

LET'S DISCUSS . . .

STERLING
CHILDREN'S
BOOKS



HOWARD WALLACE, P.I.

This discussion guide is designed to help parents, teachers, librarians, and booksellers explore the story's ideas, themes, and meaning with middle-grade readers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Howard Wallace, P.I.* is told from a first-person point of view. How does this affect the story and the information that you find out?
2. Compare and contrast Ivy and Howard. What traits do they share? What traits make them different?
3. In the first chapter, beginning on p. 3, Howard runs into Tim and Carl, two eighth-grade bullies. Based on the things he says to them, how do you think he feels? Based on his actions and the emotions he describes, how do you think he feels? How do you respond to bullies?
4. Who are some of Howard and Ivy's suspects for who stole the student council checks? Can you explain some of the motives the suspects might have? Do any of them have alibis? How did your opinion of the suspects change throughout the book?
5. On p. 64, Ivy asks Howard, "So, who's good cop, and who's bad cop?" Based on the conversation with Bradley Chen that follows, what do you think she means by that? Describe the tactics each person used in their role.
6. Discuss the theme of friendship in this book. What does it have to do with Howard's P.I. business? How does it play a role in the crime that's been committed? How does Howard and Ivy's friendship change over the course of the story?
7. In chapter sixteen, Howard and Ivy approach Miles Fletcher in the cafeteria to ask him where he heard the new rumor about Meredith. Discuss this scene and how it relates to the overall themes of the story. What does Miles mean when he says Howard "doesn't react well to change?"
8. Blue, Howard's bike, is an inanimate object. How does the way Howard interacts with Blue give her a personality for the reader? Describe what Blue would be like if she was a person.
9. In Chapter 25, Howard's sister Eileen helps convince their parents that Howard should be allowed to leave the house. What strategy does she use to do this? What does this tell you about how Howard's parents feel about his detective work?

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EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Go over some mystery vocabulary with students: crime, suspect, motive, alibi, evidence, clue, witness. Split students into groups, and ask them to identify as many of these elements as possible in Howard and Ivy's big case. Next, have students come up with a new crime for Howard and Ivy to solve and identify each qualification in the new case.
2. Ask readers to come up with an imaginary crime that's been committed against them. Then, have them to write a letter to Howard, asking him to take on their case. How will they convince him it's a worthy cause? What do they think might appeal to him about a case?
3. Howard has a map of Grantleyville that he uses to help him solve cases. Ask students what they were imagining Grantleyville's layout to be as they were reading the book. Have them draw their own maps, based on Howard's description of the town and their imaginations. Students can compare and contrast their maps with a classmate's, providing an alternative vision of Grantleyville.
4. Consider how the story would be different from Ivy's perspective. How would the tone and word choices change? Have students choose a scene and rewrite it from her perspective.
5. Howard mentions a few famous detectives in the story: Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe, and Nick and Nora Charles. Have students pick one of these names and do a little research: In what books and/or movies do these characters star? What are some of their characteristics? How are they similar to Howard and/or Ivy?
6. *Howard Wallace, P.I.* needs a book trailer, similar to the way movies need movie trailers. Have students create a story board for the trailer they would film. What scenes would they include? What plot points would they tease or leave out? How would they introduce Howard and Ivy?