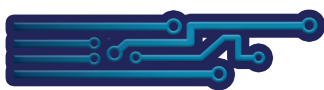


THE GHOST NETWORK

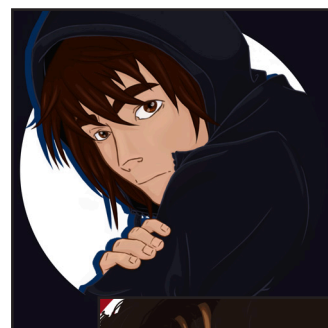
Book Club Discussion Questions

Note: Many of the following questions connect the fictional use of the internet with the lived reality of kids online today. These are thematic connections meant to spark conversations between readers, and are not a substitute for a full online safety training course.

Characterization



- John, Slack, Salome, Akane, and Eva each come from different backgrounds and different part of the world. Choose two of these characters and create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting their personalities and traits. What do they have in common? What makes them unique?
 - Afterward, as a group, talk about how a team might benefit from having a wide variety of people on it.
- Who is your favorite character and why? Do you have traits similar to that character? Now think of an action the character takes in the story that you might've done differently. Discuss why in pairs.
- You've probably heard the phrase, "Don't judge a book by its cover." What does that mean when it's applied to people?
 - In the story, many of John's first impressions of people at the Wolf's Den end up being different than what they are actually like. How does John's perception of Roy Lykos change over the course of the story? Or of Irma Reiffelt? Or of Eva?
 - As a group, choose one character and discuss how John's relationship to them changes. List significant details and events to support your answer.



Digital Citizenship

- Early in the book, John and Slack get in trouble for pulling a prank and posting the footage online. When bullying happens over the Internet, it's called **cyberbullying**.
 - How is **cyberbullying** different than bullying in person? Some suggested topics for the group include anonymity, the size of an online audience, and the perceived absence of consequences in digital interactions.
 - How can we respond to **cyberbullying** when we see it happening online? How can we respond when it happens to us? As a group, discuss what it means to be a responsible digital citizen in the age of the Internet.
 - Do you think John and Slack become more responsible digital citizens throughout the story? Why or why not?
- John and Akane are long-distance friends, but after John goes to the Wolf's Den, they are unable to chat online. Do you talk to your friends over the Internet? In what ways does chatting online feel different than chatting in person? As a group, talk about the benefits of connecting with others online, and also the drawbacks, including how to stay safe when surfing the web.
- The Wolf's Den recruits students from all over the world. As they become friends, the main characters learn about one another's cultures, customs, and backgrounds. Since most of us probably don't attend a secret school for technological excellence, how can we best learn about different parts of the world that we may not get to see in person? Why is it important to take the initiative and do so, even outside of class?



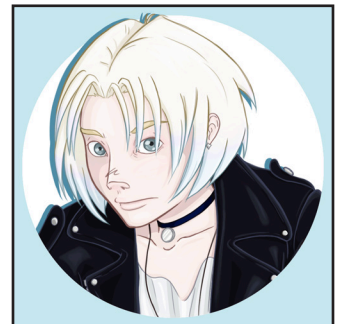
- Choose a country that no one in your group has visited before. Think about what you know about that part of the world currently, maybe from what you've heard or seen on TV. Then do research on that country and write down five things you didn't know already, or that surprised you. Emphasize the importance of approaching differences thoughtfully and respectfully, no matter how different another country may seem from your own.



Empowering Readers



- Throughout the book, John is troubled by dreams in which he does things that he would never do in real life. Thoughts that won't go away can be scary or frustrating, especially for John, who doesn't have a trusted adult at the Wolf's Den to talk through them. To help himself focus, he remembers Akane's advice to practice **mindfulness**: "*Clear your thoughts, she'd say. Empty your mind. Concentrate on one thing only*" (118).
- Think about a time when you've been frustrated or upset, and it was difficult to calm down. Individually, write a few sentences about that time and what you were feeling.
- As you read *The Ghost Network*, take note of times when John stops to reflect on upsetting situations, and how he deals with them so he can keep going.
- As a group, discuss a few of these moments, and talk about whether John's reactions are helpful for him to move past troubling thoughts. Do you think he deals with them well? Would it have been helpful for him to talk about these feelings with a friend earlier than when he does? Why or why not?
- By the end of the book, we know that coding is literally ingrained in the kids, but it's figuratively ingrained too, just by virtue of growing up with technology at their disposal. Because of this, they're very comfortable with computers. Akane describes the feeling of slipping into the zone while coding as "transcendent" (60).
- Think of an activity that you know how to do so well that it feels completely natural to do it. Now think of another activity that's hard for you, that might be less familiar, in which you have to actively concentrate to do it well.
- In pairs, talk about this second activity that's further outside your comfort zone. How long have you been doing it? Do you feel more comfortable with it now than when you first started? Do you enjoy doing it *in spite of* the challenge or *because of* it? Could it be both?



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RETURNS FALL 2019