

Study Guide



As Libby looks down from a hotel room to her father's steamboat, a shadow separates from a building off to the right. A second shadow, then a third shadow follows. Suddenly the quiet night explodes with barking dogs . . . bloodhounds!

Hi Friends—Welcome aboard! Can three men racing toward the steamboat find freedom?

By now you may be well acquainted with the *Christina*. Or you may live close enough to a river to be able to see a similar steamboat. If not, turn to the drawing at the front of the book. As Libby goes from one deck to another, check out their names and notice the stairways between them. Soon you'll feel as much at home on the *Christina* as Libby, Caleb, and Samson.

Let's Talk About . . . Words you might need

Find a dictionary and fill in the rest of this boat language:

Bow:

Stern:

Paddlewheel or Paddleboat:

Sidewheeler: Steamboat with two wheels, one on either side of the boat. The *Christina's* name is on the wood housing that protects the wheel.

Sternwheeler:

Lines:

Levee:

Decks, starting at river level:

main deck:

boiler deck: Just above the large boilers that heat water into steam to run the ship. Most of this deck has a railing around an open walkway. The stairs from the main deck lead up to that walkway and the large main cabin where guests and crew gather to eat.

hurricane deck:

texas deck: The captain's cabin and directly behind is Libby's cabin.

Now let's travel back to 1857. Use the blank space between questions to write your answers or create sections in your loose-leaf notebook when you want to write more. To find something in the story, check the number (ch. 1) at the end of the first question. That means chapter 1. Look there until you see another note (ch. 2, or 3, or 4) directing you to a different chapter.

Let's Talk About . . . The story

- How would you describe Libby at the beginning of this novel? (ch. 1)
- Why does her pa, Captain Norstad, want Libby living on the *Christina* again?

- Libby wants something she cares about more than anything. What deep hurt has made her feel that way?
- What does it mean to Libby to be part of a never-give-up family?
- What does a never-give-up family mean to her pa?
- At the end of the first chapter Pa mentions a boy who works on the *Christina*. Why does Caleb already seem important?
- What big problems does Libby face when she leaves a mansion to live on a steamboat? (ch. 2)
- Why do you think Caleb keeps Libby from snooping around the big box? (ch. 3)
- How does Caleb keep from answering Libby's questions? What secret is he hiding?
- Captain Norstad wants Libby to have a Newfie. Why? But how does Libby feel about it?
- If you don't know a Newfoundland, you might be able to get acquainted with one through a pet store or a chapter of Newfoundland owners near you. www.newfoundlanddogs.com. Warning: It's hard to not bring a Newfie home!

Let's Talk About . . . Conflict

- In what we would now call homeschooling, Captain Norstad begins talking about a fugitive slave law passed in 1850. How did people in northern states handle what the law asked them to do? (ch. 4)
- What causes the disagreements between Caleb and Libby? (ch. 5) Take sides. One of you on his side. One on hers. Talk about what's going on in their world.
- Sparks fill Caleb's eyes. "You think that being treated well makes up for being *owned*?" When they reach St. Louis, where does he take Libby? Why? (ch. 6)
- What is the crack in Libby's armor—the place where she realizes what is happening to Jordan?
- How did Caleb protect Libby when she could have been badly hurt? (ch. 7)
- When Libby changed her dress and hairstyle, what did those changes symbolize?
- In what ways did Jordan remind Libby of royalty? How could someone who was a slave remind her of a king?
- What has Libby learned about her father's purpose in life? How did he live that purpose?
- What does it mean to have a purpose in life?

Let's Talk About . . . Freedom . . . What is it?

- Does being a freedom seeker mean that you can do anything you want? Give reasons for your answer.
- How did runaway slaves find their way at night? (ch. 8)
- When Libby was curious, Gran told her, “To understand Caleb you have to understand what he believes in.” What *does* Caleb believe in? Why?
- What are Caleb’s reasons for the way he answers Libby’s questions? Are they good reasons or wrong? Explain.
- How did Jordan act when his leg irons were off? (ch. 10)
- Libby thinks, *Jordan is safe now*. But what would be the cost if the wrong person found him? Talk about the obstacles Jordan still faces.
- If the wrong person learned that Captain Norstad hid a runaway slave what might happen?

Let's Talk About . . . Relationships

- What does Libby mean when she tells herself, “*I didn’t know that being a never-give-up family would cost so much*”?
- Why does Caleb not trust Libby? Would you trust her? Why or why not?

- What important quality is at the center of Pa's relationship with Caleb? What is a code of honor?
- What happened to Libby when she saw the whip marks on Jordan's back? (ch. 12)
- What did Jordan's daddy teach him about forgiveness? How did Jordan choose to forgive?
- What happens to us if we hate someone?
- Why was Jordan free, even though he was a slave?
- What did Jordan's mother promise him? Why did her promise give Jordan a sense of purpose?
- Why were the words "Let my people go!" important to long-ago Israelites? (Exodus 7:14–16)

Now—think about Jordan crying out—*Let my people go!*
Sing with them!

Let's Talk About . . . Making choices

- Pastor Salter was the real-life pastor of the First Congregational Church in Burlington, Iowa. What bold prayers does he pray in this story? (ch. 13)
- How did Jordan, Caleb, and Libby hide their identity? (ch. 14)

- If you were in the wagon when Riggs rode up, what would be the hardest part for you?
- Who are the Society of Friends, also known as the Quakers? Why is truth so important to them?
- How did Caleb tell the truth when Riggs asked, “What have you got in your wagon?”
- When Libby and Caleb are scared, he tells Libby something her pa said: “We all have times when we’re afraid. What counts is what we do, even though we’re scared.” Have you had a time when you were scared and made an unwise choice?
- Have you had a different time when you were scared and did the right thing?
- What did Samuel do so that his father could honestly say, “I saw no slave enter my house”? (ch. 15)
- Why did Libby suddenly understand the relationship between Caleb and her father?
- When Mr. Kimberly told Caleb it was dangerous for him to come to Salem, what did Caleb answer?
- When Caleb asked, “Will you forgive me for bringing danger to your house?”, how did Mr. Kimberly answer?

Let's Talk About . . . God's leading

- What did Jordan tell Emma? Why did she believe him? (ch. 16)
- What is the difference between God telling us to do something and ourselves telling us to do it?
- When Jordan gave a warning, Caleb asked, "Remember Pastor Salter's prayer?" As Caleb remembered those words, how did he know what to do? (ch. 17)
- In what ways was Emma stronger than Libby in a time of danger? How did Emma know where it was safe to cross? (ch. 18)
- Who has become part of Libby's never-give-up family? (ch. 19) In what ways has Libby changed since the beginning of this book? What kind of person was she at the beginning? What kind of person is she now?
- Why did Libby ask forgiveness of each person before she left the barn?
- Caleb told her, "Libby, just do what's in front of you." What did he mean?
- How did Caleb pray for her? Why does it seem safe to talk to God the way Caleb did?

Let's Talk About . . . Digging deeper

Different fugitive slave laws were passed at different times. Look under *Fugitive slave laws* in an encyclopedia such as *World Book* and read about a clause in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Read about another fugitive law passed in the Compromise of 1850. What demands did such laws make?

- To see a recovered steamboat in the *Christina's* time, see www.1856.com for the steamboat *Arabia* at Kansas City, Missouri.

Let's Think About . . . Possible field trips

- **The George M. Verity Riverboat Museum, Keokuk, Iowa**
www.geomverity.org Wonderful photos of various areas in a genuine steamboat along the Mississippi River.
- **Steamboat Arabia Museum, Kansas City, Missouri.**
www.1856.com See a steamboat and artifacts resurrected and restored from a wreck in the Missouri River.
- **National Mississippi Riverboat Museum and Aquarium, Dubuque, Iowa**
www.mississippirivermuseum.com Large complex at Tri-city hub along the Mississippi River.

Because of the time lapse between my visiting a place for research and your possible trip please check these sites online and/or by phone for more information before traveling there.

Let's Talk About . . . Your own writing

- **Talk and write about how these laws affected runaway slaves in different areas.** How did these laws also affect the people who wanted to help runaway slaves?
- What did Captain Norstad mean when he said that a fugitive slave law passed in 1850 was a bad law? (ch. 11)
- **Think about an area of the Underground Railroad that especially interests you.** What would you like to learn more about? Research this important movement and report what you find.

**Jordan escaped once . . . but will he need to escape again?
What will the Freedom Seekers do about it?**

**Thanks for being my friends through books. I'll meet you in
the next Freedom Seekers novel . . . *Race for Life!***