

Teen Reading Challenge + Discussion Questions

by [Vicki V. Lucas](#) for [Club31Women.com](#)

1. *The Robe* by Lloyd C. Douglas

One centurion won Jesus' robe at the foot of the cross. *The Robe* is his story. Journey from the elite of Rome to Israel with Marcellus and his slave (and friend) Demetrius. After the crucifixion, Marcellus is sent by the emperor of Rome on a mission to find out the truth of the man called Jesus. What he finds changes his life forever.

Why This Book: Marcellus must decide who Jesus really was and how that affects him. He goes through the basic questions of faith: who is God, how does God reveal Himself to us, is He good, why is there is pain in the world, and more. It's Theology 101 wrapped in an action-packed, compelling story.

Discussion Questions for *The Robe*:

- Briefly describe Marcellus' story from beginning to end. What character traits do you think he possesses that allow him to change from "proper Roman" to "illegal Christian"?
- Make a list of qualities about Demetrius. What qualities of Demetrius do you admire? Which ones do you possess and which ones do you want to develop?
- What did you feel at Marcellus' trial? What would you have done in his place?
- Many people today die for believing in Christ and proclaiming their faith. Would you deny Christ? Stay quiet, or loudly proclaim that Jesus is God?

2. *Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis

Screwtape Letters is a compilation of 31 letters written by Screwtape, a senior demon, to his nephew, Wormwood, who is in need of guidance. Wormwood is charged with guiding a man towards Satan and away from Jesus.

Why This Book: While each chapter reads like a devotional, the whole book drives home one point: We have an enemy. This enemy wants to destroy us, and he doesn't stop when one becomes a Christian. We should know our enemy's attacks to stand against them.

Discussion Questions for *Screwtape Letters*:

- The book is from the perspective of a demon. Why is this so powerful? How does it allow C.S. Lewis to write about topics in a new way?
- Which letter spoke to you the most? Why?

- What was the relationship between Screwtape and Wormwood like? How does it differ from a Godly relationship?
- What did you like most about this book?

3. *Hinds' Feet on High Places* by Hannah Hurnard

In this allegory, go on a journey with a young woman named Much Afraid away from her Fearing family to the High Places of the Shepherd. She travels with two companions, Sorrow and Suffering. Follow along as a picture of salvation to spiritual maturity unfolds through walking with God.

Why This Book: In *Hinds' Feet on High Places*, you experience how a Christian is transformed from someone who does not believe in Jesus to a believer who faithfully follows Jesus through dangerous and safe places.

Discussion Questions for *Hinds' Feet on High Places*:

- What four main lessons are learned by Much Afraid? What is the common connecting them?
- Describe the Valley of Loss. What is the meaning of this place? What does Much Afraid lose there?
- Why does Much Afraid slip and stumble when walking on level ground in the Forests of Danger and Tribulation more than she does while climbing the Precipice Injury?
- Why are Suffering and Sorrow good companions for the journey?
- What have you learned from reading this book?

4. *A Voice in the Wind* by Francine Rivers

Young Hadassah doesn't turn away from God when she is captured and enslaved by the Romans. Not even when her family is killed. Yet she doesn't let her faith be known, as she's enslaved to her fear as well. But her courage grows, and so does her love for Marcus, the brother of her mistress. Her path, like the young gladiator Atretes, leads to the arena where both must embrace their faith.

Why This Book: The similarities between the last days of Rome and our culture today are alarming. Rome, although described as majestic, is also seen as "a stinking bog of base humanity drowning in filth and depravity." Characters in *A Voice in the Wind* deal with issues of abortion and other subjects that are relevant to us. But through it all, we see that faith in God holds us steady.

Discussion Questions for *A Voice in the Wind*:

- Describe Hadassah and Atretes. Remember each was enslaved, but each has a different response to it. Why? What caused them to react differently to the same situation?
- Hadassah struggles with fear. How does fear control a person? What can a person do to break free of the fear? Atretes struggles with anger. How does that affect his life? In what ways can a person become less angry?
- What similarities do you see between the Roman life and today's society? What issues affect each society? Why do you think that is?
- How do you handle adversity or tough situations? How would God like you to handle difficult times?

5. *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

In Nazi Germany, everyone was busy trying to stay alive. But the busiest of all was Death. And yet, despite the work that piled up, Liesel Meminger catches the attention of Death. Liesel, a foster girl, learns to read and can't resist any book she may find. Together she shares her love with her foster father and a Jewish man hidden in their basement.

Why This Book: The narrator, Death, completely unique than how we often think of death. Portrayed in *The Book Thief* as compassionate and weary of his job, Death gives us an outside perspective of life and death. Also, the story line is more of a poor family trying to survive a world that is extremely more different and unpredictable every day. How do you live in a world where friends and family are executed just for their heritage? How do you help the innocent when it means risking your own family?

Discussion Questions for *The Book Thief*:

- At the beginning, Liesel thinks that Hans Hubermann's eyes show kindness. How does Hans gain Liesel's love and trust? Why is it difficult for Rosa to demonstrate kindness to Liesel? How do you show kindness, especially to those younger or less fortunate than you?
- Describe life in Nazi Germany.
- What scenes stood out to you? Which ones did you like? Why?
- Hitler ordered books to be burned as a form of censorship. Is censorship of books ever acceptable? Explain.
- One theme is being happy with what you have. For example, when they couldn't go outside, Liesel built a snowman inside. How do you find ways to be happy when you can't get what you want?

6. *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis

If you've already read this series, read it again. Every time I read these books, I see something new. I recommend starting with *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and continuing through the whole series as C.S. Lewis wrote it.

Why These Books: Once again, we see books filled with allegorical elements, but the whole series touches on aspects of our Christian walk as put together. For example, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* touches on our salvation through Jesus, *Prince Caspian* the development of the early Church, *The Magician's Nephew* the creation story, and *The Last Battle* the ending of our world.

Discussion Questions for *The Chronicles of Narnia*:

- Of the seven books, which one is your favorite? Why?
- Of your favorite book, what allegorical elements do you see? How do they reflect stories in the Bible or Biblical messages?
- If you could talk to one of the characters in the book, which one would you choose? Why? What would you ask them? What do you think he/she would say?
- If you have seen the movies, compare the movies to the book. Which is better? Why?

7. *Ender's Game* by Olson Scott Card

When aliens threaten the existence of Earth, Ender Wiggins is sent to Battle School, orbiting above the Earth. A tactical genius, Ender finds himself bullied for various reasons, but this compels him to fight back smarter. *Warning:* Includes some language.

Why This Book: While *Ender's Game* is a thrilling adventure with journeys into space and computer games certain to delight sci-fi readers, it is filled with discussion opportunities about what defines us as humans, how to treat those who are different, and when is war acceptable or not acceptable.

Discussion Questions for Ender's Game:

- How do you treat others who look different? How should you treat others who look different?
- Can we stop fighting to coexist peacefully?
- When is war morally acceptable, if ever?
- Is Ender "guilty" of a war crime? (A two-fold question: given what the humans actually know, was there a war crime? And if there was, was Ender guilty of it? Then why does it feel satisfying for him to take responsibility for the consequences?)
- Why is Ender a good leader and the other leaders not so good?
- What makes a friendship good or bad?

8. *The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* by J.R.R. Tolkien

This classic fantasy takes you on a quest to destroy a ring with the power to annihilate all that is good in Middle Earth. This is another one that you should read again even if you have once.

Why These Books: The entire series is filled with lessons of persistence, courage, leadership, and friendship. The weak are strong; the humble the wise. And the smallest - the strongest.

Discussion Questions for The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings Trilogy:

- Who is your favorite character? Why? List character traits of this person. What is the bravest thing this person does?
- How is friendship shown in the books? Who has the strongest friendship? Give reasons to explain this.
- Gandalf doesn't dare touch the ring. Why can Frodo and Sam touch it and he can't?
- What's your favorite part of all four books? Why?

9. *The Martian* by Andy Weir

Astronaut Mark Watney is one of the first people to walk on Mars, the first to live there, and perhaps the first person to die there. When a dust storm nearly kills him and forces his crew to evacuate, they think him dead as his communications are damaged. Now he is stranded with no way to signal Earth. And even if he could, it will take four years to return. But Mark doesn't give up. With ingenuity, skills, and a relentless refusal to quit, he confronts the

obstacles. *Warning:* There are many swear words within the book. In fact, one of the first words is a swear word when Mark discovers he was been left behind.

Why This Book: Is it worth the swear words? For older teens, I say yes. Science is everywhere and extremely relevant to life. Just growing a few potatoes requires a good knowledge of how plants grow, and that's just the beginning! Mark's attitude during adversity is inspiring. There's a strong feeling of family within the team of astronauts and Mark holds no ill towards them. Finally, Mark wasn't one of the top astronauts, and yet he does extraordinary things.

Discussion Questions for *The Martian*:

- Describe Mark's character. In what ways do you identify with Mark? How does the author get you to care about him? What aspects of his character do you think helped him in his fight for survival?
- Was the crew right in abandoning Mark? Was there another choice? What would you have done?
- Do you think it was guilt or loyalty that made the crew decide to go back for Mark? Why? What is the difference between the two?
- Given Mark's struggle to survive, how does that affect how you view Earth and the things we take for granted, like oxygen?

10. *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

Guys, don't let your eyes glaze over. *Pride and Prejudice* is not just a girl's book, or even just a romance novel. It's humorous, it's thought-provoking, and it's a classic. Elizabeth is an intelligent woman who is strong and independent. While her mother and society push her to marry someone rich, she is determined to marry for love. Don't be too proud or prejudiced to read it!

Why This Book: Elizabeth's story is about the folly of making snap decisions about people and learning to overcome your pride when you are wrong. Throughout the book, you see how Elizabeth's pride and Mr. Darcy's prejudice hinders and hurts each of them.

Discussion Questions for *Pride and Prejudice*:

- How are Darcy and Elizabeth each guilty of both pride and prejudice? How does this add conflict to the story? Of the two, which are you guilty of more often? What can you do to change this?
- Intelligence and independence are qualities that we admire in our culture. How do these qualities hinder Elizabeth? How do they help her?
- Mr. Darcy breaks up a possible marriage in the book. What was your first reaction to this? In the end, how do you feel about his actions? Have you ever seen a relationship that you don't agree with? What actions can you or should you take in this situation? Why?
- Are pride and prejudice a problem in your world? How so? Give examples. What can you do about it?

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