

Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Charlie's Raven* by Jean Craighead George.

What is wrong with Charlie's grandfather? Why does Charlie think a raven will help?

Where does Charlie find the raven? What happens when he takes it from the nest?

What does Charlie feed Blue Sky when he first brings him home?

What sorts of calls does Blue Sky make to Charlie and his grandfather? What sorts does he make to the Spinders? Why are they different?

Summarize what happens when Grandma faces the mountain lion. How do you interpret Blue Sky's behavior? Do you think it was good or bad?

Give some examples of Granddad feeling better. Why do you think this is?

Mr. Spinder's attitude towards ravens changes throughout the book. What is his attitude at first? What makes him change his mind?

The different raven calls mean many different things. Are there ways in which people communicate with more than words? Do any of the characters do this?

The different characters in the book all have their own reasons for interpreting the behavior of ravens. Explain these differences and discuss where their ideas originate.

What is "the perfect round stone"?

What are some examples of Blue Sky's behavior that can be considered both good and bad? Can you think of anything else that can be both good and bad? Explain your reasons.

Suppose Charlie spent his summers with the Spinders instead of his grandparents. What might his "perfect round stone" be in that case?

On pages 64-65, the parent ravens are observed dropping off and picking up Pinecone as if the cabin is a day care center. Do you think it is accurate to say that the ravens are really thinking about it this way? Explain.

Re-read Singing Bird's story, on page 70, about how the raven's cure works. Is this a story about magic, or is it a story about science? Can it be both? Explain.

When Charlie worries about how Blue Sky will take care of himself, Granddad says, “He’ll take care of himself, or he won’t. That’s how all life is.” Do you think this opinion is harsh? What do you think makes Granddad come to this conclusion?

Note: These literature circle questions are keyed to Bloom’s Taxonomy: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-12; Evaluation 13-15.

Activities

Create your own animal vocabulary. The glossary at the back of the book lists several raven calls and their corresponding meaning. Choose an animal (or make up one of your own) and invent a list of sounds to communicate different meanings. Think about what you will need to say to others in order to be happy, healthy, and comfortable.

Take scientific notes, as Charlie does in the book. You can study birds, a favorite pet, or members of your own family. Make a log sheet or use a small notebook. Put down the date, time, and location of your observation. Try to be objective. Try not to assume a purpose for the behavior at this time. When your observations are complete, go back and review your notes, and “let the data speak.” Look for patterns and trends. What do you notice?

On page 36, Charlie learns about the Raven Owners, a tribe whose totem animal was the raven. Form your own tribe with its own totem animal or thing. What is it about your totem that displays the special qualities of your tribe? How would your totem help or protect you?

Other books by this author include: *My Side of the Mountain*, *Frightful’s Mountain*, and *Julie of the Wolves* (all published by Dutton Children’s Books, a division of Penguin Young Readers Group).

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