

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Doane Gregory

CHRIS COLUMBUS

has written, directed, and produced some of the most successful box-office hits in Hollywood history. He first made his name by writing several original scripts produced by Steven Spielberg, including the back-to-back hits *Gremlins* and *The Goonies*. As a director, Columbus has been at the helm of such iconic projects as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *Home Alone*, *Stepmom*, and *Mrs. Doubtfire*. As a producer, Columbus was also behind the hit films *Night at the Museum* and *The Help*. Chris lives in California with his family.



Sabra Embury

NED VIZZINI

began writing for *New York Press* at the age of fifteen. At seventeen, he was asked to write a piece for the *New York Times Magazine*, and at nineteen, he published *Teen Angst? Nah...*, his autobiography of his years at Stuyvesant High School. He is the author of *The Other Normals*, *It's Kind of a Funny Story*, and *Be More Chill*. In television, he has written for ABC's *Last Resort* and MTV's *Teen Wolf*.

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

HOUSE OF SECRETS

BY CHRIS COLUMBUS
& NED VIZZINI

J. K. ROWLING — "A breakneck roller coaster of an adventure."



ABOUT THE BOOK

Brendan, Eleanor, and Cordelia Walker used to have everything: two loving parents, a beautiful house in San Francisco, and all the portable electronic devices they could want. But after Dr. Walker loses his job in the wake of a mysterious incident, the family must relocate to an old Victorian house that used to be the home of occult novelist Denver Kristoff—a house that feels simultaneously creepy and too good to be true. A visit from their evil neighbor, Denver Kristoff's daughter, transports the house and the children in it to a world inhabited by medieval savages patrolling the forests, ghostly pirates sailing the seas, and an evil queen who rules the land. The key to getting home may lie in their connection to a secret Kristoff legacy. But as they unravel that legacy, they'll discover that it's not just their family that's in danger . . . it's the entire world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Brendan admonishes Cordelia for stealing a book from the library of their soon-to-be new home (p. 38). She responds, "Seriously, Bren? Since when do you have a moral compass?" Using support from the book, discuss how Brendan proves that he does possess a moral compass.
2. When Brendan first witnesses Dahlia Kristoff's transformation into the Wind Witch, the authors state, "His world had just gotten a lot bigger" (p. 55). In what ways does Brendan's understanding of the world change as a result of the Wind Witch?
3. Dahlia Kristoff warns, "Let a page torn be a page reborn" (p. 57). Do her words foreshadow the events to come? How might her threats to the Walkers be ironic?
4. Brendan makes a reference to *The Lord of Rings* (p. 84). How does this allusion help paint a picture for readers who have read that book or seen the movies?
5. When the Wind Witch appears to the Walker children, she speaks of their selfish desires. Why does she encourage the children to listen to and act on their selfish desires?
6. Will crash-lands his plane in the Walkers' world, saving them from Slayne, and giving clues so that Cordelia can begin to fit the pieces of the mystery together (p. 98). What does she deduce from the pilot's arrival? How does this new understanding help mobilize the Walker children to survive?
7. What do the Walker children discover about their ancestor Rutherford Walker from the trunk their father possessed? How do the children react to this knowledge? How does this knowledge help them uncover the mystery of the Wind Witch's desire for revenge?
8. What talents and character traits does Will possess that help the Walkers stay alive? Why is Cordelia so attracted to Will?
9. How does the title, *House of Secrets*, relate to the story? How does the title foreshadow the plot of the story?
10. After the Walkers kill Captain Sangray, his first mate, Tranquebar, offers his help and loyalty. How does Tranquebar's betrayal affect Will and the Walkers?
11. What special talent and characteristic does each of the Walker children possess that helps them survive their ordeal? How do their talents balance one another? What do the Walker children learn about themselves as a result?
12. How do the Latin scrolls both help and hinder the Walkers in their quest to return to their normal world? Discuss this question using specific passages in the book to support your claims.
13. Will, the colossus, and Celene are all outside forces who contribute to the survival of the Walkers. What do these three characters have in common? What relationship do they have with the Walkers?
14. Why is the Storm King angry with his daughter, Dahlia? Why is she afraid of her father?
15. What does Eleanor write on the slip of paper that she slides into *The Book of Doom and Desire*? What does she forget to write that could ultimately cost the Walker family their lives?