

STORYKEEPERS PRESS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spoiler-safe conversation by Part
Choose what serves the group; skip the rest.

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How to Use These Questions

These questions are organized by Part — each set is safe to use once readers have finished that Part. No question spoils what comes later.

Questions mix three types:

- **Comprehension** — What happened? Who did what?
- **Character** — Why did this person act this way? What were they feeling?
- **Ethics** — Was that the right thing to do? What would you have done?

There are no wrong answers to the character and ethics questions. The goal is conversation, not a correct response.

Part I — The Unfortunates (Chapters 1-21)

In which three outcasts find each other — and are cast out together.

1. The village of Havenbrook divides its residents into categories: some people belong, some are "Unfortunates." Have you ever been in a group where some people were treated as less than others? What made it wrong?
2. Timbit, Pippin, and Quill are very different from each other — in personality, in species, in what they've been through. What do you think drew them together? Is being different from someone a reason NOT to be friends, or can it be a reason to be friends?
3. When Timbit speaks against the village's decision in Chapter 10, he says: "My conscience says that what you want to do is wrong, and I listen to my conscience." Have you ever said something true that you knew would get you in trouble? Did you say it? Why or why not?
4. Pippin is described as fierce and guarded. She has clearly been hurt before. Do you think she trusts Timbit and Quill at the beginning of the story? What would it take for someone like Pippin to trust a new person?
5. Quill has no memory of his past. How do you think that feels — not knowing where you came from or who your family is? Does who we are depend on what we remember, or is it something else?
6. The village casts the three of them out. But the story frames this as a beginning, not just an ending. What do you think the author is saying about bad things that happen to us?
7. Nettle finds Quill half-dead in a creek and carries him to safety. He doesn't know Quill. He doesn't owe him anything. Why do you think he did it? Is there a cost to helping strangers?
8. By the end of Part I, three outcasts have decided to stay together. What holds a group of people together when they have nothing else? What makes a group become a family?

Part II – The Refuge (Chapters 22-45)

In which the Mingles find a mentor, a ship, and a bigger world.

1. Horatio is described as a landlocked sailor — someone whose ship can no longer sail but who hasn't stopped being a captain. What do you think it means to hold onto your identity when your circumstances have changed?
2. Horatio tells Timbit: "Your problem is not the size of your body. It's the size of your thinking." Do you agree with this? Is there something you've told yourself you can't do because of something about who you are?
3. The Refuge is a place where outcasts are welcomed. What makes a place feel like a refuge — a real one, not just a building? Have you ever found a place like that?
4. Smudge tells the story of the Great Flood — and connects it to stories from Mesopotamia, Greece, and India. Why do you think so many different peoples have a flood story? What does it mean that the same memory lives in so many different traditions?
5. The Mingles play a game called Stinkfish — a talking-and-sharing game with a rhyming chant. Notice when they play it in the story. What does playing a game together do for a group of people that serious conversation can't?
6. Pippin tells the story of Firnax — a rabbit origin story about how the stars were placed in the sky. It is told reverently. What makes a story sacred? Who decides?
7. Horatio has done something in his past he is not proud of — his connection to the slave trade, symbolized by the coin he carries. He has decided he can only forgive himself by using the coin for something good. Do you think that's how forgiveness works? Or is there another way?
8. The Refuge stages the table grace twice — and every time, someone notices. What does eating together do? Why has it always been important to human beings?
9. By the end of Part II, the Mingles know there is a conspiracy threatening the whole Wilderland — and that they may be the ones who can stop it. Timbit says: "We're all just plain people." Horatio says something back. What do you think Horatio is right about?

Part III – The Campaign (Chapters 46-67)

In which the Mingles fight — and lose things they cannot get back.

1. The Aridites are scholars who began as students of the earth. They discovered something powerful and chose to use it for destruction. Can the same knowledge be both a gift and a danger? Give an example from the real world.
2. Selca describes two kinds of fear — the fear that makes you follow orders and the fear that makes you wonder if the orders are right. What is the difference? Which one do you think is more dangerous?
3. Chapter 52 says: "The most profound show of respect is a gift that costs you something in the giving." Do you agree? What's the difference between a gift that costs you something and one that doesn't?
4. Horatio is dying. He keeps commissioning the small ones, giving them everything he has left. How do people who know they are dying sometimes become most fully themselves? Have you seen this in someone?
5. In Chapter 59, Horatio says to Timbit: "My role in this struggle must decrease, but yours must increase." What does it mean to hand something over — your work, your position, your responsibility — to someone younger than you?
6. The Archon's camp runs on informers and distrust — everyone watches everyone else, and no one knows who is safe to talk to. How does this kind of fear change people? What happens to a community when no one trusts anyone?

7. Timbit's machine fails at a critical moment. He built it carefully. He believed in it. It didn't work. Have you ever worked hard at something that failed? What happened next?
8. Something irreversible happens near the end of Part III. The book does not soften it or fix it. Why do you think the author made that choice? What does it do to the story?
9. Courage is a word used a lot in adventure stories. But the book makes a distinction between courage and strength. What do you think the difference is?

Part IV — The Truth That Sets Free (Chapters 68-85)

In which Timbit speaks the truth — and everything depends on it.

1. Timbit has failed. His machine didn't work. His friend is dead. He is in despair. Marlowe finds him curled up and says: "You're caring for yourself now and doing it in the most destructive way." What do you think Marlowe means? Is there a way of protecting yourself that actually hurts you?
2. The book's climax is not a battle or an invention. It is a speech. Timbit walks alone into a circle of enemies and speaks the truth. Why do you think the author chose this as the moment of victory? What does it say about what real power is?
3. Timbit asks the crowd: "Freedom and life, or misery and death. Isn't there one person who'll stand by me?" One person steps forward. Then others follow. Why is the first person to speak up the hardest to be? Have you ever been the first?
4. Dune Shadowrend puts his body between the Archon and Timbit. He says: "I've watched it... that makes me as guilty as her. No more." He has been a bystander. What made him stop? What is the difference between a bystander and someone who acts?
5. Pippin tells Timbit: "You are a coward." This is true, and it hurts. But it also changes him. When has someone telling you a hard truth helped you? Is honesty always kind? Is kindness always honest?
6. Snicker is not coming back. The memorial at the end of the book is real — there is an empty seat, a toast in remembrance. Why do we hold onto the dead in our rituals? What are we keeping alive by remembering?
7. The book ends with the grace said again: "For that which we are about to receive, make us truly grateful." Why do you think the author ends with that moment, and not with the defeat of the Archon?
8. The Mingles choose each other — they are not born into the same family, the same species, or the same story. Their book says: "The Wilderland doesn't need a hero. It needs a Mingle." What is the difference between a hero and a Mingle? Which would you rather be?
9. The book does not fully reconcile Timbit and Pippin by the end. Some things are left open. Why do you think the author made that choice? What is waiting for Book 2?
10. If you could ask the author one question about this book, what would it be?