

YORK: THE MAP OF STARS

It was only a few days ago that Tess Biedermann, Theo Biedermann, and Jaime Cruz, along with a mysterious figure from the past, managed to survive an assault on the

location of the latest clue in the Morningstarr Cipher—and, in the process, made a shocking discovery about their own connection to this one-hundred-sixty-year-old enigma.

Now the friends are divided. Tess and Theo have no idea what the photo they found in Greenwood Cemetery means, but Jaime is convinced that they do, and that they've been keeping their own secrets from him. As the city continues to break around them, suddenly solving the greatest mystery of the modern world seems less important than saving their own friendship.

The stakes of completing the Cipher, however, have never been higher. Darnell Slant, real estate developer and owner of all the Morningstarr buildings, knows that they hold one last secret: a power that even the Morningstarrs themselves never revealed. The world has rested on a precarious balance of power for generations; now Slant and his shadowy business partners aim to unbalance it.

It's up to Tess, Theo, and Jaime to uncover the Morningstarrs' final mystery in a desperate attempt to set things right. The world—theirs, and possibly others—depends on it.



Laura Ruby is the author of books for adults, teens, and children, including the Michael L. Prinz medal winner and National Book Award finalist *Bone Gap*, the Edgar Award nominee *Lily's Ghosts*, the Book Sense Pick *Good Girls*, and *York: The Shadow Cipher* and *York: The Clockwork Ghost*, the first two books in the York trilogy. She is on the faculty of Hamline University's MFA in writing for children and young

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MAP OF STAR

NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALIST

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CHAPTER BY CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Winter Solstice, 1798

- What is the allure of New York City? What did/do people go there to find, and why?
- Who is Myles White and what role did they play on the ship?
- What is the significance of this ship and this historical period?
- Who are the woman and man Myles finds on the ship?



Chapter 1

Explain the significance of the photo Tess and Theo find. Why does it pose trouble for the twins? Why does it upset Jaime?

Chapter 2

- Who is Darnell Slant and why does Tess feel sour about him?
- Comment on Slant's position that "new and better" is the way to honor those who shaped history. Do you agree or disagree with Slant, and why?
- What signs are there that the twins' friendship with Jaime is strained?

Chapter 3

- How has Jaime changed, and why? Who or what else seems to have changed? How does the author, Laura Ruby, show you things have changed?
- Why is Jaime's father's return significant?
- Jaime wants to tell his dad about the Old York Cipher, but he doesn't. Why not?
- Why is Mima concerned about Darnell Slant?

- Who is Merriweather Rogers? What kind of person is she? What can you tell about Merry from the guests who attend her party?
- Who is Merry's father, and why is it so important to her for him to attend her party?
- What is the relationship between money and power? What truths about society does Merry's game, Megalopolis, represent?
- What interests do you suspect Merry aims to advance?

Standards for Chapter by Chapter Questions (pages 2-8):
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2,
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4,
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6,
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10



CHAPTER BY CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Chapter 5

- In what ways has the Old York Cipher become a part of Tess's identity? What fears and worries does Tess have about the cipher and their investment in solving it?
- Describe the reunion between Jaime and the twins.

Chapter 6

- Why does the mention of Ava's name change Jaime's disposition?
- Who is the man in the suit?

Chapter 7

- Why does Jaime choose to be angry with the twins when otherwise things seem to be back to normal? Why does Jaime compare Slant to a "black hole"? Who else might fit into this category?
- Who pushed Jaime off the ferry?

Chapter 8

- Who or what is Cricket mourning? Why?
- How is Karl's disappearance affecting Cricket?
- What is special about the book Cricket picks to read?

Chapter 9

- How is Jaime rescued from the river?
- How does Karl return?

- What is Jaime suggesting when he asks, "What are you two worried about? You wouldn't be here right now if you got hurt or kidnapped later, right?"
- What condition do the kids learn about challenging The Turk to a chess game that raises the stakes?

Chapter 10

- Who wins the chess match, and how?
- What does The Turk give to Tess, Theo, and Jaime?

- How is Jaime feeling about spending time with the twins again? Why, and how do you know?
- Why is the red headed lady on the Underway moving away from and watching Jaime?





CHAPTER BY CHAPTER QUESTIONS

- Would Jaime choose to time travel? Why or why not?
- Who does Jaime see in the detectives' photos that he knows, and why does he lie to the detectives about it?

Chapter 12

- Where has Karl been? What was his experience like there?
- Who is Octavius, and why is Octavius important to Karl's story?

Chapter 13

- Who pushes Jaime off the ferry? Why do you think they do it?
- How do the men from Citizens for a Greater New York City want to improve NYC? What do they want from the Biedermanns? What ominous threat do they make to Tess?

Chapter 14

- Why might Detective Biedermann be skeptical about Tess's conversation with the men from Citizens for a Greater New York City?
- How would you have responded to being caught by someone in the secret passageway? Do Theo's actions surprise you? Why or why not?
- Why does the painting of Eliza Jumel catch Theo's attention?

Chapter 15

- Why would ghost hunters frequent the Morris-Jumel Mansion?
- How do the events leading to finding the clue at the mansion support the argument that the Cipher wants to be solved?
- ◆ At the end of the chapter, Jaime finds himself thinking about "ghosts, about echoes of people in the things they left behind...those things and the people they belonged to got forgotten, or erased," (p. 221). What are some examples of people and things Jaime is or might be thinking about? Might there be a connection between these thoughts and Jaime's feelings about his mother?

Chapter 16

- Which men have been following Imogen Sparks, and why?
- Who is Imogen Sparks and what is her connection to the story?
- Who could have broken into the archives of the Cipherist Society Headquarters, and what is their motive?

Chapter 17

 Explain what makes it extra time consuming to get the puzzle box open.









CHAPTER BY CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Grandpa Ben has instilled in Tess and Theo the belief that solving the Old York Cipher is more about the process of sleuthing and solving than it is about the solution itself. Why is Tess reflecting on those words now?

Chapter 18

- What causes the avalanche?
- If Cleopatra's Needle and the park were built after the Morningstarrs disappeared, how might these Cipher clues have been hidden?

Chapter 19

- Why is Jaime increasingly aware of and concerned about the things they are "borrowing"?
- The trains are late and dirty. The Guildmen are acting unusual. What might be causing the machine problems?



- What secret does Cricket reveal to Jaime?
- What story do you think Karl will tell?

Chapter 20

- Why is Darnell Slant concerned about Merry's presence and/or support?
- What is Slant's agenda? What does he intend to do to make New York City better?
- What is Slant's accusation against Lora Yoshida?
- Why is Slant so concerned with the Biedermanns?
- What relationships with other characters are revealed in this chapter? Who poses a threat, and why?

Chapter 21

- Why do you think Detective Biedermann feels the way she does about the Old York Cipher?
- What is the plan for the twins and Jaime to get into the Tombs, the headquarters of the New York City Police Department? Why does it work?

- Why does Lora Yoshida invite the kids to her interview? Why does Detective Biedermann agree?
- What does "allegedly" mean, and why does Lora use that word when talking about Slant?
- Why would Lora not want to answer questions? Why would Detective Biedermann not want to ask questions of Lora?

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Lora says the locket was entrusted to her by a "friend." Who do you think gave her the locket, and why does she give the locket to Tess?

Chapter 23

- Why is Jaime uncomfortable at the police department?
- What do you imagine Detective Biedermann is thinking of when she tells the kids, "I don't always like everything I have to do." (p. 318)
- Jaime is still struggling to decide if the Morningstarr twins knew the future or if Tess and Theo are the Morningstarr twins. What do you think? Why?
- What does Karl reveal in his story that adds to the twins' understanding?
- What are the contents of the locket, and what questions does it make you ask?

Chapter 24

- Why did Ava run from where she grew up? Where did Ava disappear to?
- When did Ava meet Theresa Morningstarr? What happened?
- What big question about the Morningstarr twins does Ava answer in this chapter?
- Why is Ava angry at the Morningstarrs?
- Why has Ava been visiting Grandpa Ben? Why does she want the secret he entrusted to Auguste?

Chapter 25

- How has the mission to solve the Old York Cipher changed?
- How do Tess, Theo, and Jaime get up the escalator?

Chapter 26

- What tune do Tess, Theo, and Jaime uncover in the closet?
- What do Tess, Theo, and Jaime find inside the star-shaped room? What does it seem to mean?

- Who pushes Jaime off the ferry, and why?
- How does the description of Slant's office contrast with the rest of what was once Morningstarr Tower? In what ways does this contrast underscore Slant's character?
- Detective Biedermann claims those trying to solve the Old York Cipher are "chasing ghosts." Does she mean this literally or figuratively? What evidence supports your thinking?





CHAPTER BY CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Chapter 28 — September 6, 2025

- Why does Laura Ruby insert this jump in time? When does this chapter take place in relation to the rest of the story? How do you know?
- What has changed about New York City?
- What have Tess and Theo been working on? Jaime?
- What is the bizarre letter the twins received, and who could it be from?
- What is desperation?

Chapter 29

- What are the consequences of the kids' trip to Slant Tower?
- In what ways does it seem Tess, Theo, and Jaime have reached the end of their Cipher solving?
- What will the schematics build?
- Are Tess's nightmares imagined or real?

Chapter 30

- What does Theo think about that made him stop worrying for a bit and enjoy the wedding?
- What do the kids need to find at the synagogue?

Chapter 31

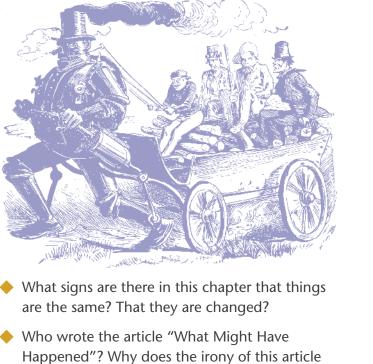
- How has Jaime hurt his dad and Mima?
- What do Tess, Theo, and Jaime find in the Ark?
- What do they retrieve from Exquisite Engines that completes the machine?
- Who finds Tess, Theo, and Jaime at Exquisite Engines?

Chapter 32 — August 18, 2041

- Why is Theresa "numb" about the pending weather emergency?
- What is Theodore's argument regarding the mysterious envelope? Why is Theresa skeptical? What does Theodore want to do? Why does Theresa ultimately agree?

- Why does Ava ask the kids to leave the machine alone?
- What happened to Ava in the past, and how are the Morningstarrs connected to her story?
- What is Ava's plight?
- Why does Miss Roberts want the machine? Why does Hunter Roberts want the machine?





CHAPTER BY CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Chapter 34

- What is the backstory to Dr. Munsterberg's monsters?
- What new possibility is revealed regarding what happened to Jaime's mom?
- Why would Hunter Roberts and Dr. Munsterberg want Ava's cooperation so badly?

Chapter 35

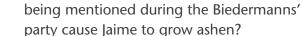
- How does Ava conjure the Zīz?
- Reread what Hunter Roberts tells Tess, Theo, and Jaime on pages 485-486. What do you think of Hunter Roberts' claim that they are stuck in "a pointless and endless loop"?

Chapter 36

- Do you think Detective Biedermann knows the twins' actual identities?
- What does Ava say to Detective Biedermann that surprises her?
- What makes Tess question their choice to try solving the Old York Cipher? What conclusion has she come to?
- Does Jaime's choice surprise you? What do you think you would have done if you were in his shoes?

Chapter 37

- When does this chapter fit in the sequence of the story? What evidence suggests this?
- Why are the Biedermanns hosting a party?



December 3, 1855

- Where does the locket come from?
- What does Theresa mean that they haven't been born yet?
- How would you describe the relationship between Ava and Theresa? What new insights does this chapter from the past reveal?

May 10, 2114

- What is the same and different for Ava Oneal at this point in time?
- Why does Ava tell the waiter her name is The Viatrix?

FOR MORE DISCUSSION

Structure and Craft

Consider the structure of the book, specifically:

- The time periods of the prologue and epilogues
- Chapters from various points of view (main characters and secondary characters)
- Chapters that are organized out of sequence, where the story's place in time jumps forward or backward.
- Why do you think Laura Ruby made these choices? How do these choices impact your understanding of the story?

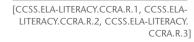
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Interdependent Heroes

Throughout the trilogy, the team of characters working to solve the Old York Cipher have remained the same: Tess and Theo Biedermann and Jaime Cruz. In what ways could you argue that solving the Cipher required all three friends?



Could the twins have solved the Cipher without Jaime, or Jaime without the twins? How do each play a role in their arrival at the conclusion?



Justice

"Who can find justice in the Halls of Justice?" (p. 266, 313) Justice is often thought of as fairness. When Tess, Theo, and Jaime find this clue, they know it points them to The Tombs, the headquarters of the New York City Police Department. Later, when visiting The Tombs with Detective Biedermann, Lora Yoshida asks this question of the kids when she leaves her interview. Why is the police department considered a place of justice? What do you think the answer to the question is? Who might not find justice in the Halls of Justice, and why?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2]

The Truth

In Chapter 29, Tess and Theo have been issued consequences that keep them bound to their room and they've lost access to their phones. Their parents' intentions are to keep them safe and prevent them from continuing the quest to solve the Old York Cipher. Nonetheless, they escape the house to join Jaime and finish solving the Cipher. Tess is reminded of a conversation she had with her father in *York: The Shadow Cipher*







FOR MORE DISCUSSION

about the black box—a figurative container holding hard to bear truths—and wonders if children are their parents' "black boxes." How might this be true in the case of the Biedermann family? What truths do Tess and Theo live or represent that their parents' might not want to acknowledge?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3]

Immortality

Hunter Roberts' interest in the Morningstarr machine is that it might enable him to live forever. What would be the advantages and disadvantages to being trapped by immortality? Where in the novel do we see examples of the price paid by characters who live longer than an ordinary lifetime?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3]

Legacy

On page 478, Dr. Munsterberg says his motive for experimenting with hybrid creatures was: "To leave something behind that will be talked of and written about for generations." In other words, he wants to leave a legacy. The legacy of the Morningstarr

twins is central to

this series. Is the Morningstarr twins' legacy positive, or is it negative? What other characters are driven by their potential legacies? How and in what ways does the motive of leaving a legacy influence actions we take in our own lives?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2]

Overlooked, Hidden, Forgotten

Consistent with the first two books in the series, this third book continues to mention individuals whose stories have been overlooked or hidden or forgotten.

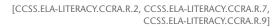
Explore some of the figures mentioned in this book. Who were they? What were their contributions? What were their stories?

Josephy Trench John Snook

Eliza Bowen Jumel Colonel Roger Morris

Anne Hampton Northup Soloman Northup Wendell Phillips Frederick Douglass

Can you think of other figures from history (or the present day) who are often overlooked? Why do you think this happens? What becomes of these people and their contributions?











OTHER EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Cryptography

Codes and ciphers have been used since ancient history. Take time to explore some of the ciphers that were part of the Old York Cipher and featured in this book. Make codes for your friends to decipher.

- ◆ Turkish Irish: Insert "AB" before each vowel in your words, best when spoken at a fast pace. (p. 180, 249-250)
- Hieroglyphics: Believed to be the earliest cryptography, hieroglyphics originated in Ancient Egypt and used roughly 1,000 different symbols to represent words, syllables, and individual letters. (p. 246-247)
- ◆ Playfair Cipher (also called Wheatstone Cipher): A digraph substitution cipher in which the "key" is a keyword followed by the unused alphabet letters arranged in a 5x5 grid (i/j together). Then, pairs of letters in the message are encoded as corresponding letters in the key according to the transposition rules of the cipher. (p. 361-364)



Puzzle Box/Ball-in-a-Maze Puzzle

The puzzle box Tess, Theo, and Jaime find in the hearth at the Morris-Jumel Mansion is one of the more time-consuming puzzles the kids have to solve in order to work through the Old York Cipher. What makes this puzzle so challenging? (p. 236-242)

One kind of a puzzle box is a dexterity puzzle that requires the user to maneuver a small pinball ball through a maze to the end, sometimes unlocking a secret compartment. There are many varieties of these types of puzzles/mazes, some handcrafted and some commercially marketed.

Can you build your own Ball-in-a-Maze puzzle? How could you craft the channels of the maze? Would you choose to give it a clear cover so those you challenge can see the ball's movements, or would you use a solid cover to raise the level of difficulty?

Game Playing

In Chapters 10 and 11, in search of the next clue, Tess, Theo, and Jaime travel to Coney Island to play a chess match against The Turk. Chess is a game of calculated moves and strategy. Do some research to learn more about the game and try playing, either with a partner and an actual chess set, or virtually with an online game.

Several chess matches are referenced in Chapter 10 (p. 146), with Kasparov vs. Topalov, or Kasparov's Immortal Game, being named the greatest game of all time. What sets this match apart from others? Why is it recognized as a significant moment in chess history?



OTHER EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Learn more about the believed-automaton "The Turk." What is its history? How did it work? How did The Turk inspire mathematicians and influence the invention of future computers?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9]

Merriweather Roberts hosts people for gameplaying parties, and in Chapter 4, she introduces a game she has invented called Megalopolis. As roles are distributed, we begin to see the ways her game is fashioned after real life. What other examples of games do you know that in some way resemble real life (past or present)? Can you modify a game you know or invent a brand-new game that includes some inspiration from real life?

Time Travel

Throughout York: The Map of Stars, Theo, Tess, and Jaime wrestle with the question of whether time travel might be possible, and if so, what its rules would be and how it would work. How could the Morningstarr twins have planted clues in locations that didn't exist until after their disappearance? How would they have been able to see the future?

At different points in their quest to solve the Old York Cipher and make sense of the impossible, Theo, Tess, and Jaime consider wormholes, black holes, and the prospect of a mirror universe. What do physicists know and understand about these ideas and concepts?

Is time travel a thing of science fiction or is it something we have yet to discover and understand? What do you think?

Have you ever thought about a time period or a historical event you would change if you were

only able to travel in time? When and where would you travel to, and what would you do? What do you imagine would be different as a result?

History

The pursuit of the Old York Cipher takes Tess, Theo, and Jaime to a number of historical

spaces around the city. Conduct some research about some of the sites featured in *York: The Map of Stars*. How do these sites fit with the bigger themes of the book?

Peck's Slip Ansche Chesed

Croton Fountain Morris-Jumel Mansion

Coogan's Bluff Cleopatra's Needle

Sun Building/ The Ramble Cave

Odd Fellows Hall

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9]

Find out more about the Boston Molasses Flood, a real and lesser-known event from history.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7]

Folklore

The Zīz is mentioned in a few parts of *York: The Map of Stars*, most notably when Ava Oneal calls upon the creature for assistance at Red Hook. The Zīz, also called Renanin, is a mythological creature from Jewish mythology. Learn more about the Zīz. What does the Zīz represent? Do any other

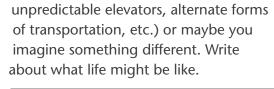




OTHER EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

cultures or myths have a similar creature and story? Why is the Zīz a fitting choice for the role the creature plays in Laura Ruby's novel?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. CCRA.R.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9]



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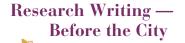
Environmental Impact

Chapters 28 and 32 are set years into the future and both include details about the setting that illustrate changes in climate and the environment in New York City and beyond. Reread these chapters to look specifically for these details. How does the setting of each chapter compare to the setting of the other chapters in this story? How is the climate and environment in these chapters similar and different from present day in our own world? Is the world Laura Ruby projects for 2025 and 2041 strictly science fiction or is it a conceivable future? What do you think?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5]

Creative Writing — Build a City

On the cab ride to Red Hook with Theo and Jaime, Tess wonders about what New York City might have been like if the Morningstarr twins hadn't built it (p. 433). Think about your own town or city, the place you know and love. Imagine if the Morningstarrs, with their engineering and mechanically-minded talents, had influence over your town or city. Maybe some of the characteristics of York would appear (for example: guildmen, spiders, hybrid pets,



While wondering what New York City might have been like if the Morningstarr twins hadn't built

it (p. 433), Tess remembers Samuel Deerfoot and his people and imagines what might have happened if the land had not been taken from them. Do some research to learn about the indigenous people who inhabited the land we know as New York City. What was life like for their tribes? Research what life was like where you live before the time of colonization. What can you learn and share about the indigenous people who originally inhabited the land?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.8, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7]

