

Discussion Questions

1. Dinah means “judged” or “judgment” in Hebrew. Do you think that Dinah was judged unfairly? Do you think she showed good judgment? Give examples. Did you find it ironic that Matthew’s first impression of Dinah was that she was a reprobate?
2. How is this a coming-of-age summer for Matthew? In what ways does he grow or change? How does the creek reflect the changing process?
3. Why does Dinah talk about Dinah Shore as if she were family? Do you have any heroes or role models you’ve never met that you feel like you know? Who? Why?
4. Were you named after someone? Does that affect who you are or how you feel about yourself? What names would you choose for a son and a daughter? Why?
5. What scene do you think is the climax of this story? Why?
6. Do you think Matthew and Dinah would have become friends if Kyle had been around? Do you think Matthew’s friendship with Kyle will have changed when Kyle returns? Why or why not?
7. What does the maple tree behind the library symbolize for Matthew? For Dinah? Does it symbolize anything more or different for you?
8. Matthew tells Luke that Dinah is like a Siren, but describes her like a Muse. What is the difference between a Siren and a Muse? Is there anyone who might think that Dinah was more like a Siren than a Muse?
9. Dinah talked about three chords being the foundation of all of the music she plays. Matthew quotes a verse from Ecclesiastes stating that a three-strand cord is not easily broken. Can you think of other examples not included in the book where the number three represents strength, unity or completion?
10. Do you think Matthew will eventually tell his parents about Dinah? Why or why not? If so, when? What will he say?
11. In what ways is Matthew like his father? In what ways is he like his mother?
12. Did it surprise you that Dinah’s mother was in jail? Why or why not?
13. Do you think Matthew is an honest person? Why or why not? What about Dinah?

14. Have you ever known anyone who was home schooled? Anyone who was homeless? If you had to trade places with either Matthew or Dinah, who would you trade places with? Why?
15. Why did Matthew say, “God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve”? Why did it upset Dinah?
16. Do you think Matthew and Dinah will be friends as adults? What do you think their lives will be like when they’re 20? 30?
17. What role does God play in the book? Do you think Matthew has faith? Why or why not? Do you think Dinah has faith? Why or why not?
18. Do you think this story could really happen in today’s world? Why or why not?
19. How do you picture the sanctuary of Peace Congregation? Do you think you would feel comfortable there? Do you think you would feel comfortable spending the night alone in a church? Why or why not?
20. What prejudices or biases does Matthew have? What about Dinah? Do any of these change over the summer?
21. What role does music play in this book? If you were writing a book, what songs might you include to connect with your readers? Why?
22. What role does poetry play in the book? Which of Dinah’s poems do you like best? Why? Which don’t you like? Why?
23. Matthew’s dad talks about the different meanings of sanctuary. He doesn’t mention animal sanctuaries. Do you think he intentionally wanted to leave that out of his sermon?
24. How might this story be different if it were told by Dinah? A third person? How might Kyle tell the story when he returns home if Matthew tells him about Dinah?

Supplemental Reading Recommendations

1. Read the following Bible verses and passages in both the King James Version and the New International Version: Genesis, Chapter 34; I John 1:5; 2 Peter 3:8; Acts 10:34; Romans 12:5; and John 2: 12-25 How are these woven into the story? Which version do you like better? Why? (Text is available on-line at www.BibleGateway.com)
2. Read the first two chapters of *Reprobation Asserted* by John Bunyan. Why do you think Matthew's dad gave him that to read? Text is available on-line at <http://acacia.pair.com/Acacia.John.Bunyan/Sermons.Allegories/Reprobation.Asserted/>
3. Read Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Scene V, Act IV. Matthew quotes Richard's last words before he dies. Is there any connection between Richard's death and the muck scene in the pond? (Text is available on-line at <http://www.online-literature.com/shakespeare/richardIII/>)
4. Read an excerpt from or a summary of *Moby Dick*. How is Dinah like Ishmael? How is Matthew like Ahab? Is there anything in the story that might represent the whale?
5. Read one of the books from *The Chronicles of Narnia* series by C.S. Lewis. Why do you think Matthew likes these books? Would Dinah like the book? Why or why not?
6. Read one of the *Harry Potter* books. Why might *Harry Potter* appeal to Dinah? Would Matthew like the book? Why or why not?
7. Read the poem *A Summer Sanctuary* by John Hall Ingham. How is this poem different from the poems Dinah writes? Try to imagine Matthew reading the poem to you. Try to imagine Dinah reading the poem to you. Would the same poem mean different things to Matthew? Dinah? You?:

I FOUND a yellow flower in the grass,
A tiny flower with petals like a bell,
And yet, methought, more than a flower it was,—
More like a miracle.

Above, the sky was clear, save where at times
Soft-tinted fleeces drifted dreamily,
Bearing a benison to sunny climes
From altars of the sea.

In vestments green the pines about me gleamed
Like priests that tend the sacrificial fire;
And the faint-lowing cattle almost seemed
Some far intoning choir.

It was a place and an occasion meet
For some high, solemn wonder to befall;
And, when I saw the flower at my feet,
I understood it all.