

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

# THE WONDERLING

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Age 10 and up



1. The first time in his life that Arthur sticks up for anyone is when he stops Wire and his cronies from trying to kick Trinket over the Wall. Why is he able to stick up for someone else when he's never been able to stick up for himself?
2. When Trinket tells Arthur things about the outside world, he's most intrigued by "ice cream, carousels, cheese toasties, music halls, and pie" (page 70). If you had spent your whole life at Miss Carbunkle's and someone told you about things that existed outside, what would you be most intrigued by?
3. Arthur's nightmares always feature an "enormous pillar of blazing-red light moving toward him like a faceless monster born of fire" (page 72). Before you found out about the fire at the end of the book, what did you think the red light might be?
4. When Pinecone finds Arthur and Trinket in the forest, he asks them, "Tinkerer, trader, forager, foe?" (page 133). Which would you call yourself, and why? Can you come up with any other words to describe the creatures in this book?
5. The manticore and Miss Carbunkle depend on each other. Is one of them more in control of the other?
6. When he steps inside Pinecone's house, Arthur thinks, "So this is what a home *really* is" (page 137). Is it a happy thought? What are some of the emotions you can sense in Arthur at that moment?
7. What did you expect Lumentown to be like, and how did it measure up to your expectations? How do you think it measured up to Arthur's? What about Gloomintown?
8. Arthur has some strange run-ins with cats once he gets to Lumentown. Can you think of any reasons that the cats act so oddly?
9. Quintus is, as Arthur and Trinket both note, a scoundrel, but one with a good heart. What other characters can you think of that have more complicated motivations than just good or evil?
10. Why are the High Hats in charge? How do you think Lumentown's society got to be that way? Would you change it if you could?
11. When Arthur first enters Miss Phoebe's house, her neighbor questions him and spies on him. Why is her assumption that, because Arthur is a groundling, he's doing something wrong?
12. Why do you think the weeping gargoyles on the Home are mentioned so frequently?
13. Would you have forgiven Quintus for what he did with Linette's note? Why?
14. Do you think Trinket could ever build an invention like the Songcatcher?
15. Why do some of the humans in the book hate groundlings so much?
16. There are elements of our world in *The Wonderling*—Beethoven, Mozart, legends about King Arthur. Why do you think the author chose to include these bits of our reality in an otherwise imaginary world? Can you think of some other real-life people, stories, or things that would fit well in *The Wonderling's* world?
17. Miss Phoebe and Miss Carbunkle are both groundlings, although they keep it a secret and present themselves as humans to the outside world. How common do you think this is among the humans in *The Wonderling's* world? Could there be other groundlings passing as humans?
18. Lots of characters in the book talk about King Arthur, and Trinket names Arthur after him. What stories do you know about King Arthur? Do you think Arthurian legends might reveal anything about Arthur's destiny?
19. Could the Wonderling possibly be a creature of ancient magic like the night crows, the manticore, and the gargoyles? Can you find any clues in the book that might support this theory?
20. At the end of the book, Miss Phoebe and Mr. Pitch disagree over whether Miss Carbunkle is worthy of pity or forgiveness. What do you think?
21. Do you think Arthur will learn more about what it means to be the Wonderling and what his mother believed he was supposed to do? How might it affect his future?
22. How do you hope Arthur's story continues in the sequel to this book? Is there anything you really want to happen? Is there anything you think could happen that you really *don't* want?



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