

LET'S DISCUSS . . .

STERLING
CHILDREN'S
BOOKS

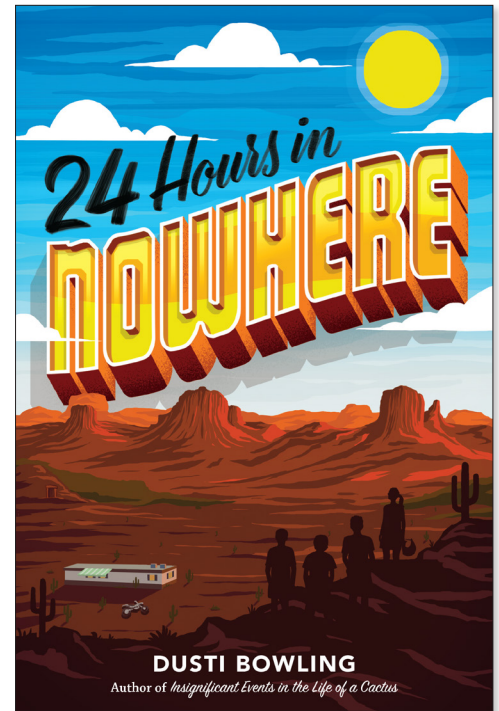
24 Hours in NOWHERE

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

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION: BULLYING, OVERCOMING DIFFERENCES, SACRIFICE, AND FRIENDSHIP

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The home lives of the four main characters are all very different. Which one do you think is most like your home life? Why?
2. Why do you think Bo is a bully? What do you think you should do when you see someone being bullied?
3. What do you think Rossi means when she asks Gus if he's going to let someone else's actions define who he is? Has anyone ever made you feel bad about yourself? How do you handle those feelings?
4. What examples of teamwork can you find in the story? Do you think any of the four characters could have survived if they'd been alone?
5. Why are Gus, Rossi, Jessie, and Matthew so poor? Have they made choices that have caused their poverty?
6. Rossi collects scrap metal from the desert and sells it to the scrap yard so she can maintain her dirt bike. Do you have to pay for any of your own things? If so, how do you earn the money to pay for them?
7. Do you think people look down on others due to their poverty? How do you view others who have less than you?
8. The story is told in the first person, from Gus's point of view. How do you think the story would change if it were told from Rossi's, Jessie's, or Matthew's points of view? What if it were told from Bo's point of view?
9. Can you find an example in the story of a time when Gus, Rossi, Jessie, and Matthew each sacrifice something to help someone?
10. Gus often uses humor when talking about his living situation. Why do you think he does this?
11. Why does Gus believe acing the SAT is his only way to get into college? What does this reveal about the extra challenges people face when they are born into poverty? What do you think it means to be born with privilege?
12. Think about the setting the author has chosen. How does it affect the way you read the story?
13. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story in an hour-by-hour format?
14. The Gus we meet at the beginning of the story is different from the Gus at the end. How is he the same, and how has he changed? How have the other characters changed?
15. How do the relationships between the four main characters change from the time they enter the mine to when they finally make it out of the cave? What do you think caused these changes?



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ACTIVITIES

1. In the story, Gus has to reuse spaghetti and pickle jars to hold water because he can't afford to buy regular water bottles. Think about the kinds of things you regularly throw away that you could reuse or repurpose in some way. Can you talk to your parents or caregivers about finding ways to do this in your household?
2. Gus frequently jokes about eating cheap canned food, generic boxed foods, and very few fruits and vegetables. Why do you think his diet is so limited? Make two different menus for a full week of eating. The first one should be healthy and well-rounded, filled with plenty of fresh meats, fruits, and vegetables. The second menu should be made of mostly generic canned and boxed foods. Take a trip to the grocery store with an adult and write down the prices of the items on your menus. Total the pricing for each menu and discuss in class—both the differences in the pricing and the impact poverty might have on health.
3. Make a map of the town of Nowhere based on Gus's descriptions in the book.
4. The cave in *24 Hours in Nowhere* is based on a couple of incredible caves in Arizona: Kartchner Caverns and Colossal Cave. Check to see if your local library carries books about these caves or research them online. Use this information and the descriptions in the book to draw a map and pictures of the cave.
5. Gus is obsessed with vocabulary words. Play "Vocabulary Memory" using Gus's vocabulary words (there are 36). Use two index cards per word: on one card, write the word, and on the other card, write the definition. Turn the cards over on a table and take turns picking two cards with the goal of matching the word to its definition. The student with the most pairs at the end wins!

