

The Scavengers

by Michael Perry



The name “Maggie” isn’t tough enough for a girl growing up OutBubble. There are no volleyball games or ice cream cones or amusement parks out here. An OutBubble girl has to find her own food, build her own shelter, withstand unpredictable weather, craft her own armor, undertake dangerous supply trips, and fend off vicious solar bears and GreyDevils. A girl like this has to claim a name that tells the world she is ready for anything, and “Ford Falcon” is just such a name.

Ford lives with her parents and little brother Dookie in a make-shift, tarp-covered shack perched on a ridge overlooking a ravine full of old garbage. With a lot of hard work—and the help of a few loyal and somewhat kooky neighbors—they are managing to survive. Ford even has time now and then to study Emily Dickinson poems with her Ma. This life is far from easy, but she knows her parents must have had good reasons for choosing not to move them into a government-run Bubble City on Declaration Day. That URCorn the Bubblers eat all the time is disgusting anyway! At least her family is in this together . . . but for how long?

Dad has been acting strangely lately. He is always preoccupied, and he frequently wanders off, leaving them alone for hours. He

isn’t looking well, either. Meanwhile, the GreyDevils are ranging closer and closer to their camp, and Ford can’t protect Ma and Dookie by herself. Will she be able to hold her family together and figure out what her dad is hiding before someone gets hurt . . . or worse?

About the Author

Although he is a *New York Times* bestselling humorist and host of a nationally-syndicated radio show, Michael Perry doesn’t take his success for granted. He grew up on a dairy farm in the tiny town of New Auburn, Wisconsin (his inspiration for “Nobbern” in *The Scavengers*!). His childhood days were filled with chores, reading, and singing with family and friends. As a young man, Perry supported himself through nursing school by working on a ranch in Wyoming. These experiences inspired him to become a professional writer. Making a name for himself, however, took many years of people-watching, practice, perseverance, and patience, and Perry vows he’ll never forget it. These days, he is back in Wisconsin, happily writing, running a small homestead with his family, and juggling his side-jobs as a volunteer firefighter, a self-taught pig farmer, an essayist for various major magazines, a singer-songwriter, and the host of Tent Show Radio. *The Scavengers* is his first novel for young readers. Watch [this interview](#) to hear Perry explain how his life on the farm inspired him to write this futuristic story.

Getting Started

You can find *The Scavengers* at your local or school library, or at local or online bookstores. It’s also available as an ebook for your iPad, Kindle, or Nook.

Investigate

Every good story is full of captivating characters, timeless and timely themes, significant settings, pivotal plot points, and vivid vocabulary that combine to engage our brains and our hearts. In this section of the website, you will find activities that invite you to dig deeper into each of these literary elements for a better understanding and enjoyment of the book.

To aid your investigation, save our “Writing While You Read” guide (see pages 22 and 23), with helpful tips on keeping a reading journal and annotating a book while you read.

Respond to the following prompts in your Reading Journal as you read (or re-read!) Chapters 1-18 of *The Scavengers*:

- The key way a writer helps his or her readers connect with a story is through its characters. Which qualities, behaviors, and choices do you think make some characters more appealing than others? To help you answer this question with specific evidence from the book, use the Character Grid you’ll find on pages 24 and 25 below (and you can make extra copies of page 25 if you need them). Tuck it inside your book, and, each time you meet a new character, take a minute to jot down the name and your initial observations about him or her on your Character Grid. Be sure to revisit your Grid every few chapters or so, too! There may be more ideas you want to add as you get to know each character better.
- In the book’s opening pages, we learn how finding an old station wagon “sunk to the bumpers” in Goldmine Gully inspired “Maggie” to rename herself “Ford Falcon” (1-2). Even though “it’s not even a cool car,” Ford immediately loves it because it will “let [her] hide out but still be where [she belongs]” (19). Why is it so important for Ford to have a place of her own away from, but nearby, her family? Does this have anything to do with her age? Do you ever feel the need to have an “alone place” of your own? Why or why not?
- Ma reminds Ford, “Just because our *life* is rough around the edges doesn’t mean we have to be rough around the edges” (9). For this reason, She “[does] everything she [can] to give [her children] little moments of a normal life” (14). What do you think Ma means by “rough around the edges”? What kinds of things does she ensure the children do and learn, so they will have a “normal” childhood despite the way they must live? How do you think Ford might think and behave differently if her mother did not insist upon raising her children in this way?



- How do Toad and Arlinda Hopper impact Ford's family's overall quality of life? In your response, be sure to include specific examples from the text. Consider not only what the Hoppers give and do but also how they talk and interact with the new family in the neighborhood. Knowing the rough, lawless nature of OutBubble living, what surprises you about how the Hoppers treat their new neighbors? Are people in our own world typically so willing to lend a hand? Why or why not?
- Ford and her family are determined to do whatever it takes to survive, which is no easy task in this unpredictable OutBubble world. They spend most of every day tending crops and livestock, foraging for edible plants, digging for items to trade, maintaining their shelter, and defending themselves from threats—all without the assistance of electricity, gasoline, or guns (94). When they do have a few free minutes, they must make their own games to play or read from the two books they have. Ford points out that, when she was younger, her mother “read [*Little House on the Prairie*] over and over, until I had every chapter memorized. Every time I heard about the hardships little Laura Ingalls and her family went through it helped me a little bit with understanding ours” (14). Why would this children's book, about a young girl and her pioneer family homesteading in the 1800s Midwest, have meant so much to Ford? How do you think this book has helped her get used to the demands of living OutBubble as a child?
- Oftentimes in novels, the story is told by an omniscient—all-knowing—narrator who gives us all the details not only about the story's events but also about each character's thoughts, feelings, and actions. In *The Scavengers*, however, the story is told from a first-person point of view. This means all of the story's events are filtered through the eyes, ears, thoughts, and feelings of a single character: Ford Falcon. How might this narrative voice be more appealing to young readers like you? In the case of this book, what would young readers and Ford have in common? In what way(s) would those commonalities lead to a more meaningful reading experience?
- In Chapter 14, Ford prepares to set off on a supply mission to Nobbern with Toad and Tilapia Tom's son Toby. She reflects, “I know there will be danger, but it makes me proud that Toad trusts me to come along and help out. Some people would think it was weird that my parents would let me do this, but we live in a world where each of us has to do what we do best, no matter what our age” (83). What do you think prevents people from living by this same principle in our world right now? How might the fact that we're safe and our needs are more easily met affect the way we divvy up roles between adults and children?
- Since Declaration Day, the government has stopped overseeing transportation, food distribution, buying and selling of goods, and law enforcement OutBubble. The remaining citizens are left to fend for themselves, as long as they stay off the Cornvoy Roads and out of the Sustainability Preserves, that is! How has this removal of formal governance affected Nobbern, the “ghost town” nearest to where Ford lives (99)? What does it look like? How do people interact with one another in town? How do they exchange goods and services? What is most striking to you about the way Nobbern works? In your response, be sure to include specific examples from the book to support your observations.

Respond to the following prompts in your Reading Journal as you read (or re-read!) Chapters 19 – 41 of *The Scavengers*:

- Although Toad's vehicle, the *Scary Pruner*, is a marvel of ingenuity and creativity, its many defensive weapons and fortifications tell us just how dangerous a supply trip can be. All along the road to and from Nobbern, Toad, Ford, and Toby must watch out for an attack from the mysterious GreyDevils. According to Ford, "Nobody really knows where the GreyDevils come from, but we'd all be happier if they went back. Toad says they probably started out as humans like us, and that's why we should try not to kill them. . ." (6). Ford, though, doesn't quite know how to feel about them. Their eyes are yellow and hollow. Their bodies are "sickly and undernourished" (117). There are "tear streaks and snot streaks" down their faces, and they make a "sad, long, mournful sound" (114, 117). For some weird reason, they will stop at nothing to find that terrible tasting URCorn. If Toad, Ford, and Toby cannot keep them at bay, the GreyDevils will swarm and ransack the *Scary Pruner*, stampeding anyone who gets in their way. Who do you think these GreyDevils are, and why do they behave this way? Why don't they make homes and find food for themselves, like Ford and her companions have done?
- How does Ford's relationship with her parents compare to her friendship with Toad and Arlinda Hopper? How do they talk to one another? What do they do together? How do they treat one another? Create a Venn diagram (see pages 26 and 27) in your Reading Journal to help you organize your observations into similarities and differences. Then look back over your notes and consider which of these adults best understands the kind of guidance and encouragement Ford needs.
- At this point, you've probably caught yourself giggling more than a few times! Look back over the chapters you've read so far and, in your Reading Journal, note which characters have made you laugh and at what moments in the story. When do the characters themselves crack jokes and laugh with one another? Even though they are almost constantly hungry, scared, and uncertain about the future, they manage to keep their sense of humor. Does this surprise you? Why do you think the book's author, Michael Perry, has included these elements of humor (such as the rooster's antics and Toad's spoonerisms), particularly throughout the early chapters?
- At the end of Chapter 25, Ford finds herself forcibly separated from her family for the first time in her life. After searching for them everywhere, she returns to the Shelter Tree, thinking, "I am so wet, so cold, so tired. So lonely for my family. So lonely for my days as Maggie, when I had no responsibility for those around me" (147).



Then she begins to sob, "quietly" and "hard" (147). Why do you think losing her family makes Ford long for her "Maggie" days? Why do you think she is always so private about her feelings? When you feel overwhelmed, as Ford does in this scene, how do you handle it? Does it help (or hurt) to share your fears and worries with trusted family and friends? Why?

- When Ford finds her little brother Dookie's limp body under the roots of the Shelter Tree, she immediately pushes her own feelings aside and resolves to become his caretaker in her parents'

absence: “I stop crying. Somewhere within me comes strength I didn’t know I had” (149-150). When Dookie is fully recovered from his injuries, Ford even moves the two of them back to the shack on Skullduggery Ridge. She realizes that trying to take care of him on her own is probably prideful, but she does it anyway. Why does Ford want so badly to be a “stand-in” for her parents? What reasons, other than her desire to “prove [herself],” might compel Ford to live on her own without adult supervision (157)? Why do you think Toad and Arlinda allow her decision to stand?

- “Fiction is characters in conflict.” --Sherwood Wirt, professional journalist & author
As you’ve probably already noticed, many of the characters we meet in literature or film are in the midst of a conflict. In fact, many people argue that without conflict, there is no story! A story’s conflict—and how the main characters respond to it—keeps the story moving forward, makes it interesting, and gives it more meaning for readers. The four most common types of conflict are: person versus person, person vs. society, person vs. nature, and person vs. self. With which type(s) of conflict do you see Ford struggling? How so? Remember to include specific evidence from the book to support your answer.
- At the beginning of Chapter 33, Ford realizes the “skunk-monkey” she is about to club is not a GreyDevil; it’s her dad! How does this moment, and what she learns about Dad afterward, change the way she looks at, talks about, and thinks of the yellow-eyed GreyDevils going forward? Why?
- After several days of rest and regular meals in the Hoppers’ pig shed, Dad begins to look and sound more like himself. He finally admits to Ford why he left Skullduggery Ridge and why they have been living OutBubble all these years. Now that you know Dad’s backstory, do you think he was a coward to leave his family unprotected? Why or why not? In what way(s) might his craving for URCorn have impacted his decision-making skills? Why doesn’t Ford see his craving as an acceptable excuse for his behavior?

Respond to the following prompts in your reading journal as you read (or re-read!) Chapters 42 – 59 of *The Scavengers*:

- Why do Ford and Toby make such good traveling companions? What are their complementary strengths and weaknesses? Why do you think there is no hint of romance between these two? In your response, be sure to reference specific evidence from the book for support.
- Early on in the book, Ford explains, “Out here, you eat what you have, not what you *want*” (42). The truth of this statement becomes even clearer to her when a man emerges from the city rubble and offers her and Toby rat jerky. Although he sees they are repulsed by his food and rat-pelt poncho, he is quick to point out that “[n]obody wants to eat a rat, nobody wants to wear a rat . . . [u]ntil they’re starving or freezing” (230). Perhaps Ford and Toby simply haven’t become that desperate . . . yet. In what way(s) is having food choices a luxury? How do the various characters in this book help us better understand the difference between a luxury and a necessity? A need and a want? When you imagine yourself living OutBubble, do you see yourself adapting well or struggling? Why?
- Of all the adults in Ford’s life, Ma is the only one who refuses to call her “Ford Falcon.” Clearly she loves and respects her daughter just as much as the other adults do. Why, then, do Toad, Arlinda, and Dad choose to honor the girl’s wishes while her own mother does not? Why do you think Ma is stubbornly holding on to the name “Maggie”?

- Throughout the novel, Ford pushes back against the assumption that, just because she is a girl, she shouldn't say, learn, and do certain things. For example, Daniel Beard probably wouldn't have liked to see her using the tools and techniques in his *The American Boy's Handy Book*, yet she does—and improves upon them, too! Her dad tries to stop her from going to the capital to rescue Ma by saying, “I am the *man*. This is my responsibility” even though Ford is the one who has the actual survival skills and experience necessary to make the dangerous journey (206). How might a character like Ford lead people to reconsider stereotypes about what girls and women are capable of accomplishing? In what way(s) could this character inspire young, female readers in particular? Which of Ford's qualities, behaviors, or ideas are most admirable to you? Why?
- In the book's final chapters, there are signs that the government and CornVivia may be losing control of the Bubbling situation. Several well-intentioned science experiments have gone awry. OutBubblers are surviving, and, in some cases, even thriving without government and big business interference. The Sustainability Reserve guards have begun firing real, rather than rubber, bullets at the GreyDevils. The people who have been regularly eating URCorn now release the scent of it through their pores. The swarming GreyDevils seem able to distinguish the authorities from regular OutBubblers, as though they want revenge. Lettuce Face and the Fat Man are growing more and more desperate to shut down their international competitors and critics. Overall, things don't seem to be going according to their plan.

Do you think these are just growing pains that will eventually get sorted out, or is there a larger problem? What effect has the highly celebrated Patriotic Partnering between CornVivia and the government had on the nation it was supposed to save? Has it “[allowed] every citizen of this great nation an opportunity to live life free



of hunger, want, or danger” (141)? Is this the kind of partnership you think our government should pursue in the future? Why or why not? In your response, be sure to mention specific examples from the book to support your stance.

- Compare the way Ford sees UnderBubble living to the way her parents see it. Is the Bubble City true to the advertisements Ford has seen? What would the family gain by living there? What would they give up? How do their life experiences affect their point of view? (Keep in mind, of course, that Ford has lived virtually her entire life OutBubble while her parents still have strong, fond memories of their life before Declaration Day.) In your Reading Journal, create another Venn diagram (see pages 26 and 27) to help you visualize the pros and cons of their decision. Which setting best suits each character? Why?
- Since they've been living OutBubble, Ford and Ma have had access to only two books: *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* and Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*. Take a moment to learn a bit more about [Dickinson](#) and [Wilder](#), who each woman was and how she lived. Of all the beloved books this literature

scholar must have had on her shelves, why do you think Ma selected these two as she was running away from civilization? In what way(s) does Dickinson represent an UnderBubble approach to life while Wilder represents an OutBubble approach? How do you think these authors' differing perspectives have led Ma and Ford to approach the future in opposite ways?

- Now that you've finished the book, look back over the notes you've made about Ford Falcon on your Character Grid (see pages 24 and 25). Based on the evidence you've collected, do you think she is a static or a dynamic character? Before you make up your mind, go back and re-read the book's Introduction on pp. 1-2. At what point in the story's timeline is she speaking to us? (For a hint, pay particular attention to her clothing!) Do you notice anything different about the way Ford sees herself and her world in these opening pages as compared to the first few chapters of the book? If so, what has changed and why? Have the other characters on your Grid changed more or less than Ford as a result of their experiences over the course of this story? Why might that be the case?
- In literary studies, works are generally divided into four major genres: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. Within those genres, though, there are lots of different subgenres to help us keep track of all the different types of plays, poems, essays, and stories we read. That's why you see far more than four sections in your local library or bookstore. If a bookseller were trying to categorize this book by subgenre, on which shelf would it land? Tricky question! In *The Scavengers*, Michael Perry has included elements of two popular subgenres of fiction: post-apocalyptic and dystopian. Post-apocalyptic fiction generally revolves around efforts to survive and rebuild civilization in the aftermath of a catastrophic event (such as an alien invasion, a human-made disaster, or an extreme weather phenomenon) that wipes out most of humankind. Dystopian fiction, on the other hand, focuses on a futuristic (sometimes falsely perfect) society in which citizens feels trapped, miserable, fearful, and manipulated by forces beyond their control. Using these definitions as guides, make a two-column list in your Reading Journal. Then categorize details from the book's setting, characters, conflicts, and events as either dystopian or post-apocalyptic. Into which sub-genre does *The Scavengers* best fit? Where would you shelve it and why?
- Why do you think Perry chose to name this novel *The Scavengers*? What is a "scavenger," and what sorts of creatures and/or behaviors do we typically associate with that term? How do you think this information helps readers better understand the overall theme or message Perry hopes to get across to readers through this story? What do you think Perry hopes we will reconsider or learn after reading his book?

Getting to the Root



English is a living language. It changes and grows all the time. One of the best ways to understand the history of the English language and to unlock the meanings of unfamiliar words is to learn Latin and Greek word parts. As you study biology, you will learn more and more of these word parts, and once you know them, you will begin to recognize them in all kinds of words—and you'll find that your knowledge of those word parts will help you decipher the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Roots are the "base" of plants, and Latin and Greek roots form the base of many English words. For example, the Latin root *audi* means "to hear." How many modern English words can you think of that include the root *audi*?

Next, take a look at each word part below. Beside each part is a word from *The Scavengers* containing that word part. You can find the word in context on the page number in parentheses.

- **for – ford** (2)
- **phone – gramophone** (48)
- **plac – placidly** (94)
- **de, crep – decrepit** (117)
- **re, patr – repatriated** (238)
- **pet, ant – petulant** (261)

1. Can you determine the meaning of the root from your knowledge of the word beside it?
2. If not, think of other words that you know that also contain that root. What do those words have in common? Based on that common element, can you figure out the meaning of the root?
3. If you're still stumped, check out this [list of Latin and Greek roots](#).
4. Now that you know the meaning of the root, how many words can you generate that use the root?
5. Once you understand the meaning of the root, you'll find that even your understanding and appreciation of familiar words will deepen and grow when you think about how that root works in those words.

Words, Words, Words

The Scavengers is full of great words. Below is a list of some of the words from the book that may be unfamiliar to you, along with the page number on which each word appears in the story. Be sure to follow the steps below for other words in the book that are new to you.

- constitution (16) **HINT:** *This word has several possible meanings. To determine which one fits, be sure to check for context clues in the sentence where the word appears.*
- scavenge (17)
- tinker (18)
- baneful (48)
- ricocheted (64)
- demented (71)
- prevalent (77)
- feistiness (77)
- extract (92)
- initiated (100)
- winch (121)
- poultices (150)
- astride (170)
- futility (170)
- maim (176)
- haggard (194)
- disoriented (216)
- writhes (219)
- stalactites (220)
- stalagmites (220)
- proboscis (255)
- adept (260)
- elusive (260)
- conundrum (263)
- perusing (265)
- incapacitation (299)



Before you look these words up in a dictionary—or ask someone what they mean—try working through the following steps:

1. Generate a list of other words that share one or more of the same word parts. What do the words on the list have in common? Are there any clues from those commonalities that you can use to help figure out the meaning of the unknown word? Hint: Some word parts—as they appear in English words—have multiple meanings as we look back at the Latin and Greek, in part because of changes that have occurred in the words over the years. For example, does the "ped-" in "pedestrian" mean the same thing as the "ped" in "pediatrician"? Where there is possible confusion, context clues (see step 2) are extremely important.
2. Go back and reread the word in its context. This context includes the sentence in which you find the word, but you should also read one or two sentences both before and after the appearance of the word. What context clues do you find that might unlock the meaning of the word for you?
3. Make your best guess at the meaning of the word.
4. Look up the definition in [a dictionary](#). Be sure to also look for information about the word's origin. This information will often contain the Latin or Greek word from which the word is derived.
5. How close was your guess?

Uncover

Our world is full of connections—between people, places, and events. In this section of the website, you will find activities that uncover some important connections—in genetics, aquaponics, economics, and architecture—between *The Scavengers* and our world.

Genetic Engineering

The Science of Super Foods

Many large-scale farming operations rely on the study of genetics to ensure the plants they grow are more productive, nutritious, and pest resistant than they ever were in the past. Obviously, no one has figured out how to produce a plant that “cures cancer and diabetes and baldness and bad skin and arthritis” and “help[s] you live to one hundred years or your money back,” like URCorn does in *The Scavengers*, but many people believe it’s just a matter of time until someone does (41)! In fact, around the globe, there are concerned citizens arguing that the science of super foods is advancing too fast. Will the potential risks outweigh the benefits? Is this industry being responsibly regulated by governments? Let’s take a closer look at how, why, and where genetically-modified foods are produced.

Activities

- [Meet Gregor Mendel, the “father of modern genetics”](#). In the mid-1800s, Mendel pinpointed the basic principles of heredity by [observing the ways in which dominant and recessive traits were passed on from one generation of plants to the next](#).
- Geneticists can now predict how genetic traits will pass from parents to their offspring by using the [Punnett square](#).



- [Learn how strands of DNA combine to form genes](#) and [genes combine to make chromosomes](#) (on the molecular level. These combinations create a blueprint that determines which traits a living thing will have as well as how it will develop and function.
- Compare the [traditional hybridization process](#) farmers and gardeners have used for centuries with the [laboratory-based cutting and pasting process](#) genetic engineers use today. Which process more

closely follows the natural life cycle of the plants? Which process is faster? Which process yields more predictable results? What are the advantages and limitations of each?

- [Consider why some countries around the world have more readily adopted the genetic engineering process to increase food production than others.](#)
- [Weigh the potential benefits and risks of producing and consuming foods that contain genetically-modified organisms](#) (or GMOs). What [concerns](#) have been raised about how these super foods affect human health, the environment, and the global marketplace?

As you can see, super foods have become quite a controversial issue in recent years! Amid growing concern that the potential risks outweigh the benefits, [organic farming](#) is on the rise, and most developed countries around the world have passed laws requiring food products with genetically-modified ingredients to be labeled, so consumers can choose whether or not to eat them.

The [United States passed a law in 2016](#), but as you can see from this story, neither side is happy with the bill. Based on what you have learned, what do you think of this new law? How would you improve the law?

Applied Science

The Aquaponic Farming Trend

While some scientists and farmers are working to harness the power of genetics to manipulate and improve crops on a molecular level, others are looking to let Nature itself take the lead. Aquaponic farmers, like Tilapia Tom from *The Scavengers*, are adapting naturally-occurring processes to make farming more accessible to the general public and less harmful to the environment at the same time. Before Declaration Day, Tilapia Tom “lived in the roughest part of a big city, where he taught people how to grow their own gardens on top of water tanks filled with fish. It sounded crazy, and everyone told him it would never work, but it did” (65). By the time Ford Falcon meets him, Tom has relocated to BeaverSlap Creek where—without the assistance of electricity, gasoline, lab equipment, or machinery—he and his son Toby raise and dry tilapia to trade in Nobbern (66). Clearly, this method of farming is very different from what we would consider “traditional” farming. Why is aquaponics becoming trendy today? Can it really be done without the use of modern technology? Let’s find out!

Activities

- [Learn how the Ancient Aztec and Chinese civilizations pioneered aquaponic farming.](#)
- [Identify the key features that distinguish Aquaculture from Aquaponics.](#) (Be sure to scroll to the bottom of the Internet window to view the video!) Which type of aqua-farming emphasizes mutualism, or a “give and take” relationship between two species? Which type relies on the naturally-occurring Nitrogen Cycle to maintain the health and growth of the crops? Which type is gentler on the environment in terms of land use, waste produced, and water consumption?
- Consider how aquaponic farming techniques can be adapted to both [urban](#) and [rural](#) areas where healthy, affordable food is needed but traditional, large-scale farming is impossible. How does the addition of plants in aqua-farming reduce the expense, equipment needs, and workload for farmers?

It’s easy to see why aquaponic farming is on the rise! It’s fairly inexpensive and easy to do. It can be done in places where traditional farming is not possible. It uses drastically less water and land. It eliminates the need for potentially harmful human-made fertilizers and antibiotics. It is sustainable on a small scale. In what way(s) would this farming

method benefit your community? What drawbacks do you see? Why do you think traditional, large-scale farming is still more common?

Economics

Investing in a Local Currency System

In the post-Declaration Day world of *The Scavengers*, the government no longer oversees the economy OutBubble. In order to survive, those living in the ghost town of Nobbern have worked out a local currency system based on the exchange of Barter Bucks (See Chapters 17-18). This system enables people to bargain and trade with one another, so everyone's needs are met.

Interestingly, local currency systems, similar to the one you've just read about, have recently begun cropping up in the real world in response to increasing unemployment rates and a sluggish global economy. Local currency (which may also be called "community," "regional," or "micro-" currency) is not backed by the country's national treasury but by the good faith of the community in which it is used. In this type of system, participants work together to define their own rules about how goods and services will be offered, how prices will be negotiated, and how records will be kept. Some local currency systems design their own money as well! Let's investigate how these systems can increase economic stability on a community level.

Activities

- [Research the origins of the word "currency"](#) (in relation to money) and [the role it has played throughout human history](#). How do you think the word "currency" became associated with the exchange of goods and services?
- [Watch this video to learn how starting, running, and participating in a local currency system works in today's economy](#). How does this system compare to the BarterBucks system in Nobbern?
- Consider why local currencies have gained popularity [in the U.S.](#) and [abroad](#) in recent years.
- [Compare the day-to-day functioning of a local currency system to that of a community-based time bank system](#). How does the exchange of goods and services between participants differ when the currency is "hours" rather than a form of money?



- [Assess the way tax laws apply to local currency systems in the United States](#). Which types of transactions are tax exempt? How might it be more difficult to keep track of and report one's income when participating in a local currency system?

Supporters argue that local currency systems keep resources circulating, strengthen relationships, and define “work” and “payment” in ways that best benefit the local community. Now that you know more about how these systems work, do you agree? Why or why not? In what way(s) are communities better able to accomplish these goals via a local currency system as opposed to a national system run by the country's government?

Architecture

Living UnderBubble

From her neighbors Toad and Arlinda Hopper, Ford Falcon learns that—when people started clamoring for somewhere safe and secure from rioting, erratic weather, and bombs—the government announced the “Seal Our Nation’ plan” and built Bubble Cities around the country (77-78). To Ford, and probably to most of us, this is almost too unbelievable to be true. Of course, stories about moving humankind into vast, enclosed, life-sustaining structures crop up in science fiction novels and movies pretty regularly, but could the opportunity to live UnderBubble really be in our future? What would that be like? There are actually a number of projects under way around the world that could be precursors to some type of UnderBubble living. Let's see how soon this futuristic lifestyle may become a reality.

Activities

- In the 1960s, architect [Paolo Soleri](#) began developing the philosophy of “Arcology” (a [portmanteau](#) of architecture and ecology) that emphasized reorienting the way we think about living on the planet. A few years later, he founded the [Cosanti Foundation](#), dedicated to promoting arcology-based design principles, and began building a dome-shaped arcology community in Arizona called Arcosanti. [Take a virtual tour of Arcosanti](#) and predict the way(s) in which it models a compact, ecologically-conscious, multi-use style of construction that can be adapted to multiple climate zones and geophysical locations with little to no effect on the environment.
- [Today researchers and designers continue to expand, rethink, and refine Soleri's original vision for an arcology](#) in a way that has inspired a number of other projects worldwide. Many of them are even enclosed and climate-controlled just like the Bubble Cities in *The Scavengers!* Compare [these newer arcologies](#) to the Arcosanti model. What changes and/or improvements have the designers made?
- In 1991 eight researchers attempted to live inside a completely enclosed biosphere modeled after our own Earth. Watch this video of Biospherian Jane Poynter ([Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)) explaining the unexpected challenges she and her colleagues faced once they were sealed inside Biosphere2. Although the Biosphere2 experiment did not last as long as planned, [scientists are still learning from the data the researchers collected](#) in hopes of applying it to future space colonization projects. The site itself also continues to be used as a [large-scale bio-research and educational center by the University of Arizona](#).
- In 2015 [Google announced plans to redesign their North Bayshore campus](#) and enclose the working and living spaces within a glass fabric that operates like a super transparent, ultralight membrane. Bjarke Ingels, one of the key architects for the Google redesign, advises aspiring designers to rethink the purpose of architecture, not as a way to bend the environment to humans' needs but [as a way to build “the kind of world we want to live in”](#)

[for the future](#)". Consider the ways in which this innovative philosophy and method of design may influence future public and private building projects around the world.

- To get a sense of how challenging marrying architectural and ecological principles can be, follow these instructions to [conduct your own biodome-building experiment at home](#). Once you have a handle on the basic requirements for this type of design, consider how your architectural bubble would look if you were not limited by money, materials, space, or straight lines. Be sure to jot down your dream design!

As you can see, cutting edge architects are busily pioneering two different paths for life-sustaining, bubble-like design. One path focuses on sustaining life in isolation from the outer elements (either on Earth or another planet) while another focuses on sustaining life by protecting and partnering with the environment in mutually beneficial ways. Which path of design most appeals to you? Why?

Create

An important part of learning is having the chance to produce something of your own. Here you will find engaging projects that connect with the novel and that allow your creative abilities to shine.

Hone Your Handy OutBubble Skills

One of the most enjoyable things about reading *The Scavengers* is seeing all the clever ways the characters communicate without electronics and re-purpose found objects to make tools, defensive weapons, and toys. To do most of these things, they follow the instructions in Toad's copy of *The American Boy's Handy Book*, which was originally published in 1882. Many of us would probably have a thing or two to say to Daniel Beard about the narrow-mindedness of his handbook's title, but even Ford has to admit the skills Beard describes have certainly made OutBubble living a lot easier and more enjoyable.

Why not try out a few yourself? Just follow these *handy* online instructions!

- [Twirl your own whirligig.](#)
- [Send secret messages with Morse Code.](#)
- [Communicate with Semaphore Signals.](#)
- [Toss a handmade boomerang.](#)
- [Get familiar with first aid supplies.](#)
- [Prepare a disaster kit—just in case.](#)

PLEASE NOTE: These last two projects will require assistance from a trusted adult. Do not attempt to operate tools without assistance!

- [Explore life below the surface with your own Underwater Scope.](#)
- [Build a Rain Barrel to water your food garden.](#)

Speate Your Own Croonerism!

Now that you've read *The Scavengers*, you've had lots of practice decoding spoonerisms! Toad's clever use of language not only keeps him—and his friends!—mentally sharp but also gives everyone a reason to laugh now and then despite their difficult living conditions. In the real world, of course, spoonerisms often happen by accident, as they did to Rev. Dr. William Archibald Spooner, which is how these “slips of the tongue” [came to be named after him](#). Many poets, songwriters, and children's book authors, though, purposefully incorporate tongue-twisting spoonerisms into their work just to be silly and get a few laughs!

Do you “just lang-love-uage,” like Ford's friend Toad Hopper (25)? Then why not try writing some spoonerisms of your own! Think of some ways to weave your own spoonerism(s) into:

- a coded message to a friend (like Dad's letter to Ford on p. 272);
- a silly poem or song; and/or
- a retelling of a favorite fable or fairy tale.

For inspiration, look back through your book for examples. Also check out [these clever animations](#) (be sure to scroll down to the bottom of the Web page!) based on *Runny Babbit*, an entire collection of spoonerism poems by [Shel Silverstein](#). You may already be familiar with this book or some of Silverstein's others.

When you are ready, begin with a straightforward statement or question. Then flip-flop two words or the beginnings of two words (see page 24 in *The Scavengers* for an example). This will result in a basic spoonerism. You can also replace one or more words in a phrase with a synonym or homonym (as Toad does on pp. 24-25). If you're up for an even greater challenge, try something like “‘Fife is lot nair!’ . . . a three-letter forward flip—for experts only” (p. 282)! Like Toad, you can always invent your own word-play rules, as long as you don't make the language too complicated for your target audience to understand. After all, that would defeat the purpose of this silly form of communication!

Launch Your Own In-House Currency System

When Ford Falcon and her friends go into Nobbern to trade, they participate in a local currency system based on the exchange of BarterBucks (see Chapters 17-18). Buyers and sellers work out prices for their goods and services amongst themselves. When they reach a deal, they initial trade slips. Then Banker Berniece collects the trade slips, tallies the deposits and withdrawals on her abacus, and logs final amounts in her ledger. Lastly, Berniece uses the “envelope system” to create “a backup record of how many BarterBucks each person has” (111). All records are locked in her “gigantic bank vault” for safekeeping (109). In this kind of system, there are no computers or government regulators. There are no credit cards, checkbooks, or cash registers. Nevertheless, the BarterBucks system works because the participants have agreed to trust one another. As an added bonus, all prices are negotiable, and all resources stay within the local community.

To experience the pros and cons of a local currency system first-hand, try starting your own at home! Here are some thinking questions to get you started:

- What will your currency (or money) be called?
- What will your currency look like? Will you use some kind of trade slip, bills, coins, or counters? Feel free to be creative with the size, shape, color, and design!
- How will you encourage your family to participate in your local currency system?
- Will you have any rules about setting prices, making offers, and negotiating deals?
- What kind of goods and services will family members barter and trade for, using the currency you've designed? Consider what kinds of things are most valued in your household: screen time, clean laundry, a new book or video game, walking the dog, scooping the litterbox, borrowing a tool or item of clothing, a trip to the library? What else? Ask your family members to help you brainstorm a list of possibilities!
- How will family members keep track of how much they have earned and spent? Who will oversee the record keeping?
- How long will your in-house currency system be up and running?

Obviously, the more “community” buy-in you have, the better your local currency system will operate! If things start to seem too complicated, ask your family for feedback and try to think of ways to streamline and simplify the barter-trade-recordkeeping process. After trying out your local currency experiment for a while, step back and think about what worked well and what didn't. If your neighbors considered starting up a system like this in your community, what potential benefits and drawbacks would you foresee? Based on your in-house experience, would you want to participate on a community-wide scale? Why or why not?

Eat Like a Locavore

One of the greatest challenges for people living OutBubble is getting enough food to stay active and alive. Obviously, there are no grocery stores nearby, so Ford Falcon and her family have learned to grow what they can, forage for edible plants, and come up with items to trade for everything else they need. Their food choices are strictly limited to what is in season (i.e., growing at that particular time of year) and what they can find within a short distance of their shelter. All of this requires hours and hours of work, so most of their time is spent thinking about how, when, and what they are going to eat next.

To get a more concrete sense of what this would be like for your own family, ask a parent or guardian to help you research and prepare a meal like a locavore! ***This activity will require quite a bit of adult assistance, so be sure to ask permission and set a cooking date well in advance.*** By working together, you can plan ahead to eat only meat, dairy, grains, and produce that have been grown or produced in your local area—just like Ford and her family do in *The Scavengers*! Here's how to get started:

1. First, [look at a map of your area](#) and consider how far you can reasonably travel to find food. Clearly, it is not safe to go looking for edible plants in your neighborhood without proper guidance from an expert. ***Please do not eat anything without permission from a trusted adult!*** Instead, think about how you and your family could get to a farm stand or farmer's market either under your own power (say, on foot or bicycles), via public transportation, or in your *Scary Pruner* (otherwise known as your car). You may also need to go to more than one location. Most locavores limit themselves to foods that have been grown, raised, or produced within a 100

mile radius of their homes. Remember, the tighter you keep your food [radius](#), the more realistic your OutBubble eating experience will be. Search your zip code using [this free database](#) to identify sources of locally produced food near you.

2. After you've decided where to go for food, plan your trip carefully, so you will expend as little energy and fuel as possible. You don't want to be too tired to cook when you get home! (There are no drive-thrus OutBubble.)
3. When you arrive at your destination(s), look around to see which foods are in season. Do you see anything familiar? Do you see anything new you'd like to try? Which combination of available food would be easiest to prepare, provide [good nutrition](#), and leave your family feeling satisfied? As you choose which foods to purchase, try to be flexible. Remember, what Ford says: "[Y]ou eat what you have, not what you *want*" (42).
4. When you get home with your food, look in a cookbook or online for recipes using the ingredients you were able to find. There would not be a lot of spices and condiments OutBubble, so stick with simple soup, stew, or roasting recipes that will most accurately represent the kinds of meals Ford and her family could prepare with their outdoor stove.
5. After enjoying your meal, get your family's feedback on the locavore experience. Was the food edible, perhaps even enjoyable? How difficult was it to find and prepare the food, as compared to the family's usual routine? How did the cost of the meal compare to what your family would ordinarily have spent? What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of eating locally on a more regular basis?

Connect Prompts

In Duke TIP's online Book Club, the "Connect" prompts provide an opportunity for students to share their ideas about the book with other Duke TIP students. You may choose to record your responses to these questions in your Reading Journal, or you can use them to talk about the book with friends or classmates who have also read it.

Claim Your Name!

In the Introduction, the book's narrator tells us about the day she found an old station wagon "sunk to the bumpers" in the ravine near her home (1). She says, "I was Maggie back then. Maggie, the name my parents gave me. A nice name. But these weren't nice times. . . . and every morning as I strapped my SpitStick across my back and set out to scavenge, I found myself thinking I needed a better name. A stronger name. I mean, the name Maggie was fine, it just seemed kinda underpowered" (1). In this moment, she is inspired to claim the car's name for herself: "Ford, because we had a lot of rivers to cross. Falcon, because, well, if you have a lot of rivers to cross, a pair of wings can't hurt, and then once you get across the river it's likely you will need sharp eyes and an even sharper beak" (2). This name makes perfect sense to her. As the story progresses, she grows into her new name, becoming more self-reliant, bold, and quick-witted. In the end, re-naming herself enables Ford Falcon to face down her unpredictable circumstances in a way her old name did not.

If you were to rename yourself (perhaps after some combination of objects, animals, or places), what name would you choose? In what way(s) would your new name have special meaning for you? How would your new name give you the confidence to face fears and challenges in your life?

Sitting on a Goldmine

After wandering aimlessly through the woods for years, finding scant shelter and food, Ford Falcon and her family consider themselves incredibly lucky to have stumbled upon an unclaimed “junk dump” that “served four families for several generations” (22-23). They set up a tarp-covered shack overlooking the garbage-filled ravine, which they nickname “Goldmine Gully,” and begin meticulously digging through the piles day after day. According to Ford, “Even though we’re basically digging through trash, it still feels like a treasure hunt. You never know what you’ll find. Mostly it’s pretty unexciting—rotten wood, rusty soup cans, worthless plastic. But sometimes you find a pail with only a tiny hole in it, or a spoon that isn’t bent, or maybe a chunk of iron Toad can trade for bags of oatmeal and brown sugar” (27). Things people once viewed as broken or useless before the Bubbling are now invaluable to this struggling family because they can be traded “for things [they] can’t grow or make [them]selves” (28).

How does *The Scavengers* lead you to re-think your own definition of “trash”? Why is it so easy to view our things as disposable and/or replaceable? Why do we often throw out items that could be repaired or repurposed? Should this change? How and why?

Running Against the Herd

Ford Falcon spends a lot of time reading through the Hoppers’ stash of old newspapers and magazines, trying to understand why so many people agreed to Declaration Day and the Bubbling. From what she can piece together, everyone was on edge after a string of crazy weather, natural disasters, bombs, airplane crashes, and riots. There hadn’t been a war or anything, but when pictures of a ragged, armless Statue of Liberty began dominating the news, “[i]t got people thinking the entire country was in danger” (78). In no time, government-secured Bubble Cities were going up “around the country,” and people were filling them (78). Ford just doesn’t understand why people would willingly give up their lives and freedoms so easily.

Toad tells her, “. . . when people are fearful, you can get them to do things they said they’d never do” (77). Arlinda adds, “You get people riled up and worried, it’s easier to herd them in the same direction” (78). What do Toad and Arlinda mean by this? Why is it potentially dangerous for people to “follow the herd,” rather than thinking for themselves? Can you think of a time in history when following the herd has got humankind into trouble?

This Poem is Just Right

Ford Falcon cherishes the brief moments when she and her Ma read Emily Dickinson poems together. They take a break from their never ending chores and worries to sit underneath the Shelter Tree, drink hot tea, and interpret Emily’s words, as though she is a special friend writing just to them (162). Even though Dickinson wrote her poems in the late 1800s, and lived in far different circumstances, she seems to put *their* feelings into words in a way they cannot do themselves. Ford admits, “Sometimes I feel like Emily knows my lonely so well that I don’t even have to read her poems. Just holding the book is enough. The words speak softly to me from between the covers” (163). Somehow, Emily’s poems makes the hardships of OutBubble life easier to bear.

At one point, Ma explains that, “[w]hen a poem is just right, it’s like your own heart you hear talking” (37). What do you think she means by this? Do you have a special poem (or song) that affects you in this way? Tell us about it

Two are Braver than One

Spoiler Alert: If you haven't finished the book, stop reading now and come back later!

At the end of Chapter 38, Ford Falcon decides to take matters into her own hands. She's going to the capital to rescue her mother and bring her home to Skullduggery Ridge. When Ford Falcon announces her plan to Toad and Arlinda, though, her friends vow not to let her go alone (208). She is tempted to ignore them until Arlinda wisely points out, "There is no courage . . . in simple-minded stubbornness. . . . bravery ends where blockheadedness begins" (208). Ford realizes just how true these words are: If Toad hadn't been there to pull her to safety during the GreyDevil stampede, she would be dead and no help to her mother at all. In the end, Arlinda convinces Ford that going alone would make her a blockhead; accepting help from a friend, like Tilapia Tom's son Toby, would make her courageous.

Have you ever stubbornly insisted on doing something yourself, even though you knew the task was clearly too much for one person to handle? Why was it so difficult to ask for help? What, if anything, would you do differently if you had the chance? Tell us about it!

Your Very Own Time Machine

Spoiler Alert: If you haven't finished the book, stop reading now and come back later!

When she digs up the Porky Pig bank in Goldmine Gully, Ford Falcon is confident Mad Mike will give her lots of BarterBucks for it because there are people depending on him to find "old, odd things," treasures for their collections (30). After some thought, she realizes why. Just holding the bank leads Ford to imagine how it once looked on a store shelf, who carried it home, and why it ended up in the dump (32-33). The bank has become "[a] *time machine*, I think. Not a real time machine, of course, but an object that allows me to travel in my head back to a time I never even knew. To a time when things weren't as tough as they are now. To a time when there was time" (33). Even though Ford has only hazy memories of her pre-Declaration Day life, Porky Pig shows her that a child's life was once very different.

Later in the book, Ford is surprised to see the same Porky Pig has ended up in the hands of an enemy! The Fat Man, too, holds the pig and is transported—in his mind, at least—away from the stark, white walls of the interrogation room to another time and place where he blissfully watched cartoons while eating macaroni and cheese (249). He depends on objects like Porky Pig to help him remember the world as it once was.

In *The Scavengers*, we encounter several characters who cling to special objects that transport them to a happier, more peaceful time and place. Ma has her Earl Grey tea. Dad has his Bon Iver t-shirt. In the end, even Ford has a time travel object of her own: Merely holding the book of Emily Dickinson poems takes her back to the afternoons she once spent under the Shelter Tree with Ma.

Why do you think time-travel objects like these are so important to us, regardless of who we are or where we've been? If you were forced to leave your old home on Declaration Day, what one item would you bring with you? What special item would help you time travel, to remember who and where you once were?

Your Brain, Your Property?

Spoiler Alert: If you haven't finished the book, stop reading now and come back later!

In Chapter 35, Dad finally confesses to Ford Falcon why he has been acting so strangely. He's on the run from CornVivia! Before Declaration Day, he worked for them in a top secret research and development laboratory. When he figured out the terrible ways they were planning to use his research, though, he ran away. CornVivia believes "that because the knowledge [he carries] in [his] . . . brain . . . [is] patented and owned by CornVivia it [is] considered 'intellectual property.' . . . it [is] CornVivia's right and duty to make sure the information [doesn't] fall into the wrong hands . . ." (187). Later, the Fat man tells Ford, "The fact is, by running away, [your father] stole from us" (250). To CornVivia, her father's theft justifies everything the company has done to get him back under their control.

Obviously, [intellectual property](#) is fundamentally different from tangible property (or things one can touch, see, and/or move). In what way(s) is it more difficult to prove ownership of one type of property versus the other? What happens when one's inner "sense of right and wrong" (another part of one's brain, so to speak) doesn't match up with what the law says is "right" or "wrong"? Who do you think is right in the case of Dad versus CornVivia? Why?

Declare Yourself: Under or Out?

Over the course of the novel, Ford Falcon learns what Declaration Day was all about and why her parents, and people like the Hoppers, chose to fend for themselves OutBubble despite the obvious hardships they would face. She also sees with her own eyes that life UnderBubble is not all volleyball, picnics, and ice cream cones, as the newspaper articles and brochures at the time led unsuspecting people to believe (140, 233). Now that you have a clearer sense of what your life would be like both OutBubble and UnderBubble, where would you choose to live? Why is one lifestyle more preferable than the other, in your opinion? Remember, there are "No do-overs" (140), so make your choice carefully.

Keep Reading

A few thoughts on books and reading...

"When I have a little money, I buy books; and if I have any left, I buy food and clothes." — Erasmus

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." —Dr. Seuss

"Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read." —Groucho Marx



What's next?

We hope that you enjoyed reading *The Scavengers*, by Michael Perry. Check your email for information about our next book club selection. In the meantime, if you are looking for a new best friend—and aren't inside a dog—here are some books you might enjoy. Don't forget to use the tips from "Writing While You Read" (see pages 22 and 23) to deepen your enjoyment and understanding of these books too.

- *A Single Shard*, by Linda Sue Park
- *The Island of Dr. Libris*, by Chris Grabenstein
- *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library*, by Chris Grabenstein
- *The Lost Kingdom*, by Matthew J. Kirby
- *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*, by Kate DiCamillo
- *The House of Power*, by Patrick Carman
- *Rivers of Fire*, by Patrick Carman
- *The Dark Planet*, by Patrick Carman
- *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster
- *Navigating Early*, by Clare Vanderpool
- *The Apothecary*, by Maile Meloy
- *The Apprentices*, by Maile Meloy (sequel to *The Apothecary*)
- *The City of Ember*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The People of Sparks*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Prophet of Yonwood*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Diamond of Darkhold*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Mysterious Benedict Society*, by Trenton Lee Stewart
- *Chasing Vermeer*, by Blue Balliett
- *The Lightning Thief*, by Rick Riordan
- *Fever 1793*, by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick



Writing While You Read

Have you ever read every word on a page, and turned every page, but when you finished reading, you couldn't remember anything that you had read? If so, you're not alone! Reading can be relaxing, but sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that reading is passive, when it should be active. This doesn't mean you need to run while reading – that might not be a good idea. Writing as you read, however, makes reading active. This process involves some effort, but the payoff for that effort is a deeper understanding and greater enjoyment of the books that you read.

Two strategies for being an active reader are keeping a reading journal and annotating your books.

How do I keep a reading journal?

Below are some suggestions of things that you might write in your reading journal. Experiment with them. You may find that one strategy works really well for you, while others don't work at all. There's really not a right or wrong way to keep a reading journal, as long as you use it as a place to explore your thoughts, reactions, and questions as you read.

What Do I Write?

Write a brief summary, in your own words, at the end of each chapter or section. Include the main ideas or concepts of the chapter, major events in the plot, and any new information that you learn in the chapter.

Do you meet a new character? If so, what is the character like? How do you know? What are the reasons behind what that character says and does? How is the character like other characters in the book? How is the character different? Does this new character remind you of characters you've read about in other books?

Does the setting change? If so, how does the new setting compare and contrast with the previous one? Why does the setting change?

Create your own title for the chapter. If the book includes chapter titles, you might write about why the author has chosen that particular title for the chapter. How does it relate to the main ideas or concepts, major events, and character action in the chapter?

Respond to the chapter. What is the most interesting thing in the chapter? What did you learn that you didn't know before? Do you agree or disagree with the choices the author is making about plot and character? Why or why not? What do you think is going to happen next? How can you connect what is happening in the book to other things you've read? To other things you know? To your own experience?

Identify words that you don't know. Some of these words may just be new to you; others may be jargon, terminology that is used in a particular field or academic discipline. Look these words up in a dictionary, write down their definitions in your notebook, and be sure you understand their meanings and how the author is using them. Often these words are some of the most important in the reading.

Make note of passages where you are confused and/or have questions, and be sure to include a page number. Once you finish the chapter, you can return to the passages. Perhaps further reading clarified the confusion. If not, you know exactly which points in the text to further research or to ask questions about.

Write down striking or unusual use of language. Often writers use particular words, expressions, or sentences in ways that we wouldn't have thought to use them, and the effect can really jump off the page at us. If you come across a passage that seems really cool to you, write it down in your reading journal.



Throughout the online book club activities, you will find activities that are specifically labeled “Reading Journal.” When you see that label, read the writing prompt, and respond to it in your reading journal. These prompts will usually ask you to write about a personal connection to what you’ve been reading. For example, a journal prompt might ask you to write about a time when you found yourself in a situation that is similar to a situation of one of the characters in the book.

To Write or To Type, That is the Question!

Your reading journal doesn’t have to be a hard-copy, hand-written one, but there are some advantages to using an old-fashioned journal:

- The physical act of writing promotes a stronger memory for new words, phrases, and strategies you will be learning
- The hard copy notebook can evolve into a collage, a scrapbook, even a work of art that represents your creative, messy, overflowing mind!

How and where you keep a reading journal is much less important than actually doing it! So find an old notebook that may be buried in your desk, ask mom or dad if you can buy an inexpensive composition book, or create a new folder on your home computer and get started!!

How do I annotate a book?

As the word suggests, annotating a book involves making notes or other types of marks that help you focus on particular words or passages that seem important, are often repeated, relate to other things you’ve read, or simply interest you as a reader. An active reader annotates a text by doing any or all of the following:

UNDERLINING

Specific words that convey significant events or elements of the story’s characters, plot or theme

VERTICAL LINE ALONG THE MARGIN

This helps the reader quickly find an important passage underlined, or to highlight a paragraph or other section too long to underline.

* ASTERISK/STAR/DOODLE ★

Placed in the margin, this device is reserved for the most important, special ideas, events or elements of the book. There would be no more than a dozen of these in the entire book; by flipping through, one could easily find once again the most significant passages in the text.

4. NUMBERS

Placing numbers in the margin can help count a set of related points or ideas the author is listing.

P.#32 PAGE NUMBERS

Often indicated by “p. #” or “Cf. #” next to the number, this indicates an idea or element is connected to another on different page of the book, and should be considered together.

CIRCLES

These serve the same function as underlining key words or phrases, but may be reserved for the BIGGEST ideas or facts in the book.

Of course, all of these strategies involve marking in the book. So if you’re planning on annotating your book, we recommend that you have your own copy – librarians take a very dim view of writing in books that belong to the media center/library!



Keeping Track with a Character Grid

When reading a new book, it can be helpful to keep track of the characters you meet and what you think about them. This Character Grid is one way to do just that!

Characters in books (or movies!) are often very like people you meet every day in real life. You may notice the way a character dresses, talks, thinks, behaves, or makes new friends. As you record your ongoing thoughts here, remember that some characters will change and grow depending on what happens to them—or whom they meet—as the story progresses. These are called **dynamic** characters. On the other hand, some characters stay the same no matter what happens to them. These are called **static** characters. Whether a character is willing to change and grow can affect the kind of person he or she turns out to be in the end, and it can also influence how we, as readers, feel about that character.

For example, Marlin, from the movie *Finding Nemo*, starts out as an overprotective dad who doesn't believe his son Nemo should try new things because he might get hurt. As the movie progresses, though, Marlin makes new friends, like Crush and Dory, who help him learn to guide and encourage his son without keeping him from experiencing the fun life has to offer. By the end of the movie, Marlin has changed his way of thinking about how to be a "good" dad. This not only makes him a dynamic character but also makes us like him better and want him to succeed as a parent. (If Marlin had not changed his ways, we might have ended up being frustrated by him.)

INSTRUCTIONS:

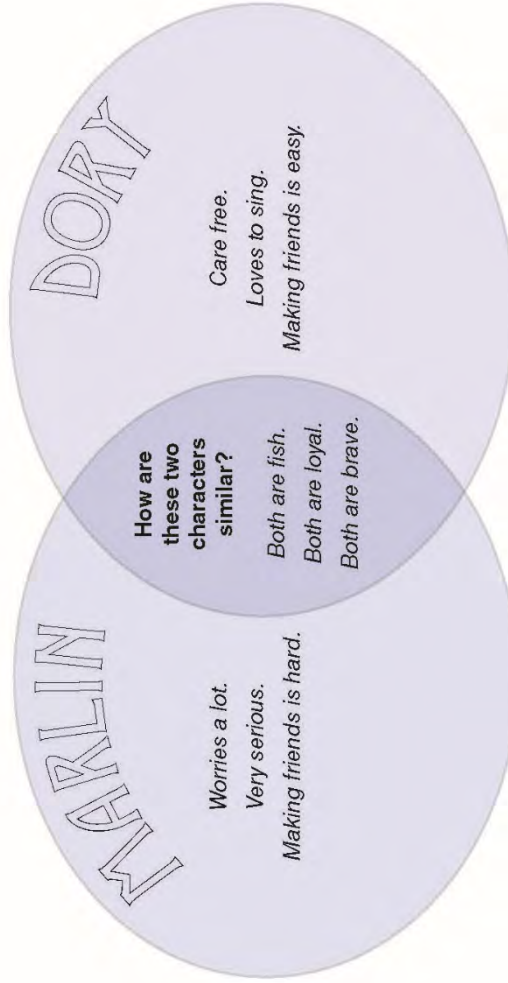
1. Tuck this Character Grid into your book or Reading Journal. Then, each time you meet a new character in the book, take a moment to write down his or her name on the grid and answer the "As You Are Reading" questions. (If you run out of writing room, feel free to create your own grid or answer these questions in your Reading Journal!)
2. Once you have finished the book, go back through your grid and answer the "After You Have Finished the Book" questions. As a way of wrapping up, consider: With which character(s) did you connect most strongly? What does this tell you about yourself?

Character's Name	As You Are Reading...		After You Have Finished the Book...	
	Where/When do you meet this character?	Describe this character's appearance and behavior.	What stands out to you about this character's name, behavior, or choices?	Why is this character important to the story overall?
				Is this character static or dynamic ? What evidence from the book tells you so?

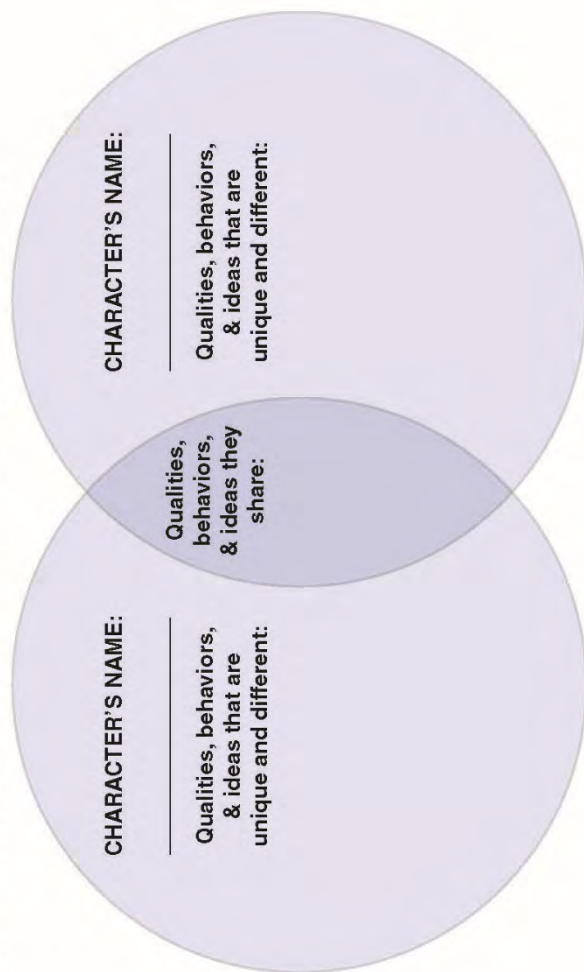
Side-By-Side Comparison with a Venn Diagram

Creating a Venn Diagram can help you visualize and make sense of the similarities and differences between two or more things. For example, as you are reading a book, you could use a Venn Diagram to compare key characters, places, or events.

A basic Venn Diagram is made up of two, partially overlapping circles. Let's say you wanted to compare two characters. In the outer part of each circle, you would write one character's name and list the qualities, behaviors, and ideas that make him or her unique and different. In the space where the circles overlap, write down characteristics the characters share. If we were comparing Marlin and Dory, from the movie *Finding Nemo*, here is how our Venn Diagram might look. (If you've seen this movie, try adding some observations of your own!):



Now you are ready to draw your own Venn Diagram in your Reading Journal! To get started, try something like this:



If you want to compare more than two characters, places, or events, simply add additional circles to your Venn Diagram. Be creative! Just pay attention to the places where your circles overlap and look for similarities there. Here are some other possibilities:

