ile des Marr, Eleanora Marr gives Bonebag a difficult choice: take the potion and halt the progression of the scales or return to the *Scura* to look for the cure and face Modor and Faeder. What is a difficult choice you've had to make? What did you do and why?

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9. Which of the many characters Bonebag meets on his journey did you want to know more about? Lionel? Skritch? Eleanora Marr? Someone else? What about this character interests you? What role did they play in Bonebag's journey?

10. How do you think the relationship between Margo and Toby changes Margo's opinion about the Rags? How might their relationship have been different if their roles were reversed? What is something you liked or didn't like but now feel differently about? What changed your mind?

11. Bonebag visits many places on his journey: the Curve, the Isle des Marr, The Gullet, The Glowers. What was your favorite? What mood did it evoke for you? Would you want to visit it? Why or why not?

12. The book ends on an ambiguous note - we don't know if the woman on the other side of the door is Bonebag's mother or not. What do you think? What happens to Bonebag after the last page?

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