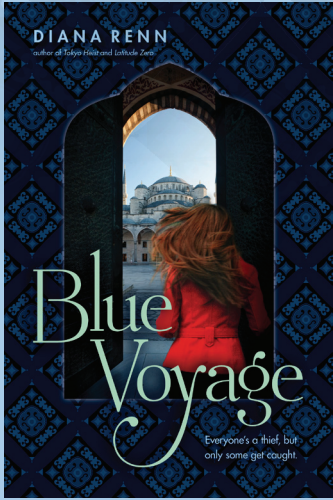


Discussion Guide



AN INTRICATELY CRAFTED MYSTERY SET IN THE CONTEMPORARY MIDDLE EAST.

Zan is a politician's daughter and an adrenaline junkie. Whether she's rock climbing or shoplifting, she loves to live on the edge. But she gets more of a rush than she bargained for on a forced mother-daughter bonding trip to Turkey, where she finds herself in the crosshairs of an antiques smuggling ring. These criminals believe that Zan can lead them to an ancient treasure that's both priceless and cursed. Until she does so, she and her family are in grave danger. Zan's quest to save the treasure—and the lives of people she cares about—leads her from the sparkling Mediterranean, to the bustle of Istanbul's Grand Bazaar, to the eerie and crumbling caves of Cappadocia. But it seems that nowhere is safe, and there's only so high she can climb before everything comes tumbling down.

PART I: THE TURKISH RIVIERA

1. The novel opens with Zan perusing a copy of the Lonely Planet Guide to Turkey. Have you ever used such a guidebook before or during a trip? Was it helpful? What other ways are there to explore an unfamiliar setting?
2. Zan reminds her mother they are traveling on their own for “[a]dventure . . . Life experience. Fresh perspective.” Do you think Zan and her mother are actually traveling for these reasons? Are other characters traveling for these reasons? Have you ever gone out of your way for adventure, life experience, or a fresh perspective? Did your experience match your expectations?
3. Zan laments being unable to document her time on the Yasemin without her confiscated phone. Do her feelings change as the novel progresses? How long have you been disconnected from the virtual world? How was the experience?
4. Early on, we find out about Zan's vitiligo, a skin disorder that causes a loss of skin pigmentation in blotches. How does Zan handle her condition, and what does that say about her personality?
5. How is Aunt Jackie handling the death of her husband Berk? How do others react to her insistence that her husband's death was no accident? Why does Zan believe her aunt?
6. What were your first impressions of the other passengers on the boat? Did your impressions of anyone alter as the novel progressed? Positively? Negatively?
7. Why is rock climbing such a “grounding” activity for Zan?

Discussion Guide

8. Sage shares this quotation from British explorer and travel writer Dame Freya Stark: “To awaken quite alone in a strange town is one of the pleasantest sensations in the world. You are surrounded by adventure.” Do you agree with this sentiment? How can being “quite alone” feel so pleasant?
9. Why is Zan so eager to strike up a friendship with Sage? How would you characterize their growing bond? At what point does Zan begin to question Sage’s actions and their true intentions? Did you ever question Sage’s actions or intentions?
10. Zan contemplates this Dame Freya Stark quotation: “The beckoning counts, and not the clicking latch behind you.” How would you interpret this expression?
11. Sage tells Zan about Suleiman the Magnificent, who had his heart buried apart from his body so it could stay near the place he loved most. But he is not the only historical figure to have had his heart buried separately. Others include Frédéric Chopin, Thomas Hardy, Percy Shelley, and Anne Boleyn. What is the symbolic significance of this act? Have you ever felt your heart tugging you toward another place?
12. By the end of part one, Zan wonders if there is such a thing as a “good motive” behind a bad decision, such as joining a smuggling ring or lying to the police to help another. What do you think? What examples can you find in the novel of characters whose “good motives” lead them into unethical territory?

PART II: ISTANBUL

1. How would you describe Nazif’s first interactions with Zan? Why do you think he acts the way he does?
2. Inspector Lale informs Zan: “[N]ot everyone in the force takes me seriously. There aren’t many women in my position within the national police – or any police department here.” How does Inspector Lale circumvent these obstacles in order to do her job? How might impressions of women in the police force compromise her investigation?
3. Nazar boncuğu (evil eye amulets) appear more than once during Zan’s time in Turkey. Why do you think these talismans become such a constant on her journey? What might they symbolize for Zan?
4. Zan finds a similarity between Sage and Uncle Berk: “a desperate need for money to make their problems disappear and their dreams come true.” What problems were they both trying to rectify? What were their dreams? Were they successful? Do you believe they went too far to achieve these goals?

Discussion Guide

5. Sage confirms what Zan read in Uncle Berk's British archaeology article: some collectors consider what they're doing as "recovering" and not "stealing," as "something noble, saving objects from neglect or invisibility." Do you agree that this reasoning can justify certain artifacts leaving their place of origin? In your opinion, do these ancient artifacts belong to Turkey or the world? Can there be a compromise?
6. What impressions did you have of Turkey before reading this novel? Did the novel confirm or challenge any of your ideas of this country? What fact about Turkey surprised you the most?
7. As part two comes to a close, new truths are discovered about Zan's acquaintances from her time on the Yasmine. Did they surprise you? In retrospect, what clues did the author plant for these reveals?

PART III: CAPPADOCIA

1. Within the caves, the girls come across drawings of people with their faces rubbed off. Why? What does this tell you about the history of the area?
2. Many believe that the Karun Treasure is cursed. Does what happens to Zan and other characters, like Uncle Berk, support or debunk this belief?
3. Both Zan and Sage have complex family situations. Do these circumstances shift by the end of the book? What are their thoughts on each other's families?
4. What does Zan learn from the numerous families she comes across: from the family on the rooftop, to the makeshift one on the boat? How would Zan define "family" by the end of the novel?
5. Zan and her mother were once closer, but not when they started their trip. What caused the rupture? In what ways did their time in Turkey help them to repair their relationship? What do you think both need to continue to work on?
6. Divulging what you know is a prominent theme throughout the novel. When did Zan and other characters not speak up about what they knew? Is this a type of deception? What are the consequences of not speaking up?
7. Zan and Nazif's feelings for each other gradually blossom. Why are they attracted to one another? Do you think their relationship might be able to continue? Why or why not?

Discussion Guide

8. Near the end of the novel, Zan has a revelation: “My parents’ story is not my own. I could make different choices. I could get busy leading my own life instead of just reacting to theirs.” When do you think Zan began to live her own life – at this moment of realization, or earlier? Is leading your own life instead of the one your parents have planned for you a necessary part of transitioning into adulthood?
9. The Glazer family motto, according to Zan’s mom is, “Things could always be worse.” Is this a good motto? By the end of the novel, Zan is looking for her own dictum. What would your suggestions be? What might your own family or personal motto be?
10. Zan admits that she has been inauthentic, a fake. In what ways does she conceal her true self? When does she begin revealing her true self? How does her quest to accept and reveal her authentic self relate to the artifacts Zan attempts to recover?



ACTIVITIES

1. Zan’s English teacher describes how to write a “you are here” journal entry as follows: “Just write about where you are now . . . Look up. Look around you. Capture the moment. It might seem boring to you at the time, but you might look back again later and find that it was actually interesting.” Write 3-5 of your own “You are here” journal entries, as Zan does on page 55. They can be written at very ordinary moments, such as while you are having lunch or waiting for the bus or right before you go to bed. Then consider the kinds of details you observed across these journal entries. What types of details seem to catch your eye? What do you tend to pay attention to? What moods or themes emerge in your observations?
2. How would you describe one of your favorite destinations (such as a park, a beach, a specific building) if it were an entry in a guidebook? Think about your audience for such a guide. What information might you highlight? What might you leave out? For some ideas, click through Lonely Planet’s online guide to Turkey or look at other guidebooks.
3. Look at a sampling of at least three guidebooks (online or hard copies) about the city, state or country in which you live. Do you feel the guidebook accurately represents your home? If any information is missing or misrepresented, what are the possible reasons for that? Look up the biographies of guidebooks’ author(s). Are they from this place? How well do they seem to know it? Do you think guidebooks should be written by “outsiders” or “insiders” to a place? Does it matter? Write or discuss your analysis.

Discussion Guide

4. Dame Freya Stark plays a vital role in Sage's newfound life as a traveler. Research a famous travel writer – such as Gerturde Bell, Jenny Diski, Paul Theroux, Richard Wright, Jack Kerouac, or even Dame Freya Stark herself. Find one that speaks to you. (Remember: Travel writing can be fiction or nonfiction!) Find out where this person traveled, what motivated his or her travels, and a sample passage of their travel writing. What specifically do you like about this passage? Does the writer compel you to travel to this place? Is so, why? Find at least three examples of how he or she brings a location to life or persuade you to travel there. Write or discuss your findings.

5. If you were to be a travel writer, where would you journey and what would you write about? Why? Write a sample entry of your yet-to-be-published travel book. You can mimic the style of the writer you researched for activity 4, or experiment and discover your own personal style – nonfiction or fiction. Then compare and contrast this entry with your guidebook-style entry in activity 2. When is one style of travel writing more useful than another? Which one do you prefer? Why?

6. The importance of preserving history through art, artifacts, written documents and landmarks resurfaces throughout the novel. Why are cultural artifacts so vulnerable to theft or destruction, especially during times of war? Whose job is it to save them? Research a person who has worked to preserve cultural artifacts, historical documents, or landmarks in real life. (Some recent examples include Abdel Kader Haidara, Maria Reiche, Aaron Lansky). What motivated this person's work? Did he or she work alone, or find support for the cause? What kind of opposition did this person face, and how did they overcome it? What would have happened if this person hadn't taken action? How does it compare to the actions people take to preserve history in *Blue Voyage*? Write or discuss your findings.

QUESTIONS BY LOURDES KEOCHGERIEN, EDITOR-AT-LARGE FOR YARN: YOUNG ADULT REVIEW NETWORK (YAREVIEW.NET)

ACTIVITIES WRITTEN BY LOURDES KEOCHGERIEN AND DIANA RENN

GUIDE DESIGNED BY RENEE COMBS DESIGNS (RENEECOMBSDESIGNS.WEBBLY.COM)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diana Renn is the author of the young adult mystery novels *TOKYO HEIST*, *LATITUDE ZERO* and *BLUE VOYAGE* all published by Viking/Penguin. She is also the Fiction Editor at YARN (Young Adult Review Network), an award-winning online magazine featuring short-form writing for teens. Diana grew up in Seattle and now lives outside of Boston with her husband and son.