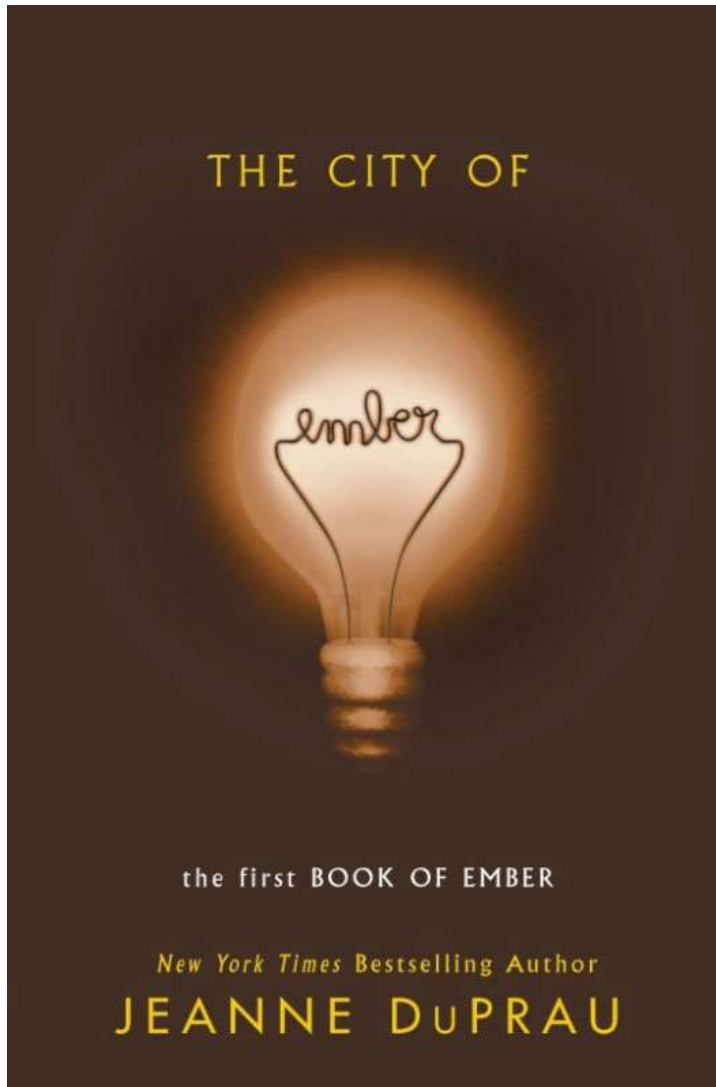


The City of Ember

by Jeanne DuPrau



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school library, or at local or online bookstores. It's also available as an ebook for your iPad, Kindle, or Nook.

In the city of Ember, a city surrounded by the darkness of the Unknown Regions, “day” comes from huge lights mounted throughout the city, and “night” comes when those lights are turned off. Everything in Ember is old, the supply of food and other goods is running out, and, worst of all, blackouts in the middle of the day are happening more and more frequently, and that can only mean one thing: the lights are failing.

Like all citizens of Ember, Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow are assigned jobs when they graduate from school at age 12. Lina has dreams of another city, beyond Ember, beyond the Unknown Regions, and Doon is determined to fix the generator that powers the city’s lights. Then Lina finds a mysterious document, and Doon uncovers his own mysteries in the massive Pipeworks below the city. Are these discoveries related? As the blackouts in Ember grow longer, can Lina and Doon find a way to save the people of Ember?

About the Author

Jeanne DuPrau has written five novels, six books of non-fiction, short stories and essays. *The City of Ember*, her first novel, was named an American Library Association Notable Book and a Kirkus Editor's Choice, and it also received the Mark Twain Award. Ms. DuPrau lives in California.

Getting Started

You can find *The City of Ember* at your local or

While You're Reading

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 page 15), with helpful tips on keeping a reading journal and annotating a book while you read.

Reading Journal Prompts

- Look up “ember” in a dictionary. Reflect on why Jeanne DuPrau chose to name the city “Ember.” How well does that name fit the city it describes? As you read (or reread) the novel, look for other examples of “embers” in the story.
- In the city of Ember, everyone is assigned a job by the luck of the draw at age 12. What strengths do you see in this system? What are the weaknesses? Talk to your parents and grandparents about their jobs and the factors that influenced their career choices. What factors are influencing your thoughts about your own career?
- In Chapter 2, we learn some history about Lina’s and Doon’s friendship. In particular, Lina recalls an incident when she and other children, including Doon, were trying to climb a lightpole. Reread this incident, and think about what it tells us as readers about Lina and about Doon. Which character do you most relate to and why?
- While waiting in the Reception Room to deliver the message to the mayor, Lina has a chance to read from *The Book of the City of Ember*. In one section, she reads, “The Gathering Hall clock...measures the hours of night and day. It must never be allowed to run down.... It is the job of the timekeeper to wind the clock every week and to place the date sign in Harken Square every day” (34). But Lina knows that not all timekeepers have been diligent in their work, and as a result, no one in Ember can really be sure of the exact time, the day of the week, or the year. How important is time to you? What roles does it play in your life? How would you feel if you weren’t quite sure what time or day or year it was? What difference would that uncertainty make in your life?



- After the long blackout, the mayor calls a town meeting to provide all citizens with “important information.” The mayor tells the people of Ember that the difficulties are “slight,” that the people need to be patient, and that solutions are being found. He urges them not to panic. Why do you think the mayor chooses this approach, rather than talking more directly to the people about the problems the city is facing? How does this approach help the mayor? How does it hurt him in the eyes of the people? How do the mayor’s words help the people? How do they hurt them? Have you ever had an experience when someone told you things were better than you knew they were? How did that make you feel?
- After the Town Meeting, Doon says, “It makes me so angry the way he talks to us” (88). Doon’s father then says, “The trouble with anger is, it gets hold of you. And then you aren’t the master of yourself anymore. Anger is” (89). Are there other characters in the novel that aren’t their own masters? What is controlling them? Think about things in our world that can “get hold of” people, that can become a “master.” What are the consequences of being controlled by something like anger or some other “master”?
- Doon’s father then begins a statement that we can assume Doon has heard before: “And when anger is the boss, you get....” Doon finishes the statement: “Unintended consequences” (89). If you read *The Apothecary* and worked through the book club activities, this concept should be familiar to you. As you read the novel, look for examples of unintended consequences.
- In *The City of Ember*, Jeanne DuPrau uses similes (comparisons of two things using “like” or “as”) and metaphors (figures of speech in which you use one object or idea for another to suggest similarity between the two objects or ideas) to make the story more vivid and enjoyable for the reader. “She runs like the wind” is an example of a simile, and “He’s a monster on the basketball court” is an example of a metaphor. When Lina recalls her father’s illness, she uses two similes: “...he seemed to grow dim like a lamp losing power, and the sound of his breathing was like water gurgling through a clogged pipe” (134). What do you notice about these particular comparisons? Why does Lina compare her father to a lamp losing power, or his breathing to water in a pipe? Look for other examples of similes and metaphors in the novel, and write them down in your Reading Journal. For each one, write down your thoughts about why the character (and the author) used that particular comparison.



- Many characters in this novel are searching for something. As you read (or reread) the novel, look for examples of this searching. How are these characters’ searches similar to and different from one another? Also pay attention to the imagery—particularly the repeated references to doors and the contrasts between darkness and light—that DuPrau uses throughout the novel. How do those images relate to this important idea of searching?

- After a significant event near the middle of the novel, Lina feels “as if she ha[s] suddenly gotten older” and is “a sort of mother herself now” (143). *The City of Ember* is, among other things, a coming-of-age story—a story that traces the growth and development of the main character, or protagonist, from childhood to adulthood. As you read or reread the novel, look for examples of Lina’s coming of age. How is she growing and changing in this story? How is she different in the end of the novel than she is in the beginning?
- The Singing is a significant holiday in the city of Ember. Reread chapter 16, which describes the various elements of the Singing. Considering those different elements, and the role they play in the Singing, would you call this event a “celebration”? If so, what is being celebrated? If not, what type of holiday is it? How is the Singing similar to holidays that you celebrate or remember? What holiday do you celebrate that is most like the Singing?
- “Curiosity,” [says] the mayor. ‘A dangerous quality. Unhealthy. Especially regrettable in one so young’” (217). Write down your reaction to the mayor’s comment. Why does he feel this way? He’s not alone in his thinking. Have you ever heard the expression, “curiosity killed the cat”? What are the positive elements and results of curiosity, both in the novel and in your world? Can you think of other books or movies in which curiosity plays an important role? Is curiosity a positive thing or a negative or both in those stories?
- Many popular novels for young people and adults are coming-of-age stories. What other books have you read that fit the coming-of-age description? In what ways are those novels similar to *The City of Ember*? In what ways are they different?
- *The City of Ember* is also a post-apocalyptic (from *apocalypse*, meaning “widespread destruction”) novel, imagining a world after some catastrophic event. Can you think of other post-apocalyptic stories that you’ve read or seen in film? What do those stories have in common with *The City of Ember*? How are they different? Why do you think these kinds of stories are so popular?

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 root below. Beside each root is a word containing that root.

Next, take a look at each root below. Beside each root is a word containing that root.

- **micro**—**micro**scopic
- **pre**—**pre**fix
- **phone**—**micro**phone
- **tele**—**tele**vision

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

Below is a list of words from *The City of Ember* that may be unfamiliar to you, along with the page number on which each word appears in the story.

- vast (7)
- lumbered (7)
- labyrinth (11)
- ochre (22)
- jostled (100)
- illegible (103)
- egress (171)
- threshold (186)
- curtly (200)
- unfurled (215)
- impudence (218)
- tumult (224)
- disperse (230)
- thrashing (239)
- feeble (251)
- gully (265)
- chasm (270)



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?

Explore

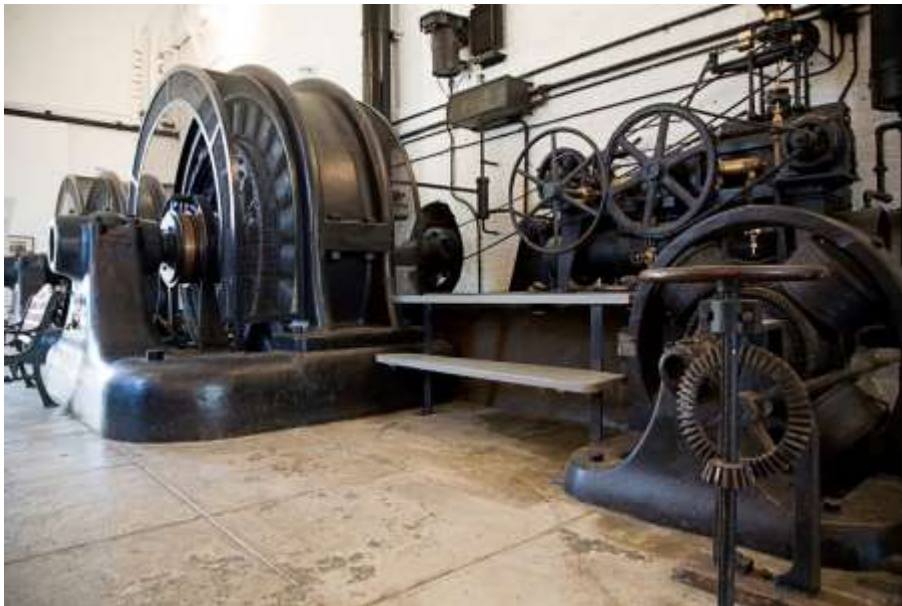
Our world is full of connections—between people, places, and events. In this section of the website, you will find activities that explore some important connections—in science, the history of science, and economics—between *The City of Ember* and our world!

Exploring Electricity

When you flick a light switch, turn on your computer, or plug your iPad charger into the outlet, you probably don't give it much thought. Electricity is such an important part of our lives that we usually take it for granted, until a storm knocks out the power! Electricity may be even more critical in the underground city of Ember, where it provides the only source of light. Think about how different a power outage is in the middle of the day and after the sun goes down.

Activities

- Want to learn how electricity works? Check out this link from howstuffworks.com to get started.
- A generator is a critical part of an electrical system, and Ember's generator is almost a character in the novel. Now that you understand the basics of electricity, [learn how a generator works](#).
- On his first day of work, Doon asks how the generator works, the old man from the generator room says, "All I know is, the river makes it go" (48). In our world, we know that rivers generate electricity around the world. [Learn more about hydroelectric power](#), and review some facts about the [Grand Coulee Dam](#), the largest hydroelectric power plant in the United States, and the [Hoover Dam](#). The largest hydroelectric dams in the world are the [Itaipu Dam](#), between Brazil and Paraguay, and the [Three Gorges Dam](#) in China.
- Interested in learning more? [Research pioneers in the study of electricity](#).



Economics in Action

Electrical power isn't the only thing that is running low in the city of Ember. Certain foods haven't been seen in ages, and now, necessities like light bulbs are in short supply. Under these circumstances, we can see some basic principles of economics (the study of how individuals and communities manage resources to make, buy, and sell products and services) at work.

Read (or reread) Chapter 5, "On Night Street," and then complete the following activities.

Activities

- [Learn about the economic principle of scarcity](#). Where do you see examples of scarcity in this chapter? How does scarcity influence Lina's choices?
- Have you ever said to your parents, "I need a new Xbox game"? Have you ever "needed" the latest book in your favorite series, or a new outfit with the latest brand name, or the latest and greatest cell phone? [Learn about the differences between wants and needs](#). Does Lina have these two confused?
- The man in the shop tells Lina the price of each colored pencil is five dollars. Why is the price so high? [Learn more about the economic principles of supply and demand](#) to find out.
- Based on what you've learned about supply and demand, what would you expect to happen to the price of...
 1. ...roses in February?
 2. ...gasoline in June?
 3. ...heating oil in August?
 4. ...oil when there is the threat of war in a major oil-producing country?
 5. ...flat screen TVs ten years after the first model came on the market?
 6. ... oranges after a late freeze in Florida?
 7. ...a mobile phone when the news breaks that the batteries cause fires?
 8. ...corn for food when more corn is used to make an alternative to gasoline?
- Ask a parent or teacher for other examples of the impact of supply and demand on prices in the real world. Are there situations in which the supply, the demand, or the price seems to move in a different direction than you might expect? Why would that be?



Create

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

"The main thing..."

is to pay attention," Doon's father tells him. "Pay close attention to everything, notice what no one else notices. Then you'll know what no one else knows, and that's always useful" (51). Paying careful attention, observing the world around you, is an important habit and skill to develop, whether you want to discover a cure for cancer or write the next great American novel.

Focusing on something you're excited about is a great place to begin to develop your own skills of observation. Doon is "fascinated by bugs," and he records "his observations about them in a book" with pictures on the left side and descriptions of each bug's activity on the right (52).

- Select something - a plant or bug, for example, or a set of somethings - a specific part of your yard, or a garden, for example - to observe, and commit to regular observations (the same time(s) of day, every day) for a specific period of time. This time period may vary depending on the subject of your observation. Be sure to pick something in which you're interested.
- Decide how you will document your observations. Will you make your own book, like Doon? If so, find a nice notebook or journal, give it a title, and decorate the cover. If that approach is too low-tech for you, create a digital log on your computer or tablet or you might choose to record your observations with images that you save in a digital album. Whichever digital approach you take, you can still come up with a creative file name and create a cool cover.
- Determine what you will record. Be sure to include observations of factors, like the weather or food, that might be influencing your subject(s).
- How will you organize your observations? Will you have one page per day? Will you draw pictures, take photographs, or try to capture everything in words?
- Don't forget to pay attention! Look for how your subject(s) are growing, changing, and interacting with each other and with the environment. Note changes from day to day, but also compare your observations over longer periods of time, like from one Monday to the next.
- At the end of your observation period, review the entire journal or log, and reflect on what you've learned. Record those reflections, pick something else to pay attention to, and apply what you've learned to the next round of observation.

How-To 101

Have you ever had difficulty following instructions? Maybe you were trying to build a Lego Deathstar, or maybe you were baking a cake. Maybe you were trying to set up your avatar in a game, or perhaps you were building a tree-house. Or, most entertaining of all, perhaps you were watching a parent try to put something together - do dads ever read instructions?

If you have ever had difficulty following instructions, imagine if you had to bake a cake without knowing what an "egg" is! Try building a tree-house without knowing what this strange thing, "hammer" does. That's the situation Lina and Doon find themselves in when they finally reach the hidden storage room with boxes of mysterious things like "candles" and "matches."

Activity

For this activity you're going to put yourself in the shoes of the Builders who were leaving the instructions.

- Think of a process that you know how to do and that involves multiple steps, but that someone you know - maybe friends or parents - wouldn't know how to do. It will be a bonus if items needed to complete the process are unfamiliar to your friends or parents, - like the candles, matches, boats and paddles are to Lina and Doon in the novel.
- Create a set of detailed written instructions - visual instructions would make it too easy to demonstrate the uses of the unfamiliar things! - to be followed to accomplish the task. Remember that you will need to explain not only the process itself, but also the purposes and functions of any required "tools."
- Give your instructions to your friends or parents and observe. Are they able to follow your instructions? Where do they have difficulty and why? Does working together as a team make it easier for them?
- For an extra challenge, tear up the instructions, and make sure some portions are missing when they are put back together. Then see how well your friends or parents can decipher and follow your instructions!

Everybody's a Critic

We're all familiar with great books, from the Harry Potter series to *Harriet the Spy*, being the basis for movies, and *The City of Ember* is no exception. With your parents' permission, watch the movie version of *City of Ember* (available through Amazon, Blockbuster, Netflix or other services). After you've watched the movie, play movie critic and write a review of the film. As you're working on your review, here are a few tips to keep in mind.

- The purpose of a review is to help your audience determine whether they would enjoy the movie or not.
- Give an outline of the story, but be careful not to provide "spoilers" that will give away too much information to your audience.
- Provide your opinion of the movie, and support that opinion with references to specific scenes or elements like acting, lighting, music, sets, or costumes. This supporting information will help your audience determine if they would likely share your opinion or not.
- Identify the ways in which the movie differs significantly from the book, and provide your opinion as to whether those differences improve the book's story or make the story less interesting.

- Read your review several times to make sure you have expressed your ideas clearly, supported them with effective examples, and used proper spelling and grammar.
- Look for a way to publish your review. Possibilities may be a class or school newsletter, a bulletin board in your school or public library (with permission, of course), or simply sharing it with friends who haven't yet seen the movie.

If you're interested in television and film yourself, use your written review as a script for an on-camera review. If you record a video review, look for ways to distribute it. Again, check with parents, teachers, or librarians about ways to use the review in school eNewsletters, daily student news broadcasts, or on the school's website. Who knows? This review might be the first installment in a regular series that could help other students and friends pick movies they will enjoy and avoid ones that they won't!

Reflect & 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.

Help Wanted?

In our world, people looking for a job used to respond to "Help Wanted" signs and now review online job postings or online networks like LinkedIn. In the city of Ember, no one has to look for a job because everyone is assigned one at age 12. When Lina and Doon receive their assignments, they have very different ideas about which jobs are important and which are useless. Lina thinks being a messenger is perfect because they connect "everyone to everyone else" and because she loves to run (16). Considering what you love to do and what you consider to be useful and important, what would your perfect job in the city of Ember be? Why? What about in your hometown?

Enough is Enough – Or Is It?

In *The Book of the City of Ember*, Lina reads, "The citizens of Ember may not have luxuries, but the foresight of the Builders, who filled the storerooms at the beginning of time, has ensured that they will always have enough, and enough is all that a person of wisdom needs" (34). One wise person, Socrates, put it this way: "He who is not contented with what he has, would not be contented with what he would like to have." Do you agree with the Builders and with Socrates' quote? Why or why not? How do you know when "enough is enough"? What makes something a "luxury" and what makes it a "necessity"? How do you determine the difference between a want and a need? (See the Uncover section for more information on wants and needs.)

Responsibility or Reward?

Doon's father frequently tells him, "You're a good boy and a smart boy. You'll do grand things someday, I know you will." Doon "...ache[s] to do something important, like finding the secret of electricity, and, as his father watche[s], be rewarded for his achievement" (50).

- Doon's father's quote suggests that there is a connection between having a strength, like intelligence, and both an ability and a responsibility, to do "grand things" with that strength. Do you agree?
- Share your favorite example of someone who did something "grand."
- Sometimes we do things because we feel like we have to - we have a responsibility or duty to do them. Other times we do things because of what we will get - there is some kind of reward or recognition waiting for us at the end. Is responsibility or reward a more powerful motivator for you? Why?
- Doon says he wants to save the city, but he also wants to be recognized for his efforts in Harken Square. Based on the rest of the book, is responsibility or recognition a more powerful motivator for Doon?

When Life Gives You Lemons...

After his first day of work, Doon's father tells him, "...it sounds unpleasant, I have to admit... But the Pipeworks is your assignment, no way around it. What you get is what you get. What you *do* with what you get, though...that's more the point, wouldn't you say?" (51). Doon's father's advice sounds like some other famous statements you may have heard: "bloom where you are planted," or "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade."

- Are these statements good advice? Why or why not?
- How do they relate to some of the other ideas in the novel?
- Share some examples of characters in the novel who make the most of their "unpleasant" situations.
- Can you think of examples of characters who "get" something pretty good (in other words, they have a better situation than others), but who *do* some unpleasant things?

- Share a time when you have made "lemonade" out of a "sour" situation. What did you learn from the experience?

The Final Frontier?

Lina tells Clary, "In my mind, I see another city.... It isn't like Ember; it's white and gleaming. The buildings are tall and sort of sparkle. Everything is bright, not just inside the buildings but all around them, too, even up in the sky. I know it's just my imagination, but it feels real. I think it *is* real." When Clary asks about this city's location, Lina says, "That's what I don't know. Or how to get to it. I keep thinking there's a door somewhere, maybe out in the Unknown Regions - a door that leads out of Ember, and then behind the door a road" (68-9).

Like [Christopher Columbus](#), [Sacagawea](#), and [Yuri Gagarin](#), Lina possesses the impulse to explore, the powerful belief that there is more than meets the eye, that there is something else "out there."

- Why do you think the impulse to explore the unknown is so powerful for some people? What is it that we're looking for?
- What other characteristics does an explorer need? Does Lina have those characteristics?
- What are the benefits of exploration? What are the dangers?
- How does this impulse for exploration relate to Doon's father's advice to "do with what you get"?

Turning on the Light

For Lina, "[t]aking hold of a pencil [is] like opening a tap inside her mind through which her imagination flow[s]" (135). What is your "pencil"? What is it that opens the tap or turns on the light of *your* imagination? For Lina, the results are pictures. What is it that *you* create?

Finders, Keepers?

When Lina realizes that Lizzie has been getting pineapple, fruit cocktail, peaches, applesauce, and other long-forgotten treats from Looper, Lina asks, "But Lizzie, why should *you* get all that? Why you and not other people?" Lizzie's response? "Because we found it. Because we can get at it." When Lina says it's not fair, Lizzie offers her some of the goods too, but that's not Lina's problem. Lina thinks it's unfair "that just two people [are] getting things that everyone...want[s]. She [can't] think how it should...be done. You [can't] divide a can of applesauce evenly among all the people in the city. Still, something [is] wrong with grabbing the good things just because you [*can*]" (153).

- Do you agree with Lina? Is what Lizzie and Looper are doing unfair? Or should "finders, keepers" apply? Why or why not?
- When things are scarce, who should decide who gets them? How should that decision be made?
- If you were in charge of the storerooms in Ember, how would you decide how to distribute these items?

Ending or Beginning?

SPOILER ALERT

These questions, and the responses to them, will be focused on the end of the novel, so if you haven't finished reading yet, turn back now!

The ending of the novel reveals a great deal of new information that changes how we understand what has come before and that sets up the next book in the series, *The People of Sparks*.

- Were you surprised by the ending? If not, what clues can you point to that led you to expect an ending like this?
- Did the ending satisfy you as a reader, or did the fact that it opens the door to the next book, while leaving so many questions from this book unanswered, leave you frustrated?
- After reading *The City of Ember*, do you want to read *The People of Sparks*? Why or why not?

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

"I cannot live without books."—Thomas Jefferson

"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 City of Ember*, by Jeanne DuPrau. 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, including the next books in the Ember series. Don't forget to use the tips from Writing While You Read (see page 15) to deepen your enjoyment and understanding of these books too.

- *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



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!

