



BIGGER THAN A BREAD BOX STUDY GUIDE

QUESTIONS FOR DEEPER READING

Bigger than a Bread Box is a book about magic. But many of the themes it addresses are as much about the real world we live in. Here are some questions to stimulate deeper discussions:

1. Rebecca is angry! Who is she angry at, and how does her anger change through the book? Can you think of any times in your own life when you've been angry at someone you love? Can anger be productive?
2. Do you think this book has a hero or a villain? Did you identify with Rebecca throughout the book? Why or why not?
3. How did you feel when Rebecca discovered what the bread box could do? How did you feel when she discovered *how* it worked? Can you think of other times when understanding *how* something works has changed the way you feel about it?
4. How does loneliness operate in the book? How does loneliness operate in your own life? Can you think of other books you've read in which the characters are lonely? How were they the same or different to ***Bigger than a Bread Box***?
5. What character in the book do you identify with the most? What character do you like the most? Are they the same person? Why or why not?
6. In the end of the book, what do you think will happen to Rebecca's family? How does that make you feel? How might you choose to end the book differently? Why?
7. When Rebecca realizes how the box operates, she feels bad for stealing. What does she do to make herself feel better? Would you have done the same? Do you think it's wrong to steal, even if you don't know you're stealing? Does trying to

return the stolen things actually make it better? Why do you think Rebecca put the things in the Goodwill box?

8. When Rebecca arrives in Atlanta, she becomes “Becky” for a while. Have you ever moved to a new place? Would you choose to be someone different, or the same person? Why or why not?
9. Was it wrong of Rebecca to take the bread box home with her to Baltimore? Do you think she’ll be tempted to use it again in the future? Do you think that’s okay?
10. Laurel Snyder based many of the scenes and characters in it on real people from her own life, including her mother and father. How do you think they might have felt, reading this book? Do you think it’s okay to write a novel that “borrows” from someone else’s story? Why or why not?
11. Gran and Rebecca have a special relationship, don’t they? What do you think makes it so special? How do you think Gran feels about everything that’s happening in her house? Do you think Gran knows about the Bread Box? Why or why not?





WRITING PROMPTS

1. Sometimes, the best way to start telling a story is with a small specific detail that connects to a larger story or concept. ***Bigger than a Bread Box*** begins with a fight, but it centers on a very concrete memory of the lights going out. Rebecca describes what that felt like, what her book smelled like, she uses all her senses to describe that moment. Try to remember a moment in your own life as clearly as you can. Use all of your senses! The moment doesn't need to be important or "big." Just focus as closely as you can on the smallest details and tell the story of that moment.
2. ***Bigger than a Bread Box*** weaves song lyrics and lines from poems into a larger text. Take lines from five songs you know by heart—any songs at all! Write them on a piece of paper. Now write a poem using those words. You can add to the words on the page, but you have to use all the words you have!
3. It can be easy to write a story in which an emotion gets simplified. Rebecca is SAD and ANGRY, but she has plenty of moments in ***Bigger than a Bread Box*** when she is also happy or having fun. This contrast is important to the book. Write about one time when something BAD happened to you, but include details of how something funny also happened. Or write about a time when something GOOD was happening, only some aspect of it was messy or scary or sad. In writing, we call this counterpointing!
4. Place is very important in this book. Atlanta and Baltimore are very different cities. As Rebecca notices all the little differences, she remembers her home in close detail. Describe a place you've known well, and attempt to write down the tiniest details about it. The things you think nobody else sees!



RELATED READING: PENNY DREADFUL

Laurel Snyder's novel *Penny Dreadful* shares themes with *Bigger than a Bread Box*. She wrote the two books back to back, and in some ways, she considers *Bigger than a Bread Box* to be a revision of *Penny Dreadful*.

1. Plot: After reading the two books, can you identify some similarities in plot? What are some individual scenes that remind you of each other? What are some key differences in plot? How do these differences in plot change the books?
2. Themes: Are there themes that the two books share? What are they? What themes are distinct from one book to the next?
3. Character: How are Rebecca and Penny different from one another? Are there ways in which they're the same? Which girl seems more real to you? Why do you think this is? Which would you rather be friends with and why?
4. Setting: How does setting affect each of these books? Which would you rather visit, and why? Which feels more real?
5. Tone: What is the tone of each book? How does tone affect the way the books make you feel? Which is more fun? Which do you prefer, and why?
6. Voice: *Penny Dreadful* is written in third person. *Bigger than a Bread Box* is written in third person. How do you think this affects the books?
7. Magic: Both of these books engage with the idea of magic in the real world, but they do so very differently. Are these books fantasies? Which one feels more magical to you? What do you think of the way the magic operates in each books?



LAUREL SNYDER

Laurel Snyder began to write ***Bigger than a Bread Box*** (Random House Children’s Books) because she wanted to figure out the answer to a single question: WHERE DO THINGS COME FROM WHEN THEY ARRIVE BY MAGIC? Shortly after she began, she realized that in her own mind, the idea of “theft” was connected to her childhood memories of her parents divorce. And so two stories began to weave together, the story of an amazing magical box, and the more realistic story of a girl wrenched from her life, and her father.

While this book is fictional, many aspects were taken from Laurel’s life. She grew up in Baltimore, and lived for a time (with her dad, on weekends) in a rowhouse like Jim and Annie’s. While her parents split up when she was only 8, Laurel moved in seventh grade, and she remembers that as a particularly hard transition and year. Today she lives in Atlanta, where she loves her life, but misses seagulls and gravy fries. And during the writing of this book, Laure’s son Lew was the same age as Lew in the book!

Laurel is now at work on a new book, ***Seven Stories Up***, which is a prequel to ***Bigger than a Bread Box***. It tells will the tale of Annie, Rebecca’s mom, when she was twelve. Hopefully, it will explain why a girl who grew up in Atlanta might decide to run away to Baltimore, after some magical adventures of her own.

Laurel’s other books include ***Any Which Wall***, ***Penny Dreadful***, and ***Up and Down the Scratchy Mountains***, as well as a handful of picture books, and a collection of poems (for grownups).

*When Laurel is posing
for an author photo, she looks like this:*



*When she is NOT,
she looks more like this:*



You can always visit her online at laurelsnyder.com.