

EVERLOST

By Neal Shusterman

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Lief never tried to leave his forest before Allie and Nick came along?
2. If you were in Everlost, how do you think you'd spend your time? Lief spends his alone in the forest and seems to find peace and happiness in the pickle barrel. Mary protects/oppresses people. The McGill tries to terrorize people. The Haunter tries to hurt and imprison people. Nick and Allie try to figure things out and explore. Would you do one of these things, or something completely different?
3. From getting stuck in ruts to sinking to the center of the earth, there is a theme about the danger of sinking in Everlost. How could this tie into the idea about questioning authority? Are there any other dangers that this idea could represent?
4. When you realized that Mary Hightower uses the Twin Towers as a refuge, how did that make you feel? Did you feel like it was "too soon" or that it was a fitting tribute to 9/11? Allie and Meadow discuss this on p. 82 [paperback version]. How would it change the book if the author avoided the subject completely?
5. If you were in Everlost and you acquired food that had crossed over, do you think you would hoard it for later, devour it immediately, or share it with others?
6. How and why do you think Mary comes up with all her rules? Speculate on how Mary spent her time before she ended up in the Twin Towers.
7. Why do the "Afterlights" choose to be called "afterlights" instead of ghosts? Do you think that this is a fitting name for them? Are there any other names that could be used to describe afterlights?
8. Towards the end of the book, some characters begin to see Mary as not so benevolent. She has the nickname "the Sky Witch" and Allie compares her to a vampire. Do you think Mary is mostly good, mostly bad, or somewhere in between? What was one of the first clues you had?

9. When did you first figure out that there might be a connection between Mary and the McGill? On p. 229 [paperback version] there are some similarities and differences between the two. Are they more similar or more dissimilar? Compare chiming to getting children in repetitive "ruts," collecting coins, etc.
- 10: The author never talks about what's in the light at the end of the tunnel. Even when the characters talk about it they say "they got where they were going." Why do you think the author did this?
11. One review of this book praised it for its theme of questioning those who put themselves in power. When do you think it is good to question "the powers that be"? When do you think you should trust and obey without asking any questions?
12. Names are very important in this book and seem to be the key to identity. In Everlost, people hold onto their real names for dear life and acquire a nickname only if they cannot remember their real name. If you forgot your name, what name or nickname do you think you would acquire? Ask others what they would call you.
13. Appearance is a very odd thing in Everlost. You can't change the clothes you wear, yet there is a danger of changing your appearance if you forget what you looked like. However, two characters in the book change their appearance through force of will. Do these changes reflect something about the character's inner selves? What about when Lief is removed from the pickle barrel and can't remember what he looks like? Does loss of appearance lead to loss of sense of self? Also, when Mikey sees his photograph and changes, does his attitude also change? Finally, what changes would you make? Keep in mind, not all the changes are conscious changes. For example, Nick's chocolate: the more he tries to forget about it, the more it stays on his face.
14. Why do you think Mary finds fortune cookies so dangerous?
15. Do you find Everlost to be a sad place, or an exciting place? If you did not know about the Coins (and that there's a ticket out of Everlost) would it change your opinion? Why do you think the author put the coins in the story. How about the fortune cookies?
16. What would you do if Nick gave you a coin? Would you take it and "get where you're going?" Would you hold onto it and explore Everlost a little longer? Or would you never use it, thinking it was safer to stay put, since you didn't know what might come next?