

Telling a Thumper

Book Club Discussion Guide

Spoiler Alert: This discussion guide contains spoilers to Telling A Thumper.

1. Reading the story through the perspective of Colin, our blind protagonist, meant leaning on his other senses to create your “image” of the story. What he heard, smelled, sensed, touched...but never really saw. How did his non-visual perspective impact your understanding of settings and situations throughout the story?
2. When you first meet Colin, he harbors the lingering devastation of his missing father, the simmering resentment about his mother’s new marriage, and the puzzling arrival of Pete. Given these early conflicts, how do you view his character development throughout the novel?
3. What are your opinions about the character development of Colin’s key collaborators, Pete and Katie.
4. Hannah carries her own dark secret. Why do you think it took so long for her to acknowledge her shortcomings and do something about them? Was it enough for you that she eventually did the right thing or was it too little, too late?
5. Besides Hannah, other secondary characters in the book play varying roles in Colin’s quest for the truth. There’s quite a list: Ben, Charlie, Mr. Stiles, Mrs. Judson, Moretti, Tracey Honeycutt, and Aunt Coleen to name a few. Is there a particular character that stands out for you? Someone you admire, empathize with, or hate? Maybe a character that just made you laugh out loud?
6. We learn rather early that “telling a thumper” means to construct a clever lie. Throughout our story, thumpers present themselves in many ways. Pretenses that protect. Distortions that deceive. Fibs, half-truths, and a bit of good-natured bluffing, too. Ultimately, we confront the most profound thumper in the book’s conclusion. How did these twists and turns impact your investment in Telling A Thumper?
7. We follow Colin from his righteous quest for truth to a jarring conclusion that blurs the line between justice and retribution. How does the outcome sit with you? Do you believe justice was served? Or was the “avenger” just another perpetrator? Who was the avenger?
8. A subtle thread regarding Pete’s personality is woven throughout our story. Then, near the novel’s conclusion, Ben and Colin discuss Pete’s possible struggle with “embitterment.” At one point, Ben tells Colin that “embitterment against the person who harmed you festers, it could even cause fantasies of revenge that grow stronger and stronger...” Do you think it’s possible that Pete had a role in Moretti’s demise?
9. The Saint Barbara medallion finds its way into several key moments of the story. What’s the symbolism for you?
10. Historical context – authentic and accurate – is always important to the author. How did you view the 1970s backdrop? What about the history of anthracite coal mining and the true Twin Shaft disaster that occurred in 1896?
11. To a new reader of Telling A Thumper, there’s plenty of ambiguity in the book’s cover art. Now that you know the outcome, what does the cover mean to you?

