

THE SECRET ZOO

SECRETS AND SHADOWS

BY BRYAN CHICK

DISCUSSION GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK

In their second adventure, the Action Scouts—Noah, Megan, Ella, and Richie—and their courageous animal friends face grave dangers. Sasquatches prowl, and a far more dreadful menace also lurks in the Secret Zoo: the Shadowist. To prevent the Shadowist from wreaking destruction on the entire world, the Action Scouts receive training from mysterious teens called the Descenders, and they learn many of the zoo's secrets. Yet there is always more to discover, as the Action Scouts fight to protect their beloved Secret Zoo from its ruthless enemies.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. After reading *The Secret Zoo: Secrets and Shadows*, do you know this series's characters, setting, and overall plot better? What specific new things have you learned about them? What do you think you might learn about the characters, setting, and plot in the next book in the series?
2. If you were describing this story to a friend, what genre would you say it fits into? Why? Would you categorize it in more than one genre? Why or why not?
3. Identify the simile in this sentence: "Richie's face sank with such force that Ella half expected his eyes, ears, and nose to tumble to the ground and lie there like Mr. Potato Head pieces" (p. 4). Why might the author have used a simile here? Do you ever use similes? Why?
4. When Sam doesn't notice the beauty around him on page 46, Noah realizes, "somehow people could actually grow used to the City of Species. It was even possible to take it for granted." What does he mean? What might result from people taking the City of Species for granted? Why?
5. Mrs. Fellerton, the librarian, tells the Action Scouts: "Knowledge comes with time. Nothing else" (p. 59). Do you think the Action Scouts agree with this statement? Why or why not? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why?
6. Would you call any of the Action Scouts the leader of their club? Why or why not? Do clubs always have leaders? Explain your answer.
7. How do the scouts and their animal friends communicate? How is the way they communicate similar to and different from the way animals and people communicate in real life? How do you best communicate with the animals you love?
8. In chapter 9, Mr. Darby explains where magic comes from. What interests you most about his explanation and why? If you were going to write a story with magic in it, how might you explain the origin of your story's magic?
9. Over the course of the novel, how do the Descenders treat the Action Scouts? Would you like people to treat you the way the Descenders treat the Action Scouts? Why or why not? What would be your response to such treatment? Why?
10. Describe a moment in the story during which a character disobeys rules for what he or she thinks is a good reason. What results from this character's actions? Was the choice right or wrong? Why? What would you have done in the same situation?
11. What is each Action Scout's greatest strength? Using an example from the story, explain your answer. How do these strengths help them achieve their goals? What is your greatest strength? How does it help you achieve your goals?
12. How does the name "Descenders" aptly describe the Descenders? Do you have a nickname? If you were to choose a fitting nickname for yourself or a friend, what would it be? Why?

Questions for Discussion continued on the next page

13. What are the differences between Insiders and Outsiders? Which would you prefer to be and why? Would you choose to be a Crosser? Why or why not?
14. Does the Shadowist remind you of any other villains in stories you've read? In what way? What do you think the Shadowist will do in the next Secret Zoo book? Why?
15. Describe an important act of courage in the book. How does it change the characters or the events in the story? What's the most courageous act you've ever performed? What resulted from it and why?



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. **THE ACTION SCOUTS' MAGNIFICENT MOTTO.** With your class, discuss the Action Scouts' new goals. Also, lead a discussion on mottos and their purpose for groups working toward a common goal. Solicit possible mottos for the Action Scouts, and vote for the Action Scouts' Magnificent Motto. Help students create a poster with the motto to hang in your classroom.
2. **INSTANT MARLO.** Discuss handwritten messages you and your students might like to send to each other, like reminders about group projects and crucial announcements. Brainstorm ways your classroom might set up an Instant Marlo system, so students can pass these handwritten messages to you and each other. For example, designate "Instant Marlo" a classroom job that different students perform on different days. Set up your system and start Instant Marlo-ing!
3. **ZOO-ILLUSTRATION.** Have students pick their favorite sections of the Secret Zoo. Help them think of everything they know about their favorite sections from reading the series. Then assist them to create illustrations for these. If appropriate, have them label their pictures. Then hang these Zoo-illustrations for everyone to view.
4. **GREATEST TRAITS.** Discuss the concept of character traits with your students, using the Action Scouts as examples. Then tell your students to pick an Action Scout and then write an opinion or literature essay stating what they think their Action Scout's greatest trait is and why. Once these essays are revised and polished, have students present their Greatest Traits essays.
5. **IMAGINATIVE INVENTIONS.** Read aloud some of the imaginative inventions in the City of Species, such as the Wotter Tower and the glass slide. Then help your class generate a list of local school or transportation problems. Using the City of Species inventions for inspiration, assist students in designing inventions that could solve the school or transportation problems. Host an Imaginative Inventions presentation and celebration for your clever class.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bryan Chick is the author of *The Secret Zoo*. He lives with his wife and three young children in Clarkston, MI. You can visit him online at www.theseecretzoo.com.



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